THE MONITOR CELESTRA
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CONTENTS

STATUS OF FORM
INT. COMPLIANCE PER 23-3-B

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INTEL. CODE

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SYS. OP. LOG. CON. – NEG

COMP. ANALYSIS CON. – NEG

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SIG. ENHANCE CON. – NEG

SIG. VIEW CON. – NEG

SIG. SOURCE CON. – NEG

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 2

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FLT GRP 003

DATE 71/21354 REV 3	REP. OFFICER: MJ. Casanas, Senior IntInfExe, Minos Branch	SEC. DISTR. 545-8

PAY AND PLAY

The Monitor Celestra is a pay-and-play event, aimed at players lacking the time or inclination to spend hours preparing a costume and participating in workshops months before the game. It's a professionally run scenario for a mature audience who expect the best of quality in props, gamemaster assistance and writing - and are prepared to pay for the privilege. The ticket price includes a place in the game, a written character, a uniform on loan (if you play a uniformed character), developer contact and support the weeks before runtime, food, off-game sleeping arrangements, character-specific props (when such are relevant for the story), and a pre-game workshop as well as an after party. The game is set in a real world naval vessel redecorated, propped and lit to look and feel like a ship from the first Cylon War.

DRAMATIC LARP

The Celestra is a ship in a state of crisis, rife with conflicts. Active players will have no difficulty filling the 32 hours of actual gameplay with drama and high emotion. We intend to make solitary introspection and menial tasks into things to seek out, if you want to experience them, rather than main components of the experience. This pacing might seem intimidating to players used to slower fantasy games, but once you get into the habit of constantly seeking out new dramatic scenes, we believe everyone will enjoy having a game jam-packed with high-stakes interaction. The game will consist of four separate, thematically different episodes of fewer than 8 hours a piece. You will be able to freshen up, plan scenes and - most importantly - sleep during the breaks.

CASTING

The Monitor Celestra is a casted game. You sign up for an A, B and C classes. The ONLY difference between the character classes is how expensive their intended costumes will be. There is neither any qualitative difference in the underlying writing or player support, nor in the amount of authority wielded ingame. As an example, the officers and crew of The Celestra (Class B) have far more hands-on power over the ship than any colonial character (Class C), while any corporate suit (Class A) involved with the HERMES Project and the ultimate fate of The Celestra will potentially be able to overrule them all. After signing up for a particular class, you will be casted for one or more groups within that class, and may be offered to choose between pre-written characters belonging to them. You may also be offered a single character only, appropriate to the class, depending on the amount of sign-ups for the particular game you want to attend. We will do our utmost to accommodate player wishes for particular parts, and to maximize the fun by delivering a

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KAS 1470-742387

Please note if this briefing continues on a separate sheet

NO. OF SHEETS: 24

CURRENT SHEET: 3

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

Vergis Form OC-114 (REV. 3-65) AC/21321 GDD Submitted - FAR/EC

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DATA AND ANALYSIS GROUP

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Briefing
form OC-114

FLT GRP 003

well-designed challenge. As the only exception, the group of 500+ EUR crowd funders who risked their hard-earned money in the early stage of the project will have greater influence over their final characters. We promised them first choice, and will honour that. The character brief will consist of one part cultural info, one part group and subgroup, one part personal and relationships with others. All parts will focus on giving actual playing advice, and there will be tips and suggested interpretations for various facets of the character, as well as connections to the Letter of Resort - which is a short brief with out of character instructions on (primarily) intros and outros, handed out shortly before a new episode.

A LIFE-SIZED SPACESHIP SIMULATOR

While The Celestra is nowhere near the size of a Battlestar, she does boast a mind-bending array of sensors, missile launch tubes, heat sinks, a Tylium reactor, air-scrubbers, Solium exhausts, sublight thrusters, navigational computers, FTL-drives, safety valves, DRADIS stations, tactical targeting matrices, refuse processors, personnel record stations and scores of other systems that must be overseen and maintained. These duty stations will be active parts of the game, emulated through the use of a local network of a dozen or so custom-built consoles and screens, communicating with the gamemasters outside the ship. Every action performed at a station carries potential game consequences with it. We want to give players the freedom to steer and manage The Celestra as they see fit, prioritizing the scant resources available to have her perform according to their wishes. And pay for it, if necessary.

This means we are putting major effort into creating interfaces and motors with the look and feel of a Galactica computer system. Sound, ambient effects, mechanical interfaces (levers, wheels, etc), custom keyboards as well as one or two surprises, will make you feel like you really are controlling an antiquated spaceship in an unexplored part of space.

DRAMATIC SYSTEMS

The functional computer systems and the real-time sound feedback are just a part of the gameplay used to bring the Celestra to life. The Monitor Celestra will use simple and very physical systems (rules) to emulate fistfights, mexican standoffs as radiation as well as Cylon Projections to emulate that Gaius/Six psychodrama. Expect nothing even remotely like "no touching", hitpoints or rock-paper-scissors; The Monitor Celestra is a Nordic Style What You See/Feel Is What You Get - style game, so expect a fair bit of physical exertion, snuggling, half-contact brawling, and plenty of action.

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KAS 1470-742387

Please note if this briefing continues on a separate sheet

NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 4

Vergis Form OC-114 (REV. 3-65) AC/21321 GDD Submitted - FAR/EC

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BRIEFING

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DATA AND ANALYSIS GROUP

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NATURALISTIC SCIENCE FICTION

While The Monitor Celestra is fairly liberal in its treatment of the canon of the reimagined Galactica series; we religiously adhere to Ron Moore's core vision, as well as the series' constant commentary on, and exploration of, real-world political and philosophical issues.

We take as a given the idea that traditional space opera, with its stocky characters, techno-double-talk, bumpy-headed aliens, thespian histrionics, and empty heroics has run its course and a new approach is required. That approach is to introduce realism into what has heretofore been an aggressively unrealistic genre. Call it "Naturalistic Science Fiction."

