

The Free Worlds Confederation

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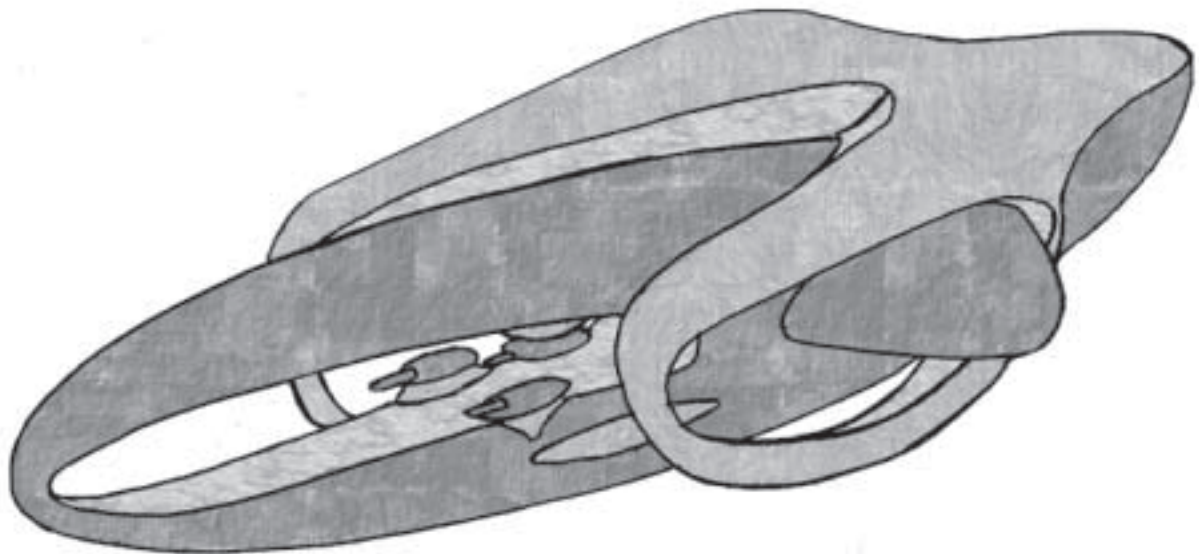


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Chapter 1: The Free Worlds Confederation

Introduction

The Free Worlds Confederation marks the point where the spin-ward expansion of the Centauri Republic finally ground to a halt. Though its borders would be tested several times over the centuries, the recession of the Centauri from the region, and the near crippling of the nearby Orieni would leave the Free Worlds as a power in the region.

The Free Worlds Confederation is a multi-racial endeavor between the Nashani and Medushaan races. The Confederation traces its origins back to the era just before the Centauri-Orieni War. Up until that time, the Nashani and Medushaan had seen a number of conflicts along their shared borders. The looming war between the two great empires of the age threatened to engulf and devastate the region. The Nashani believed that the only way to survive was for the two races to unite in the defense of the region. It would take great courage, diplomacy, guile and persistence, but in the end the Nashani and Medushaan would enter into a mutual defense pact. Nashani and Medushaan space would become known as the Free Worlds Alliance, as they were not to be under the sway of the great empires so nearby.

Together, the allies would ride out the storm that was the Centauri-Orieni war, and in its aftermath they would find themselves cooperating even more closely to stave off the advances of a resurgent Centauri Republic. Through the years to follow, cooperation would grow into a true partnership as the pragmatic Nashani and fierce Medushaan closely integrated not only their defensive measures, but their expansions, their economies, and their societies to the point where they had become intertwined at nearly every official level. Despite this, the proposal that the two species form a cooperative government sparked intense unrest as both races had those whose own pride would not allow such a merger.

The Seal of the Free Worlds Confederation



Though this period would be difficult for both the Nashani and the Medushaan, their leaders stayed true to their goal, and in the end a government was formed in which both races would cooperate fully on external policy matters and on such internal matters as economic integration. In this the Free Worlds Alliance became the Free Worlds Confederation.

Today the Confederation has grown to be a regional power, with a position of strength recognized throughout much of the space formerly dominated by the Centauri Republic. Trade routes have been established with spin-ward factions, and contacts have been made as far anti-spin-ward as Babylon 5. Ever mindful of security and stability, the leaders of the Confederacy keep close watch for potential trouble from all quarters. Of particular concern are rumors that the Orieni are rebuilding their forces for another crusade. Only time will tell whether the Free Worlds will remain truly free in the future.

Government of the Free Worlds Confederation

Like the composition of the Free Worlds, the government of the Confederation is a unique partnership. While the Nashani and Medushaan each retain their own separate governments and sovereignty, the Confederation provides the bridge

by which the two races remain linked. The Confederation government provides the conduit through which the two very different species coordinate their foreign relations, trade, and defenses. It is a case of the individual states being vastly stronger in unity than they could ever hope to be alone.

The core of the Confederation's government is the legislature known as the House of Stars. The House is composed of equal numbers of representatives of each race, selected by their own people. The House has the power to ratify treaties and trade agreements in the name of the Confederation, and must be consulted on matters external security. However the House does not have the power to compel either of the component governments to take any action. Rather, the House acts to represent each race's views to the other, with directions generally coming straight from their own governments. While technically and publicly the power that binds the Confederation together, the House of Stars is often just a sideshow those that truly control the policies of the Confederation, the Ministers, and most of all the First Minister of the Confederation.

Politically there is no more powerful individual within the political realm of the Confederation than the First Minister. The First Minister is chosen by the delegates of the House of Stars to be the central administrator of the Confederation's bureaucracy. Though the First Minister has few jurisdictional powers, he or she is the singular voice of all of the Ministries of the Confederation. As such, the political power of the position is obvious, with the ability to control what reaches the ears of the House and what directives are given to the Ministries. The First Minister serves her post until recalled by a majority vote within the House of Stars.

Besides the First Minister there are several other powerful Ministers that see to the day to day administration of the Confederation. These other Ministers make up a sort of Executive Council, presided by the First Minister. The Ministries of the Free Worlds Confederation are bureaucratic machines composed primarily of Nashani workers, though there are a surprising number of male Medushaan that see the Confederation's government as a way to advance beyond the normal limits of their own culture. The Ministries of the Confederation are Defense, Trade,

Intelligence, Foreign Relations, Finance, and Justice. While the first four Ministries are pretty much as one would expect, the Ministry of Justice is of interest. The Ministry of Justice is charged with the daunting task of administering those systems held as "Free World Dominions", distinct and separate from either the Nashani or Medushaan states. The Ministry of Justice also provides a small, elite cadre of Wardens, who provide both security for the delegates of the House of Stars, and for the other Ministries.

The final and most visible component of the Confederation's government is the Chancellor. The office of the Chancellor is a largely ceremonial post, with little effect on the daily administration of the Confederation. The fact is that the Chancellor is the public spokesperson for the government to the constituents of the Confederation. The most important task of the Chancellor is not the shaping of policy, but rather *selling it* to the masses. The Chancellor opens each session of the House of Stars, makes public proclamations, and is often on tours of the Dominions. This is not to say the Chancellor is a fool or unwitting tool of the Confederation, but is an important public face for an otherwise faceless bureaucratic machine.

Worlds of the Free Worlds Confederation

Since the foundation of the Free World Confederation the borders of the cooperative government have changed several times. Those borders have remained fairly stable since the early 2200's, and within are several star systems that fall under the direct control of the Confederation, rather than the control of one of the constituent states. Known within the Free Worlds as "Dominions", these systems are administered by Governors whom are appointed by the Free Worlds bureaucracy. These governors serve as long as their sponsors wish, or until they themselves "retire". Individuals of either the Nashani or Medushaan races are expected to respect the authority of the governor when in a Dominion system. Though nominally under civil authority, the Free Worlds Dominions are primarily military posts. As such, the governors of dominion



systems typically defer to the military authorities in most matters.

Ushtal

Ushtal holds a unique place within the Free Worlds as both the oldest settled interstellar colony of the Nashani, and the nerve center of the Free Worlds Confederation. The proximity of Ushtal to Medushaan space, and to former Centauri space, made Ushtal the perfect location for the new capital of the fledgling Free Worlds Confederation. Elaborate facilities, both orbital and ground-based, have been constructed for the cooperative government. The capital itself is a massive station complex with both zero-g and gravity positive living areas suitable for the Nashani and Medushaan who live and work there. In fact, Ushtal has the only truly permanent population of Medushaan within Nashani space, and is the only Nashani Planet where Medushaan ground troops are deployed to protect vital facilities.

Ushtal is home to the headquarters for the Free Worlds Navy, and is perhaps the most heavily defended system in all of Nashani space. The Free Worlds First Fleet, composed of both Nashani and Medushaan warships, is based in the Ushtal system, and it is supplemented by a sizable force of clan operated warships generally in-system. In recognition that Ushtal is first a Nashani system, the command of the systems mobile forces and fixed defenses is under the direct control of the Nashani admiralty with the Medushaan in a subordinate role.

Essekyre

The site of the most dramatic victory of the Free Worlds over the Centauri, the systems inhabitable world Essekyre-3 was reduced to an irradiated rock to destroy its Centauri garrison. The Nashani and Medushaan forces would initially retreat to their well fortified positions in the Voshtal

system following the victory, but continued to patrol the region regularly. The Nashani recognized the value of Essekyre as a buffer against any threat approaching from that region of space, either from the Centauri, a resurgent Orieni empire, or from any other source. Following the Centauri withdrawal from the region they moved quickly to establish a defensive network in the system. It mattered little that the system's "inhabitable" planet was a nuclear wasteland, as the Nashani had little inclination to build ground facilities anyway.

Decades after the Free Worlds victory of the Centauri, Essekyre is one of the purely military posts within the Confederation. The permanent orbital facilities are crewed by the Nashani, and the Nashani provide the bulk of the mobile forces. Medushaan squadrons regularly rotate through Essekyre, primarily to train alongside their Nashani counterparts. These units rarely remain long as the lack of ground or large positive gravity facilities do have a negative effect on Medushaan crews.

Lisuria

Lisuria is the primary "forward" base for Free Worlds military forces along the Border with the Shatu Imperium. While the system features impressive fortifications, its real strength comes from the solid core of front line warships from the Confederation's 2nd fleet that are an ever present part of the starscape. These forces are there to keep tabs on incoming trade ships, and as a constant reminder to those watching from across the border.

Vinos

Formerly the Centauri colony known as Quadrant 13, Vinos is the way station for much of the trade passing to and from Nashani space anti-spinward. The system changed hands several times during the conflicts known as the wars of the Confederation, with the Nashani and the Free Worlds finally gaining control as the Centauri withdrew from the region. Now known to the Free Worlds as Vinos, the colony's ground facilities were left more or less intact by the Centauri. While this meant little to the Nashani in terms of comfort, this was a blessing when conducting trade with other races and allows for the long term garrisoning of Medushaan ground and space forces within the system. As a result, Vinos boasts

the Headquarters of both the Free Worlds 2nd Fleet (1 of only 2 standing "fleets" within the Confederation), and the bulk of the Free Worlds Army, composed of 3 Legions of Medushaan ground troops.

In addition to the military presence Vinos is a trade nexus with a direct route to Ushtal as well as being a relatively short trip to many other inhabited systems. Commercial traffic is heavy at all times, and patrol forces are ubiquitous and well equipped. These patrol forces are often complimented by warships based in the system when they are not otherwise indisposed.

Vinos maintains a formidable ring of Medushaan and Nashani orbital fortresses, OSATS, and is the location of the only joint shipyards in the Confederation. Vinos also holds the distinction of being the only Dominion system administered by a Medushaan governor, a nod to the system's majority population.

Lodira

This former Centauri colony world is valuable to the Confederation as a buffer against aggression from anti-spinward, and in protecting their trade routes. Lodira is fairly well fortified, and like Lisuria is well patrolled by both forces stationed in-system and elements of the Free Worlds Navy. In addition to the military forces present, Lodira is home to a few minor Nashani orbital facilities which serve the trade ships passing through the system.

Mantukas

Like Lodira, Mantukas is important because of its strategic location at the intersection of several trade routes. Again like Lodira, Mantukas is well defended by both fixed fortifications and mobile forces. In the case of Mantukas, the fixed defenses are more formidable than those of Lodira, and the world is also protected by a sizable garrison of Medushaan ground troops. This has lead some to speculate that the Centauri left more behind than partially wrecked spaceports and the residences of some minor nobility. Whatever may be there, no one within the Free Worlds will say, it is possible that it may be something that even the Centauri were unaware of during their occupation.

Veil

The Veil system is a border checkpoint system protecting the route from Rogola through Azami space. Though a large amount of trade passes through Veil on its way to Mantukas, there is little of note in the system beyond its impressive defenses. Though technically a Free Worlds Dominion, Veil is primarily a Nashani concern. Veil is often the sight of choice for joint training operations, likely as a show of strength to their neighbors.

Bundara

The Free Worlds Dominion of Bundara serves as a strategic reserve depot for the Free Worlds forces operating in the region. The well protected ground facilities in-system house the stockpiles of materials needed to support Mantukas or possibly the border with the Azami Holdings.

Bundara is the headquarters of the Free Worlds 3rd Fleet, an inactive reserve. Vessels are regularly rotated in and out of the reserve, given extensive overhauls and refits in the Bundara yards if needed. Should the 3rd Fleet be activated, it would draw active ships and crews from the surrounding systems. The commander of the Free Worlds Naval forces at Mantukas would then become the commander of the new fleet.

Fetslak

Fetslak is held by the Free Words as a “transit” system, and is home to one of the few non-Nashani, non-Medushaan populations in the Confederation. The primitive natives of the system’s habitable world were enslaved and nearly exterminated by the Centauri, barely maintaining a toe hold on their now barren home-world. The Free Worlds leadership has tried to identify some formal organization among the natives with which they could open communications, to no avail. For now they have simply chosen to leave the natives alone and wait for them to advance to the point where communication might be possible.

Other than the natives, Fetslak is of interest only because it possesses a functioning jump gate which the Confederation has moved to the outer system. The Nashani have also constructed a small outpost to serve the needs of vessels passing through the system.

Idellem

Idellem is another important border checkpoint, similar to the Veil system. Idellem lies along the most direct route between the Free Worlds and the heart of the former Centauri colony worlds. Because of this, the port at Idellem has the potential to be one of the most important to trade between the Free Worlds and the Anti-Spinward powers. Increased tensions with the Shatu in recent years has led many strategists have urged the Free Worlds leadership to fortify Idellem at least as well as Lodira or Mantukas. So far this has not happened with belief that to do so would be an unnecessary provocation.

Buvarn

The Free Worlds inherited the Buvarn system from the Centauri following their withdrawal from the region. The Centauri left little of value in the system, but the Free Worlds found it did have enough untapped mineral resources to justify building a mining outpost in the system. Still, Buvarn remains a backwater Dominion.

The Free Worlds Navy: Combined Fleet Operations of the Nashani & Medushaan

Fighters bobbed and darted as beams of light stabbed at their formation. Though a few shots came near enough to scorch paint, none connected as the swarm came on unhindered by the display. If Commander Shi-Col Ban Nasi was the least bit concerned by the onrushing vessels, he did well to hide it. A sensor operator ticked off the time until the enemy would be in range to use their weapons, a very rapidly shrinking figure. Commander Ban Nasi touched a softly glowing icon on the display before him. Instantly a dark, shimmering visage stared back with startling blue orbs.

“Don’t you think that you are cutting this just a bit close, Troxan?”

The Medushaan commander gurgled what passed for a laugh among her race, “We were waiting to see if your gunners got any of them! My second wagered that they could not. I, of

course, defended you. You cost me a fine bottle Nasi!" More of the Medushaan's laughter chased the image as it faded from the display, replaced by the ship's external pickups. As the enemy fighters came to their firing range, a similar horde burst around the flanks of the lumbering Nashani cruisers. The Medushaan force of fighters and MCVs had used the Nashani force to screen their approach, and the attacking fighter force had no chance to react to their arrival. The Medushaan slashed through the formation just seconds short of their weapons envelope. It was good that the Medushaan could be relied on for more than ill-timed humor.

"All Blue Elements", communications opened a channel to the Nashani component of the Task force. Commander Shi-Col Ban Nasi continued with an exasperated sigh, "Target enemy carrier vessels and engage with main battery fire." No sense in letting empty carriers escape to refill their bays.

For well over a century, the Nashani and Medushaan have been the closest allies, with their unique relationship leading eventually to a cooperative government as well. For many years the two nation's militaries have closely coordinated their strategies and tactics, and have conducted many joint operations successfully. Though there are no permanent, standing combined fleets under the banner of the Free Worlds, this is merely a formality. Nashani and Medushaan Task Groups continuously train together to better develop the tactics and the trust necessary for successful combined operations, and are well prepared should the need arise. Strategic coordination and structure is provided by the Free Worlds Combined Command, a long-standing organization composed of members of both races. Combined Command not only oversees the deployment of joint task groups, but insures the command structure of the mixed forces. As a rule of thumb, the fleet's commander will be of one race, while his or her deputy commander will be of the other, regardless of the number of forces present from each.

During their long partnership the nature of their forces have shifted slightly to accentuate the

strengths and minimize the weaknesses of their forces when acting in concert. Individually the Nashani and Medushaan fleets have several weaknesses that can be exploited by an enemy. Together, they are a formidable force indeed. This is particularly true in larger groups of ships such as a full task force or fleet, where the full weight of the advantages of each race can come into play. In fact, it is uncommon, though not unheard of, for the Free Worlds to deploy combined forces smaller than a task group.

When using the Nashani and Medushaan in B5Wars it is possible to have mixed fleets of both races vessels with no penalties as their systems are well integrated. All of the ships deployed by the Free Worlds player may benefit from special abilities such as ELINT, and command bonuses available as if the ships were all from one race. The Player using the Free Worlds must then designate one of the races as the "Primary Race" and the other as the "Secondary Race". The Primary Race may purchase ships as normal, while there are some restrictions on the ships that the Secondary Race may purchase. Base Hulls remain unaffected, and may be taken for their normal point cost. All other hulls have their availabilities raised by one level such that common variants become Limited availability 33%, Limited becomes 10% Restricted Deployment, and Restricted becomes unavailable to choose. In Fleet Action, the controlling player may not create mixed squadrons of Nashani and Medushaan vessels, though again, all of the ships are treated as being from one race for all other purposes. As with B5Wars, the Fleet Action player must select a Primary and a Secondary Race. In a Fleet Action game, the Secondary Race may not provide the fleet flagship, and may not exceed 50% of the fleets total point value.

It has been theorized that in the future the members of the Free Worlds may begin to construct jointly designed vessels specifically for combined operations. While it seems that this is an inevitable outgrowth of the present cooperation between the races, there are just as many reasons why this is unlikely, and impractical. In the foreseeable future, each race will continue to shape their forces to maximize the unique advantage their partnership provides. The Nashani and Medushaan will also certainly continue grow along their own distinct technological pathways.

Important Personalities of the Confederation

Nalda Dross

Nalda Dross is the current Chancellor of the Free Worlds Confederation. It may surprise some outsiders to find that the public face of the Confederation is a hulking Medushaan, but Dross is a charismatic and influential individual. Distantly related to the current Medushaan ruler, Nalda Dross is a never ending fountain of energy beloved by many average Medushaan, and friends with many of the most powerful. Dross has long been a staunch supporter of closer cooperation with the Nashani, seeing it as the key to extending Medushaan influence outside their own borders. Nalda Dross is quite literally the most cosmopolitan of all Medushaan.

Shi-Otani Nas Tesha

Tesha is the granddaughter of one of the most revered Nashani naval and political heroes. Since her youngest years she has been set on proving her own worth beyond the influence of her Clan. It is not surprising to those that know her well that she has risen to the most powerful political position within the Confederation when it would have been a far more simple matter to remain within the political power center of the Nashani Confederacy. Shi-Otani Nas Tesha is a driven individual in every sense, and is well known as perhaps the most unpleasant and dour example of her species, a feat for a race renowned for their tight personal control. Tesha maintains only distant contact with her Clan, determined to prove her self-worth through dogged independence.

Durga Lenar

Durga Lenar is the Supreme Commander of the Confederations ground forces. A truly grizzled, battle-scarred veteran Lenar is one of the most publicly aggressive personalities of the Free Worlds Confederacy. Lenar is a brilliant tactician, but a rather disinterested administrator, a fact which is somewhat mitigated by the utter loyalty of her subordinates. If there is one area in which Durga Lenar has excelled, it has been in surrounding herself with magnificent staff officers,

showing a particularly keen eye for individual strengths and talents. For the past few years, Durga has been increasingly vocal in her warnings of the danger posed by the Orieni. While most view the aggressive Shatu Imperium as the greatest immediate security threat, it is Durga's firm belief that the Orieni have been setting the stage for a return to prominence. Such a rebirth, she believes, would require the Orieni to neutralize the Free Worlds as a threat.

Shol-Bor Van Las

The Supreme Commander of Confederation Naval Forces, Shol-Bor Van Las has always displayed a bit more flair than the average Nashani. This has led some to speculate that he has served too long with his Medushaan counterparts. Whatever the case, Las has had the personal determination and pure skill to rise through the ranks of the Confederation Navy without the political or familial advantages that many others possess. Shol-Bor Van Las has always been a risk-taker and gambler, with an intuitive feel for strategy. Many that have served with or under him feel he is a perfect fit for dealing with the unique challenges of coordinating the Nashani and Medushaan elements the comprise the standing fleet of the Confederation.

Brixa Tragg

Brixa Tragg is the Confederation's Minister of Defense, and a firm disciple of the Free World's Ground Forces Commander, Durga Lenar. The one-armed, former fighter pilot is a very aggressive, forward thinking individual. Tragg has pressed for greater cooperation between the Nashani and Medushaan governments to develop new technologies which can strengthen both in case of a war. Like Lenar, Tragg is sure that the Orieni are preparing for war once again. Unlike her mentor, Brixa privately believes that the Orieni will try to seize the independent stellar territories which were once under Centauri control. If that is the case, Tragg is preparing to oppose them with all of the means at her disposal, as she sees Orieni control of the region as a greater threat than an all out assault on the Free Worlds.

Sher-Shal Ban Sani

Sher-Shal Ban Sani is the son of a powerful Nashani family whose connections brought him to the position of Minister of Foreign Relations for the Confederation. The very picture of the cold, emotionless Nashani, Sani is a rather blunt, unlikable fellow to be sure. He is however a master manipulator and shrewd politician. As such he conceals his contempt for the Medushaan and his dislike of the Confederation as a whole. Unlike the idealists, Sher-Shal Ban Sani sees the whole unpleasant arrangement as a means to an end. Namely, the Confederation is the best way to extend the influence the Nashani and his Clan, while using others to minimize the risk. Sher-Shal Ban Sani may be a Nashani supremacist, but he is also a pragmatist.

Chapter 2:

The Nashani

Some have said an outer mask of calm shrouds the inner turmoil of the individual Nashani. Others have observed the same of Nashani society.

-Unknown

Physical Characteristics

The Nashani are long-limbed, gaunt creatures as a result of their home-world's low gravity. In fact, in an earth-standard gravity, the generally must use all four limbs for locomotion and find breathing very difficult. The Nashani embrace weightless environments such as ships and stations, and show no ill effects from prolonged zero-g living. In weightless environments, the Nashani are not only more comfortable, but they are quite nimble as well. Nashani bodies are covered in short, thick hair which varies widely in color from individual to individual, though there are some colors more common in certain families. Common colors for Nashani hair are gray, brown and fawn. The Nashani have long, flat faces with small noses and large, liquid eyes. Like their limbs, Nashani digits are long and thin, and very flexible.

The Nashani take a very long time to reach sexual maturity, and pregnancies are often difficult or even dangerous. This is because the pregnant Nashani must return to a gravity well equivalent to that of Nashan for proper development of the fetus. Many Nashani are unaccustomed to "normal" gravity, which leads to a great deal of physical stress on top of a long pregnancy. Despite this, the population of the Nashani is quite stable as females typically consider the birth of a healthy child to be one of the greatest accomplishments possible. Female Nashani have a relatively short span of fertility, and typically attempt to bear as many children as they can during this time. Those who survive multiple births to return to their former careers are always treated with renewed respect.

If there is one unique characteristic of the Nashani it is the fact that all are naturally empathic to some degree. Because of this the Nashani will



often seem to be emotionless as they tightly control their own feelings. They will always consider emotions, theirs and others, very carefully when making any important decisions. There are those who believe that knowing how to play on another's emotions make the Nashani excellent motivators, and manipulators.