There will be no aliens, no technomagical solutions to problems, and no stereotypical hero/villain characters. Science in the game will be somewhat simplified to make the game playable, but it will be based on 21st century theory, rather than make-believe gizmos, hyperspace communication and other black-hole-bending shenanigans. The atmosphere of The Celestra will have more similarities with that of a lonesome submarine in space, than with The USS Enterprise. Real people will crew her, and their decisions will make the difference between survival and destruction. No deflector-shield or failsafe Cylon-detector can save them. If you are interested in our approach to hard science, we recommend the book "The Science of Battlestar Galactica".

POLITICAL RELEVANCE

In interviews, Ron Moore often refers to the reimagined series as a show about post 9-11 America. Questions like "Why do they hate us," "When do your desperate measures to defend national security turn into all-out fascism," "Who is a freedom-fighter and who is a terrorist," and "Can torture ever be justified" constantly take centre stage. While these questions still hold relevance, we intend to explore political and philosophical thematic more immediate to modern day Europeans. We will not shove any personal agendas down your throat, but we will fuel this Sci-Fi drama with a healthy dose of real-world issues.

This is a game about being, and staying, alive in a time when racism and cultural prejudice are again publically included in the political agenda. It's a game about our irrational fear of The Other. A game about never being able to go back home. About escaping one kind of oppression, just to encounter another, in what you believed to be a place of refuge. But it's also a game about hope, and building a new life for you in a fresh environment. Of escaping stifling tradition, and reinventing yourself and your society on the ashes of the old world.

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KAS 1470-742387

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 5

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MORALITY

There is no "good" and "evil" in the world of Celestra. Good people do terrible things, and bad people engage in unexpected heroics. There are no moral absolutes to cling to, and no true heroes to look up to. People are just trying to get by, in a terrible situation. Try to play a person, not a white or black hat, and your game will be all the more enjoyable for it.

CAPRICANS VS. TAURONS

Cultural intolerance is a sad fact of life in the colonies. The democratic, capitalist Capricans see themselves as culturally superior to clan-, blood- and honour-focused Taurons. "Dirteaters" (a derogatory term for Tauron colonists) migrating to Caprica (often fleeing from persecution or poverty on their home world) are treated as second-class citizens. Most Capricans would never see themselves as racist, they simply love their free way of life and don't want any weird offworld customs to infringe upon it. Some organize in political movements and rallies, blaming immigrants for surging crime rates, honour killings, and exploiting the Caprican wealth without contributing in kind, like the parasites they seem to be. Intolerant Taurons, on their hand, see Capricans as orphaned and hedonistic creatures, ignoring their roots and only staying tied together by the senseless accumulation of wealth and the dictates of a faceless state. They care not for oaths, tradition or family. Their superior attitude is reminiscent of how Taurons were treated in ancient days, when they were slaves to the imperial Virgons and Leonides, more than 800 years ago. Those are not good buttons to push in a proud people.

PORTRAYING ETHNICITY, RACISM AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

Since ethnicity is a core part of the game, we need ways to easily separate Capricans and Taurons. First off, ethnic Taurons will mostly be present in the Celestra Crew, Vergis Corp and Tauron Civilian groups. This means costume and social group will be a good indication of the cultural origin of a character. Most characters belonging to these groups will be wearing the Tauron glyph as a part of their insignia.

Secondly, the majority of ethnic Taurons (weather they live on the home planet or offworld) sport markings on the hands and neck, sometimes even in the face. A few generations ago, these were almost always tattoos, ritualistically made permanent by priests using ink and needle. Nowadays, special ink-markers (temporary tattoo pens of the brand "Stargazer") are used to commemorate important life-events, personal triumphs, graduations, and oaths of allegiance. As the colour fades, the significance of the mark is considered to merge with the body and soul of

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| NO. OF SHEETS | 24 |
| CURRENT SHEET | 6 |

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND
THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE
OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

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its wearer. This fashion of non-permanent markings started when Ha'la'tha thugs were forced to start using "invisible" tattoos, in response to colonial police forces cracking down on the group during the '80's.

We encourage, but do not require, players portraying Tauron nationals to dye their hair black or dark brown. Temporary leave-in, or spray dye, costs less than 8 EUR and takes 20 minutes to apply. This is not a requirement; there are fair-haired Taurons in the series, even if the vast majority seem to have dark hair. Real-world looks are completely irrelevant to in-game ethnicity. You don't have to play a Tauron just because you have dark hair or a Caprican because you're blonde.

Any and all intolerant play must be focused on Tauron or Caprican character ethnicities only (excepting the frakking toasters of course). No bashing of "darkies," "blond bimbos," or other mundane racist remarks will be tolerated. To quote Edward James Olmos: "There is only one race, and that's the human race."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08VCkyG_C2s

SOME DEROGATORY TERMS FOR TAURONS:

Dirteater, Bullhead, Bullfrakker, Yoke-dragger, Dirtfrakker, Mudsucker, TT-banger (from Tauron Town, the main ethnic Tauron area in Caprica City), Ha'la'thista.

SOME INSULTS TOWARDS CAPRICANS:

Cap-trash, Master, Mistress, Sir or Madame (said with dripping sarcasm), Faithless, Godsless, Flowerfrakker (refers to the ancient Tauron belief that flowers belong to the gods and should not be worn, displayed or even seen by humans), Waste of seed.

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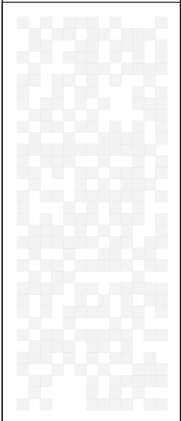INTELVIEW.
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STATUS OF FORM
INT. COMPLIANCE PER 23-3-B

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KAS 1470-742387

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 7

Vergis Form OC-114 (REV. 3-65) AC/21321 GDD Submitted - FAR/EC

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NORDIC LARP

The Monitor Celestra is a Nordic LARP. Since this is an internationally marketed and run game, allow us to explain some of the basic tenants of the tradition, and how they apply to this particular game.

Alibi - You are not your character. Full stop. You will not be held responsible for any of the actions your character performs on the Celestra. Be as nasty or lame as your character needs to be, and don't worry about being hated. We expect everyone to treat each other as their characters in-game, and as peer's off-game. Naturally, this doesn't mean you should break the rules, play to win, block initiative, screw up the game for other players, or engage in other odious player behaviour hidden behind the mask of the character. You'll still be in control.