Government

The Nashani culture is centered on family groups, from immediate family to clans of thousands of members. Each clan has a well-defined hierarchy based on both seniority and achievement. At the head of each clan sits a council of elders, which sets makes important

decisions for the family in matters such as business. Clan leaders then appoint agents who represent their family in dealings with the other clans. The central government of the Nashani people is simply an extension of this system which treats the entire race as if it were one family. Each clan, no matter its size or power, provides representatives to the Grand Council which is the basic policy making and legislative body of the Nashani Confederacy. A huge body by necessity, the true power of the government is vested with those few Nashani selected from among their peers to serve the High Council, which handles the day to day management of the Confederacy.

Society

As noted previously, the center of the Nashani existence is the family. The family provides each Nashani with an identity, opportunity, and direction in life. Among their immediate family, Nashani have a special bond with their siblings. This is because of the difficulties which plague Nashani pregnancies, often limiting females to a single offspring. Nashani born of the same mother feel a closeness that no other Nashani could ever know.

Above the immediate family comes the clan. These extended families are all unique unto themselves, each with their own history and traditions. The clans have no mechanism for controlling its members they are simply expected to do as they are instructed. Those rare few that stand against their clan are viewed with disdain and sadness. These rogues are not persecuted in any way, but they find that they are simply cut off from their associates, friends, and even their immediate family. Typically, despair will bring end to the offending Nashani as completely as could an executioner. Those individuals that commit particularly heinous offenses against are simply imprisoned and their assets frozen or confiscated. In the history of the Nashani there have been times when entire clans have been dissolved by the decree of the Grand Council, with their holdings dispersed to the injured parties. In these rare cases, members of the clan determined to have no part in the criminal acts were “adopted” by another clan, though they would lose any position of authority they may have had.

Within the structure of clan life, the Nashani people are surprisingly free to express themselves,

and a great many can be considered artists and musicians. The Nashani especially appreciate artistic ventures which illicit an emotional response, particularly their own form of opera. A particularly well done piece of music can literally hold its audience in rapture as they bask in the wash of emotions let loose around them. Non-Nashani who have heard their music or seen their art in other forms get a rare glimpse into the inner passions of the Nashani. Most of the time, Nashani are very well in control of their emotions, both inwardly as well as outwardly, but in unguarded moments, they can be subject to outbursts of any emotion that may strike them. Outsiders would be astonished to witness Nashani wracked by laughter, or by sobs, as such a thing would seem impossible from the stoic gaze which is their norm.

The Nashani as a people have very few vices, though one that is common is gambling. Most cannot turn down a game of chance, particularly ones that are both complex and tension-filled. The more a particular game stimulates the intellect and emotions, the better. Often, high ranking clan officials will make high stakes wagers that could take several years to play out, providing ongoing entertainment.

Military

There are two different levels of military service among the Nashani; clan service and service with the Free Worlds Navy. Nashani clans are permitted by law and custom to retain small forces to protect their holdings and merchant shipping, though few clans can absorb the cost of maintaining a large force of modern warships. Among the rigid hierarchy of clan life shipboard discipline is strict and crews are extremely formal, even by Nashani standards.

Those Nashani that serve in the Free Worlds navy are typically from lesser clans, or are lower ranking members of more powerful families. The Confederacy’s navy prides itself on being built on a solid foundation of achievement rather than family or political connections. All naval personnel are expected to maintain very high standards at all times. Those individuals that do not meet the expectations set out by their superiors are quickly moved from shipboard duties to support roles, or removed from naval service altogether. Incompetent officers among the Nashani are

almost unheard of, and exceptional officers are more common than in most other navies. It is very common for Nashani officers to retire from military service to assume a position of responsibility within their clan. It is also fairly common for some to serve relatively short stints with the Confederacy, and “retire” to a position with their family’s naval forces.

The Nashani have no ground forces to speak of, though they do have security personnel in most civilian and military facilities. Though lightly armed, these forces represent a real threat to any attacker seeking to board and capture a Nashani facility or vessel. Completely comfortable in zero-g and trained to use their physical abilities as assets, these Nashani use speed and dirty tricks to repel boarders. In times of war, these troops could be used in commando-style raids.

The Nashani use a seniority based ranking system much like those used by many other nations. While exceptional personnel can be promoted to positions of greater responsibility rapidly, the system is generally based on time served. The expectation among the Nashani naval establishment is that if an officer or crewman continues to serve well, they must have earned greater responsibility.

The ranks are organized as follows:

FLEET COMMANDER: Fleet Commander is the highest naval rank, and as one might expect, the holder of this title is responsible for the operations of an entire fleet. The most senior Fleet Commanders form the “admiralty” of the Nashani navy, and are responsible for the highest levels of decision making.

GROUP/SYSTEM COMMANDER: Group Commanders are responsible for leading Confederacy Task Forces, and are generally the highest ranking Nashani officers “in the field”. System Commanders are of equal rank, but they are charged with the defensive operations within a star system. System Commanders will control not only fixed defenses, but those mobile forces directly tasked with system defense.

FORCE COMMANDER: Force Commanders lead flotillas composed of several squadrons

of warships. Force Commander is by tradition the highest rank acknowledged among the Nashani clan forces. No matter how senior an officer may be, in combined government/clan forces, the clan commander is regarded as a Force Commander.

FORCE LEADER: Force Leaders are the equivalent of a human commodore as they are tasked with command of a single squadron of warships. Though they may be in a position of responsibility over several vessels, Force Leaders are not considered “flag” officers by their superiors.

SENIOR SHIP COMMANDER/FIGHTER COMMANDER: Senior Ship Commanders typically command the largest and most important of the Confederacy’s warships. Often they Captain the flagships of Force or Group Commanders, and the title is a reflection of respect rather than added responsibility. Fighter Commander is the highest rank attainable by an active pilot, and is equal to a human squadron commander. Fighter Commanders are few and far between as a result of the limited Nashani fighter forces. Though few will ever attain flag rank, many that have retired from active fighter operations remain on the staff of a Force or Group commander to help coordinate Fighter Ops, particularly when working with their fighter heavy Medushaan allies.

SHIP COMMANDER/FIGHTER LEADER: Ship Commanders are the equivalent of human captains as they command Nashani warships, particularly capital ships. Fighter Leaders have responsibility for a wing of Nashani fighters, and are generally tasked with coordinating the fighter ops of a single vessel.

JUNIOR SHIP COMMANDER/PILOT: Junior Ship Commander is the lowest recognized command rank, and these individuals are the captains of the smaller Nashani vessels such as corvettes and escort frigates. Pilot is the basic rank for all Nashani fighter pilots, and they have no responsibility beyond their wingman. Many Pilots will serve a short time

in Nashani fighter forces after which they will be transferred to a shipboard position from which their careers can move forward.

The remaining junior officer ranks of the Nashani navy refer to specific shipboard positions such as Junior Navigator, Senior Engineer, Etc... Nashani enlisted ranks follow a similar convention as crewmen are associated with their specific job and a seniority designator, such as Senior Gunner, Junior Reactor Technician, etc... They one exception to this is the one crewman on each ship designated Crew Leader. This rank is somewhat like a warrant officer as the Crew Leader represents the enlisted crew to the ship's captain and officers. Crew Leader is position granted to the most senior enlisted crewman, and is a position of respect onboard Nashani vessels, among both crew and officers.

Foreign Affairs

As a founding partner in the Free Worlds Confederacy, the Nashani obviously have a great deal of contact with the Medushaan. The relationship between the Nashani and the Medushaan goes beyond close allies to working partners who consult each other on a daily basis as part of a cooperative government. All other diplomatic contacts are conducted through the Free Worlds Confederacy, though it must be noted that the Nashani have had a great deal of business contact with other species. Not surprisingly, almost every Free Worlds Ambassador and representative is a Nashani, and as a result the Nashani have been expanding their diplomatic contacts with other races in recent years. It is interesting to note that a delegation from the Free Worlds did visit Babylon 5, though it is unclear what, if anything might come of the foray.

Recently the Free Worlds has found itself confronted by two threats, the Shatu and the Orieni. While the Shatu have been an obvious military threat, they have become somewhat more of a Medushaan problem. The Orieni on the other hand represent a much greater threat to the Nashani both in simple proximity and due to past history. Through the years the Nashani have maintained a back-channel trade conduit with the Orieni by dealing with their Rogolon proxies. In recent years there have been more and more

indications that the Orieni are preparing for another period of expansion, and they have already reclaimed many of the worlds that had been lost during their great fall. For now the Nashani only watch and wait, but they are resolved that if conflict should come to them, they will be ready. Should it become necessary they will stand and fight; never more can a foreign power cow them.

Technology

The equal of most young races in most areas, the Nashani do possess several advanced systems. Though they are not a particularly inventive race, the Nashani are extremely adept at analyzing the technology of another race, recreating it and adapting it for their needs. Early contact with such advanced races such as the Orieni and the Centauri gave the Nashani a tremendous technological base in a relatively short time, and advantages that they work hard to maintain.

The Nashani are particularly fond of lasers and those systems in service are quite efficient and well-designed. In addition to laser technology, the Nashani have quite advanced power production capabilities and have recently had many breakthroughs in the area of gravitics. This research in particular hold a great deal of importance to the Nashani as they see the technology as key in negating many of their physical weaknesses.

Nashani History

Early Nashani Civilization (500 BC-500 AD)

As the Nashani tribes developed from nomadic gatherers to cultivators, they created their first permanent settlements. There were an abundance of natural resources, so there remained little need for these tribal settlements to make war on each other. Instead, each fledgling community soon learned the benefits of producing a surplus of a particular item for trade with a neighboring settlement. Communities would specialize in particular goods or trades, and soon, the interdependency of the Nashani towns would grow.

The Nashani would also begin to shape their

planet for the first time in their history. Transportation ways were constructed to help facilitate trade, and natural obstacles were bridged or otherwise overcome. Soon, delicate cities began to rise above the canopy of the lush forests of Nashan. Also for the first time, the Nashani people would look to the skies above their world in wonder.

During this period, the clans grew from just family groups, to have a political meaning. Within this early civilization, the leaders of the clans were naturally seen as the leaders of a town or city. The several clans that might reside in one location would all have a say in the affairs of state, though the most prosperous or populous clan might have a greater voice.

The Golden Age of Nashan (500-1200 AD)

During this period the Nashani would experience what could be called their renaissance and their industrial revolution. Nashani culture continued to develop its own unique identity, and during this period technology evolved at an ever increasing pace. During these years the ever inquisitive Nashani would seek a greater understanding of themselves, their world, and the universe. Discoveries were made in nearly every field of endeavor. Medical and material sciences advanced and populations grew into cities which rose from the forests of Nashan in great and beautiful spires. Nashani inventors harnessed the natural resources of their world and created machines to ease the rigors of every day life, to travel great distances quickly, and to build previously unimaginable feats of engineering. Everything was done with a kind of elegant sense of purpose, and with an efficiency seen among few races.

There would be a dark side to these advances though, as for the first time in their recorded history, Nashani would battle each other for valuable resources. Most often these conflicts were quiet, but bloody affairs between rival clans seeking primacy, or between a clan in a position of monopoly being brought down by an alliance of lesser clans. Though such conflicts were denounced, they rarely had impact on the daily life of most Nashani, and were quickly forgotten. Occasionally during this time, a city would attack the holdings of another, but these were few, and

generally undertaken by a clan or two, not the entire city and its population.

Reaching for the Stars

Nashani societies looked for new obstacles to overcome, new mysteries to solve, and new materials to fuel their civilization. They looked to the stars. Long had the Nashani looked to the sky and wondered. During their golden age, they had created telescopes and other instruments which showed them first the surface of Nashan's moon, then the existence of other worlds, then the basic composition of their region of the galaxy. At first driven only by their curiosity, few believed that they could ever reach the stars. Later, as the needs of their society reached the point where the Nashani feared harming the world that had birthed their civilization, they became determined to reach out to the stars. It would not be an easy first step.

Early space exploration was done by un-"manned" missions fired into orbit. These experiments showed that the Nashani body could not possibly survive the stresses associated with a high-g rocket launch. The early spaceflights also show the potential for the development of the space around Nashan. Soon, a halo of satellites began to orbit Nashan providing communications, planetary mapping, weather forecasting capabilities, and even looking further out into space. By 1337, Nashani scientists had developed a system for achieving the first orbital flights by the Nashani themselves. Although there would be set-backs, those that traveled to space spoke with unrestrained joy of the experience, from the view of their own world to the freedom of weightlessness. These pioneers would fuel the desire of their people to "walk among the stars".

Cities in the Sky

In 1362 a cooperative effort between several Nashani clans builds the first orbital space station. A fairly primitive structure, research here confirms the affinity of the Nashani for microgravity environments. Over the next several years many more stations would be built, and the first permanent populations are established in orbit. During this time, long range probes begin to explore more closely the other worlds of the Nashani home system, and flights are even made to Nashan's lone moon.

By 1387, several lesser clans feel that they are being “left out” of this great new frontier, and grow tired of the increasing leadership role of the greater clans over the entire world. Open hostilities would break out throughout the world, as clans sought to unseat dominant groups, capture resources, and even technology. The entire sad chapter last but a few years, but it would drain the Nashani, and would produce great scars on their beloved world. Though the leading clans would ultimately “put down” the upstarts, they would see that there was still growing resentment. To put this too an end, the clans would compromise and create the first unified “government” for the world of Nashan. The clans would become the representatives of the Nashani people as a whole, and would answer to each other in a Grand Council. Every recognized clan, no matter how small, would have their voice in the council. Here compromises could be made, and policies set forth before matters escalated to violence. At the very head of the Grand Council would be a committee of clan representatives selected from among all of the clans to handle the day to day activities of the new government. The bureaucracy already existed within the structure of the individual clans, so the transition to this new form of unified government was uncommonly smooth. For the first time, the Nashani were united towards the goals of their world, not those of an individual clan, and freed from this, they surged forward.

Construction began on the first of what would be seven massive colony space stations in 1401. These space stations are built with materials from Nashan’s moon, and go beyond mere research facilities; these are true cities in space. Still, the Nashani look further out, and in 1420 the “Long Reach” survey missions are launched. “Manned” expeditions, these missions travel to the other worlds of the Nashani home system as the clans seek both greater understanding, and greater raw materials. By 1431 all heavy industry has been moved to orbit around Nashan, and the world itself transforms to a more agrarian setting needed to feed the growing populations in space.

The “Long Reach” missions would be followed up in 1436 as the first colony ships would leave for the other worlds of the Nashani home system. Over the next 100 years, the Nashani would continue to settle throughout space, with the outer colonies feeding the materials back to Nashan for

the expansion of the blossoming civilization growing in orbit there, and to the new cities being built at the Trojan points between Nashan and her moon. By 1512, all of the planets of the inner system have some colonial presence, and the asteroid belts of the outer system are being heavily developed, and have a large population of their own. A second round of “Long Reach” missions were launched in 1519, this time with the even more ambitious goal of exploring other solar systems. These missions would be crewed by volunteers on board slower than light vessels on decade’s long trips to the systems nearest Nashan.

Age of Expansion

In 1543, a cataclysmic event occurred as an asteroid being towed to a Nashan-orbiting factory breaks free, and collided with the planet. Though not a massive rock by most standards, it survived to impact in the great southern ocean of Nashan. The ecological damage was massive as weather patterns shifted and tectonic activity increased a thousand fold. As a result of this accident, the Confederacy government takes more control over the management of the space around Nashan. To help calm public outcry, the clans redouble their programs designed to colonize other star systems. The second “Long Reach” missions would bear fruit in 1578 when one of the survey ships reported that they had reached their destination, and were conducting an extended survey of a dynamic system. Though the message has taken years at the speed of light to reach the Nashani, the effect is instantaneous as several sleeper ships which have been prepared are launched towards the new system. The trip will take roughly 54 years, but the clans quickly fill the berths. Just three years later, the Nashani would be rocked by the revelation that they were not alone in the universe.

A mining ship operating in the outmost reaches of the Nashan system’s asteroid belt stumbled upon what the captain would describe as, “an obviously alien construct” in 1581. The Nashani scientific community swarms to the artifact, and before the work is even begun several clans lay claim to the discovery. In several instances, bickering turned bloody as clans conducted clandestine actions against each other jockeying for control over the item. To put a stop to the tense situation, a consortium of leading clans agree to

study the artifact together, for the betterment of all Nashani. Though they do not know it, the Nashani have stumbled upon a Vorlon jump gate, left behind thousands of years before. The resources of the species are thrown at unlocking the secrets of the construct, and by 1598, Nashani scientists believe they understand its purpose quite well. The amazing potential with which they present the Confederacy is stunning to the clan leaders, and not without risk. The Grand council would be the stage for any and pointed debates over whether or not the gate should be activated. At last, it was decided to go ahead with experiments of a conservative nature. In late 1598, the jump gate was activated for the first time, and the first probes sent into hyperspace. These cautious missions continued until 1605, when a series of short, "manned" flights were undertaken. Assured of the safety of the device, a new round of "Long Reach" survey missions are launched into the maelstrom of hyperspace. Many ships are sent into the swirling depths, and some never return.

In 1612 the Nashani deploy their first ships equipped with its own jump drive, a testament to their engineering prowess. In a short time, they would have several jump capable survey ships which were sent out to explore hyperspace, and the regions surrounding Nashan. In early 1618, a survey ship returns with news of a great success, the Ushtal system has been reached by hyperspace, some 14 years before the colonists aboard their sleeper ships would arrive in 1632. Sadly, they would not find the survey ship which had left for Ushtal 100 years before, though later missions would discover traces of the mission on some of the planets of the system.

Within months of the of the successful return, a full scale colonization effort was launched to the system, making Ushtal the first interstellar colony of the Nashani. When the sleeper ships of the original colony effort arrived in late 1632, they were stunned to be greeted by fellow Nashani already living and thriving within the system. This "second wave" of colonists would be treated with great respect for the sacrifice they made to their people, and they and their descendents would be granted the ultimate honor as a new clan within the ranks of the Confederation.

Rules of the Universe

Cautiously continuing their exploration of the greater Universe made possible by jump drive technology, the Nashani visited several star systems during the late 1600's and early 1700's. Though none would match the all out effort seen in Ushtal, all of the stars which the Nashani came to would soon have some permanent population. Some of these were mere outposts or mining stations established by a clan seeking riches. Others would come to rival the great cities orbiting the home-world.

All through these expeditions, the clan leaders new that it was a possibility that they could encounter an alien life form. After all, some alien intelligence had built the jump gate which they had discovered, and it was impossible to imagine that there were no other races among the stars. Still, none of the Nashani's early travels gave even the slightest hint that there were ever any other star-faring in there region of space. All that would change in 1756.

Early that year a Nashani survey ship stepped from the veil of hyperspace into a previously unexplored star system. As the crew went about their duties, they were startled by the sudden appearance of objects appearing from one of the system's inner planets. The vessels were obviously under some kind of intelligent control, and the Nashani immediately attempted communication. As the minutes wore on, there was no response from the oncoming ships, and soon even more rose from the planet to form up behind the first wave. Not a naïve people, and aware of the possibility that alien races might not welcome "visitors", the Nashani made preparations to jump out of the system should the aliens become hostile. They would not have to wait long as the oncoming ships began to salvo large, primitive rocket propelled munitions, which Nashani sensors revealed were fitted with large thermonuclear warheads. Quickly the Nashani activated their jump drive and moved to retreat. The few slow moving rockets that managed to get near enough to the Nashani before they jumped out were destroyed by the defensive systems on board the explorer, and the Nashani made good their escape. Though no blood was shed by either side in the encounter, both would learn from the experience. Though neither would know it that day, it was to

be but the beginning of a new chapter in each of their races histories. The Nashani had met the Medushaan.

Within a few years of their initial encounter with the Medushaan, they would become more cautious in the exploration of the new territories. Other species would be discovered in time, though none yet possessed the interstellar travel, and most were of relatively primitive levels. There would be other meetings with the bellicose Medushaan. In each instance, the Medushaan would refuse any communications, and instead would attempt to destroy the survey ships with every means at their disposal. By 1801 the two races had carved out well-defined borders, though the violence of the meetings would now lead to losses on each side. For years to come the Medushaan would launch attacks into Nashani territory, usually taking horrific losses to the more advanced Nashani, but never backing down. The ongoing border conflicts would be the catalyst for the creation of the Nashani Confederacy's first centralized naval command, and their first purpose built warships.

Not all relationships with alien races would be composed of violent clashes. During the 1800's, the Nashani began to make contact with the various species within their corner of the galaxy. These contacts brought an interesting revelation. The innate empathic talents of the Nashani race were something quite unique to their species, and gave their people a distinct advantage when dealing with other races. Though not as concise as a telepath's ability, the capability to "read" the true emotions from an individual allowed the Nashani to manipulate negotiations with great subtlety, and to make sure that they left others with a positive impression. Coupled with their cultural tendency to negotiate, debate, and deal, the Nashani quickly garnered several very lucrative trade agreements, a non-aggression pact, and even basing rights. To the Nashani, it would have been illogical not to use every advantage at their disposal when dealing with aliens. While most Nashani considered such practices just good business, there were those among the clans who began to believe that they had a right to take advantage of other, "inferior" races for their own advancement. Though not a common sentiment among the pragmatic Nashani, clan leaders feared that if left unchecked, this hubris could lead some among them to become too bold or reckless, and

even dangerous. Still, there was little done to curtail the troubling movement, a fact that Confederacy leadership would one day regret dearly.

Between the Empires

During their initial contacts with other races, the Nashani would learn that the local portion of the galaxy was dominated by two empires, the Centauri and the Orieni. This prospect unsettled the Nashani, as by all accounts, these two empires exceeded their own technical capabilities by a fair margin, and seemed to be bent on an endless campaign of expansion. The most immediate threat to their space seemed to be the Orieni, as their massive empire lay just a few jumps beyond their own fledgling holdings. It would not be long before the Orieni would come to call. While Nashani would find the Orieni refreshingly straightforward, they would be unsettled by their intentions. Though offered a place within the Orieni Empire, the Nashani Grand Council would politely, but firmly refuse. The Nashani clan leadership believed that they would be giving up everything they had gained through their own effort, and quite possibly their very identity. For their part, the Orieni accepted the decision of the Nashani people, but left them with a chilling warning; should the Nashani ever align with the enemies of the Orieni, the Empire would then consider the Nashani Confederacy a disciple of evil. With that, the Orieni delegation left the Nashani, somewhat less than secure about their position.

The Nashani would have even less contact with the Centauri, and would be similarly be unsettled by the fragility of their existence. The Nashani would learn that the Centauri made no offers of peaceful co-existence, no parlays for trade of jump-gate rights. Instead, the Centauri simply took by force, be it military or economic, whatever they set their sights on. Unlike the Orieni, The Centauri were corruptible, but the Nashani had little to offer a Noble House that it could not simply take on its own. Besides, the Nashani knew that they could only buy a bit more time. Another possible advantage was the placement of Medushaan space between the Centauri and the Nashani. It became increasingly obvious to the Nashani that the Medushaan were shifting some of their forces from their border with the Nashani, to confront the coming of the Centauri. The Grand Council was

divided on how to handle the situation. Some wanted support the Medushaan in some way to keep them in any fight against the Centauri, others wanted to take advantage of the Medushaan weakness and actually aid the Centauri by striking at them. For their part the Medushaan consistently refused to communicate, making it immensely frustrating from the Nashani standpoint.

The whole situation placed the Nashani in a very uneasy position. They knew it was but a matter of time before one Empire or the other would see the necessity or the advantage in seizing some or all of Confederacy space. With few options available, in 1886 the Nashani renewed their efforts to explore in the spin-ward direction from Nashan. Their hope was to not only locate new markets for trade, but to establish colonial footholds where the Nashani populations could relocate, should one or both of the great powers decide to invade. These missions were marked by a secrecy never before seen in Nashani explorations. Unlike their earlier expansion, the Nashani did not construct jump gates and move large groups of colonists shortly after discovering a useful system. Now, systems deemed valuable were well charted, but kept off the beacon routes. Further, instead of civilian habitats, military installations were constructed and defenses set in place well before small large scale construction was begun on population centers.

Along with this government effort, several individual clans began to make preparations for the storm they knew they must face. Some focused on their own explorations and colony efforts, and others built their own warships and prepared for battle. Among the clans there were even those that secretly looked outside of Nashani space for help should the need arise. Among these clans were some of the oldest and most powerful families, and their wealth and influence were considerable. These clans sought not only mercenaries, allies and weapons, but ways to destabilize their giant neighbors so as to turn attention away from themselves. Clandestine meetings and back room deals would ultimately bring these Nashani what they sought, but at a price that they were not prepared to pay.

The Dark Edge of History

By the early 1900's the Nashani knew that the events around them were coming to a head. All of

their sources and instincts led them to the conclusion that the Centauri and Orieni were preparing for war. Such a conflict would likely prove cataclysmic for every race in the region. Already, the Centauri were beginning to press the Medushaan in earnest, and would doubtless launch an assault to secure their flank. The Nashani would not be far behind. Though they had been preparing for just such an event for years, they knew that alone against the Centauri, they had no hope. The spin-ward expeditions had provided a few fall back positions, and new trade contacts, but offered but a slim chance of long-term freedom for the race. The Grand Council debated at great length over the possibilities of what could be done. Some favored joining the Orieni Empire claiming that some freedom was better than none. Others completely rejected this while others still felt that doing so would only mean forcing the Centauri into action even sooner. Government colonization efforts were stepped up, while individual clans continued with their own preparations. Quietly, the greatest of the clans decided that their only hope was a desperate course of action indeed. They watched and waited for their opportunity, and when the timing was right, they took the greatest gamble in their history.

In 1955, the Centauri launched their anticipated offensive aimed at crushing Medushaan resistance. An impressive armada of house forces built around a core of warships from the Republic's navy, it tore right into the Medushaan space with no pretense of subtlety. The Medushaan massed their forces to meet the threat head on, and the confident Centauri welcomed the opportunity to destroy them in one swift blow. What the Centauri had never counted on was the intervention on the Medushaan's long-time enemy, The Nashani. A force of the newest and most capable Nashani warships had played a dangerous gambit by shadowing the powerful Centauri force through hyperspace. When the Centauri force engaged the defending Medushaan force, the Nashani jumped in behind them and without a moment's hesitation, opened fire. The shocked Centauri were caught between the battle hardened, desperate Medushaan, and the disciplined, advanced Nashani force. All order broke down in the Centauri force as ships tried to maneuver out of the trap, only giving their enemies greater advantage. The Centauri fought for their lives, but few ships would

escape the conflagration. Though losses were high on all sides, the combination of Medushaan and Nashani forces won the day. But this was just the beginning. Hails went out from the Nashani fleet and a great tension filled the space between the Medushaan and Nashani forces, as their long-time enemy tried to make sense of what had happened.

After some time, the silence was broken and for the first time, the Medushaan responded to the Nashani. Immediately the Nashani sent out diplomatic overtures, even offering to send a delegation to the Medushaan fleet, unarmed. Still wary of the Nashani, the Medushaan accepted the offer. They knew that the Nashani were a frail race in comparison to their own, not to be feared, but could be intimidated. The Nashani accepted the terms laid out by the Medushaan and their envoys were sent. Still confused and uncertain of the Nashani intent, the very fact that the Medushaan did not kill the Nashani delegation upon their arrival was testament to their curiosity, and perhaps thanks for the Nashani intervention. The Medushaan would also be surprised at the Nashani courage. They had long thought of their neighbors as weak cowards, and were impressed by the unflinching confidence of the delegates. Even in the much harsher physical environment of the Medushaan vessel, and among the burly warriors of that race, the Nashani conducted themselves with a cool confidence, but not arrogance.

Eventually, the Medushaan would agree to a meeting between their leaders and the Nashani embassy. In those meetings the Nashani would reveal the true intention for aiding the Medushaan against the Centauri. They reasoned that neither race could stand alone against the powerful empire, but perhaps an alliance of the two would prove to be too difficult for the Centauri or the Orieni to attack, so long as they still faced off against each other. The Nashani offered trade and shipping rights, as well as technology to the Medushaan, and in return, they only asked for an agreement that should either be attacked, the other would come to their defense. The Nashani would eventually have to give the Medushaan other minor concessions, but they had gotten what they wanted, and in early 1956 the two powers formally entered into a mutual defense pact. When the pact was completed to their satisfaction, the Medushaan believed that they had gained the better part of the deal. They would have greater

tolls to employ against the hated Centauri, and they had given up nothing in return. The Nashani, for their part were elated that they could oppose the encroaching Centauri with Medushaan blood, and had given away far less than they had been prepared to.

Although the Treaty with the Medushaan had been a true coup, most of the clan leaders still believed that it was but a matter of time before either the Centauri or Orieni escalated their own conflicts to an all out war. Should that occur, it was likely that the fledgling alliance would find itself squeezed between the two giants, or worse yet become a battlefield as each side sought to outmaneuver the other. As a result, most continued their own schemes for survival.

The Spoils of Another's War

When the Centauri-Orieni conflict did finally manifest into all out war, The Nashani and their new allies the Medushaan declared themselves neutrals. Both the empires would threaten that if the alliance gave any assistance to their foe, then the Nashani and Medushaan would become enemies of that empire, and thereby be targeted for destruction. The alliance initially bolstered their defensive frontiers, but it soon became apparent that neither of the two empires had the ships to spare from fighting each other to make a serious attempt on the allies territory, for now. What the Nashani feared more than anything at the time were not attempts to seize their territory, but purely punitive attacks meant to punish them for supporting one side or the other. It would not be difficult for either side to render one or more Nashani world a lifeless rock if that was their intention. Even the Medushaan, who wanted nothing more than to invade the Centauri territories on their border, recognized the dangerous situation, and were forced to content themselves with their usual, small-scale border raids on Centauri holdings.

Both the Centauri and The Orieni found many of their normal trade routes blocked by the ongoing conflict, and many of these blockades could be avoided by passing through space controlled by the Nashani-Medushaan alliance. A few months into the war, both empires began to move large, heavily escorted convoys through territory controlled by the Medushaan and Nashani. The

Medushaan would attack these convoys when possible, but could do little more than harass them. For their part, the Nashani would shadow the civilian shipping, but took no action. Though it was apparent that neither side in the ongoing war could spare the ships to stage an invasion of Nashani space, the Nashani feared what would befall in the antebellum years. It would not have been wise to anger either party to the conflict, lest the Nashani face their wrath in years to come. The course of action that was finally agreed upon was a deft piece of diplomacy, even if it was primarily symbolic. Nashani controlled space was declared “free worlds”, open to civilian vessels of any race. Peaceful traders were welcomed at all Nashani ports, and Nashani police forces would ensure the safe passage of all shipping which would pass through. In this declaration, the Nashani could distance themselves from any favoritism, and it would make the whole situation generally more palatable as Centauri and Orieni shipping were no longer simply violating Nashani space as they chose to. The Nashani also knew that neither belligerent would allow them to escort their vessels, thus a hollow offer.

After a great deal of wrangling with the Medushaan, the Nashani would convince them to curtail their attacks on Centauri shipping and join the Nashani in this declaration. Together, the Nashani and Medushaan territories would become known by spacers as the “Free Worlds”. Throughout the course of the Centauri-Orieni War, civilian shipping on both sides would continue to take routes through the Free Worlds, and there were surprisingly few incidents between either empire’s forces within Free Worlds’ territory. A Few ships in need of repair would sometimes even stop at Nashani ports, providing some small benefit to the locals. The situation would remain tense throughout the War, but the Nashani could do little more than hope that hostilities remained far from their door.

A Dagger from the Darkness

The war between the Centauri and Orieni had quickly ground to a stalemate, and the Nashani seemed content to sit on the sidelines, and ride out the war. There were difficulties though as trade had become more difficult and dangerous, and the Nashani found it increasingly difficult to keep their

economy rolling along. Military expenditures had never been higher, and coupled with the strain of survey and colonization efforts, their entire infrastructure could easily collapse given any significant jolt. The status quo could not be maintained, and in this climate, certain factions within the clans would step forward with a bold plan. A powerful clan leader revealed to the Grand Council that his clan had been secretly acquiring and developing powerful new weapons through contacts with an alien *ally*. With these weapons they intended to attack the Orieni with the goal of seizing valuable territory while their attention was elsewhere. They reasoned that in the end, the Centauri would be victorious, and it was better to show the Centauri that they were a strong race, and that they were in fact not their enemies, but perhaps their allies. The proclamation stunned the assembled council beyond words. What was perhaps the most troubling aspect was the ferocity of the clan leader’s convictions. The Grand Council knew beyond a doubt that the clan leader was absolutely assured of the success of the madness he proposed. Even long-time supporters of the clan had never guessed at the plans that had then been revealed. The final shock came as the clan leader calmly informed the assembled council that his clan’s fleet, and those of their allies, had already departed for Orieni space. The Grand Council quickly arrested the clan leader himself, but they had no ability to stop what was about to happen. In an effort at damage control, they dispatched an envoy to the Orieni to disavow the actions of the rogue clan, but that envoy would disappear en route and no warning was given to the Orieni. It would not have mattered anyway.

The year was 2008 when a small but powerful force of the most advanced warships the Nashani had ever produced jumped into Orieni space and began their attack. At first, the defense of Orieni space was in the hands of a few, older vessels, police forces and fixed defenses stripped of much of their capabilities as reinforcements were sent to the Centauri border. These attacks were significant enough that the Orieni felt they had to respond with a decisive force before their attackers succeeded in penetrating the outer worlds of the empire. Quietly, but with a bit of desperation they pulled a powerful fleet from the Centauri border and raced to meet the new threat,

hoping to crush it before the Centauri could capitalize. They would not succeed. Though their fleet would engage and ultimately obliterate the forces of the rogue Nashani, the Centauri would recognize the sudden opportunity they had, and resumed their offensive before the Orieni could return to their defensive positions. This brief weakness would spell doom for the Orieni even though they would eventually blunt the advance, as this time they would not be able to push the Centauri back.

Following the incident, the Grand Council discovered the shocking truth behind the entire affair. One of their most powerful families had allied itself, had indeed become the pawns of an alien race called the Drakh. Though the Nashani would never know the true goals of the Drakh, it was plain enough the damage they had done. To try and make amends for their actions, the Grand Council seized all of the assets of the clan responsible, and arrested all that they believed were involved in the plot. The assets were offered to the Orieni as compensation, as were those who were responsible for the acts. The Orieni would accept the culpable parties, including several Drakh, but refuse any “pay-off” or reparations. They instead executed the entire Nashani embassy which had delivered the message and the prisoners. The corpses were sent back to Nashani space with the promise that such would be the return of any Nashani that ever crossed into Orieni space. Only the fact that the Orieni Empire was in fact crumbling saved the Nashani from a more terrible fate. Ashamed of what had happened, the Grand Council saw to it that all evidence of the entire episode was destroyed, but the leaders of the Confederacy would never forget.

Filling the Void

The Centauri-Orieni war came to a conclusion in 2010, and left much of the territory around the Nashani broken. Though the Nashani had feared the end of the war because they believed that the victorious power would turn its sights on them next, their fears would prove largely unfounded. The Orieni Empire simply collapsed as constituents broke away from the central power, and the Centauri were far too exhausted to begin a new campaign. In fact, it would not be long before the Centauri Empire would begin to crumble as internal

strife and civil war consumed it. As worlds drifted or broke away from the once proud empires, they looked to survive, rebuild and ultimately prosper. Into the vacuum left by the dying giants, the Nashani cautiously probed. Between 2020 and 2082, the Nashani would begin to claim a few former Centauri colony worlds as their own, and established trade relations with others. During this time, these rebuilding worlds were eager to trade freely to spur on their post war economies. The Free Worlds Alliance provided secure trade, and in the instances of the annexed worlds, pledged their forces in defense. In this way, the Free Worlds grew from a simple alliance, to the beginnings of their own kind of Empire. The Nashani were careful not to make enemies of the former Centauri and Orieni subject worlds, and instead offered only to help if asked. They did not garrison troops or try to control governments. Instead they carried goods on their ships for worlds without their own merchant fleets in return for certain concessions, provided protection from raiders to those who needed it in return for jump gate access, and so forth. While they remained ever cautious, the sphere of influence of the Free Worlds grew at a slow but steady pace. During this time, the Medushaan proved themselves invaluable, and reliable allies. As the two races worked together to expand their territories, it became increasingly apparent that their destinies had become intertwined.

A New Beginning

By 2094 Nashani and Medushaan leaders have begun to talk openly about the possibility of a political union between their two governments. The proposal would provide fewer economic barriers and greater military cooperation. Each nation would also cooperate closely in matters of foreign affairs. However, many factions within both races staunchly opposed to any political combination of the two peoples. At first there were simply those who spoke out against the possibility. Then, there was outraged dissent. Then there was civil war.

Each race was faced with separatists who would die before they would give up their species’ “freedom” to another race. Those that favored the union were known as the Central Order. Though not technically a majority within either race, the Central Order was definitely composed of and supported by the most powerful factions of both

the Nashani and the Medushaan. Most of the attacks by separatist forces were upon symbolic targets, or those with economic importance to both states. By early 2098 those Nashani that were opposed to the new Union had been eliminated or “convinced” of their error. There was still a sizable force of Medushaan warships in control of separatists, and late in the year (2098) they were finally cornd by forces of the Central Order, and defeated in detail at the Battle of Rentamn.

In 2102 a unified government was officially created by agreement of the Nashani and Medushaan, with the capital established the Ushtal system. Called the Free Worlds Confederation, the government was based on the Nashani system, with large numbers of representatives from both races. Most of the bureaucracy for the new government would be made up of Nashani, though a surprising number of Medushaan males proved willing and quite able as well. The two nations would remain separate with relation to internal matters, but were united when it comes to external relations, trade agreements and military affairs. The official governing body, composed of representatives of both races would be known as the House of Stars. The chief executives of the house would be ministers chosen from both the Nashani and Medushaan, in equal numbers. There would be relatively few ministers, and though they would be ultimately answerable to the delegates of the House of Stars, it was they who would wield the true power within the new government. Though the closest of allies for nearly two centuries, this would be a very difficult transition at times, but one worth the all the efforts in the end.

Wars of the Confederation

2120-2121 would see the first test of the now unified Confederation. Several powerful Centauri houses seek to reclaim some of their lost trading, and mining interests in the border regions of the Free Worlds. They would organize a series of attacks along the Centauri-Free Worlds border composed of the forces at their disposal. Well coordinated defense of the border systems would hold them at bay, but the Confederation does not want to send too many of its much needed forces to defend the fringes of their space. Eventually, the Centauri Royal Navy would send a sizable force to “secure” the border region. After a few

shows of force, the Royal Navy would take no territory, but won several trade concessions for the noble houses. These concessions would later serve to embolden the Centauri.

The Second War of the Confederation would be fought between 2126-2130. This was a major assault by the Centauri along the whole “western” border region of the Free Worlds. The Confederates would fight hard, but find themselves unable to go toe to toe with the Centauri in the mobile defense that was required. In the end, they would loose seven of their border outpost/colonies (Quadrant 2, Ostova, Conoripax, Quadrant 4, Correntz, Quadrant 3 and Beta 10) and were forced back to positions along the Sivorn, Lodira and Mantukas border, before the Centauri offensive losses momentum, and the lines stabilize. The majority of the Confederacy’s mobile forces were decimated during this conflict. Only the refusal of the Centauri emperor to commit heavy reinforcements from the royal navy prevented the Centauri from punching through to more vital worlds. The Nashani are able to restrain the Medushaan from launching a suicidal counter-offensive by promising their full commitment to vengeance. Secretly, the Free World forces begin rebuilding their fleets, having learned many lessons from the conflict.

The Third War of the Confederation (The War of Liberation to the Medushaan who had lost more of their colonies to the Centauri) was launched by the Free Worlds Confederation in 2148 and would last until 2152. Again the Centauri Empire was contracting, and the Free Worlds military is prepared to strike. Taking advantage of Centauri weakness in the region, they hope to regain their lost territories, and perhaps gain new ones in the process. Their fleets have been rebuilt, with their focus on ships and doctrines designed to defeat the Centauri.

The offensive began slowly with raids on Centauri forces in the border region, testing the reaction of their foes. Soon, it would become apparent to the Free Worlds that they were facing only poorly trained, poorly equipped and undisciplined house forces, in stark contrast to their prior conflict with the Royal Navy. Tentative raids evolved into more bold strokes, but always the Free Worlds Navy used Hit-an-run tactics to minimize losses. Exposed and attacked from many sides, the Centauri house forces were unwilling to die

for the Imperial frontier posts, abandoning their facilities at the Gamma 3, Quadrant 4, Correntz and Beta 10 systems.

In early 2152, a Centauri Lord managed to gather a substantial fleet to re-conquer the lost border region, and eventually take the entire Confederacy. The Centauri tried to catch the Free Worlds Fleet for four months before they had their chance in the Essekyre system. In fact, the Centauri had allowed themselves to be pulled into a trap, and this coupled with the incompetent nature of the many Houses involved, led to them being almost completely destroyed. The victory at Essekyre would be the death knell of Centauri involvement in the region. Thereafter the throne would refuse to support House calls for assistance, and finally the houses themselves withdrew totally.

Meeting New Threats

In the 2230's it became increasingly obvious to the Nashani that another power had staked its claim throughout much of the region's former Centauri space. Moving into the area from their core-ward Imperium, the Shatu were technologically advanced and ruthlessly efficient. Rapidly they set about sweeping up the broken pieces of the former Centauri subject worlds, and with frightening speed had become a major player in the region. The Nashani had had some minor dealings with the Shatu in the past, but nothing had hinted at the ability of the Imperium to seize and secure such a wide area of space so rapidly. Some within the Nashani hierarchy believed that the Shatu were over-extending badly in an attempt to grab as much territory as possible, others hoped they were, but secretly feared they were not. Ever wary of potential threats, the Nashani tried several times to slip intelligence gathering missions through Shatu space with trade convoys, with mixed results. The very fact that so many of their spy ships simply vanished without a trace gave even more reason for the Nashani to be concerned.

In late 2234, the Shatu began a series of hit-and-run attacks along the old Centauri-Medushaan border. There had been cross border skirmishes between the bellicose neighbors for several years, but the tenor of the attacks were different this time. Rather than the typical quick and dirty, small unit

actions of the past, these incursions were disciplined and formidable. Early in 2235 the expected thrust exploded into Medushaan space. The defenders had been forced to place their forces at several key locations, and the lack of concentration was telling as the Shatu brought the full weight of their strike force to bear on the most heavily defended Medushaan border system. While the Shatu easily outmatched the individual Medushaan warships, they quickly found that they had miscalculated the sheer number of fighters that were available to the Medushaan garrisons. What they had not known was that the Medushaan had stripped every fighter, from every outpost not immediately threatened by the possibility of Shatu advance. Those fighters were staged not only from ground bases, orbital facilities and carriers, but from hastily converted freighters and transports. The massed fighter strikes from the Medushaan forces came at a staggering price to the defenders, but they slowed the advance of the invaders.

The Nashani delegation to the Medushaan home-world offered to intervene, and the Medushaan leaders relented, slightly. They agreed to allow a Free Worlds fleet, which meant primarily the Nashani contingent, into Medushaan space, but only to secure the core-ward flank of the Gynocracy so that the ships there could be pulled to the front lines. The move would take some time however, and the Shatu would not allow the allies much breathing room, striking again just days after their initial assault. The second battle was even more in the Shatu favor in terms of ships destroyed versus those lost, but they had been forced to a more conservative battle plan to guard against the Medushaan fighter swarms. The Shatu still held the advantage in warships, what hurt them the most now was their lack of intelligence regarding the interior of Medushaan space. As their scouts fanned out to determine the best route of advance, precious time was being lost. Although the Shatu Fleet used the brief respite to consolidate their gains and effect repairs, they had lost the initiative, and with it the possibility of matching numbers against the Medushaan. But the Shatu had one more ace to play. When their scouts located the next target the force lingered just long enough to dispatch a courier to the second prong of their attack, from the core-ward side of Medushaan space. They gambled on the fact that the courier would arrive at its location, on time, and the second

force would immediately jump to their target, and timed their advance accordingly. Though the second force was smaller, it should, they reasoned, face little opposition as it ran down the defensive frontier of the Medushaan to catch their fleet in between. It was a risky plan that depended on perfect timing and execution, but the Shatu were a very confident lot.

The Shatu continued their grinding assault, confident their flanking force would break through. What the Shatu did not know, and would not find out until much later, was that the second prong of their attack had jumped into the teeth of a Free Worlds Battle group composed of Nashani main combatants that had arrived just hours ahead to secure the Medushaan flank. Though the Shatu did hold a tech advantage over the Nashani, the margin was narrower than that with the Medushaan. Worse still, the flanking force was composed primarily of the lighter and faster units in Shatu service, and found itself at a severe disadvantage in pure firepower. Outgunned, but unwilling or unable to abandon their plan, the Shatu attempted to break through the Nashani. They would inflict heavy damage, but eventually they would succumb to the heavier force. With the destruction of this force, the Imperium lost all hope of a quick success.

The situation devolved into a stalemate with the Shatu battering any Medushaan attempt to dislodge them from the systems they had taken. Many in the Free Worlds wondered where the Shatu would attempt to strike. None expected the deft diplomatic maneuver that came next. A Shatu ship carrying a diplomatic mission jumped into Nashani space and announced that it carried the authority to negotiate a cease fire, but that it would do so only with the Free Worlds government. The Shatu had rightly recognized that the Medushaan would not negotiate any settlement, directly. Though the Nashani maintained that the Free Worlds Confederation could not impose terms on the Medushaan government, they agreed to take the matter to the Confederation for consideration. Initially the Medushaan members of the Free Worlds government vehemently opposed the proposed negotiation, but they were won over by the Nashani who maintained that the Confederation would act only as the conduit for the negotiations, and that the Gynocracy would have the final say in any agreement. The

Confederation would respect whatever the Medushaan leaders decided.

The following negotiations were relatively straight forward, as befit the natures of the belligerent races. The Medushaan demand was simple, the complete withdrawal of the Shatu from the worlds seized. The Imperium for its part demanded that the Medushaan abandon several outposts throughout the border regions which were little more than listening posts and staging areas for nuisance raids. Though the points seemed simple ones, it took months of wrangling with the Nashani acting as the mediators under the banner of the Free Worlds. In the end, the Nashani would come away with a greater respect for the Shatu, feeling that the Imperium had salvaged a victory through diplomacy that had not been achieved through military might. All too often, the Centauri had pushed the Free Worlds as hard or harder than the Shatu had done, but had come away with little to show as they had been unwilling to deal with the Confederation or its members as equal entities. To the Nashani, that simple fact made the Shatu all the more dangerous, and they would not soon forget it.

The State of the Confederation

With their victory over the Centauri in 2152, the Free Worlds reached their present day borders. With the removal of the vast power of the Centauri from the “western” borders of their territory, the Confederation leadership determined it wise to keep a buffer between their space and those of other powers. The trade ships and diplomatic transports of the Nashani are common sights in the regions of the galaxy once so dominated by the Centauri and Orieni, but they have no interest in trying to control this region themselves. They have learned well from the mistakes of the two former superpowers. While the Nashani and the Free Worlds Confederation are relatively unknown anti-spinward of the Centauri Republic, they have had trade contacts with the Golians and Antareans, and they are known to the Minbari as well, though no formal contact has occurred. Of greatest concern are the regional newcomers, the Shatu. Advanced, and aggressive, these beings threaten to upset the balance of the region, which has favored the Free Worlds for a great many years. Recently, there have been signs of an Orieni

resurgence. Obviously the consequences of a rebirth of that Empire are not lost on the Nashani, and they have quietly prepared for possibility of conflict, determined this time to stand their ground as an equal.

The spin-ward holdings of the Free Worlds are not as extensive or as developed as those of the “heartlands” or the anti-spinward territories. The spin-ward regions provide most of the raw materials still collected in the Free Worlds, and there is some trade with the few races that the Nashani have encountered in the area. Nashani exploration has brought other benefits from this region of space, including the recent discovery of a long dead civilization which has provided the Nashani with access to true gravitic technology for the first time. Though they still do not fully understand these systems, the ingenious Nashani have already seen practical applications of the technology with the promise of greater things to come.

It is known that a delegation from the Free Worlds once visited Babylon 5, and that they had many meetings with the ambassadors in residence, but it is unclear what will come of these meetings. For one, the Free Worlds Confederation is a very long way from the League of Non Aligned Worlds, who would be the most likely to trade with the Free Worlds. On top of that, the most direct routes to that region of space are dominated by the Centauri and by the Minbari, neither of whom is likely to allow Confederation Trade to pass through their space. To make things more difficult, the Orieni have kept their word destroying any Nashani or Medushaan (damned by association) ship which has entered their space no matter the reason. Now but a shadow of its former power, the Orieni have worked hard to rebuild the territory under their control, and could well prove a major problem for the Free Worlds one day.