WYSIWYG - What You See Is What You Get. Every character looks exactly like they the player portraying them. If you want to be pretty, use makeup. If you want to play a colonial marine, cut your hair short. If you want to be strong, lift some weights. This applies to almost all props and effects as well. A gun will be a metal or composite air soft gun or replica, a computer will be a computer running the correct in-game interface, and a toilet will be a cramped shipboard toilet.

Do touch - Hugging, slapping, wrestling, shoulder-slapping and kissing are normal ingredients of Nordic LARP. Your character may not like it, but as a player you are expected to be okay with normal physical contact.

Simulated stuff - Some things are simulated through simple rules systems; to make sure no one gets hurt physically or emotionally. Violence, sex, drugs, injury, radiation, and incarceration are among them. See below for the respective system. Also note that players who come to an agreement beforehand may want to up the ante, for themselves, and take it up a notch. They will still have to answer to Swedish law and sane, off-game consensus.

In-game consequences - If you do something stupid and/or risky in game, expect to suffer for it in-game. There are no safety nets protecting your right to do whatever you feel like during a game, and get away with it. Your character's actions carry consequences. If you make yourself very unpopular, for instance by defending Cylon rights, expect to be treated like shit. Most importantly, if you kill or severely hurt a character, be prepared to suffer the same fate.

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REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

NO. OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 8

Vergis Form OC-114 (REV. 3-65) AC/21321 GDD Submitted - FAR/EC

STATUS OF FORM
INT. COMPLIANCE PER 23-3-B

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RULES

Player versus environment (or rather, player versus Cylon, to be perfectly clear) and spaceship combat is intended to be highly competitive, while balanced and fair. You can try your damned best to fight the Cylon enemy in space, without risking to steamroll someone else's game or blocking their possibility to keep playing in a satisfactory manner.

The rules for player versus player, injury and death are ONLY meant to support dramatic role-playing. You are expected to play to lose, prettily. In a game where experiencing the journey is the whole point, winning is moronic. Losing, on the other hand, is dramatic and cool since it puts a spin on the story and contributes to emotional impact. Anyone looking for a balanced, combat intensive game where they can show off their real-life shooting and fighting skills should look elsewhere. Still, great fun can be had by waving guns, getting others to do your bidding temporarily and raising the stakes. Just like in the show. If you pull a gun, you should be prepared for a tense scene which could go any way - go with the flow.

SAFE-WORD AND GO-WORD

We use the established phrase "Cut" for safety and security. Yell "Cut!" when you need the game to stop for any reason. Then discuss what is going on, and return into character. There is no shame in using the phrase, it's a vital mechanic. You are not weak or stupid for using it.

To escalate a situation (if you want a rougher beating, wetter kiss or tougher argument than your co-player is delivering) use the word "Frakk" a lot. "Frakking kiss me!", "Frakk you motherfrakker!", "Get the Frakk off me" are all ways to ask for more intensity. Naturally, your partner is under no obligation to escalate if he or she feels uncomfortable doing so.

INTIMACY AND SEX

Humanity may stand on the brink of extinction, but that does not mean love and physical attraction are dead. Quite the opposite, actually. Danger excites, and love is the last thing humanity will lose.

In the Colonial Navy, sexual relationships between crewmembers should be authorized by a superior officer. In practice, this means an affair can only continue as long as it's discreet and does not interfere with either party's duties. In the Celestra Crew, casual and steady relationships are common and are seen as a good thing, a way of bonding. Outsiders may get the impression that they are quite a promiscuous bunch. Vergis researchers are usually married, or married to their

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NO. OF SHEETS **24**

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET **9**

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work. Lonely, lost and frightened civilians may well find comfort in each other's arms, and when it comes to matters of the heart, social taboos and the "wrong" clan may weigh very little indeed.

The rules for sexual play are fairly straightforward. When playing intimately with someone you do not know, the default limit is closed-mouth kissing. Hugs and caresses are fine as well, but no ass-/tit-/crotch-groping, please. Be sensitive. If something feels dodgy, move away or use the phrase Cut. When playing full-on sex, strip down to shirt and underpants and play out the scene by touching each other's shoulders, arms, back and hands while making appropriate noises. Remember: you are never forced to play on attraction of any degree whatsoever unless you want to. No relationship written into your character is static. It may end or evolve as both the involved characters do.

Avoid rape and sexually abusive relationships. They seldom contribute, and many are offended by even coming into contact with them. If things are moving in that direction, the players involved MUST discuss the issue at depth beforehand or during breaks. All parties must give their expressive consent. And you should think carefully about when, how, where and in front of whom you play the abusive scene.

DEATH AND INJURY

Celestra uses an episode-based rules system for injury and death. An episode is a coherent, 8-hour long session of play in-between breaks. The first day will have one episode, the second two, and the third and final day will have one last episode. There are four in all, so pace your game for maximal enjoyment. A varying amount of time will pass in-game between the episodes. Sometimes hours, sometimes a week. Play your injuries for all their worth. Don't put your head out if you don't want to limp around coughing blood for the next six or seven hours. And fear weapons. They have the capacity to change your game.

During Take The Celestra, the first episode, you can only be injured by external effects like radiation, electrical blowouts etc. You will never die unless you must leave the game, or if you have agreed to play a special character destined for an early exit. No guns will be fired during this episode, no knives will be drawn. The possibility for fisticuffs exists, but will only result in trivial injury. No torture during this episode.

Blood For Blood, is the second episode. Player vs. player conflict now starts for real. Fights will end in role-played injuries (no spontaneous deaths, only injuries) which will count as fully healed at the start of the following episode. If injured in a fight, you MUST visit a medic unless the damage is a trivial scratch. NO guns will be fired during this episode, limiting their use to taking

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 10

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hostages and controlling a room, temporarily. No torture beyond body-blows and threats, during this episode.

The third episode, But For The Grace of the Gods, turns it all up a notch. Gunshots may now be fired against other players. They will cause potentially life-threatening injuries. Torture may be used during this act.