The Nashani Military is relatively small in comparison to the overall size of their territory, and as a result it is a professional, dedicated force. The Nashani provide the core units for the Free World Navy, and their vessels are capable, and flexible. Combined with the fearless brawlers of the Medushaan, they can be extremely formidable. For physiological reasons, the Nashani do not provide any ground troops to the Free Worlds Confederation, allowing them to specialize in naval warfare, and there are many excellent naval

leaders among their ranks.

The economy of the Nashani is tied to the fate of the Free Worlds Confederation, and that is dependant on trade both domestic and foreign. The Nashani in particular provide a great many of the finished goods produced by the Free Worlds, trading them for raw materials and exotic items. In particular, the Nashani are known to produce excellent power systems and good sensor suites for export, with their greatest beneficiary being the Medushaan. The Nashani can see the opportunity that the anti-spinward powers would provide, but also know that there are a great many obstacles, and even now the Grand Council and the House of Stars debate the best way to overcome them.

Worlds of the Nashani Confederacy

Nashan

As the home system of the Nashani, Nashan has seen the greatest amount of development, growth and change of any system controlled by the Confederacy. During the years before hyperspace travel was possible, the Nashani spread throughout their home system exploring the worlds to be found and exploiting the resources available. In time, the majority of all Nashani would live in the off-world colonies, factories and asteroid mining stations. After unlocking the secrets of jump gate technology, the Nashani began to spread to other stars, and fewer and fewer called Nashan their home. Industry and research moved to more suitable locales, and orbital cities which once housed thousands went silent, and were dismantled for their systems. Today, the Nashan system remains the cultural and political heart of the Nashani. The skies over the home world are now speckled with the magnificent manors of powerful clans, and the seat of the unified government, a huge facility known simply as Council House. The permanent population of the entire system is still significant, but no where near those of some of the important colony worlds, and is composed primarily of the “elite” of Nashani society. The home-world itself has barely any full time inhabitants, and has become something of a tourist attraction. Nashani from other systems visit

their ancestral home to view the lands where their clans-folk once called their own and to visit locations of historic importance. Those few that choose to live upon the surface of the world throughout their lives are known as the “Tree Keepers”, and it is likely that they could become their own distinct clan some day.

Because of the political significance of the Nashan system, there is a large military presence in system, and a formidable defensive network. The system’s defenses are controlled from the massive command center, built into Nashan’s sole natural satellite. Once the base was the headquarters of the Confederacy’s Navy, but with the formation of the Free Worlds, a joint command was established in the Ushtal system. Though it would seem that there are too few ships to protect the system, the truth is that the ships of the Free Worlds navy would be augmented by the potent forces operating under the clans which make here home at Nashan.

Ushtal

If Nashan is the cultural heart of the Nashani Confederacy, Ushtal is the economic nerve center. The oldest colony of the Nashani, Ushtal is nearly as heavily developed as Nashan was during its peak. During the early years of colonization, industries were built to take advantage of the plentiful resources, and around those industries the clans would construct business interests of every type to support the sudden population surge. In time most of the clans would relocate their business operations from the home-world to Ushtal for the sake of efficiency. Today, Ushtal is a constant bustle of activity as ships carrying raw materials come in, and manufactured goods are shipped out.

Ushtal is also important as it is the capital of the Free Worlds Confederation. As such, the system represents one of the truly unique amalgamations of two races to be found. See the comments in the section on the Worlds of the Free worlds for details on the capital.

Voshtal

The second system colonized by the Nashani. Voshtal was once considered of value only as a defensive bulwark protecting the direct route to

Nashan. That changed as spinward exploration located several systems rich in resources. Constructing new industrial facilities along the lengthening route was deemed to great a risk. Such expansion would require stretching the regional defenses very thin, and would require a huge movement of personnel and materials. It was decided to make use of the already well protected and nearby Voshtal system.

Today Voshtal is a very busy system, home to the bulk of Nashani heavy industry as well as the Confederacy’s major shipbuilding facilities. As has already been noted, the Voshtal system is well defended, though it is no longer as heavily fortified as it once was. This is because the borders of the Confederacy have expanded, and it is no longer on the “front lines”.

Rentamn

During the years preceding the Centauri-Orieni war the Nashani invested heavily in spinward exploration. The goal was to establish population and industrial centers well away from the probable war-zone, which was expected to extend into Nashani territory. The first of these “fallback colonies” would be Rentamn. Though it was not particularly well suited to colonization, it had the advantage of being close to the Nashani heartland while being away from any likely invasion route.

A great deal of capital and effort were expended to develop the system, and the Confederacy had to justify its expense. To help make the colony viable the Nashani moved most of their government research facilities from Nashan to Rentamn. As the threat of invasion passed, and few new worlds of value were located spinward, Rentamn continued to grow. As a result, Rentamn has become the center of Nashani research and technical advancement, and important beyond the initial expectations of the Nashani.

Rentamn is not as heavily fortified as Nashan or Ushtal, but given its significance it is heavily patrolled by local forces and those of the Nashani Central Fleet. Rentamn is still the stepping off point for clan funded expeditions spinward, though the region has yet to yield truly useful discoveries.

Apsan

Like Rentamn, Apsan is the result of Nashani exploration in the years prior to the Centauri-Orieni

war. Spinward from Voshtal, Apsan has proven a modestly successful if unspectacular colony. With a reasonable amount of resources available, the colony at Apsan exports a fair amount to the industrial centers of Voshtal, and provides support for the exploration and colony efforts spinward. In fact, most of what comes to the Apsan system is merely passing through en route to its final destination.

Because of its proximity to the strategically important Voshtal system, Apsan is provided with decent defenses, and is the home port for many Nashani warships. Apsan can be considered the last large population center along the spinward route from Voshtal.

Cashital

This colony is spinward of Apsan and is home to abundant resources. The colonists in residence here are charged with the collection of these raw materials, and preparing them for shipment. The colony is actually a sprawling mass of smaller habitats which are dotted throughout the system at mining sites and other key places.

Cashital is fairly well patrolled by the Nashani, but lacks true “fixed” defenses. This is because of the nature of the settlement, which is widely dispersed throughout the system. It should be noted that most of the stations in the system, “civilian” or not, are armed for self-defense, and many clan operated warships are around to protect convoys as they depart the system.

There is one addition interesting fact about the Cashital system, one known to very few within the Confederacy. During the initial surveys of the system an ancient, derelict vessel built by an unknown race was discovered on one of the system’s worlds. The vessel had many systems on board that were well in advance of anything the Nashani had yet built, or in some cases encountered. Very quietly the vessel was disassembled and moved to government research facilities. Recently, the Nashani have made several advances in gravitic and materials technology as a direct result of researching the systems found on the mysterious ship. Even today, Nashani scientific and archeological teams scour the Cashital system under the guise of mining operations, hoping to discover yet more that may have been left behind.

Jenan

The most “spinward” of the Nashani colonies, Jenan is a trading post and a launching point for further explorations. A relatively minor settlement with few of its own resources, Jenan exists as a bridge to the few species the Nashani have contacted spinward of their territory. An austere but busy port facility near the system’s single gas giant world is the only civilian settlement within the system. Because of its exposure as a border world, the Nashani maintain a fairly sizable force of patrol vessels and fighters in the system, based from one of the gas giant’s moons, which has been well fortified. These forces are often augmented by clan vessels which are escorting valuable merchant vessels to and through the system. Main fleet elements also make patrol sweeps of the system, “showing the flag” for the alien races that might be in-system on business.

Nashani Vessels

The Nashani are not weak. Strength of will is a weapon as true as strength of arms.
-Regna Tarl Padra (2078-2153)

Ana-Shi-Class Command Cruiser

The largest dedicated warship operated by the Nashani, and the rarest. The Ana-Shi represents the best technology available to the Nashani. Armed with an array of attack lasers, ballistic lasers, and defense lasers, the command cruiser is also equipped with the new laser combiner, as well as gravitic shielding (also a new Nashani advancement). In addition to its fixed weapons, the command cruiser carries a squadron of interceptors for its defense. The Command cruiser is not intended to be risked in direct combat. Rather, it is to act as a fleet/task force command ship both for Nashani and mixed Nashani/Medushaan forces. The command cruiser is equipped with a jump drive.

Deesh-Ra-Class Exploratory Cruiser (Rare Ana-Shi Variant)

By the 2240s it had become apparent to Nashani leaders that their old survey cruisers were

no longer effective long range explorers. However, none among the clans were willing to fund a new design or give up construction space to build it. A compromise was reached in the mid 2250s. Several of the new command cruiser hulls then under construction would be completed as exploration vessels. The basic design seemed well-suited to the role with its large size, advanced systems and integral jump drive.

Since the *Deesh-Ra*-class has entered service, it has provided the Nashani with a vastly improved initial survey capability. On the down side, the *Deesh-Ra*-class does not carry components for jump gate construction, and does have a very high operational cost. Many believe that in the event of a conflict, the ships of the *Deesh-Ra*-class would be used as command and control vessels, for which they would seem well suited.

Otani-Class Battlecruiser

A pure fire support platform, the Otani is typically only encountered in large formations, and is not intended for solo actions. A long-range sniper, the battlecruiser mounts six attack lasers and 2 laser combiners, all of which are in the forward arc. For close in defense, the battlecruiser also has 8 defense lasers, and they are arranged so that several may be fired through a combiner to add to the forward offensive firepower if desired.

Ten-Sha-Class Combat Cruiser

Another new(er) design currently deployed in relatively small numbers. A very aggressive ship by Nashani terms, the combat cruiser mounts attack lasers and ballistic laser launchers to pack a good offensive punch. The primary armament is supplemented by 2 gauss snipers. The *Ten-Sha* also features a single laser combiner in the forward arc, and 6 defense lasers. Intended to be the new "ship of the line" for the Nashani fleet, it is unlikely that the *Ten-Sha* will reach such widespread service soon.

Keewa-Class Escort Cruiser **(Base Hull)**

The most commonly seen Nashani warship (but not the most numerous). Typically used to protect convoys and to patrol Nashani controlled space, the escort cruiser is a fair combatant, though not up to the standards of most galactic power's

cruisers. Like most ships, the *Keewa* is at its best at long range with its armament of attack lasers, though it lacks the ballistic lasers and laser combiners of larger ships. The escort cruiser somewhat makes up for this as it carries 12 interceptors for fleet/convoy defense, and as a result is often deployed much like a light carrier when operating in larger formations.

Algawa-Class Strike Cruiser **(Keewa Variant)**

An attempt by some to get greater combat capability from the *Keewa* hull. Though a potent offensive warship, the design was doomed by high costs and lack of need for such a ship. It turned out that the standard escort cruiser was more cost effective and efficient for peacetime activities such as patrol of shipping lanes and convoy protection. As a result, the *Algawa* was produced in relatively small numbers. Those that were built are generally held in reserve by the confederacy in case they should be needed.

Teg-Sha-Class Scout Cruiser **(Keewa Variant)**

Using the same hull as the escort cruiser, it is very difficult for a foe to pick the *Teg-Sha* out of patrol or screening formations until they actively use ELINT capabilities. A fair if somewhat limited scout, the *Teg-Sha* retains the attack laser armament of the escort cruiser which do make it useful if forced to fight. To make room for the specialized ELINT gear and a jump drive, the scout cruiser does have to sacrifice the ability to carry fighters, but this is considered a reasonable trade-off. Scout cruisers are surprisingly numerous in Nashani service. The *Teg-Sha* is equipped with a jump drive.

Shokkani-Class Heavy Frigate **(Base Hull)**

Somewhat smaller than the *Keewa*, the *Shokkani* actually boasts greater firepower, at the cost of the cruiser's ability to carry fighters and any jump capability. The Nashani employ the *Shokkani* as their main "Ship-Of-The-Line" and it is the backbone of any Nashani force. Because it lacks the ability to make its own jumps, and the somewhat austere crew accommodations, the

Shokkani is rarely seen outside of Nashani space unless part of a larger strike force. Like all Nashani designs, it favors long-range weaponry.

Nehann-Class Escort Frigate

An older ship used by the Confederacy for convoy defense and system defense/patrol. Though not very useful against modern warships, it remains effective against typical raider-type forces. The greatest drawbacks of the Neehan are its thin skin and relative lack of mobility. The type remains in service primarily because the clans have a lot of them.

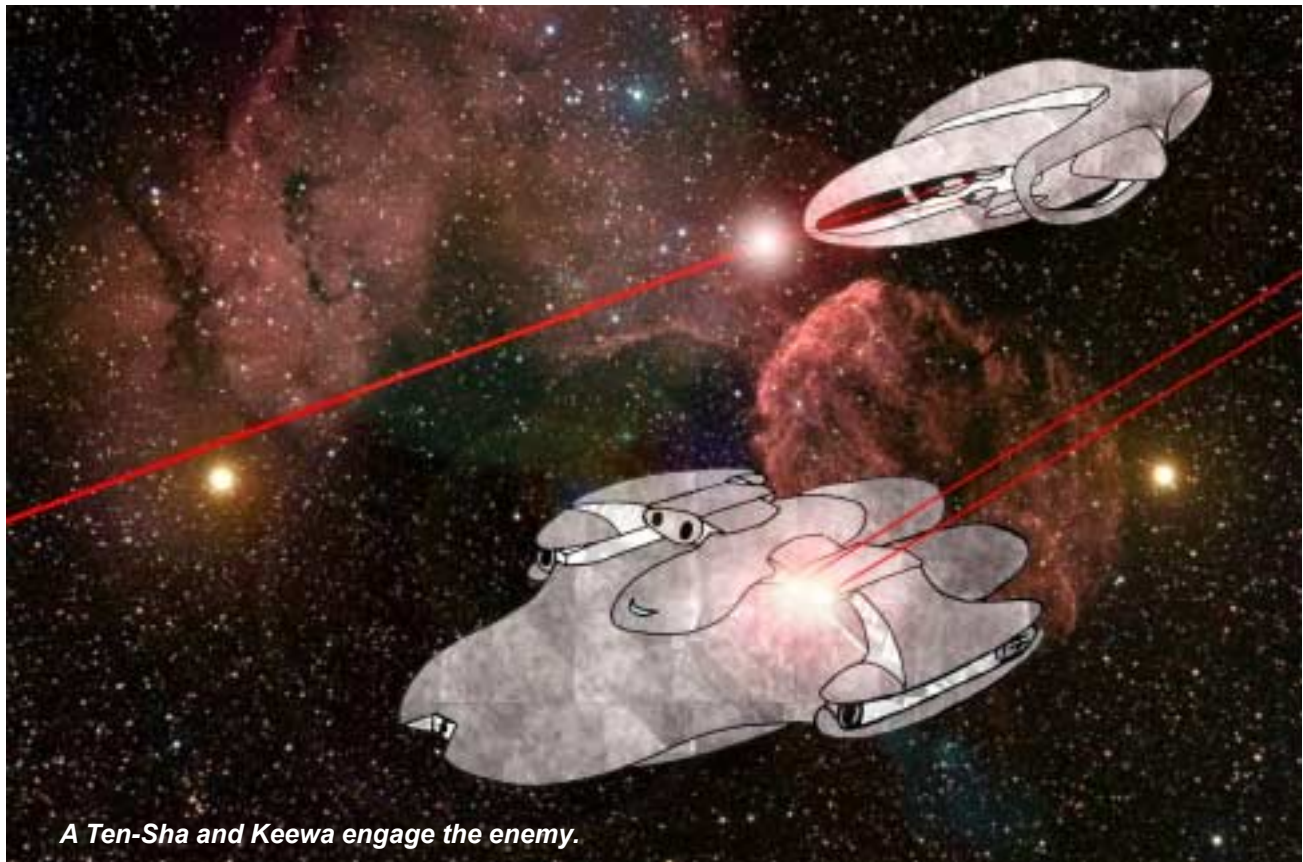
No-Las-Class Fighter-Killer

The Nashani have always had great difficulty defending against enemy fighter attacks. Many solutions had been tried over the years with mixed results, but none had been truly satisfactory. The aging Nehann-class escorts were well past their prime by the 22240's, and the ill-conceived Hatoga-class corvettes never approached the capabilities the Nashani had hoped for. In the late 2240's, Nashani engineers had developed an advanced version of the standard defense laser. While the

weapon was a true generation beyond of its predecessor, the Nashani had no ships on which it could be mounted. Hefty power consumption meant that small ships could mount too few, and large ships would have to sacrifice offensive firepower for defense.

At this time the Nashani rediscovered a failed design from a decade earlier, the No-Las. Intended to be an attack MCV much like those operated by the Medushaan, the No-Las featured a powerful reactor for its offensive weaponry, and better agility than most Nashani vessels. At the time of its initial trials, the No-Las had been determined to be impractical, but fitted with the new Advanced Defensive Laser, it showed tremendous potential as an anti-fighter escort. Impressed, the Confederacy ordered the new type into production, and since that time, the No-Las has continued to impress as the Nashani's best anti-fighter platform to date.

Despite its capabilities, the No-Las remains in somewhat limited service. This is because of the expense to build and maintain the complicated ADL's, and the specialized nature of the class. Typically, the No-Las will be deployed in the



A Ten-Sha and Keewa engage the enemy.

screening elements of priority capital ships such as command cruisers and battlecruiser. Experiments have continued on the advanced defensive laser, but for the time being the No-Las remains the only ship to feature the weapon.

Shol-Ani System Defense Ship

The Shol-Ani is a relatively modern vessel, originally designed to serve in the Nashani fleet as a multi-role fleet support vessel. It was quickly spurned by the Nashani Military as a muddled compromise, only a few were ever built by the government before the program was cancelled. The ships that had been built languished in the fleet docks for several years until a few clans were able to purchase the hulls. Deploying them as system patrol ships, these clans quickly recognized the possible uses for this “jack of all trades”. Soon, individual clans had procured construction rights from the military, and the design went back into production.

The clans have added several design features, such as the capacity to carry a small amount of cargo or extra supplies for patrols, or VIP accommodations. In some cases, the atmospheric capability of the design allows it to double as a ground to space transport/hauler for high priority cargos. Used extensively by local mining consortiums, these ships bring in the personnel and equipment and then defend the site while it is being constructed. Though useful against most raider forces, the nature of the design is such that it is of little value against competent military adversaries.

Hatoga-Class Patrol Corvette

A newer vessel designed to replace the aging and limited Nehann Based primarily on the Centauri Haven patrol ship, the Hatoga is small, relatively mobile and inexpensive, while carrying a useful armament. Many believe that it is too fragile, and because it is not as agile as its Centauri inspiration, unable to effectively avoid enemy fire. As a result, the Hatoga has seen limited service in somewhat smaller numbers, primarily with smaller clans.

Ha-Nito-Class Courier **(Hatoga Variant)**

Considerably more successful than the Hatoga on which it is based. Since the Nashani prefer face

to face interaction to long-range communications, couriers are a common means of transporting individuals to meetings. By removing the majority of the weapon systems from the patrol corvette hull, the interior of the courier is surprisingly comfortable, particularly for Nashani taste.

Ka-Tann-Class Diplomatic Transport

Used by the clans to ferry important individuals and items throughout the confederacy. The Ka-Tann has a comfortable interior, powerful drives and basic defenses to insure that emissaries arrive to their location safely. Diplomatic transports are commonly used to carry clan representatives to meetings in other systems. Clan elders rarely travel, and typically only do so on board armed warships modified with comfortable quarters.

Hat-Tagi-Class Commerce Freighter

A bulk freighter used extensively by the Nashani to carry everything from raw ores, to foodstuffs to manufactured goods. A solid and reliable vessel, the Ha-Tagi class is also well armed for a “civilian” vessel, making it a difficult target for raiders and privateers.

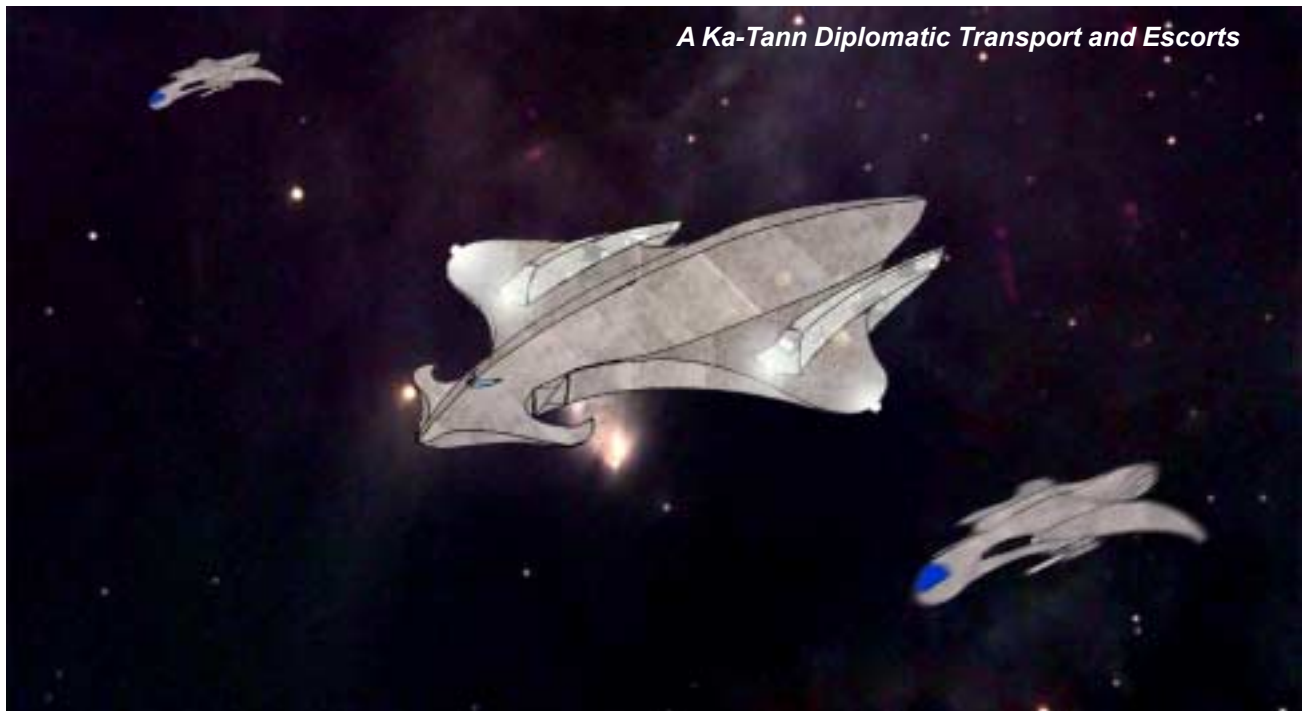
A less common version of the commerce freighter is the Kalwa-class colonial transport, used by the confederacy to carry large numbers of colonists and their basic necessities to new star systems. Comfortable by Nashani standards, the Kalwa is capable of very long journeys, and will typically serve as the home for the colonists while they work to construct a new orbital habitat. Game statistics are the same for both ships.

Yaron-Class Civilian Transport

A simple, reliable civilian liner used throughout the confederacy. While the majority are used as passenger transports, a sizable number are used as light cargo vessels. The standard civilian transport is considered a short-haul vessel, and does not have stores or facilities for long-range travel.

Wen-Shar-Class Light Fighter

Because of their somewhat frail physiology, Nashani do not make very good fighter pilots, and as a result they do not deploy a sizable fighter



force. The Nashani are smart enough to recognize though, that the fighter is the best defense against other fighters. As a result, the Nashani only operate one fighter, and it specializes in the role of Interceptor. Armed with fast firing lasers, fast and nimble, the only drawbacks to the design are its lack of durability (it's a light fighter) and the lack of durability of the pilots (resulting in poor drop out ratings).

Malara-Class Orbital Habitat

The Nashani are rare in their tolerance, indeed their preference, for weightless living conditions. As a result, they only rarely build ground-based colonial facilities. Instead, they construct large orbital habitats where colonists live and work in comfort. Huge stations encompassing living quarters, industries, and even agriculture, these cities in space are common throughout Nashani territories. Even if the colonization effort is centered on a planetary body with minimal gravity, the Nashani will generally construct an orbital habitat to act as the colonial center.

Shen-Ra-Class Clan Orbital Manor

These are the private residences maintained by individual Nashani clans. Usually an orbital manor will be the permanent home of the clan's elders, and

the heart of a clan's business. Each manor is unique in its architecture and its aesthetics, but all are roughly similar for game purposes. All orbital manors are well protected and well armed, and often have one or more warships in attendance. The skies over Nashan itself are home to many orbital manors although they are also found in other Nashani controlled systems. The manor depicted here is that of the Shen-Ra clan.

Ha-Gonan-Class Orbital Commercial Station

These huge constructs are the main ports of any Nashani controlled system. Capable of housing thousands of permanent residents and visitors, these stations teem with activity non-stop. Though nominally "civilian" facilities, the value of each commercial station means that they are always well defended. Most commercial stations are actually multi-clan investments, and it is not unusual for such stations to act as a base for clan warships alongside civilian freighters and transports.

Teshera-Class Defense Fortress

These stations act as the anchors within any Nashani planet's defensive network. Always independent of individual clan control, these stations coordinate osats, mines and mobile forces

against any threat. Very well armed and armored, a planetary defense fortress is always attended by some number of warships and/or patrol craft directly tasked to system defense. Generally only one such fortress would be located orbiting any world, though a particularly important world could be home to more as necessary.

Bahani OSAT

The Bahani osat is the standard orbital defense platform in use through nashani controlled space. A compact and reliable design which can mount either a single gauss sniper cannon or a single attack laser. Area defense is provided by a pair of defense lasers.

Shinara Advanced OSAT

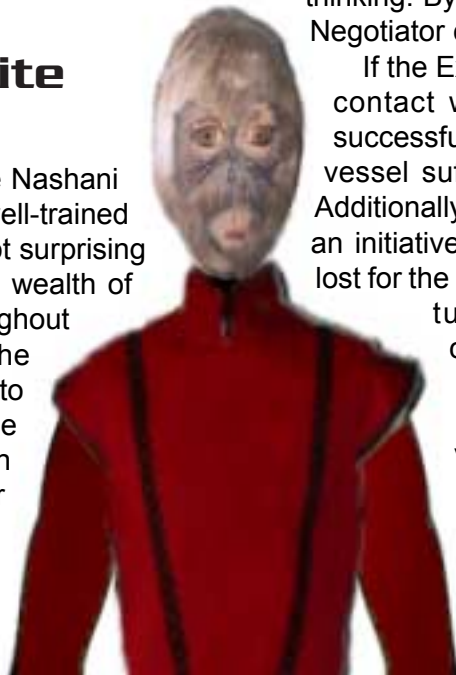
This new defensive system has recently begun to appear in high priority positions within confederacy space. The features a single attack laser as its main armament along with a pair of advanced defense lasers. Coupled with superior sensors, the Sinara is far more effective than the Bahani.

Mines

The nashani use primarily DEW-type mines throughout their defensive networks. The Standard Nashani mine is the *Deman*-class DEW mine which is used by both government and clan entities.

Experts and Elite Officers

As has been noted, the Nashani possess an excellent and well-trained naval establishment. It is not surprising then that the service has a wealth of expert officers serving throughout the ranks. In addition to the experts commonly available to other races, the unique Nashani makeup has given rise to an elite officer of their own, the Expert Negotiator.



Nashani Expert Negotiator

The Nashani have rightfully earned a reputation as some of the best negotiators in known space, and have on more than one occasion put their talents to use in space combat. Historically the Nashani have sometimes been able to avoid direct confrontation when such action did not suit their strategic goals, even if they might hold some tactical advantage over their foe. Less often, the Nashani have used negotiations to gain just such a tactical advantage over their enemy. While all Nashani are excellent negotiators, Experts specialize in the field and are far more influential than even the average Nashani. Expert Negotiators are most often found on board specialized exploration craft where their superior talents can be beneficial in "First Contact" scenarios, though a surprising number can be found within the independent clan fleets seeing to the business concerns of their own families.

Location: C&C

Cost: 40% of Ship's Base Cost

Availability: HCV or larger vessels only. Not available to Non-Nashani.

Once per scenario, before initiative is determined, the Expert Negotiator may attempt to communicate with an enemy vessel. If successful, the Negotiator will attempt to use his formidable powers of persuasion to influence the enemy's thinking. By distracting or causing hesitation, the Negotiator can win a valuable advantage.

If the Expert Negotiator successfully initiates contact with an enemy vessel (Roll 1d10; successful on a roll of 4 or better), the enemy vessel suffers -2 to its initiative on that turn. Additionally, if the target vessel normally grants an initiative bonus to other ships, that bonus is lost for the remainder of the turn. Each additional turn that the communication is continued, apply an additional -1 penalty to the target ship's initiative (up to a maximum penalty of -5). Any vessel firing on the ship carrying the Expert Negotiator incurs a -1 modifier to the chance to hit.

At the end of each turn, roll 1d10 to determine if the negotiator is able to keep the comm lines open for an

additional turn. A “4” or better is still required for success, and for each turn following the initial contact apply a -1 modifier to the chance of success.

Weapon Systems

Attack Laser

The main Nashani offensive weapon. Developed from examples of both Centauri and Orieni technology acquired over many years. The attack laser is similar to the commonly seen heavy laser developed by the Narn, with the exception that the Nashani preferred to go for longer range over sheer power. The lower damage potential is not seen as a shortcoming by the Nashani as they are more comfortable with finesse over brute strength.

Defense Laser

A short range, rapid fire laser primarily intended for defense against fighters, ballistics, and matter weapons. The defense laser can fire offensively, but its low damage yield and short range (trade-offs for its high rate of fire) means that it is generally better served as a defensive system.

Advanced Defense Laser (A.D.L.)

The Nashani have long had difficulties dealing with attacking fighters, even though their ships mount many defensive lasers. Though an accurate and efficient system, the standard defensive laser lacks the punch to deal with heavier fighters, and has range sufficient for close in defense only. Many experiments had been conducted over the years to improve the abilities of the defense laser, but none bore fruit until the introduction of a few alien technologies recently discovered. The Advanced Defense Laser was developed from the same research that would later produce the impressive laser combiner. Like the combiner, the system merges laser beams (in this case two) into a single beam with greater range and power. Unlike the more powerful combiner system, the ADL cannot be switched between merged and unmerged beams, nor can additional beams be added to the two already combined within the system. This makes the whole assembly much less bulky and complex than the combiner. On the down side, the system is very power hungry as there are essentially

three functions happening simultaneously. This has severely limited the usefulness of the weapon, and to date it is deployed aboard only one hull, the purpose built anti-fighter No-Las escort.

Laser Combiner

A dynamic new system developed to grant much greater flexibility and effectiveness to Nashani laser weapons. This is a very new system and is seen on only a few hulls at this time. Basically, the laser combiner is a gravitic focusing device which literally pulls together 2 or more laser beams creating a single, powerful shot. The system is far from perfected, and the Nashani are working to work out the bugs before the system even as they put into widespread use. The laser combiner is effective with both attack and defense lasers. When using the Combiner with attack lasers, no more more than 3 beams may be combined.

Gauss Sniper

Developed by the Nashani from the Orieni Gauss Cannon, the Gauss Sniper has much greater range than the Orieni weapon, or even the Centauri Matter Cannon. The Gauss Sniper is not as accurate as the Matter Cannon, but it gives even smaller Nashani vessels the ability to hit targets at long range.

Ballistic Laser

The ballistic laser is the Nashani answer to the ballistic weapons employed by other races. Though not as powerful or as flexible as some weapons, the ballistic laser relies on components which are tried and true, and the Nashani are comfortable using without fear that they can be “cooked-off” in their launcher by a single (un)lucky shot. The Nashani ballistic laser is identical in function to the weapon developed and used by other races, though the parallel development is merely coincidental.

Gravitic Shields

The Nashani have recently discovered and replicated gravitic shield technology from an unknown source. To date, the system is very rare as it is power hungry and complex. Undaunted, the Nashani are aggressively developing the technology and hope to field an improved version fleet wide within decades.

Chapter 3: The Medushaans

Medushaan Physiology

“In the Age when time had no meaning, there were born seven sisters. All grew in peace under the ever-watching Eye of She that was their Mother. Through the Ages that followed, one Sister grew stronger and more beautiful than the others. Jealousy brought the Six others to move away, and for the first time since her Birth, Medusha stood alone. The pain of loneliness at first brought despair, but Medusha was strong and the pain brought resolve. Medusha sought out others that were not her Sisters, and came upon Forge. Forge could not be what Medusha sought, but Forge was wise and taught her to create those that would love her, for all time. Forge built many vessels from pieces of Medusha’s body, into which she placed a spark of her fiery Soul. So it was that Medusha became a Mother herself, her children growing strong, fueled by the fire within. Though strong, her children could not hold Her Essence within forever, and in time their bodies grew weak, and they crumbled. At first the Mother was saddened, but then she learned that if the Spark of Life was returned to her womb it would join with her being once again, and then could be passed to the next generation of her children. The return of each of her children became Medusaha’s greatest joy as they brought with them all of their experiences, everything that they had grown to become, and all of their Love.”

-Excerpt from the Medushaan Creation Story, told as part of the Traditional Funeral Ceremony.



The Medushaan are a race of powerful mammal analogues originating from a harsh world covered in active volcanoes and sulphurous seas. The average adult female stands roughly 7-8 feet tall and is powerfully muscled. Males of the species are slightly smaller, topping out at about 6 feet and are far less bulky, though they are still much heavier than the average human. The skulls of females are extremely heavy and as they age they often feature projections above the skin. The skulls of males tend to be thinner and smoother. The skin of both sexes is mottled gray, and extremely thick, though more pronounced in females. Medushaan eyes are covered by a protective membrane that gives them an unsettling, luminescent blue coloration.

Because of the difficulty of surviving the environment of their home-world, Medushaan evolution has taken some interesting steps to ensure the continuation of the species. First of all, the birth rate for females is much higher than that of males, on the order of 10 to 1. Females also have greater physical strength and protection than males, helping more to survive to sexual maturity. Pregnancies are relatively short, after which the

female lays 1 or 2 leathery eggs. The final weeks of development for the embryonic Medushaan takes place within the egg. This evolutionary trait frees the female to continue on with her duties, whatever they may be, from conception to birth with little or no impact physically, making her far less vulnerable.

For their part, the males of the species also feature several interesting characteristics. Males reach sexual maturity at a younger age than females, and are able to impregnate an almost limitless number of females during their breeding years. Males of sexual maturity are driven by the single minded pursuit of copulation, giving rise to the common Medushaan phrase which, loosely translated states, “males are only good for breeding and eating”. Males remain sexually active for roughly 20 Terran years, after which they undergo a dramatic change. Freed from the genetic imperative to breed, these “neuter males” develop a sharp mind, and a deep curiosity. Early Medushaans would often force these “useless” males out of the tribe as they were a drain on resources, and could cause all sorts of trouble. In the wilderness, these males would be forced to survive by their wits, and many died shortly after being turned out. Those that did survive would in time be regarded as something like legendary wizards or shaman to the tribes that had abandoned them. These tribal Medushaans would eventually find themselves seeking out these hardy, wise-males for all types of knowledge and advice. In this way the “neuter-male” found his way back into society. Today, non-breeder males are a kind of eunuch class; trusted councilors, scientists, and explorers to the ruling females, held in high regard throughout the society.

Medushaan Homeworld

Medusha is an earth-sized moon in orbit around a gas giant in the Tsiph system. The gas giant provides its warmth and light to the nearby moon which would otherwise likely be too distant from the systems primary to develop life. Medusha is tidally locked with the gas giant meaning that the moon has a *hot* side facing the gas giant and a *cold* side facing away. In between there is a narrow twilight band which is less extreme than the opposing faces. The world is very active tectonically and volcanic and geothermal energy add to the

warmth of the world. Earthquakes and active volcanoes are fairly common on Medusha. The atmosphere of Medusha is thick with particulate matter such as volcanic ash and has a definite sulfur smell, but is breathable by humans so long as they provide some form of filter to avoid breathing the choking dust. Plant life on medusha is largely dependent on geothermal energy rather than light, and grows low to the ground over wide areas. Though the volcanic soil is rich in mineral nutrients, until modern times it has been difficult to cultivate large crops as the necessary heat energy is not terrifically widespread in the habitable regions of the moon. Animal life on medusha is composed mainly of sturdy plant eaters that can go for long periods of time between meals, with many well adapted to the more extreme climates of the hot and cold sides of the moon. Higher predators are likewise rugged, and are often very specialized ambush killers, setting up near feeding grounds where they can catch prey with a minimum of effort. Interestingly the vast majority of living species on medusha have evolved in the deep seas on medusha’s cold side. Though covered in ice for the most part, deep sea vents warm the seas from below and provide a nutrient rich environment which sustains all manner of interesting species. This discovery by the Medushaans provided them with an almost limitless supply of food once they had developed technology to a point where they were able to safely harvest the bounty.

Today, Medushaans live across the entire face of their homeworld relying on artificial means to protect them from the extreme environments. The hot side is covered with power stations, old mines and industrial plants, while the cold side is scattered with “fisheries”, geothermal power plants, and plants which treat and ship water throughout the moon to support the needs of the inhabitants

Medushaan Government

The Medushaan government is a loose Republic composed of many semi-autonomous states which are subordinate to the central government. Each of these states is ruled by a *Regnar*, or “Queen” and her daughters, known for our purposes as “Princesses”. The Queens rule in a fairly autocratic manner with control over

military and civilian affairs within their domains. The position of Queen is hereditary with the reigning Queen choosing her heir from among her daughters. The head of the central government is an individual best described as the “Empress”. Called the *Regnar Sulam*, which means “Great Mother”, the position of Empress is not hereditary like the Queens, but is chosen from among the ranks of the rulers by majority vote following the death or removal of the old Empress. While she is the head of state for the Medushaan, the Empress must abdicate the throne of her realm to her heir, and may not, by custom and law, retain any territory besides that of her current position. The Empress controls the military aspects of the government through a staff of career military officers sworn to the throne. The bureaucracy is composed largely of neuter males whom are likewise sworn to the office, rather than the individual. The central government enforces its will through a combination of quid pro quo, threat of violence, and threat of economic isolation. The Empress reigns for life unless she renounces her position for reasons of her own.

Within the court of each Queen and the Empress, there are many “neuter males” known as *Duro*, which literally translated mean “wise” or “wiley”. These Duro form a kind of eunuch class within the courts and serve the rulers as councillors and aides. Duro are all extremely knowledgeable on a wide variety of subjects and they provide their matrons with the information they need to make informed judgements on matters of state. Since the Duro owe their position to a particular ruler, there are typically loyal without question, and are generally considered among the most trusted members of a royal court. Duro are very often disliked by the majority of the Medushaan around them as they are seen to have achieved high status without the risks associated with the lifestyles of female Medushaan, but they are tolerated because they serve a role which no female would willingly accept.

Medushaan Military

Each Queen maintains a personal paramilitary force composed primarily of ground troops. These Royal Guards act not only as the Queen’s personal body guard, but as secret police, and as reserve forces for the military of the central government.

Few Queens maintain a sizable force of warships mainly for reasons of cost. Generally, each Queen does possess a small number of ships for patrol/police/customs duty. The equipment of the guards (number and quality) varies from ruler to ruler, but they universally maintain an extremely high level of training and troop quality. Regular competitions between royal guard units are held with a great deal of pride and bragging rights at stake.

The military forces of the Central Government are under the direct control of the Empress and are commanded by a professional and dedicated officer corps. The bulk of the forces are conscripts serving a 5 year minimum term of service, though a great many medushaan take pride in military service taking it as a life-long career. The head of the Medushaan ground forces holds the rank of Xandar Tas, roughly translated as “warleader-for-all”, a rank more or less equivalent to Marshal. The Xandar Tas answers directly for the Empress, and her orders are considered as directly from the Empress herself. Command of troops in the field is typically done by a Xander, or “Warleader”, who would be the equivalent of a general.

The head of the naval forces for the gynocracy is the Itar Raeph, whose title literally means “Great Star”. The Itar Raeph generally advises the Empress in naval matters, and assists in developing strategy, but has little to do with mission planning and other details. Operational details are handled at the Fleet level by the Alis Raeph, or “Fleet Shipmother”, who is given a great deal of authority in doing what it takes to achieve the goals set out by the Empress.

The remaining Medushaan ranks are as follow:

Ground Forces

Xandar Tas: “warleader-for-all”, Commander all government ground forces.

Xandar: “Warleader”, “general” of a medushaan “army”, roughly 16,000-40,000 troops.

Xandar Nor: “Lesser Warleader”, commander of a medushaan legion of roughly 4,000-10,000 troops.

Ato Lasaph: “Elder Warrior”, a veteran warrior placed in command of a medushaan “troop” of roughly 500 troops. More a warrant officer rank than a commissioned grade.

Pedara: “Blade Carrier(?)”, an accomplished warrior placed in command of a group of warriors numbering anywhere from 50 to 250 depending on the mission and specialty of the unit. The term can also mean a warrior with special skills or training, with small units of Pedaras acting as a sort of special forces in a variety of roles.

Lasaph: “Warrior”, the common foot soldier of the gynocracy.

Naval Forces

Itar Raeph: “Great Star”, Commander in Chief of Medushaan Naval forces.

Alis Raeph: “High Star”, a medushaan “admiral” commanding a fleet, or task force of warships.

Raeph: “Star”, the equivalent of a captain commanding a squadron or two of warships.

Raeph Nor: “Lesser Star” more common ship commander, possibly commanding a squadron, especial of small ships.

Ato Luco: “Elder Spacer” a warrant rank, often in command of a small warship, or sometimes acting as the captain of a larger warship which is the flagship of a squadron or task force.

Ato Naras: “Elder Pilot” a warrant rank, typically the commander of a squadron of fighters.

Luco: “Spacer”, common ship’s crewmember, usually with a prefix describing shipboard duties.

Naras: “Pilot”, the common rank of medushaan fighter pilots. The pilots know well the seniority within their ranks, and there

has never been a need to add additional ranks. If the Ato Naras of a squadron is killed or becomes incapacitated, the next most senior pilot simply steps in to take her place.

Medushaan Religion

The Medushaan have a very ancient religious system centered around the belief that their homeworld is a living being and is the mother of all Medushaan life. This Goddess is known as the Fiery Mother. The Medushaan are a superstitious lot and they believe that their soul will be re-born so long as it is returned to the Fiery Mother. In ordinary circumstances this means an elaborate funeral that culminates with the body of the deceased being lowered into a river of lava, or some form of volcanic fissure. In the early days of spaceflight, Medushaan leaving the homeworld would ritualistically remove a body part, such as a finger, which was in turn preserved so that if the rest of the body was lost off-world, the remaining piece could be given a proper funeral so that the soul could return home. This actually developed from an ancient tradition in which warriors leaving their homes to do battle in a distant land would conduct similar rituals, fearing that if they died in enemy lands, their bodies would not be returned to the Fiery Mother’s womb.

The Medushaan have a great many rituals and ceremonies that often include ritual combat, feasting, and the recounting of ancient myths. In fact, the closest thing in Medushaan society to clergy are the males known as *Marras*, or Lore-Tellers. The Marra has committed to memory a vast number of stories and myths and during every ceremony, a Marra will recount a tale relevant to the occasion. The Marra is perhaps the most respected male member of medushaan society.

Medushaan Fashion

For ceremonies and other dress occasions, the medushaan wear colorful, layered robes that border on flamboyant. To accent these robes, individuals will wear an assortment of gems and precious metal ornaments along with jeweled (but functional) weapons.

For everyday wear, the medushaan do prefer utilitarian garb made of durable synthetics and

featuring many pockets and pouches. Even then, medushaan of importance such as military officers or government officials will wear a jeweled gorget as a symbol of rank, and even lesser personnel will sometimes work in a splash of color or jewelry.

An ever present part of medushaan dress is the “Erta”, or “dueling blade”. This long and razor sharp weapon was used in ancient times to settle disputes, conduct trial by combat, and for general self-defense. Though many medushaan wear the Erta as a purely ornamental piece, every adult female is well trained in how to handle the blade, and though archaic, it remains a deadly addition to their dress. Of particular note are the blades carried by the empress’ personal bodyguard. These spectacularly ornate blades are composed of specially developed synthetic obsidian and are deadly as they are beautiful. In fact, this signature weapon has given the name to the Empress’ guards, the “Terlam”, which literally means, “Black Blade”.

Medushaan Technology

Though they have been a star-faring race for many hundreds of years, the technology of the Medushaan can be considered average among the younger races. There are several reasons for this. The most important reason is that the Medushaans do not carry out research for the sake of research believing that if a system works, don’t mess with it. This is not to say that the Medushaans are stupid or lazy, quite the contrary in fact. Advances are typically brought on in response to a particular problem which crops up, a weakness an enemy exploits, or a weakness identified which can be exploited in an enemy. In this framework, the Medushaans are extremely capable of developing a solution to a problem, but they will rarely if ever go beyond the practical application to advance a system’s capabilities.

In a few certain circumstances the Medushaans have received technology from other races which they have found useful, and this is particularly true in their relationship with the nashani. In fact, many medushaan are very happy to let their allies spend their time effort and treasury on developing systems which they can then decide if they are worth pursuing. The Medushaans have also received a great deal of technology over the years from the centauri, in the form of salvage. This has

led to many Medushaan advances particularly in weapons technology, one area where the Medushaans are quite advanced.

Medushaan History

Early Medushaan

The Medushaan were originally organized into loose tribal bands of hunter-gatherers. Tribes would battle each other whenever they came into contact, raiding supplies, resources, and breeding males. The basic necessities of existence were in short supply in the narrow habitable areas of Medusha, and coupled with the harsh environment, the scattered tribes barely avoided extinction. Only their biological adaptations and a tenacity borne of desperation kept them alive during some very desperate times.

During this time, many tribes would force a male out of the group when he could no longer fertilize the females of the tribe. This was a practice based on the fact that non-productive males consumed resources for no perceived benefit. The males were ineffective fighters when compared to females, and could be troublesome. In more desperate circumstances males that were no longer useful as breeders would be killed and eaten. These practices were carried out for generations as the Medushaan clung to life.

Stories began to be told among the tribes of the Medushaan versions of wizards or shaman that survived in the wilderness without the support or protection of a tribe. These individuals were seldom seen, but the wild tales were told that these wizards sometimes saved the lives of tribal members through the use of potions or provided some oracle-like wisdom. It would take some time for these legends to gain some level of acceptance, but the real shock would come when it was discovered that these near mythical entities were actually Medushaan males that had learned to survive their hostile home-world by their wits alone. As it turned out, males freed from the biological imperative to breed were as intelligent as any female, and had greater patience and a very inquisitive nature. At first, the leaders of the tribes viewed these males as a direct threat, but it soon became apparent that these neuter males had no intention of challenging the rule of the females.

Soon Medushaan males would come to be an important though subordinate part of the developing culture of the Medushaan. In fact, it would be the males that would show the wisdom of creating permanent settlements, and how to cultivate the few available edible plant-forms. This would prove to be a key turning point in Medushaan history. During the ensuing decades villages would grow to towns and towns to cities as the Medushaan people refined the crude ways of their nomadic ancestors into the trappings of early civilization. Tribal leaders that had been known as Roshan, a title that literally translated meant “warleader”, began to see themselves in a new way. With greater responsibilities and an increased personal importance, the Medushaan leaders began to call themselves by a new name, Regnar, a form of “mother”.

Harnessing the Elements

By the 1200’s the habitable regions of Medusha were speckled with cities. Power was never a problem for these city-states as the Medushaan had early on developed simple but effective means for exploiting the plentiful geothermal energy. These growing population centers required ever increasing natural resources and raw materials to continue to thrive. Unlike the power resources, there could still be continuing problems in providing the necessities of life such as adequate food and building materials. Sometimes, wars would occur between neighboring cities as one would try to acquire what it needed by plunder. Researchers worked tirelessly to develop new solutions to the shortages, and with equal vigor, to create new weapons of war. Leaders kept large stables of dedicated neuter-male scientists, whom were always hard at work to fulfill the wishes of their matrons. The competition between rulers to gain and keep the upper hand would ultimately drive a “scientific revolution” within Medushaan culture. Some of the more impressive accomplishments would include the first expeditions well onto the hot and cold sides of Medusha, the introduction of more efficient and effective methods of agriculture and medicine, and the first crude attempts at spaceflight. These forays were primarily conducted for matters of prestige or for military advantage, but they marked a significant step forward in many aspects of technology.