During the last episode, Paradise Rebooted, the gloves come off. Any player can die during the last act, but unless obviously executed (shot in the head at point-blank range, stabbed to death by a mob of Cylon sympathizers), a medic can confer with the wounded and decide that the character has only been severely injured. If so, the player can rejoin the action after emergency surgery and shitloads of morpha. Expect a 50-50 chance of dying in the last episode.

INCARCERATION

A more common result of a conflict is being held captive or thrown in the brig, or reactor. When holding a captive, please abide to these guidelines:

Never compromise the captured player's ability to evacuate in case of a real world emergency. As a captor, you are fully responsible for this - all the way to the Swedish courts, if necessary.

Never leave the prisoner alone unless setting up an escape-scene. Playing alone in a cupboard is not fun.

Check straps/handcuffs etc often, and make sure the prisoner is being fed and given water.

If you or the prisoner start feeling bored with the captivity scene, it's time to mix things up and end the scene. As a prisoner, you can end the scene by giving the captors what they want, or making some other substantial offer or threat. The captor should say yes to this, as long as the offer is sincere and accepting it would be plausible. The captor can end the scene at any point by allowing a prisoner exchange or letting the captive escape.

No personal imprisonment lasts more than one hour. When this time has passed, it's up to the captor to end the scene.

Torture may be used during the last acts and ALWAYS brings a confession, unless stopped within a few minutes for a civilian or fifteen minutes for a hard-ass marine. Ha'la'tha are immune to torture. They do feel pain, of course.

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KAS 1470-742387

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 11

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Another good way to deal with criminals and enemies is to talk to the administration and get them signed up for reactor or engine duty. This is the way the Celestra Crew punish offenses. Anyone working the reactor will take heavy doses of radiation, and when the ship is at full burn these injuries may be fatal in the long term, and debilitating in the short. Being dumped into the reactor or engine can be harsh but interesting. Don't hesitate to chuck someone in there, rather than playing a boring imprisonment scene, but remember you're still their captor.

GREEN LIGHT = RADIATION

Space is empty. Cold. Lethal. And radioactive. If that wasn't enough, you're riding on top of an ageing Tylium reactor, in a boat carrying nuclear warheads. If you're on Celestra, you're gonna take rads. Should a radiological alarm be called in a room or section in which you are located - immediately turn on the green Rad-Alert light located by the light switches. Green light tells everyone that the area and everybody in it are exposed to potentially lethal levels of radiation. This may happen for a variety of reasons. Radiation varies in strength, so does individual sensitivity to radiation.

Radiation in the engine and reactor rooms is constant. You can handle up to one hour down there, without ill effects. More time than that, and you start feeling the effects. Being rad sick is not uncommon though, penal engineers work three hour shifts and make it for months until they are finally extinguished. Others keel over after two hours, dying in a pool of their own vomit.

A radiation alarm in any other location is serious business. After five minutes in a green-lit area, most people start to feel rotten. Not many can keep conscious more than half an hour. An hour in, most are dead - or will be, soon.

Playing radiated is fun. This is your chance for acting out disgustingly dramatic and suitably unpredictable symptoms. Read up them, or use your own imagination. The most important thing to remember is to decide whether you have crossed a line - will your exposure to radiation now kill you?

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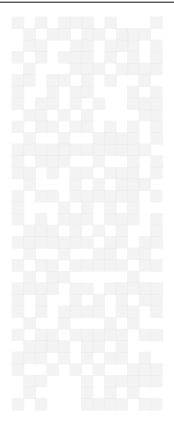
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KAS 1470-742387

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 12

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

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PERSONAL COMBAT SYSTEM

Personal combat is about creating cool scenes and moving the story along. It's never about winning. Sure, there are ways to get momentary gain by taking a hostage, grabbing control over a console or dominating a room. The cramped conditions on the Celestra means everything you do is likely to come back and haunt you, and next time you might be the one held at gunpoint. The rules for personal combat are as follows:

WEAPONS

All weapons belong to the game and can be freely stolen or confiscated. Keep track of your gun/knife.

UNARMED

Softly, softly and the bigger crowd wins. Use controlled half-contact grappling/fist fighting. Touch your opponent, lightly, or not at all. Don't swing half a meter off in the air. Aim for the arms and chest away from sensitive areas. Don't strike the face, unless you're safe with administering a safe slap. Usually, a blow is only meant as a strong gesture, not the start of all-out mayhem. If your character is reasonably cool and kept together, they probably react to a blow by wiping their face in pain and go "Good shot kid, I get your point." Play on every blow as if it was solid, unless the character hitting you is an obvious wimp. In full on fighting, the one who ends up with their back to the wall or the floor is controlled by their opponent and can be strapped, held in an arm lock or is otherwise "beaten." In a confrontation between several opponents, the side with the most combatants will end up winning unless one of them is a giant, a known boxer or a marine. Marines always win unarmed confrontations with non-marines. Be VERY careful when engaging in fisticuffs in the ship, since it's constructed out of metal and there are plenty of places to bang your head. Don't be an idiot and start a fight in an obviously unsafe place.

KNIVES AND OTHER MELEE WEAPONS

Knives equal control. Guns trump knives. The Ha'la'tha are known for their daggers, and there are many blunt implements to use as batons on the ship. Melee combat is always role-played, and is not a competitive sport. All weapons are blunted replicas, no latex or boffer-weapons will be used. When a knife is drawn in a fistfight, the side with the knives automatically win unless outnumbered two to one. If a knife is placed threateningly against you, DO NOT FIGHT BACK. If you even see a knife being drawn, back away or yield. The person holding the blade is responsible for playing the scene according to the rules of the current episode, whether that means taking someone prisoner, letting the hostage go, dropping the knife or cutting them "as a warning." A

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NO. OF SHEETS	24

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CURRENT SHEET	13

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knife-wielder may be forced to drop the knife if someone pulls a gun on him or her, which instantly ends the knife scene. Other possible ways of defeating a knife-wielder include confronting the person with more knives, or with someone obviously more proficient at melee combat (such as a laughing Ha'la'tha goon with two knives and a bare tattooed chest). Also, the side with more knives wins the combat. Knife play is fun because the stakes are high and the weapons are pretty. Never turn knife threats and standoffs into actual fighting. Never.

GUN STANDOFFS

A gun controls a room until another gun is pulled. It happens in every other episode of Galactica, so you can bet it will happen on the Celestra. Someone pulls a gun to get what they want, be it Solium vented into the Tauron refugee area, a torpedo fired on an allied ship, a prisoner exchanged back to the Ha'la'tha or a room cleared of everyone but their sister. The rule is simple: they get what they want, whereupon the gun is holstered or otherwise removed from play. It's the responsibility of the whole room involved to play up the lethality of the situation. In reality, it can be pretty easy to disarm somebody, especially a noob larper, but that is a BAD AND BORING solution. In play, give the gun wielder full attention and do exactly what they say. Not necessarily rapidly or without crying, cursing, threatening etc. When the gun wielder has gotten what she wanted, it is her responsibility to get the gun out of play - by running away (good luck with that), holstering the gun, dropping it and surrendering, or stand down in some other way. You can never stop someone brandishing a gun from getting what she wants, except by pulling another gun. The second gun now trumps the first. Control shifts to the most recent gun wielder. Either side can naturally pull more guns. When all of them are out (in general, allow 5-10 minutes for this, so players can make something out of their pull and not immediately be neutralized) the side with the most guns gets final control over the scene. Yes, dual wielding counts as two guns. In a tie, the side with the biggest guns achieves control.

GUNFIGHTS

In the two last episodes, either side can end a gun standoff by opening fire. If the superior side with superior arms shoots first, and no one returns fire, they eliminate (killing or severely injuring) the person they fire upon. Then the scene is over when they leave or remove their guns from play. If the inferior side fires back, the scene turns into a fire fight. The superior side will receive as many downed people as the number of guns on the inferior side. Their injuries are potentially lethal. The inferior side will ALL be mowed down. Any unarmed bystanders on either side will automatically take stray bullets and drop, during the fire fight. The most important rule for this kind of showdown is HAVE FUN! Even if you know you will be injured and defeated, take cover and pop off a few rounds before exposing yourself and getting shot. Make sure the injuries

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NO.OF SHEETS: 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET: 14

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seem logical and cool. While acting out the scene, the superior side may temporarily lose their advantage (someone runs away, drops their gun or just freezes when fired upon). That's okay. The scene is determined by numbers when the first shot is fired and one single person can pick off the other side one by one after that, if all his or her support happens to get whacked in the first salvo. The outcome is never in question, and playing to win is for asshats anyway.

THE TWELVE COLONIES: BACK-STORY AND HISTORY

The back-story to the Twelve Colonies (with the exception of Kobol and the 13th tribe) is largely irrelevant for the main drama of the TV series. The same goes for the game. This is a story about normal people caught up in the struggle for the survival of humanity, in the face of extinction and ethnic struggle. Not about ancient empires, or the political intricacies of the post-cylon war era. Nevertheless, some plots and themes in the game will connect to the history of the colonies. Players may want to refer to past events, wars and powerful people of the past to illustrate their character's views, add a feeling of realism or make a point. That said, you don't need to learn all this by heart. This info is optional. The minimum of information you need to be able to play is what was shown in the miniseries on TV (before the episode "33"), having read through and digested this compendium, your character information, and the Letters of Resort you will get at the game. As long as you're comfortable with the level of your own in-depth knowledge of the gaming universe, we are too.

The general guideline is this: If it has happened or exists on our Earth, it's happened on the Twelve Colonies under a different name. The Vietnam War becomes the Saggittarion War. Morphine becomes Morpha. The Second World War becomes The First Cylon War. The internet becomes The Holoband. Basketball becomes Pyramid. Marie Curie becomes Inira Halloway. The rule of name-switching is not absolute, only a tool for improvisation. You have no need to memorize all of the (very incomplete) colonial history and culture from wikis, comics, novels or the TV series. Instead, use real-world events, people, places and products. Change the name, and place the whole thing in the rough framework of colonial history and culture given below. Please note, though, that even if most characters should know what you are going on about in a rant about Spunga Cola, the actual players may not get the reference.

Tech-level through colonial history: The colonies were founded 2013 years ago by the Lords of Kobol (now often known as the Gods) and their human followers, the colonists. Technology has ebbed and flowed from that distant time, but mostly stayed close to 21st century levels (plus limited range Faster Than Light space travel). A modern day earthling would feel right at home during most epochs of colonial history. Some notable exceptions include the Dark Ages of the

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 15

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colonies, when only Virgon and Leonis kept the secrets of space travel intact, and used them to enslave the rest of the colonies (trapped in various stages of development, comparable with medieval times up to the late 18th century). The era just prior to the Cylon War is another exception, when deep-space exploration, holoband technology and the development of true Artificial Intelligence ushered in a golden age. Some claim that the very first colonists, as well as the Lords of Kobol, controlled machines far beyond the imagination of modern man. Whatever the truth of that statement, colonials sometimes find the inventions of past ages to be superior to their modern counterparts, and the rediscovery of past achievements forms a major part of research efforts.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLONIES

"All this has happened before, all this will happen again"

KOBOL

Science and religion agree. Life here began out there. According to the sacred scrolls, mankind's cradle is the legendary planet of Kobol. Here humans lived side by side with the Lords or Gods of Kobol. Rationalists tend to view them as mythological distortions of political leaders, while religious folks believe in their legendary powers and near-immortality. These Lords fought terrible monsters and forged order from out of the primal chaos of deep space. There were hundreds of Gods and Lords, their names are familiar to modern colonists through their common use as brand-names, names of warships and nicknames for individuals. An earthling transported back in time to the age of The Colonies would recognize their names primarily from Greek mythology, but also spot the names of Aesir, Egyptian, Sumerian, Celtic, Aztec and Hindu gods among their ranks. On the idyllic Kobol, man was divided into 13 clans and lived in perfect balance and peace. But as the scrolls tell it, trouble crept into paradise. The first sign of unrest came 4000 years ago, as the 13th tribe emigrated, were exiled or fled persecution - depending on which archaeologist you ask. According to legend, they found a planet called Earth to call their own. This marked the first civil strife among the Gods. Two thousand years later a third of the Lords rose up against Zeus or Jove as he is known on Tauron. Led by an unknown Lord sometimes called Prometheus or Ahriman, the twelve tribes of man escaped the land of the Gods to forge their own fate among the stars.