As a direct effect of many of the above factors, the Medushaan people began to live longer, and more survived to adulthood. Despite the ongoing and often bloody wars, the Medushaan population continued to grow ever larger, and it was not long before the population pressures began to outstrip the ability of the new capabilities and technologies to provide for them. In particularly overcrowded regions, some would return to the old ways of fighting for the simple necessities of existence

The Great Killing

Matters on Medusha had reached a terrible precipice; technology and society had led to an explosion in population that the narrow habitable band of the moon could not support. Some would begin to build colonies on the hot and cold sides, but these were costly and difficult endeavors, and could not make meaningful contributions to their parent states. An air of desperation gripped many of the city-states as they faced the terrible prospects of overpopulation. In this environment, small skirmishes and old rivalries would explode into full fledged war. Over the course of two decades, many of the leading nations of Medusha would become embroiled in ongoing wars, not for conquest, but for survival. In their shadows, many lesser states would simply cease to exist, either absorbed or destroyed by more powerful neighbors.

Just when it seemed that matters could get no worse for her people, the global wars of Medusha were ended in the blink of an eye with the sun-bright flashes of thermonuclear weapons. It was the final, spiteful act of dying nation, and it would very nearly destroy the race. Once unleashed by one nation, the survivors would respond in kind, and the devastation was beyond all comprehension. In a matter of weeks, 70% of the world’s population would die from the bombs, fallout, disease, and famine. Simultaneously all wars everywhere stopped as civilization crumbled. What would follow would be a return by most to the ancient ways of surviving by any means, no matter how brutal or barbaric.

The Peace of the Dead

Across the face of Medusha, the far flung tribes struggled for survival. Most of those that had not died in the cataclysm had little chance of living

more than a few years longer. There would emerge a few beacons of hope to which the Medushaan people would turn to. At the very edges of the once civilized world, there were a few small nations that had survived the holocaust with some form of order. These would be the keystone to rebuilding the world, though it would be a long and hard process. The small survivor states knew that they could not continue to battle each other, lest they lose what little there was left for any of them to have a future. In short order, the divisions between the survivors would begin to disappear as they grew closer and closer, eventually merging in all ways. From the ranks of the survivor states there would emerge a mere handful of cities that maintained any semblance there former society. Many more would fail, and disappear forever.

Another consequence of the Great Killing would be a great deal of anti-male backlash. Many needed scapegoats as to explain how such a horror to have occurred, and many eyes turned to the males that had developed such destructive weapons. It did not matter that they were only doing the bidding of their rulers, and many remaining rulers culled the ranks of the males in their court, and repressed those that were retained to quiet those that felt they were to blame. For centuries to come, the roles of males throughout Medusha would remain diminished, with their only official duties limited to the harems. Of course, shrewd rulers quietly maintained a stock of neuter males to carry out the tedium and bureaucracy of the rebuilding of their states and of their world.

To aid in the reconstruction, and with the heartlands all but destroyed, the Medushaan made a great effort to develop the largely intact colony facilities on the hot and cold sides of the moon. From these, the survivor states would begin to extract important raw materials and foodstuffs key to their survival. These rough, dangerous outposts were the depositing place for most of the “troublesome” males, those no longer capable of breeding.

The Gathering

The “survivor” states of Medusha had little true contact during what they called the “Years of Silence”. This was mainly caused by the fact that they were in most cases separated by radioactive wastelands, and the simple fact that they had

turned all of their attention inward. As the years past, and the radioactivity moderated, the scattered Medushaan peoples began to have greater contact, though none at the highest levels. Several rulers of city-states decided that the time had come for official communication between the remaining states and sent emissaries to the others with invitations. When it became obvious that most of the rulers did not trust their peers enough to trek to their domains, it was agreed that all of the rulers that chose to do so would meet on neutral territory, in the heart of the wasteland. Each would bring with them supplies and servants for an extended stay. At the appointed time, great caravans converged on the location chosen for the meeting, and a great tent city blossomed in the wastes. Though there would be a great deal of tension among the rulers and their followers as each sought primacy over the others. There would be several incidents, and more than one duel, but overall the meeting was considered a great success by the rulers. Though the talks yielded little, this first meeting was a chance for the Medushaan rulers to meet, and the fact that they left in peace could be considered a test passed. At the conclusion of the gathering, it was agreed that the rulers would return to that spot at an appointed time to renew their face to face discussions, and to work for the future of the race.

Over the course of time the meeting, known simply as “the Gathering”, would be held at regular intervals as had been decided. The spot that had once been home to a tent city grew to be a formidable edifice as each successive group constructed permanent buildings for their liege, and her court. In fact, the complex would grow become a year round facility where the various states maintained quarters, and allowed for more constant contact between the nations of Medusha.

During one Gathering, the rulers of Medusha declared the Commonwealth. Though largely symbolic, it would be the first step toward a unified world government. These rulers did not relinquish any of their personal power, but agreed to work together to advance a unified set of goals for their race. Some of these goals included the reconstruction of the heartlands of Medusha, the expansion of the hot and cold-side colonies, and the dedication to resurrecting some of the beneficial technologies lost in the great killing. Though intentionally lofty and ambiguous, these

goals were the unifying force behind the Commonwealth, and the first species wide effort that had ever been attempted.

Off World Riches and Risks

Probes sent throughout the space around Medusha revealed the presence of raw materials beyond the wildest dreams of those that sent the missions. Medusha was in close proximity to a mineral rich asteroid field and several sister moons orbiting the gas giant around which the home-world itself was located. As the discoveries continued to mount, the member states of the commonwealth publicly and with great fanfare announced that they would cooperate in an effort to gain a permanent foothold off-world. The proximity of destinations and the experience of the Medushaan in hostile environments would serve them well in the efforts to come.

Even as the first off-world settlement was being planned and then constructed, several members of the commonwealth began to plan their own independent colonies. They reasoned that to gain any advantage over potential rivals, a ruler would have to have a supply of materials in excess of those that any joint operation would provide. Some lesser members of the Commonwealth recognized the potential power this would bring those able to mount their own space programs, and attempted to block them from operating outside of commonwealth supervision. Ultimately, the attempt would fail, and with it would crumble the foundation of the commonwealth. Members that felt “left out” or threatened by the exploitation of of-world resources would pull out of the commonwealth, and the more powerful states would be all too happy to dissolve the remnants as the organization, loose as it was, seemed to serve no purpose any longer.

Without the oversight of their peers, each ruler threw the full weight of her capabilities into development of her nation’s space program. In short order scores of nationalistic colonies sprung up throughout the local region of Medushaan space. Particularly rich regions would become contested as several nations would attempt to “stake their claim”, and tensions would run high. It would not be long before the first blood was spilled by colonists, and every space-faring nation used the incidents as an excuse to arm their citizens

and their vessels for “self-defense”. The entire situation threatened to spiral out of control as the rivalries in space spread to the surface of Medusha. The Medushaan seemed to be doomed to repeat the tragedy that nearly destroyed their race centuries before.

Not Alone Anymore

As tensions rose among the ranks of Medusha’s nations, their mining operations continued to scour the region of space around their home-world for resources. Rulers protected these off-world investments with ever larger national space navies. Merchant ships were organized into convoys and placed under heavy escort. Incidents between rival navies grew increasingly common and alarmingly violent. During this period of mistrust and armed paranoia, the Medushaan would encounter an alien species for the first time, with unfortunate results for those peaceful explorers.

In 1581, a pair of vessels emerged from hyperspace almost directly in the path of a heavily guarded convoy. The alien’s attempts to communicate were answered by a hailstorm of kinetic projectiles and a fusillade of rockets. Though more primitive than the alien vessels, the point-blank salvos of the Medushaan warships were devastating. One ship was destroyed outright and the other was quickly an air-streaming cripple. Boarders seized the surviving ship, over-running the remaining crew before they could do more than purge the vessel’s central computers. Among the technological treasures captured was the alien craft’s jump engine, fully intact and operable.

At first, the government that had sent the mission tried to cover-up the discovery, with some limited success. Soon however, other nations grew suspicious of the sudden activity centered on the previously quiet region. Most figured that the discovery was more than likely an asteroid composed of rare minerals or some such thing, but soon stories began to circulate that what had really been discovered was something far more fantastic and dangerous. Feeling they could not hope to examine the vessel without other nations finding out, the capturing nation quietly shared the truth with the others. As in all things, it did not take long for the truth to leak to the populace. An attempt was made to cover up and then deny the

facts, but the genie was already out of the bottle.

No longer were they alone in the universe, and fear and anger gripped the very core of Medushaan society. Many were angry that the truth had been hidden from them, but many, many more were terrified that an alien race had come so close to their world. Some feared that the vessel was actually a scout for a race preparing to destroy them. Others theorized that it was a spy ship used to gather information for an attack should the Medushaan ever grow strong enough to be a threat. A kind of hysteria blazed through the Medushaan as they struggled to come to grips with the new reality of their universe. The reality was a simple one; whatever the mission of the ship, it was proof that a vastly superior alien race had been on their very doorstep, and that was a threat to the very existence of the Medushaan themselves. To this day it is unknown what race crewed the vessel, or where it came from, and the vessel itself was never seen publicly except in artist renderings.

For the first time in a generation, the rulers of Medusha's nations would come together en masse to decide what to do next. The result of that meeting would be one of the most stunning and historic events in modern Medushaan history. During one of the heated debates between the national rulers the ruler of the most powerful nation suddenly stood and demanded the undivided attention of the assembly. With the eyes of the most powerful members of society focused upon her, she calmly stated that she would immediately abdicate her throne and with her personal army and any that would follow her, begin to prepare full time to defend Medushaa from the alien menace. From that moment on she would hold the title of "Roshan" which was an ancient term for Medushaan rulers that meant not only "warleader", but "protector". With her announcement made, the Roshan strode from the meeting hall followed by her closest followers and advisors, stopping only momentarily to face her stunned peers. In that moment, so the story goes, she said in a near whisper, "My sisters, I will need you all, for failure means death for us all." Later, there were those that would question that she ever uttered these words, but there was no denying the effect of the action.

In short order, the new Roshan vacated her domain with her military forces to establish an independent base in the center of the planet's cold-

side wastes. Some rulers sent along material support and troops, but most did so in a merely symbolic fashion. They reasoned that if they were seen to be doing something, the populace would be calmed, at least to some degree, and they were largely correct.

In sharp contrast, there were those rulers that believed that the Roshan was attempting to parlay the fears of the masses into a position of military supremacy over the rest of the world, with the ultimate goal being to become the sole ruler of the world. These rulers pointed to the fact that although the Roshan had publicly abdicated her throne and lands, her daughter, the new ruler, was the single greatest supporter of the new "independent" force in both materials and technical aspects. Convinced that this was the reality, they began to work together behind closed doors to oppose the efforts of their new "protector".

Walking a Fine Line

Things began to shift in new directions for the Medushaan. The Roshan completely altered the composition of her military away from the combined-arms planetary army to a space based force capable of defensive and offensive actions. The transition was not an easy one, but the warleader worked tirelessly to shape the new force. The infant space navy became the de facto keepers of the new technology, and though she controlled the vessel, the Roshan demanded that all of the nations of Medusha take part in researching its secrets. Her detractors claimed that the Roshan kept the tech under her control by keeping it under the guns of her new navy, but no one could claim that they were kept from studying its wondrous systems.

Still not convinced of the sincerity of their "Protector's" intentions, those that opposed her apparent ambitions began to plan more drastic actions to remove the warleader, and the threat she posed to the sovereignty of the Medushaan nations. It was at this juncture that an amazing series of events would unfold, not only cementing the position of the Roshan as the protector of Medusha, but elevating her to the position of leadership that others had so greatly feared. During a secret planning session among the opposition leaders, a massive quake rocked the ancient fortress that housed the assembly,

crushing the conspirators within the toppled ruins. Not only were the leaders of the opposition killed in one sudden moment, but their actions were revealed to the eyes of the world. Superstitious people in the best of times, many saw this as a sign that the Roshan held the favor of their goddess. This would utterly break any organized opposition to the Roshan, and more support than ever was sent to the world's self-proclaimed protector.

Bold Actions

Years would pass and the Roshan would continue to build and prepare her force, maintaining her distance from the affairs of the others and keeping her promise to not interfere with their domains. During these years the best minds of the Medushaan have been pouring over and through the alien technology and believe they have unlocked many the secrets of how to operate it, including the device which they believed was the way to open a doorway to a transit system to cross the stars. Laboriously the vessel was replicated, and the facsimile towed to the reaches of the star-system and fitted a massive nuclear device before the order was given to power it up for the first time. By that time, researchers were still unclear as to many of the specifics of the vessel's operation, though they were convinced that it was capable of interstellar travel. So it was with great trepidation that the jump drive was activated for the first time in 1612. To the relief of all, and the surprise of more than a few, the activated system did open a doorway to the swirling void known as hyperspace.

Immediately, the Medushaan began a series of expeditions into hyperspace. These missions were short, and fraught with danger, but they believed that understanding hyperspace meant they could strip an invader of such a great advantage. Some researchers noted that the ship based system, though useful in the extreme, was also very inefficient and easily lost if built into a ship. Thus they proposed the possibility of a fixed Jump Gate. With such a device they could open the door to hyperspace for a vessel without risk of losing the sophisticated system to the whims of hyperspace. Building on their experience with the alien jump drive this first attempt to create a jump gate was a massive and crude device, but it

worked. In but a decade, the Medushaan had built a small network of gates within their home system which allowed them almost instantaneous travel to and from important locations therein. Though an impressive achievement, a significant effort was made to refine the ship-based system into a reliable and useful way to gain access to another star system.

Finally, Comes the Enemy

By 1732 the Medushaan had completed their first home-designed jump-capable vessel. A massive, unwieldy thing, this "gate-ship" was designed to not only travel to another star-system, but to carry the components of a Medushaan jump gate as well. The entire mission carried considerable risk as the loss of this single ship would mean the loss of not only one of the few jump-capable vessels available to Medushaan, but one of their few complete jump gates. So great was the concern that many of the leading figures within the Medushaan hierarchy stalled the launch of the vessel rather than possibly lose their investment. The debate raged within the highest levels of leadership until the fateful day in late 1756, when a jump point formed very near Tsiph, and for the first time, Medushaan warships were scrambled to intercept the alien invader.

The alien vessel, there was but one, kept well away from the fixed defenses of the system and moved away from the warships sent after it. Every vessel capable of doing so pursued the invader firing salvo after salvo of the most sophisticated weapons available to the defenders, mostly small high velocity rockets and powerful nukes. Again and again, the alien ship simply moved away and using sophisticated energy based weapons destroyed any weapons that threatened to strike it. After a short, anti-climatic engagement, the invader formed a jump point and vanished from the system. In a matter of mere hours the incident would be over, but it would open a new chapter in Medushaan history.

Once again the spectre of an advanced alien menace was rekindled among the Medushaan, and this time it was no longer purely academic; the cradle of life had been invaded, and the best its people had to offer had been powerless to stop it. Unlike the panic that had followed the discovery of the first survey ship, the fear of the Medushaan

people was focused on the singular principle of building the most advanced defensive force possible, at any cost. The equivalent of martial law was invoked and new powers were granted to the Roshan, making her for all purposes the dictator of the Medushaan people. The aging protector accepted the mantle of leadership under the condition that the day to day management of the race would remain with the Regnars, but they would swear allegiance to the Roshan. The Regnars would also turn over the majority of their military machinery and troops to the control of the Roshan, retaining only a much reduced force that would serve as their personal body-guard.

So it was that a single exploratory vessel from a neighboring species unified the children of Medusha for the first time. In the mere minutes that the contact had lasted, the fires that had threatened to consume the Medushaan people at one time in their violent history were given a new focus. From that point on the fears and insecurities of what was a powerful race in their own right was externalized. No longer could other Medushaan be the enemy. Now the enemy was not born of the fires of the Great Mother, but those that walked among the stars, threatening the existence of Medusha's people.

Beating against the Wall

In the immediate aftermath of the "invasion" incident, the Medushaan engaged in what can only be called a crusade. Every effort was made to construct and launch new jump equipped vessels at a frenetic, reckless pace. Defenses around the home system were further increased and technological advancement was demanded by the ruling powers. Even as the experts came to realize that the "invaders" could not be those that built the first survey craft, their technology was simply too different from their observations of the captured craft, they were still seen as a great threat.

After a series of disastrous losses of survey missions, and others that returned with little or nothing of value, a force finally located a system inhabited by the enemy. Immediately an attack was mounted, with disastrous results. Even though the force greatly outnumbered the system's defenders, they were totally outclassed in every aspect. Only the fact that the defenders did not pursue the survivors allowed any of the force to escape.

Though a terrible defeat, it only bolstered the Medushaan belief that they had to greatly improve their capabilities, and enhanced their fears of the aliens that had proven to be generations ahead of their own technology.

In the ensuing years, the Medushaan learned from their defeats, and changed their tactics. When a probing force located an occupied system, it would attempt to gather as much intelligence as possible before being driven off. In addition, small groups of ships would conduct raids to test defenses or attempt to capture ships in hopes of acquiring new technologies, with limited success. These operations would lead to some technical advances, and would give name to their nemesis, the Nashani. In the end the probing attacks would define the border between the Medushaan and the Nashani, a region the Medushaan would come to simply call "The Wall". The leaders publicly resolved that one day they would topple The Wall and eradicate the threat to their existence. Privately, the military minds of the Medushaan could not conceive of how they might accomplish such a goal, particularly against a foe that seemed content to sit behind their defenses and let attack after attack impale itself for no appreciable gain. Still they would attack, hoping each raid might bring home some new bit of technology, or expose some hitherto unknown weakness. This pattern would continue for decades.

The Universe Comes to Call

Even as the Medushaan found themselves frustrated by The Wall, they continued to build up their own defenses, always expecting a counter-attack from the Nashani. Away from The Wall, the Medushaan had also become more cautious with their explorations, stopping to build at least some defenses in each new system they discovered. This practice would save them when they met up with yet another alien race; one that embodied everything the Medushaan had ever feared an alien invader could be, the Centauri. Like the Nashani, the Centauri completely outclassed the Medushaan in every aspect of technological development. Unlike the Nashani, the Centauri meant to use these advantages to conquer and enslave.

The first, early scouting missions into Medushaan space led the Centauri to believe that

the backwards natives would be an easy conquest. What the careless and arrogant Centauri had missed were the well-placed, dispersed, and cunningly hidden defenses. Roused by the scouting forces, the Medushaan braced for what they thought was the opening of a new front in their ongoing conflict with the Nashani. Medushaan rulers were extremely tense, but their generals were pleased to have the opportunity to fight on their own terms for the first time. When the assault did come, needless to say, they were surprised to find themselves facing yet another alien species! However, they did not change their plans, and found that their defenses were just as effective against the Centauri as they had hoped they would be against the Nashani. The new technologies they had deployed, particularly their first operational starfighters operating from hidden bases, proved themselves against the superior foe. Where the Medushaan lacked in technology, they balanced with numbers, cunning traps, and sheer ferocity. Although the losses among the defenders were not insignificant, they had turned back the attack. They had held, learned from the attack what had worked and what hadn't, and captured more precious technologies. It would just be the first, minor push by the Centauri, and there were many more bloody battles, and several setbacks in the coming years, but every time the Medushaan held. They had become a people besieged, trapped between the Centauri Hammer, and the Nashani Wall.

A Strange Turn

By the 1950's, the continued Medushaan presence on the along the border of the Republic had grown to a concern among Centauri military planners that wished to secure that flank. It was decided that a full scale offensive would be launched with the ultimate goal being the nothing less than the final eradication of the nuisance. Unlike previous prior Centauri attacks mounted by House forces, this assault would be carried out by the cream of the Republic's Navy. The Centauri admiralty was trying to kill two birds with one stone, namely the destruction of a potential problem, and the opportunity to "blood" their forces before the possible battles to come against the Orieni.

The attack was launched in 1955, and from the start, the Medushaan knew that things had

changed for the worse. Their outer perimeter crumbled and was breached despite the heroic efforts of every defender. Every vessel able to move rushed to form a new defensive line. The Medushaan leaders hoped that if they threw everything they had at the Centauri, they could break the resolve of the attacking force and they would withdraw. This was precisely what the Centauri wanted as it would allow them to defeat the entire Medushaan fleet by committing the heavy reserve force they had yet to reveal.

The two forces met head-on in the outskirts of the Medushaan home system, well away from the support of the home-world's fixed defenses. The defenders threw themselves at the Centauri hoping to take advantage of their sheer numbers, and a brutal melee ensued. Though their losses were terrible, the ferocity and self-sacrifice of the defenders staggered the Centauri fleet. Commanders just began to feel that they would win the day when a series of jump points formed and fresh Centauri forces poured forth to fill the ranks. Knowing that they could no longer turn back the attack, the Medushaan force regrouped for a final, grim stand. As the two fleets approached, yet more jump points formed in the Centauri rear, and the Medushaan surged forward before the Centauri could bring even more reinforcements into the battle. To the utter astonishment of the combatants, the new arrivals did not rush to form ranks with the Centauri armada, but rather began to pour fire into their rear! The Medushaan were still not sure what was going on, but their commanders quickly seized upon the confusion spreading throughout the Centauri fleet as some squadrons wheeled to meet their new foe. Ships hurled themselves at the Centauri, every tiny attack ship trying to take a Centauri battlecruiser with it into oblivion. A few Centauri ships battled until destruction, but many more were destroyed trying to jump out of the Hell that the Tsiph system had become; only a very few succeeded in escaping.

As the fight wound down, the Medushaan became aware that their saviors were in fact their oldest enemy, the Nashani. With the last of the Centauri ships gone, the shattered defense force reformed once again to stand against the Nashani who had no doubt come in their moment of greatest weakness to smash them once and for all. Though the Nashani had received a great deal of damage of their own in the fight, there was no

doubt that if they pressed the attack, they would likely brush the remnants of the Medushaan fleet aside. Yet they did not move to attack, and instead sent a simple hail in a halting, synthesized version of the Medushaan language. The last surviving “flag” commander of the Medushaan fleet was a grizzled, weary veteran of many battles against the Nashani, but one that possessed a tremendous amount of personal honor and racial pride. In accordance with custom she responded with thanks for timely aid, and a request of what she could do to repay them for their courage. The transmission sent shockwaves throughout the survivors of the Medushaan fleet. Never before had there been any communication with their old enemy, never mind the pledge of debt to a warrior-comrade! As if they had awaited just such a reply, the Nashani fleet signaled that all they wished was to send a delegation to meet with the Medushaan leaders to discuss an end to the hostilities between the races. The Medushaan were dumbstruck, and some even believed that the offer was an attempt to stall while the Nashani brought in more forces. Ignoring the arguments of her subordinates the commander remained true to her oath and signaled that the delegation would be allowed aboard her vessel for a face to face meeting. She knew that no Nashani party could overwhelm her crew, and reasoned that the Nashani could in fact be physically intimidated in the tight confines of the vessel filled with warriors. Besides, if her old enemies did choose to start shooting at them, she would enjoy seeing a few of them die right before her eyes.

Upon the first meeting by the two species, the Medushaan were surprised by a great many things. The Nashani proved to be unshakable, and retained a sense of dignity and grace even with a warrior looming over each shoulder. Over the course of extensive negotiations, the Nashani made it clear that they were not the enemy of the Medushaan, but they could actually help them if they could speak with their leaders. Eventually the Medushaan would agree to bring the delegation to meet with representatives of the government, and the embassy was transported to the home-world. There, in obvious discomfort, the Nashani conducted themselves with unflinching courage and conducted their audience with the Regnar Sulam with deference, and respect. Many still harbored a distrust of their “guests” but came to

have a grudging respect for them.

In their meetings with the Medushaan leaders, the Nashani representatives had some very interesting things to say. Rather than coming with a list of demands of the weakened Medushaan, they came with offers to help defend their territory, provide technical assistance, open trade relations, and demilitarize their shared borders. In return, the Nashani asked that if they were attacked, the Medushaan would help defend their territory as well. The stunned and wary Medushaan could not believe the “generosity” of the offer, and the ensuing talks would drag on for months. Eventually, the Medushaan would win several other concessions from the Nashani, such as astrogation data and favorable trade terms. The proud warriors of the Medushaan would also not accept the stationing of Nashani ships in their space, but were all too happy to receive technical data and a mountain of intelligence information on the Centauri and other regional races. Even the most hawkish among the military establishment was forced to admit that the Nashani had never attacked *them*. The present situation only supported the probability that these aliens were dealing honorably with them. In the end it would be the Medushaan leadership’s view that while Nashani certainly could not be fully trusted in all things, particularly if they could assist them in fighting the Centauri, they would likewise be treated honorably. In their final estimation, they came to believe that they had far more to gain from a treaty with the Nashani, than they surely had to lose. Most felt they had gotten the better of the deal, and it was only a few that wondered aloud what would be the long-term cost of the agreement.