To an earthling, this age would represent the time of myth. Any legend or fairy-tale from Earth may have happened on Kobol. Magic, monsters and gods were real in this age. At least according to the religious.

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 16

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THE TWELVE COLONIES

Following ancient prophecies, the rebel Lords and their human followers found the quadruple yellow-star system Helios. Likely unique in the Milky Way, Helios Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta boast no less than twelve habitable worlds, and several moons with atmosphere. Mankind settled first on Gemenon, now the centre of religious life in the colonies, and spread out from there. Each tribe would eventually find a world to call their own.

This is a time of exodus, and the start of an ancient golden age. The time when Egypt and Mesopotamia were dominant parallels this era. Just add spaceships and forgotten high-tech.

THE DAWN OF WAR AND THE DARK AGES

As the Lords of Kobol faded from history, an urge for war took hold of the hearts of the colonists. Planet rose against planet. Nuclear and conventional warfare reversed the progress made by the Lords, and left the Twelve Colonies in a dark age. These ancient wars are still referred to in political rhetoric, but are so numerous and bloody that almost any perspective can be defended by quoting some ancient crusade.

To an earthling, this turbulent time would seem very similar to the middle ages of Asia and Europe, with constant plague, war, religious strife and the rise and fall of dynasties. But with spaceships.

THE IMPERIAL AGE AND COLONIAL LIBERATION

From the rubble of the dark ages rose two dominant imperial powers; Virgon and Leonis. The rival colonies established order and introduced many of the cultural norms that are now seen as typically colonial. For instance Caprican language is really a merger between Virgon and Leonis tongues. Virgon and Leonis held power over the Twelve Colonies for almost 500 years before any uprisings or claims to freedom started. The last colony to win their independence was Tauron, 850 years ago.

The history of Earth covers many imperial ages, but this era most clearly resembles Roman hegemony in Europe, Chinese dominance of the East, and the rule of the British Empire in the 19th and early 20th century.

THE COLONIAL AGE

With independence, the colonies were left to their own devices. World's poor in natural resources stagnated, while wealthier planets became cultural leaders of their respective systems. During

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REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

NO.OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 17

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this time, the frantic competition (and sometimes cold war) between Tauron and Caprica begins. This, and the following space age, is remembered by Taurons as their glory days, when they could rival Caprica in wealth and prestige. Many believe the good times have now returned, as Tauron is once again rising to prominence after two devastating civil wars.

The dominant (industrialized and resource-strong) worlds of this era include Caprica, Tauron, Libra and Canceron.

This time is reminiscent of the early 20th century, with the industrialized world's using commerce, ethnic cleansing, religion and superior firepower to dominate the developing worlds. Many of the tragedies of the equivalent period on Earth have their counterparts on an even larger scale, during this time.

THE SPACE AGE

The wealth accumulated during the colonial age allowed the Twelve Colonies to reach out and touch the stars again. Vast fleets set off into the dark to search for legendary Kobol. Nearby star systems were colonized and vast corporations rose as the mineral wealth of deep space allowed the construction of orbital factories. There are still secret bases and small settlements left from this age of expansion. Scavengers and exploration teams still come upon technology and cultural artefacts from roughly a century ago, and marvel at the achievements of their grand-grandparents. This age sees the construction of the first massive colonial fleets since the dark age, and many offworld wars are waged. Some are secret affairs, while others make the headline news. The fighting never touches planetary surfaces. If there was a winner in this space race, it would be Caprica. Through sheer audacity and wealth, this upstart colony (she was last to be settled, only 400 years ago, and before that she was home to tribal iron-age "natives" left over from the dark ages) gained total cultural dominance over Helios Alpha, and later over all of the colonies.

This age has similarities to the rise of US global cultural dominance in the aftermath of the second world war, as well as to the covert warfare of the cold war.

THE TAURON CIVIL WARS

In 1912 AC (After Colonization), a ragged band of farmer-clans calling themselves the Ha'la'tha took on the security forces of the Heraclitos government. After a prolonged struggle involving more and more civilians, the Ha'la'tha were defeated by an administration backed by Virgon and Leonis. The following purge was an attempt at all-out genocide. Freedom-fighter leadership was forced underground and offplanet. They gradually changed into a criminal cartel, claiming to support "the old country," while in reality defending their own interests and profit. The Ha'la'tha

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KAS 1470-742387

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 18

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

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is still the largest criminal syndicate in the Twelve Colonies.

When a second civil war tore through Tauron, just before the First Cylon War, the Ha'la'tha betrayed their ideals by preferring to protect their interests on Caprica and other adopted home worlds, instead of supporting the home front. This infuriated many of its members, among them a Tauron cabal on Caprica, close to Graystone Industries. These unnamed Ha'la'tha patriots eventually managed to smuggle several battle-groups of U-87 proto-Cylon Centurions, as well as conventional arms, back home. Their efforts were used against the unofficially Caprican-supported dictator Andreas Phaulkon, who was eventually defeated. This big leap forward for the free Tauron cause brought with it a period of great economic growth. Another result was the rise of civil liberties, and civic support systems in which families helped each other.

THE RISE OF THE MONAD CHURCH AND THE STO

Gemenon, the twin planet of Caprica, is a desert world. Even at sublight speeds, travel in-between the two is fairly rapid. Gemenon has always been the centre of religious life in The Twelve Colonies. Here, The Pantheon is situated - a gigantic temple complex in which every single one of the thousands of Lords of Kobol is worshipped. The general population of Gemenon has always been hyper-traditional when compared to modern day Capricans, or even Taurons. The planet has spawned hundreds of heresies and cults, sweeping through The Twelve Colonies at different times. None has been as infamous as The Monad Church, propagating a belief in The One, an all-powerful creator entity with absolute knowledge of good and evil, promising a paradisiacal afterlife to any who martyr themselves in His name. This god is seen as the antithesis of colonial relativism and religious tolerance. The faith rose to prominence in the years preceding the Cylon War, with a pope-like Blessed Mother as the head of the organization. Their ties to the terror cells of the Soldiers of The One (STO), and involvement in the tragic Maglev Bombing of 1955, were widely known. Jurisdictional problems kept Caprican officials from pursuing the organization on Gemenonian soil. In the years leading up to the Cylon War, Monads and the STO acted like as a Cylon rights organization, officially declaring the cybernetic life forms to be sentient and in possession of a soul in 1956. Most humans didn't give a frakk about any virtual church for toasters, instead concentrating on survival during the genocidal Cylon attacks on the colonies, but the stigma against monotheism from those times still remains strong.

The insignia of the Monad Church and the STO is an infinity symbol.

This phenomenon is a direct parallel to real life monotheistic extremism, both western and eastern, lacking only central redeemer figures and prophets. Modern day religious fanaticism, with hateful rhetoric's and absolute moral certainty, is reflected in the idea of the Monad Church. The

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NO.OF SHEETS 24

REPORT DOCUMENTS WITH MISSION LOG-DATA AND THE TRANSCRIPTION OF TRANSMISSION TO THE OFFICER STATIONED ON DUTY

CURRENT SHEET 19

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STO is based on a skewered understanding of martyrdom and holy war.

GRAYSTONE, VERGIS AND BIRTH OF THE CYLONS

After the "Apotheosis Incident" of 1955, where U87 Cylon marines managed to prevent a major STO bombing of the Atlas Stadium, cybernetic life forms were seen everywhere on Caprica. Many parts of colonial life were suddenly redefined, as the officially pseudo-sentient machines became mankind's servants. While fringe groups tried to warn of an impending disaster, people trusted in the safeguards placed on the machines. The comforts provided were well received. Doubters were silenced and ridiculed. During the five years between the Apotheosis Incident and the Cylon War, any who could afford buying one of the machines from Greystone or Vergis stopped needing to work for their living. A time of unsurpassed wealth and decadence ensued. None, neither at this point nor later, were aware of the fact that the supposedly strictly restrained artificial intelligence inhabiting the metal shells in reality was the uploaded consciousness of a teenage girl (Zoë Graystone). In 1960, Caprica and Sagittarion once more came to blows over interstellar borders and trade-rights, both sides using Cylon troops against the other. Following a particularly massive machine battle, the Cylon War began. This chain of events has led some to claim that humans provoked the cybernetic life forms into becoming a warlike species. Which naturally would be frakking bullcrap. Or is it?

THE CYLON WAR

Everyone lost someone they know or are related to, to the Cylon menace. The war started suddenly, with every single toaster in the colonies rebooting for a mysterious upgrade, and then marching off to assembly points where hijacked freighters whisked them off to predetermined staging locations. A day later, the first attacks began. In the beginning, various Cylon models fought with whatever they could get their stainless steel hands on - stolen weapons, hacked industrial machinery, civilian aircraft used in kamikaze runs. As soon as the machines gained control of orbital factories, they started to standardize. The Centurion soldier, and the original disc-shaped Raider fighter plane, were the first and most successful Cylon-built weapon systems. They were far from unique. Almost every mechanical nightmare imaginable was constructed and unleashed on humanity during close to a decade of war. After a few initial human victories, the Cylons started using their superior electronic warfare capabilities to unleash a stream of viruses and hacks which forced the highly networked fleets of its time to their knees. Humanity had no real chance of victory until all colonies united by signing the Articles of Colonization. The invention of the deliberately low tech Battlestars was also a significant step forward. The war was long and brutal, eventually ending in a tenuous cease-fire and truce. Why the Cylons, on their hand, chose to end the hostilities is still unclear. Their retreat to an adopted home world beyond

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NO. OF SHEETS 24

CURRENT SHEET 20

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colonial space, and further exploration of the west arm of the galaxy, are generally seen as prime motives. After so much mutual destruction, no one expected the Cylons to ever return.

THE GREAT BACKLASH

When the war ended, dirty jobs previously done by robots still had to be done. Corporations and national industries started hiring war-veterans, displaced refugees and widowers to fill their shoes, aided in their efforts by wartime rhetoric's. The result was a return to slavery, and extreme gaps opening up between the rich and the poor. Sagittarion, for instance, became a heavily industrialized labour-planet where workers were seldom given more rights than the machines they replaced. Under these conditions, Tom Zarek and his Sagittarion Freedom Movement quickly gained popular support. Mr Zarek remains the most quoted labour rights activist in the Twelve Colonies, despite the bombing of a government building in the past. Post-war Caprican economy recovered by moving manufacturing offworld, where workers were less accustomed to humane working conditions. Tauron made it through the recession by sheer stubbornness, supported by the patriotism of its clans and families. They chose to nationalize many corporations and opted for a planned economy and a solid, clan-operated social security system. As a result, Caprica and Tauron have emerged as two of the wealthiest and most influential colonies of the post-war era.

On Earth, the great backlash mirrors the current economic crisis, as well as the emergence of China as an economic superpower. This period also involves similar exploitation of natural and human resources in poorer and less developed areas.

FORGETTING ABOUT THE CYLONS AND THE ADAR/BALTAR DIGITAL RENAISSANCE

Close to fifty years after the cease-fire, in the very recent past of our game The Monitor Celestra, it seemed extremely unlikely that the Cylons would ever return. Bans on AI research, networked technology and the Holoband started to look antiquated and counterproductive. The Holoband WAS used, but not for the immersive, full-sensory illusions it was originally designed to host. Instead, it carried the HoloNet, a simple two-dimensional internet which in reality was military "safe" networking being put to civilian use. Most citizens used connected devices without worrying about Cylon viruses. The champion and public face of this re-networked society was Aerilon computer scientist and all-round genius Gaius Baltar. He eloquently convinced many, among them president Adar, that the time had arrived to re-evaluate restrictions on limited artificial intelligence and networking. The CNP (Command Navigation Program) allowed coordinated space jumps and cross-colony communication over data-streaming FTL-capable buoys. This system was the first major networking effort undertaken in the post-war era. Most citizens saw digital technology as something not to be used flippantly, which made computer games and virtual

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worlds into quite suspect pastimes. Many citizens (especially those of the older generation) still did not look kindly on any form of computer use, no matter the reason for it.