Weathering the Storm

In the years following the defense pact with the Nashani, the Medushaan did indeed rebuild and refit their forces, making them much more formidable than ever before. The Nashani had stayed true to their agreements, and had in fact provided more in the way of technological and material assistance than the Medushaan had believed they would. The tech that they received was largely that of the Centauri, and Orieni and even when a system could not be integrated into their own vessels, possession of an example

helped develop tactics to fight an enemy that did use it. The Medushaan economy also blossomed, as for the first time they were able to trade what they had in surplus for what they had little of. It would not be long before the new association was put to the test.

In 2001 the long simmering rivalry between the Centauri and Orieni boiled over into open war. Both Empires warned the Nashani and Medushaan not to assist their enemy, and not to interfere with their forces. Though the Medushaan at first believed that the threats were largely bravado, they soon learned the truth of the matter. When the conflict exploded in earnest, they learned for the first time that their prior conflicts with the Centauri were little more than skirmishes to the mighty empire. To see the claws of the Lion of Galaxy bared in full resurrected the old fears and feeling of inadequacy among the Medushaan. The realization that if the fleets of either Empire turned their full attention towards the Medushaan would mean total extinction of the race was shocking, and quite sobering. With no reasonable alternative the Medushaan joined the Nashani in declaring neutrality for the duration of hostilities. This did not mean that they were totally cowed however. When the peril of the situation became apparent, the entire race mobilized to prepare for the possibility that the war might come to them one day. If one of the mighty powers wished to come to Medusha, they would pay a toll in blood.

As the war dragged on, the combatants found their normal trade routes in the region blocked by the advances of their foe. To get around these blockades they simply sent armed convoys through space controlled by the Nashani and Medushaan. The Medushaan were displeased in the extreme to have the foreign vessels violating their space, but did little more than harass any convoys that they could locate. So it was that the Medushaan became involved in a sort of low-intensity conflict within their borders. Since neither side wanted the other to know that it was using the region for their convoys, they avoided being dragged into the larger conflict. Then the Nashani did something that confused the Medushaan at first.

A Nashani envoy arrived and declared that their space would be considered “free worlds” for the duration of the conflict, and that any ship from any nation wished to seek safe harbor, they could do

so under certain conditions. The Nashani representative worked tirelessly to convince the Medushaan to join them in the declaration, reasoning that since they could not keep the superpowers from violating their space anyway, they might as well make it seem as though they were actually inviting them in! The logic was lost on the Medushaan for some time, for their perception of the situation did not allow for the possibility of actually profiting from the situation. In the end they grudgingly agreed to join with the Nashani in opening their space, up until then an act completely unthinkable, when they came to understand that neither power would willingly accept the terms imposed by the declaration. In this way, they along with their Nashani allies maintained their neutrality while gaining the perception of sovereignty. Neither the Centauri nor the Orieni would ever avail themselves of a Medushaan port, but the situation did allow the Medushaan to “confiscate” a few ships from each power that did not abide by the terms of the neutrality. Though they were “Free Worlds” in name only, the Medushaan space lanes did remain quiet for the remainder of the war.

Tightening the Alliance, at a Price

With the conclusion of the Centauri-Orieni war in 2010, the Medushaan found themselves in perhaps the most secure position they had ever held since they had first traveled to the stars. The Centauri Republic, while still formidable, could not mount any serious attack on them. The Nashani remained loyal allies, and no other nation was in any position to threaten them. The historically insecure Medushaan had what they had always wanted, or so it seemed. Early in their space explorations, they had focused on finding and attacking their then enemy, the Nashani. The generations since had seen them either embroiled in conflict of one sort or another or under the threat of conflict. As a result, many of their early explorations were never followed up. Potentially, some argued, those unexplored regions could hold the next enemy waiting for the Medushaan to become weak. Even in their period of greatest security, the Medushaan managed enough paranoia to not only maintain their military buildup, but begin to explore the regions spin ward and

core ward of their space. The less militant favored the exploration in hopes of locating new resources while the more insecure and militant members of their society felt it was necessary to “find” the borders of Medushaan space and defend them.

For a century following the end of the Centauri-Orieni war, the Medushaan experienced a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity. All the while, the working relationship between themselves and the Nashani grew, with the strengths of each race complimenting the other. The Nashani opened new markets to Medushaan goods and acted as intermediaries between them and other races. The Medushaan in turn helped the Nashani to defend their borders and assist with the acquisition of raw materials. The Medushaan were particularly impressed that the Nashani would allow the Medushaan to simply “move in” to planetary systems within Nashani space, with the only condition being that the Medushaan share some of the raw materials that they harvested. In this era of incredible cooperation a few Nashani and Medushaan leaders began to quietly contemplate the possibility of a proper political union between the two races. By 2094, the talk had grown more public and even outlined the possible structure of a combined government. Even though many of both races believed in the benefits of such a marriage, there were some that were vehemently opposed it, particularly among the Medushaan.

Among the Medushaan there had long been a vocal minority that disliked the relationship with the Nashani. They felt that they were being treated at best as junior partners, and at worst, were being manipulated at every turn. When leaders began to talk openly of a combined government, the minority became even more assured of their convictions, and made outraged, impassioned speeches, to no avail. It became obvious that the most powerful members of each race was bent on a political union, and those that held that this was a betrayal of the race felt that they had no alternative than to do whatever it might take to stop the process. In 2095, on the Anniversary of the first “Gathering” on Medusha, the debate was finally over and the Civil War begun. The most influential of the dissenters, Regnar Rana Malas, took the floor in front of all of the other rulers of the Medushaan people and passionately argued that the Nashani were conquering her people. It

mattered not that they were using diplomacy rather than force of arms, the end result would be the subjugation of the Medushaan. She knew that she would find little new support in such an act, as the lines had already been drawn between the factions among the Queens. Instead, she hoped that her very public plea would gain her the support among the masses to make the move untenable for their rulers. To drive home her point, she declared that she would assume the mantle of Roshan for the rest of the Medushaan people, whom were being betrayed by their leaders. With that Malas and her supporters left the great meeting, and soon after that their forces pulled out to the fringes of Medushaan space to plan their next move. Though startled by the abrupt action, the other queens were not taken completely by surprise, and simply moved to blockade those worlds which might support the actions of the rogue faction. In truth, neither side wanted to see the political fight result in blood, but neither could they back down in dishonor.

Over the course of the next two years, Malas and her supporters would operate from prearranged secret bases in an insurrection that continued to stress propaganda over military might. They struck symbolic targets and Nashani vessels whenever they were able, constantly trying to drum up popular support for their revolt. They painted the establishment as the “Central Order”, and demonized them as corrupt pawns of the Nashani. Unfortunately for them, their pleas fell mainly on deaf ears, and by 2098, their support had dwindled and their supplies grew short. Malas learned that the Nashani were refitting a number of Medushaan warships of the Central Order at Rentamn. Desperation overcame the normally cautious separatists and they hatched a bold plan to capture both the advanced warships and the supplies they needed from the facilities. What they didn’t know was that the whole thing was a trap, and there were no Medushaan ships being refitted, but there was the combined battle fleet of Medushaan and Nashani warships lying in wait. Thus deceived, the “False Roshan” refused surrender, and declared her spite for those traitors to her race that would chose to side with the aliens over their kin while ordering her forces to attack. To the astonishment of the separatists, the Nashani ships began to move away from the fight, towards Rentamn Station, while the Central Order Forces charged

forward to meet the rebels. The advantage in numbers was in favor of the Central Order, but the separatists fought with desperation and the ensuing battle was savage, and brutal. In but a short time the two forces virtually obliterated each other, with the tide turning against the separatists with the death of Regnar Malas. Neither side had little fight left, with most of the surviving ships being little more than hulks, when a broadcast ended all of the fighting. Throughout both Medushaan forces was seen the image of the bloodied Regnar Sulam, the ruler of all of the Medushaan people, appealing for the carnage to end. She had led the forces of the Central Order in a daring gamble, and it would pay off as even the most ardent separatist lost heart for the fight. Soon, the Nashani vessels returned to the battle. Some feared that they were returning for the coup de grace, to put an end once and for all to the dissenters. Instead, they moved through the devastation and rescued the survivors of the battle, treating them without regard for which faction they had come with. This act of compassion, coupled with the general amnesty granted by the Regnar Sulam broke the separatist cause completely.

The last stumbling blocks removed, the Free Worlds Confederation was created by joint decree in 2102, with its capital in the Ushtal system. Though there would always be those that felt that it was wrong for one reason or another, never again would any faction take up arms against the new government.

The Wars of the Confederation

2120-2121 would see the first major test of the now Free Worlds Confederation. Several powerful Centauri houses sought to reclaim interests that they had lost in the border regions of the Free Worlds in the previous century. They would launch a series of assaults along the Free Worlds border, particularly in Medushaan controlled areas. Well fortified defenses and the first coordinated fleet actions of the Nashani with the Medushaan turned back these attacks, but neither race could mass enough forces without weakening their other frontiers to strike back at the Centauri. Then the Centauri Royal Navy decided to make a show of force in the border regions. Fearing an escalation to all out war, and well aware of what that had meant to even the once mighty Orieni, the Nashani

brokered a cease fire agreement with the Centauri. No territory was lost, but some Medushaan were angry at making any conciliatory gesture. The Medushaan were no fools however, and were forced to admit that the cease fire, no matter how repugnant, would allow them to bolster their forces for the next time the shooting started. They did not have long to wait.

The Second War of the Confederation would be fought between 2126 and 2130. This time, the Centauri would mount a major assault along the entire Free Worlds border with the Republic. Spearheaded by the Royal Navy and supported by numerous powerful houses, the attacks tore through the forward elements of the Free Worlds forces, decimating their ranks. The blitzkrieg attack caught even the Medushaan completely off-guard, and though they and the Nashani fought gallantly in defense of their territories, they were repeatedly forced back. Within a year 7 border colonies and outposts would be lost to the Centauri, with the Medushaan losing many more lives as a result of their planet-side populations. When the Centauri attacks finally ground to a halt along the powerfully defended inner systems of the Free Worlds, the Medushaan pressed for an immediate counter offensive. With much of their mobile forces smashed, there was little they could accomplish, and eventually they listened to reason and abandoned these plans, with the promise from the Nashani that one day they would return with the Medushaan to reclaim the lost worlds once their fleets were rebuilt.

For nearly two decades they two allies rebuilt, upgraded and drilled their fleets for that day to come. They watched as the Centauri pulled back some of the forces from the region, confident that they would handle whatever the Free Worlds could throw at them. To feed the confidence of the Centauri, the Medushaan regularly launched "psychological operations" raids into the Centauri held systems. These raids were carried out by older Medushaan craft with volunteer crews that "tested" the Centauri defenses, and almost never survived. It was not long before the Centauri felt they had absolutely nothing to fear from the Medushaan. They would be proven dead wrong when the Nashani and Medushaan finally unleashed their most advanced forces upon the Centauri in 2148.

Called by the Medushaan the "War of

Liberation”, the Third War of the Confederation began cautiously with the Free Worlds forces using hit and run attacks, and precision strikes to weaken the Centauri forces all along the border. When it became obvious that the remaining Centauri fleets were crewed by relatively poor hose forces, the allies became emboldened. Free World forces struck hard, fast and at random along the Centauri frontier. They had prepared well for the campaign and the constantly kept the Centauri off-balance and out of position. Unwilling to die for “wilderness” posts, many Centauri house fleets would simply abandon their bases in several of the contested Systems and concentrate their forces for the counterblow. In 2152 they launched their retributive strike aimed at forcing the Free Worlds fleet into the type of set-piece battle that they had avoided for several years. Confident in the sheer firepower of their force, the Centauri allowed themselves to be sucked into a trap in the Essekyre system where their fleet became englobed by not only an Advanced Nashani force using weapons that very nearly matched their own, but a huge fleet of Medushaan vessels which employed the most advanced weapons ever fielded by that race. Coupled with poor coordination between the house forces, and the tactical mistakes of the Centauri command, the mighty fleet was all but obliterated. While the Free Worlds forces sustained heavy damage, they retired from the action still a potent and powerful force in their own right. In the matter of a few hours, the combined fleet had managed to do what neither could have accomplished alone, and the day would mark the final attempt by the Centauri to conquer the region.

Another Enemy Comes

In the 2230’s another power staked its claim throughout much of the region’s former Centauri space. Moving into the area from their core-ward empire, the Shatu Imperium was technologically advanced and ruthlessly efficient. Rapidly they set about sweeping up the broken pieces of the former Centauri subject worlds, and with frightening speed had become a major player in the region. Though the Medushaan had few interests outside of their own territory, the aggressive push by the Shatu alarmed the security minded leaders of the Gynocracy. The rapid progress of the Shatu and the direction of their advance pointed to an

inevitable collision between the two. Preparations were started throughout Medushaan space to go to war for the first time in over a generation.

In late 2234, the Shatu began a series of hit-and-run attacks along the old Centauri-Medushaan border. There had been cross border skirmishes between the bellicose neighbors for several years, but the tenor of the attacks was different this time. Rather than the typical quick and dirty, small unit actions of the past, these incursions were disciplined and formidable. It was obvious to both the Nashani and Medushaan military establishments that they were testing the frontier defenses. The Medushaan would launch several spoiling raids into Shatu space, and they were all badly mauled for little return. Still, the Medushaan believed that they held an edge in numbers, and their government politely, but firmly, refused the offer to place a Free Worlds fleet along their border. While the Nashani believed that it was a mistake, but the Medushaan felt confident that they were able to see to their own borders.

Early in 2235 the expected thrust exploded into Medushaan space. The defenders had been forced to place their forces at several key locations, and the lack of concentration was telling as the Shatu brought the full weight of their strike force to bear on the most heavily defended Medushaan border system. Brilliantly planned and flawlessly executed, the plan was simple; defeat each of the Medushaan fleets in detail before they could link up, and gain an overwhelming advantage in numbers. While the Shatu easily outmatched the individual Medushaan warships, they quickly found that they had miscalculated the sheer number of fighters that were available to the Medushaan garrisons. What they had not known was that the Medushaan had stripped every fighter, from every outpost not immediately threatened by the possibility of Shatu advance. Those fighters were staged not only from ground bases, orbital facilities and carriers, but from hastily converted freighters and transports.

The massed fighter strikes from the Medushaan forces came at a staggering price to the defenders, but they blunted the advance of the invaders. Even as the assault fleet passed through the first shattered system en route to their next target they found their fleet train besieged by a surprise strike which served to slow them further, and more importantly spread their escorts

dangerously thin. The Imperium's planned blitzkrieg through the Medushaan defenders was in serious jeopardy if they could not maintain the tempo, but by striking the very center of the Medushaan lines, they kept them from knowing where the next hammer blow would fall.

The Nashani delegation to the Medushaan home-world offered again to intervene, and this time the Medushaan leaders relented, slightly. They agreed to allow a Free Worlds fleet, which meant primarily the Nashani contingent, into Medushaan space, but only to secure the core-ward flank of the Gynocracy so that the ships there could be pulled to the front lines. The move would take some time however, and the Shatu would not allow the allies much breathing room, striking again just days after their initial assault. The second battle was even more in the Shatu favor in terms of ships destroyed versus those lost, but they had been forced to a more conservative battle plan to guard against the Medushaan fighter swarms. The running battle lasted far longer than the Shatu had hoped, as the cagy Medushaan commander fought a brilliant fighting withdrawal. More important, she was able to send a warning along the now apparent axis of advance.

The Shatu still held the advantage in warships, what hurt them the most now was their lack of intelligence regarding the interior of Medushaan space. As their scouts fanned out to determine the best route of advance, precious time was being lost. Although the Shatu Fleet used the brief respite to consolidate their gains and effect repairs, they had lost the initiative, and with it the possibility of matching numbers against the Medushaan. But the Shatu had one more ace to play. When their scouts located the next target the force lingered just long enough to dispatch a courier to the second prong of their attack, from the core-ward side of Medushaan space. They gambled on the fact that the courier would arrive at its location, on time, and the second force would immediately jump to their target, and timed their advance accordingly. Though the second force was smaller, it should, they reasoned, face little opposition as it ran down the defensive frontier of the Medushaan to catch their fleet in between. It was a risky plan that depended on perfect timing and execution, but the Shatu were a very confident lot.

After just 3 weeks of operations the Shat assault fleet emerged from hyperspace and advanced

slowly, taking full measure of the defenders, and inviting them to come out to meet their doom. The Medushaan had made the best of the time afforded them, and had massed a huge force, much larger than Shatu intelligence had thought possible. The two fleets collided headlong and the cold vacuum of space became a furnace of destruction. The longer range weapons and better defenses of the Shatu fleet gave them the early edge, but the Medushaan forces pressed hard, using their advantage in speed and fighters. Though they hardly went alone, Imperium ships began to die. Even the most confident Shatu commander soon knew that any victory won that day would have been pyrrhic, and a withdrawal order was sent through the fleet. Besides, they reasoned, the Medushaan force would soon find itself cut off by the second prong of the Shatu attack, surely slashing through nearly undefended systems.

What the Shatu did not know, and would not find out until much later, was that the second prong of their attack had jumped into the teeth of a Free Worlds Battle group composed of Nashani main combatants that had arrived just hours ahead to secure the Medushaan flank. Though the Shatu did hold a tech advantage over the Nashani, the margin was narrower than that with the Medushaan. Worse still, the flanking force was composed primarily of the lighter and faster units in Shatu service, and found itself at a severe disadvantage in pure firepower. Outgunned, but unwilling or unable to abandon their plan, the Shatu attempted to break through the Nashani. They would inflict heavy damage, but eventually they would succumb to the heavier force. With the destruction of this force, the Imperium lost all hope of a quick success.

The situation devolved into a stalemate with the Shatu battering any Medushaan attempt to dislodge them from the systems they had taken. No matter how powerful their fleet was, the Shatu learned that their supply lines were increasingly vulnerable, and protecting both their convoys and their conquests from the constant Medushaan raids was a severe drain on resources. In effect, they were unable to profit from their gains because of the effort required to maintain them. The Imperium needed to breakout or they would have to withdraw completely, which was an unacceptable outcome.

Many in the Free Worlds wondered where the

Shatu would attempt to strike. None expected the deft diplomatic maneuver that came next. A Shatu ship carrying a diplomatic mission jumped into Nashani space and announced that it carried the authority to negotiate a cease fire, but that it would do so only with the Free Worlds government. The Shatu had rightly recognized that the Medushaan would not negotiate any settlement, directly. Though the Nashani maintained that the Free Worlds Confederation could not impose terms on the Medushaan government, they agreed to take the matter to the Confederation for consideration. Initially the Medushaan members of the Free Worlds government vehemently opposed the proposed negotiation, but they were won over by the Nashani who maintained that the Confederation would act only as the conduit for the negotiations, and that the Gynocracy would have the final say in any agreement. The Confederation would respect whatever the Medushaan leaders decided.

The following negotiations were relatively straight forward, as befit the natures of the belligerent races. The Medushaan demand was simple, the complete withdrawal of the Shatu from the worlds seized. The Imperium for its part demanded that the Medushaan abandon several outposts throughout the border regions which were little more than listening posts and staging areas for nuisance raids. Though the points seemed simple ones, it took months of wrangling with the Nashani acting as the mediators under the banner of the Free Worlds. In the end, the borders were set and an uneasy peace was reached. Thus far the peace has held, and the Medushaan have used the time well to prepare the strongest, and most advanced military that they have ever had. Considering the history of the Medushaan, that is quite a statement indeed.

Worlds of the Medushaan Gynocracy

Tisiph

The Medushaan home system, Tisiph retains a position of tremendous importance to the Medushaan people. Tisiph is quite literally the center of the Medushaan universe. Medushaan government, trade, culture and religion are all

centered on the system and the small moon of the race's birth in particular. The Medushaan religion holds that the home-world is actually a living being, and the mother of all the Medushaan, and the other moons and planets of the system are literally members of their extended family. As a consequence, Tisiph is the most heavily fortified, intensely defended systems under Medushaan control. So important is the system, and the home-world in particular, that the system is constantly filled with pilgrims from other Medushaan worlds. Ultimately, all respectable Medushaan, no matter the individual world of their birth, make a final trip to Medusha to be returned to the Mother's embrace.

Garra

The oldest of the Medushaan extra-solar colonies, Garra-4 is hardly a garden world by any standard, even those of the hearty Medushaan. Only through the extensive use of hostile environment habitats can colonists hope to survive for long. The colony continues to be a major supplier of minerals and exotic natural compounds even after centuries of development. In addition, Garra is home to the largest shipyard facilities in the Medushaan sphere, with facilities for both the central government and several individual rulers.

Life on Garra is not easy, but it is very profitable and at least tolerable. Much of the planet is dedicated to the acquisition and processing of raw materials, but the workers of Garra are well treated and well paid, and have some of the highest standards of living among the Medushaan.

Lecto

Unlike many of the systems occupied by the Medushaan, Lecto boasts as true garden world. Consequently, Lecto has the largest population of any Medushaan world, far exceeding even the home world. With other sources of mineral resources available, the Medushaan have never had to subject Lecto to the kind of massive industrialization seen elsewhere. Lecto has become the "breadbasket" of the Gynocracy with several transplanted species of livestock and vegetation produced for consumption throughout their space. Because much of the world remains largely undeveloped, Lecto has become home to

the Headquarters and primary training facility of the Gynocracy's standing army.

Sivorn

The Sivorn system is a heavily defended border system, and seen by some as a valuable position against any advance into the Medushaan "heartland". The small civilian populace of the system is there simply to support the military establishment. Sivorn is a favorite place for the Medushaan military to conduct exercises to "flex their muscles" for the benefit of their neighbors.

Sivorn was home to an early space age race when the Centauri first arrived centuries ago. During the early days of the war with the Orieni, that world attempted to break free from Centauri control. The crater-pocked surface of their home-world is now a constant reminder to the Medushaan of Centauri evil. Radiation levels have returned to normal, and the dust clouds have dissipated, but it is not believed that any of the original inhabitants survived.

Raphas

Located core-ward of Lecto, Raphas is the last of the three major Medushaan colonial systems, and the smallest. Explorations core-ward from Raphas have been thus-far fruitless, though the government and some individual queens continue to make periodic attempts. Additionally, the Gynocracy maintains a defensive patrol of several desolate systems core-ward of Raphas as a preventative measure. Since the appearance of the Shatu, these patrols have been of increased frequency and firepower.

The colony is constructed upon Raphas-2, which lies in close proximity to the system primary, and like the Medushaan home-world, is tidally locked. Drawing on their centuries of experience, the Medushaan have colonized the "cold side" of the Raphas-2, a colony that forms an important piece of the Medushaan industrial base. Expeditions from the cold side regularly brave the hot side of the world to collect exotic materials available almost no where else. This includes a sizable reserve of Q-40, which is quite possibly the largest in Medushaan space.

Unlike Medusha, there is no habitable "twilight zone" on Raphas-2. The colony facilities "on" Raphas are primarily "in" Raphas, with the above

ground facilities only hinting at the extent of the effort present. The largest surface facility is the large starport, which is also the headquarters for the sizable military presence in-system. Unlike most Medushaan systems, Raphas does not feature a large orbital defensive fortress ring, though there is still a respectable OSAT network. Most of Raphas' defenses are based from surface facilities and any threat will bring up an angry swarm of fighters and attack LCV/MCV craft.

Turga

Turga is a fortified system which is the primary bulwark protecting Raphas. There are no habitable planets in the system, but the Medushaan have built a naval outpost on the system's one stable Planet. The icy-cored rock of Turga-6 has only minor fixed defenses, but features a sizable force of fighters and attack craft. Typically the Medushaan high command keeps a patrol task force within the system, though these ships are not permanently stationed in Turga.

Medushaan Vessels

Parga-Class Attack Ship **(Base Hull)**

The Parga represents the latest generation of Medushaan fast attack MCV. Like its predecessors the Parga is fast, nimble and lightly armored. Where the Parga sets itself apart is in its superior firepower, sensor capabilities, and survivability. Despite being a fairly recent addition to the fleet, the mass production of the Parga has made it one of the most common ships in Medushaan service.