The gradual resurgence of digital technology (especially on Caprica) brings to mind the meteoric rise of the internet, in recent Earth history - with all the controversies connected to leading a virtual life.

A FRAGILE ALLIANCE - RECENT TROUBLES

The Articles of Colonization ended the age of sovereign colonies. The document, drafted 52 years ago, was seen as a great civic development in the warring days. In theory, it guaranteed every colonial citizen equal rights and legal protection. It is very similar to the US constitution, on Earth. The colonies retain rights comparable to some of the more anti-federal states, or most EU member states if you will. A huge deal with the Articles is that it created the Colonial Fleet, Marines, Army and Air force. One massive military organization now spans across all of the colonies. But that has not meant the end of armed conflicts. Insurgencies by freedom-fighters, the actions of terrorist groups, salvager/pirates, religious fundamentalists and sometimes even colonial governments are still cause for alarm. In a matter of weeks, most conflicts can be put to rest by the colonial war machine. That said, being a soldier in the colonial military is more like belonging to a foreign police-force, than an actual army.

This recalls the function of the US armed forces during recent years, where it's all about protecting national and corporate interests in foreign lands. Responsibility to civil authorities, recruitment, tours of duty and other aspects of the two systems are pretty much identical.

COLONIAL CULTURE

Colonial social life, entertainment and culture are modelled on American / Western European archetypes. With a few exceptions, you can freely reference any contemporary cultural phenomenon or news story; just change the details and names.

Some important things to keep in mind about colonial culture in general and Caprican culture in particular.

- Society puts an emphasis on what is worldly or holy, rather than what is male or female. Worldly people (businesspeople, military, workers etc) praise efficiency, control of emotion, ambition and the protection of loved ones - virtues we often see as "male" in our reality. Example: Starbuck. Worldly people behave in traditionally masculine ways, regardless of their sex. Holy individuals (artists, teachers, priests, drug-farmers, musicians etc) follow intuition, empathy, and

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other virtues usually labelled as "female" in today's society. Example: Gaius Baltar. Many characters in this game will be expected to act pretty damn butch / macho / have their shit together. While some need to be sensitive / diplomatic / caring. Act on the character's apparent worldliness or holiness; don't react to the player's appearance.

- Colonial society has evolved beyond the primitive forms of gender inequality we have in our society. Women do not have lower wages or limited career choices and are actually overrepresented in high-status military careers, like navy Viper pilots. Worldly women are expected to be as sexually active and take as much initiative in the courting game as men. Fashion is the big exception. High heels and a skimpy dress still seem to be the popular female choice for partying. Strange, but that's apparently how stuff works in the Colonies.

- In art and entertainment, live performance and engaging in physical activities is seen as cool, while the virtual or pre-recorded alternative would be lame. After The Cylon War, the digital realm is not only viewed with suspicion, but also seen as boring. Even passively watching something can be regarded as "sitting around in your own fumes, like a frakking toaster". Reading, going to (or better, performing in) the theatre, musicals, radio plays, playing sports like boxing and pyramid, as well as hiking, skateboarding etc are held as cool pastimes in the post-digital colonies. Partying and doing hard drugs is rated higher than losing yourself in virtual worlds, literally "toasting your brain".

- Colonial culture is inherently morally relative and tolerant. There are thousands of gods, and philosophical creeds. Your beliefs are your personal business. These days, moral absolutes (if they can even be grasped) would be associated with the terrorist group STO and their worship of a dictator god known as "The One". Utilitarianism dominates thinking. Taurons and Capricans clash on the better way to order family, values and society. Better, not true, way. Instead of trying to convert somebody to follow their traditions, a Tauron citizen would continue on her way, saying "It's the Tauron way," and that would be the end of it. A Caprican, on the other hand, might try to civilize someone with different customs - not because they are wrong, but simply because things works better on Caprica.

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CURRENT SHEET 23

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CAPRICAN CULTURE: "THE SKY IS NO LIMIT!"

- In general, Caprican culture is pretty much identical to its stereotypical American earth counterpart. Career, beauty, wealth, status, efficiency and a polite facade are all valued traits. Capricans want to consider themselves self-made people. New money trumps old money. They drive big cars and project a work hard, play hard image. Being perceived as successful is of utmost importance.

- Caprican society is generally "democrat," progressive, hyper-individualistic and politically correct. Multiple partnerships are common, gay marriage fully accepted; racism exists ONLY between individuals hailing from different colonies or species (Caprican and Tauron, Cylon and Human). Skin colour and sub-ethnicities, on various planets, are not fuel for prejudice. Drugs like weed, E or "empathy" (MDMA), K (Cocaine), Ambrosia and other alcohol - as well as many psychoactive compounds, like Kamala - are legal and sold by the state, without profit, at special lounges. Despite this state of affairs, drugs can still be socially stigmatized. Only holy people can do drugs without suspicion.

TAURON CULTURE: "BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD!"

- Balance, vengeance and justice are the primary moral drivers in Tauron culture. If insulted, hurt or treated unfairly, a Tauron will not rest until the slight has been avenged.

- Patience is a Tauron virtue. Balance will be restored, in due time.

- A "real Tauron" values the immediate family highest, then clan, then him- or herself. Career and personal gain are seen as suspect, and typically Caprican, drives.

- "Choose the time of your own passing into the soil." Wilfully terminating your own life when the time has come is seen as the best way to die, but only when dues to family and clan have been paid.

- Tauron Culture is more conservative in regard to non-traditional types of culture. Drugs beyond alcohol are not accepted, and drunkenness outside the rites of Dionysus is generally frowned upon. Frowned upon. Not nonexistent.

- Food is seen as medicine and often carries symbolical meaning. Organ food strengthens the body, mineral waters makes thinking flow smoother, and offering fruit is a way to show gratitude. Sharing meals and breaking bread together can be a powerful sign of mutual respect. Turning down dinner is seen as an insult.

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