Darra-Class Attack Leader **(Rare Parga Variant)**

The Darra was developed to give a Parga-based attack squadron even more close-in firepower, at the cost of flexible attack options. While it was designed as a support craft, the raw power of the Darra's main armament has made it a favorite among Medushaan squadron leaders. As a result, the Darra is now employed primarily as an attack leader, though its numbers are still too few in number to provide one for each squadron deployed.

Scind-Class Attack Ship**(Base Hull)**

This older MCV was once the mainstay of the Medushaan fleet. Now replaced as the primary attack ship by the Parga, the Scind is still in widespread use, and will likely remain so for many years to come. Built to be an inexpensive attrition unit the Scind packs a respectable punch but is has several shortcomings including limited sensors and a thin skin. It is likely that the Scinds that remain in service will be converted to either the Vasta or Gula types as more Pargas reach service.

Vasta-Class Torpedo Boat**(Uncommon Scind Variant)**

The Vasta is a variant of the Scind which mounts a single kinetic torpedo launcher as its primary armament. Though incapable of stand-off bombardment, the raw damage potential of the kinetic torpedo makes the Vasta a welcome addition to any attack formation. Some have proposed converting all remaining Scind-class attack ships to Vastas, though this seems unlikely.

Gula-Class Screening Vessel**(Uncommon Scind Variant)**

The Gula was developed to provide Medushaan MCV attack squadron a greater ability to deal with enemy fighters without tying up friendly fighters in the escort role. By simply fitting the Scind hull with 4 Twin Ultra Light Plasma cannons and a single Gauss Accelerator, the Medushaan had a low-cost way to add fighter defense to attack squadrons without weakening the attack ability of the formation to any great measure.

Rixa-Class Heavy Warship**(Base Hull)**

The Rixa is designed to get in close and kill enemy warships, and trades defensive systems for offensive firepower. The Rixa is a common sight among Medushaan forces and provides heavy fire support for their attack MCVs. To fulfill its intended role, the Rixa is one of the faster vessels of its size. The Achilles heel of the Rixa is its poor anti-fighter/interception capability, though this is mitigated somewhat by Medushaan deployment doctrine.

Gann-Class Torpedo Warship**(Rare Rixa Variant)**

This Rixa variant mounts a pair of kinetic torpedo launchers as its primary armament. This gives the Gann a tremendous anti-ship capacity but restricts the overall usefulness of an already limited hull. As a result, the Gann has never been widely deployed by the Medushaan.

Malor-Class Medium Carrier

The Malor began its existence as a prototype assault transport in the 2220's. Quickly it was adapted to fill the need for a carrier that could embark a useful number of fighters along with the munitions that made them even more deadly. Originally seen as a stop-gap measure until a true heavy carrier could be deployed, the Malor has proven to be a capable and economical design likely to remain in service for a very long time to come.

Motas-Class Strike Carrier**(Uncommon Malor variant)**

A "modernized" version of the Malor, the Motas is the current production model of that line. The main distinction of the Motas is its ability to embark the Rava-class heavy fighter. In addition, the Motas features updated sensors and weapons systems. The Motas is likely to replace the Aging Malor as the primary medium carrier in the next decade.

Thax-Class Collier**(Uncommon Malor Variant)**

The Thax was developed to help ease the logistic strain of operating fighters and warships that expend large amounts of munitions in battle, making replenishment a key to maintaining their effectiveness. The Thax quite simply trades the large hanger space of the Malor for cargo holds and additional shuttles for transferring weapons to other ships. The Thax is a common sight among the ships of larger battle groups, or long-range patrols.

Larco-Class Destroyer**(Base Hull)**

An older but still useful hull, the Larco is a multi-mission destroyer with decent weapons and the ability to carry a flight of medium fighters. Originally

a purely offensive warship, the Larco is now best suited to escort and patrol missions in which its armament and fighters can counter a wide variety of threats.

Vena-Class Light Carrier **(Larco Variant)**

Based on the Larco Hull, the Vena features an enlarged hanger which can embark 12 medium fighters. The Vena is still one of the most common carrier hulls seen in Medushaan service serving in a wide variety of roles from escort, strike, and planetary assault support.

Occar-Class Jamming Destroyer **(Rare Larco Variant)**

The Occar trades the hanger space of the Larco hull for a limited ELINT system. This system is capable of using only defensive ELINT abilities with designers hoping that it could provide a low-cost way to better protect assault echelons against foes with long ranged-weaponry. The Occar is not intended for scouting duties, and is never seen outside of a larger force to which it is providing its specialized support.

Nocto-Class Heavy Cruiser

The Nocto is a multi-mission platform equipped with a variety of weapons, and embarks a squadron of medium fighters for defense or strike missions. Designed for the classic cruiser roles of long range patrol, heavy assault and “showing the flag” the Nocto is a very flexible unit capable of independent or fleet operations. The Nocto is one of the few Medushaan vessels constructed with a gravity positive section for crew comfort on long duration missions, a reflection of the intended uses of the design.

Culsh-Class Assault Cruiser **(Nocto Variant)**

The Culsh is the premier assault ship of the Medushaan fleet. The hangers have been modified to carry both assault shuttles and breaching pods, and the hull features an enlarged rotating section to house the compliment of embarked troops.

Keder-Class Battle Scout **(Nocto Variant)**

The Keder is the only dedicated scout vessel employed by the Medushaan and serves both as a survey and fleet support vessel. By removing some of the heavy weapons of the Nocto, Medushaan engineers were able to include both ELINT gear and a jump drive in the design. Because of its lineage the Keder is an extremely robust design, but the production costs of such a ship have severely limited the ability of the Medushaan to deploy the class in useful numbers.

Prada-Class Heavy Carrier

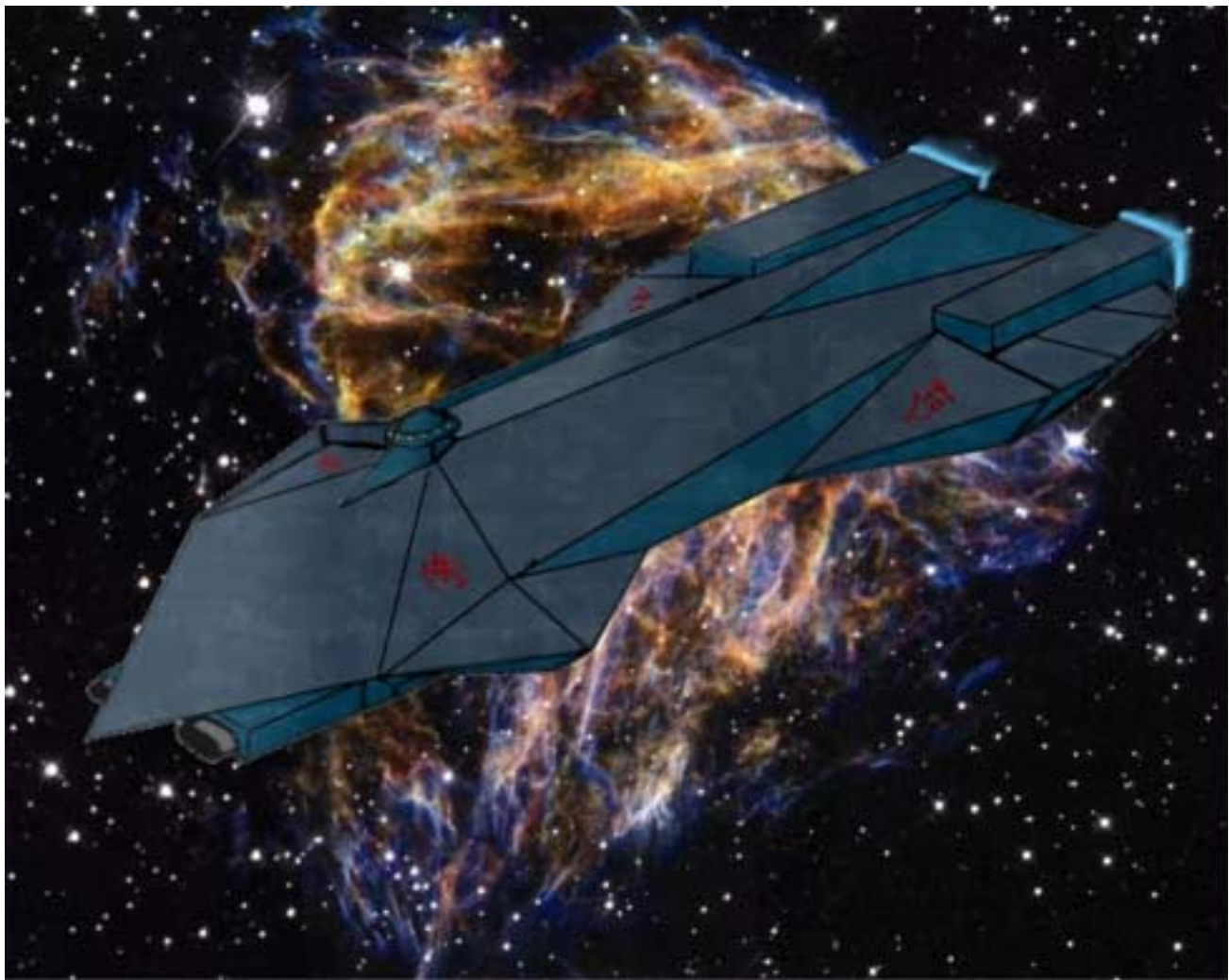
A purpose-built ship, the Prada is the most capable fighter carrier in Medushaan service. The load-out of the Prada is more than respectable with the main hangers capable of carrying 12 heavy fighters and each of the outer hangers holding 6 medium fighters each. The Medushaan hope to have a modified version in service within a few years that will be able to carry heavy fighters in the outer hangers as well. Obviously, this will greatly increase the already impressive strike capability of the Medushaan fleet.

Konar-Class Jumpcruiser

Because the Medushaan do not have large Q-40 reserves, they have long preferred to build non-combat jump-ships to support the strategic movement of their fleets. Though they have always had a small number of jump capable warships, particularly scouts, the Konar has been a true workhorse since its introduction. The Konar is a Spartan design even by Medushaan standards, though there is a gravity positive section for crews on long duration missions. The Konar conducts the vast majority of jump missions required by the Medushaan navy, though it is never risked in assault type missions.

Grumm-Class Battlecruiser

The Grumm is a fast battlecruiser designed to flank enemy forces and provide heavy support to Medushaan attack vessels. The Grumm has a potent anti-ship armament, and carries a squadron of medium fighters for area defense and strike missions. The greatest shortcoming of the Grumm is its poor armor protection as designers traded



protection for speed and maneuverability. Despite this, the Grumm is a popular choice of Medushaan commanders who favor the design's aggressive attributes.

Strag-Class Cattle Carrier **(Grumm Variant)**

A relatively new but well-received variant of the Grumm, the Strag trades some of the firepower of the battlecruiser for increased fighter capacity. The enlarged hanger facilities can embark 12 heavy and 12 medium fighters, making the Strag one of the most powerful Medushaan warships in terms of strike potential. Coupled with the hull's mobility and still useful offensive armament, the Strag is likely to become as common as the Grumm in years to come.

Roshan-Class Dreadnaught

A pure firepower platform, the Roshan is the most heavily armed warship in Medushaan service, literally built around two massive plasma decimators. Despite its raw power the Roshan is not very popular with many commanders who find the ship to be too slow and too vulnerable to enemy fire. Adding to this is the fact that the Roshan carries no fighters, something that most Medushaan commanders despise. Still, the Medushaan navy has a few of these beasts, primarily for the prestige that they bring.

Tarla-Class Heavy Transport

Most of Medushaan commercial material transport is handled by Nashani hulls. This arrangement suits the Medushaan just fine as it allows them to focus on supporting warships, but they do have a fleet of military support vessels

which are used to carry troops, munitions, foodstuffs, and all of the other items needed for sustained operations. The largest and most capable of these vessels is the Tarla, a big slab-sided beast of burden.

Tarx-Class Bomber

The Tarx is the last remaining LCV design in Medushaan service, ending a long line of light attack and support vessels. The Tarx was designed from the outset to be a bomber capable of carrying a payload of Blaze/Starfire bombs to help suppress enemy fighters, and soften up screening elements. In service the Tarx proved that it was too flimsy to survive in large scale fleet engagements, and too costly to throw away recklessly. In the end the Tarx was removed from fleet service, with those that survived transferred to garrison and patrol stations where they have fared better against raider type forces. Today, most remaining Tarx “bombers” have had their bomb racks removed in favor of an additional fixed weapon system, though there is no standard modification.

Rava-Class Heavy Fighter-Bomber

The Rava is the newest fighter deployed by the Medushaan and is a sturdy, non-atmospheric design which specializes in killing ships. The Rava is quite impressive in its intended role, though it is a limited dogfighter meaning that it is generally well escorted by other fighters. In addition to fixed weapons the Rava features a weapon’s bay which can carry a variety of weapons tailored to the intended mission with which the fighter is tasked. At present, the Rava is deployed in far fewer numbers than the older Tulas-class medium fighter, and those pilots that are selected to serve in Rava squadrons can be considered the best strike fighter pilots that the Medushaan have to offer.

Xad-Class Interceptor

The Xad interceptor is the half-sister of the Rava heavy fighter-bomber. Both specialized fighter designs came from a single “jack-of-all-trades” design originally intended to replace the Tulas in the 2240’s. While the original design was shelved as being too costly to replace the hordes

of Tulas in service, its potential was not lost on the Medushaan engineers. Rather than supplant the older fighter, they decided to develop the fighter to fill specialized roles that the utilitarian Tula just could not. Freed from the earlier restrictions the initial design quickly became two; a dedicated heavy assault fighter, a sleek interceptor. Unfortunately for the Xad, the Medushaan believe that the fighter is best employed against enemy warships, and have focused on production of the Rava. The Few Xads that have been produced are deployed in special squadrons that defend highly valuable assets.

Tulas-Class Medium Fighter

The standard Medushaan fighter for many years, the Tulas remains an important part of the Medushaan military machine. Though it has been replaced by the Rava as the primary assault fighter, the Tulas continues to serve the fleet in the escort and interceptor roles. In addition, it is an atmospheric design which is used extensively to support Medushaan ground forces as needed. The Medushaan navy hopes to deploy a new interceptor design within the next few years, at which point the Tulas will begin to be phased-out of front-line service.

Magla-Class Transfer Station

The largest orbital facility operated by the Medushaan the Magla are used as trade stations in Medushaan controlled systems. Because of the relationship between the Nashani and Medushaan, the Magla features a sizable zero gravity section for a resident Nashani population as well as transients. This arrangement gives the Magla a distinctive double ring configuration with the larger, rotating section being the Medushaan habitat, and the smaller non-rotating section reserved for the Nashani. Like all Medushaan facilities, the Magla features heavy defenses and armament.

Posta-Class Defense Station

A Posta is always the core of any Medushaan system defensive network. These powerful bases have replaced all of the older orbital fortifications in recent years and are potent forces to be reckoned with. The Posta features the most powerful weapons available to the Medushaan and carry a great many fighters. There is generally just

one of these bases present in a Medushaan controlled system.

Marsa-Class Heavy OSAT

This old design is only marginally effective in a modern context, but remain in service due to their reliability and availability. The Marsa is no longer in production and is being phased out as more modern designs become available.

Falk-Class OSAT

The most common OSAT in Medushaan service. A simple, rugged design with proven firepower the Falk forms the bulk of Medushaan OSATs in service. The inexpensive nature of the Falk allows for large numbers to be deployed in defensive networks.

Trada-Class OSAT

A very new design in limited service in a few key Medushaan positions. The Trada is the first unit in Medushaan service to feature the heavy plasma repeater. The Trada also benefits from an advanced power system that allows the satellite to mount a greater armament than ever possible before. The high unit cost of this OSAT is its single greatest drawback.

Mines

Obsessed with strong defenses, it is not surprising that the Medushaan make lavish use of mines to defend important places throughout their space. Several types of mines are in use, but the most common are the *Lasha-Class* Captor mines.

Experts and Elite Officers

The militant outlook of the Medushaan people has led to a great many individuals choosing the military as a lifelong devotion. As a result each branch of the Medushaan military is a veteran organization, and experts are widespread and respected. In addition to the more common expert officers available to Medushaan and other races, the Medushaan focus on fighter warfare has led to another officer unique to their military, the Strike Coordinator.

Medushaan Expert Strike Tactician

What the Medushaan lack in strategic sense is amply compensated by their tactical genius. No race is quite so quick to exploit a weakness, to recognize their own, and to profit from both circumstances.

-Shol Der-Vor Otani

The Medushaan are completely dedicated to the fighter as an offensive, anti-warship weapon. In addition to having some of the most tenacious pilots in known space, the Gynocracy has also produced some of the best Strike-Fighter tacticians ever seen. Veteran pilots all, many have crippling injuries that prevent them from flying. While they have all earned their reputations in the cockpit, they continue to serve the fleet by mentoring younger pilots. More importantly these experts plan and coordinate the strike missions of a ship's fighter compliment, seeing to the details and adjusting the plan on the fly in way that would be impossible to do from the cockpit when under fire. The Medushaan view the destruction of enemy warships to be the primary use of their fighters, and the destruction of enemy fighters as secondary to that goal. As a result, the narrow focus of the Expert Strike Tactician means that the bonuses gained by her fighters only apply when they are assigned to attack enemy ships, and do not gain bonuses when on escort or interception missions. If the Expert Strike Tactician is lost due to destruction of the ship or C&C from which she is operating, the fighters from that ship lose the bonuses associated with the Strike Tactician following the completion of the current turn.

Location: C&C

Cost: 25% Base cost of fighters embarked.

Availability: Other races may have as experienced strike tacticians, but the Medushaan have established a doctrine for their employment, so the cost for the purchase for another race would be double (50% base cost of fighters)

Bonuses of Having an Expert Strike Tactician: These bonuses apply to all of the ship's fighters

currently assigned to attack enemy warships.

+1 to Offensive Bonus

Jinking: The ship's fighters can use one level of Jinking without paying the thrust cost as normal. Additional levels of Jinking require the standard amount of thrust (calculated as though this "free" level were not being used). This bonus level does not count against the jinking limits for that fighter class.

+1 damage from all weapons "hits" on targeted warship. This bonus reflects the precise aim and guidance of the attacks.

Medushaan Weapons

Plasma Bolt Gun

The main anti-fighter weapon system used by the Medushaan fleet from 2189 until its replacement by the Twin Ultra-Light Plasma Cannon in 2236. Still used by some older designs, and in a new fighter mounted version, the plasma bolt gun is accurate and fast firing but suffers for an inability to intercept enemy fire, and from relatively limited damage potential.

Plasma Bolt Cannon

A somewhat successful attempt to increase the range and accuracy of the plasma cannon. Though not a great system, Medushaan builders used the design to replace the stalwart medium plasma cannon, preferring the "home-grown" system over those of alien powers. The technology was never fully developed into a large line of weapons as other areas of development eventually eclipsed the Bolt Cannon.

Twin Ultra Light Plasma Cannon

The Medushaan have always been impressed by the Centauri twin array, but have never been able to effectively replicate the system. In order to provide their forces with a similar system, the Medushaan developed a twin mounting for a scaled-down version of the light plasma cannon. Though the resulting weapon cannot match the performance of the twin array, it is a great improvement over older light weapons and is now found on nearly every Medushaan warship design.

Plasma Cutter

Based on captured examples of the Centauri plasma streamer, the plasma cutter has been refined for maximum damage potential. A very potent weapon, the cutter is hampered by very short range and high power consumption, limiting the usefulness of the design.

Plasma Accelerator

This weapon is simply a copy of the Centauri system and has been in widespread service with the Medushaan since the late 2100s. Becoming less common in modern Medushaan designs.

Plasma Decimator

An immensely powerful weapon designed with some assistance from the Nashani who provided key focusing systems. The Plasma Decimator is a huge weapon designed as a maximum damage, alpha strike weapon, found only on the largest Medushaan warships.

Plasma Repeater

The plasma repeater is a newer weapon becoming popular with the Medushaan. The plasma repeater can "store" several shots, releasing them in rapid succession. This suits the Medushaan particularly well as they allow the repeater to build a charge as their ships close to short range with an enemy, releasing a hail of plasma fire that is very difficult to defend against. When fired, each stored shot rolls to hit independently.

Heavy Plasma Repeater

This up-scaled version of the plasma repeater has impressive potential, but has only appeared on the new Trada OSAT. It is possible that future designs may be equipped with this system, though cost and maintenance are concerns.

Light Dual Plasma Cannon

A refinement of the basic light plasma cannon which has a pair of weapons in a single mounting. The system can be fired in a synchronized fashion to do greater damage in one shot, or each emitter may fire as a single light plasma cannon. This weapon replaced the light plasma cannon in

Medushaan service in the 2220s.

Dual Plasma Cannon

A larger version of the Light dual plasma cannon comprised of two medium plasma cannon equivalent weapons in a single mounting. The dual plasma cannon replaced the medium plasma cannon in Medushaan service by the 2230s.

Heavy Dual Plasma Cannon

A larger version of the dual plasma cannon comprised of two heavy plasma cannon equivalent weapons in a single mounting. The heavy dual plasma cannon replaced the heavy plasma cannon in Medushaan service by the 2230s.

Gauss Accelerator

A refinement of the Orieni Gauss Cannon which the Medushaan have had for many years. Through a series of refinements they have been able to combine the best qualities of the gauss cannon with weapons like the blast cannon. In effect, the gauss accelerator can be fired with a “full charge” that has similar characteristics to the standard gauss cannon. In addition, the weapon features a “rapid-fire” mode in which the cannon splits its charge to fire several rounds in succession. These rounds have much less velocity than a full charge shot, and therefore do less damage (and do not gain the benefits of matter weapons), but gain the ability to strike a target several times, more effectively deal with fighters, and intercept ballistic weapons.

The gauss accelerator is therefore a very useful weapon system, but is more costly and maintenance intensive than the gauss cannon. There is also a delay when switching modes, making the system somewhat tricky to employ at times.

Dual Gauss Cannon

Like the Dual plasma cannon, the dual gauss cannon is simply a pair of refined gauss cannons in a single mounting. Unlike the plasma weapon, the dual gauss cannon always fires both barrels in tandem. The System proved costly and less effective than hoped, and as a consequence appeared on few ships.

Heavy Gauss Cannon

A scaled-up version of the Gauss Cannon. Bulky and ammunition dependent, the weapon never saw much use on Medushaan ship designs. The system was widely employed in Medushaan OSAT designs of the 2100s and early 2200s where its relative simplicity and ease of maintenance were prized, and its bulk was less of an issue.

Kinetic Torpedo

The Medushaan answer to the ballistic weapons used by other races, replacing their rocket/missile weapons in the late 2100s. The weapon is simply a powerful plasma drive that rapidly accelerates an armored shell. The Torpedo carries no warhead as the heavy, fast moving projectile does ample damage when it strikes a target. The resulting weapon is simple, inexpensive and has no explosive that can be “cooked-off” in its launcher. On the down side, the Kinetic torpedo has little ability to make course corrections to track a target, and is very bulky, limiting the number of rounds that can be carried by a warship.

Light Kinetic Torpedo

A smaller version of the Kinetic Torpedo that is employed as a fighter carried weapon.

Starfire Bomb

Like its precursor, the Blaze Bomb, the Starfire Bomb is used by the Medushaan primarily as a deterrent to enemy fighters and to occupy the defensive for of an enemy force. The Starfire Bomb is a cheap, but potent plasma flash weapon that can force an enemy to evade it, intercept it, or run the risk of losing fighters or taking damage to their ships. Though the Medushaan have attempted to produce both LCV and MCV craft dedicated to carrying these bombs, they have found that their fighters remain the best deployment option being both evasive and individually inexpensive. Starfire Bombs are considered “Slow Ballistics”.

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Author's Note

This project represents our idea of what the Nashani and Medushaan could be, and is not meant to conflict with anyone else's vision of those races. Throughout the project we felt that we were better off creatively if we did not try to work within the context of other fan-created works. If the material within offends anyone who feels that we did not stay true to other, previously published works, we are sorry. We are both huge fans of the works of others that have kept this game alive, and hope that others will enjoy our contribution as well. Our hope is that even if you don't think this is how these races should be portrayed, you will "file off the serial numbers" and use them somewhere else in your personal universe.