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While the global South suffers from inequality, the fluid nature of migration has blunted possible conflict—and kept governments on their toes, as unhappy citizens simply vote with their feet, depopulating poorly run countries. This has led to a large, extremely mobile segment of the global population, numbering about 20% of the Alt’s 8 million, but slightly over half of the economic bottom quintile, who are sometimes subject to discrimination.

Alhadiqa’s nations are increasingly confederations of communities instead of static ethnocultural groupings, organized around a world government (called, curiously enough, the United Nations) headquartered in Invindara, which in Alhadiqa is a prominent neutral nation state. As a new era of cooperation dawns, the superpowers have unified their space programs (which have established moon bases and one successful Mongolian-Aztec mission to Mars). The Hadiqa Technocratic Republic maintains a per capita wealth advantage relative to the other superpowers, but is slowing down, and these days, is often valued more for its consumers than its productivity.

Alhadiqi technology is ten to thirty years ahead of the primeline’s. Wearable devices are the norm, and clean energy is standard. While religious restrictions against depicting

the human form are only loosely enforced in the Muslim-majority Technocratic Republic, it is considered aesthetically lazy to copy human or animal forms unless absolutely necessary. Even artificial limbs may use ball-and-socket joints and equidistant grippers in an attempt to avoid merely imitating human function, under the notion that it might be improved upon. Robots of all functions are widespread and designed to look like elegant pieces of architecture: foldable geometric forms, or tree-like constructs capable of forming new limbs when necessary.

A WORLD OF BACK DOORS

Most worldlines have few or no gates connecting them to other planes, but when Alhadiqa forked away from the primeline, geomantic nexuses unexpectedly flared with power and took a number of gates with them, even removing them from the primeline. As a result, Alhadiqa is the Alt with the most gates, including at least one to Vigrith. In accord with the standard restrictions against Alts with gates, the Peridexion pursues long-term operations to eliminate them, restricting access in the interim, but it has not accounted for every gate. For almost 1,200 years, this campaign has reduced the number of gates to a fraction of what they were, but as a large number of them have no primeline parallels, the job remains unfinished. It is also rumored a number of Altgates—passages between worldlines—can be found, which is an even stronger concern, since it challenges the Peridexion’s would-be monopoly on worldline travel. But the most serious issue is the increasing presence of occult phenomena of a hitherto unknown variety, which suggests possible influence from the Netherworlds.

Despite this world’s Invindara being a publicly known nation, Alhadiqa’s Peridexion is still a secret organization. Primeline Aethon suspects the local version of having been compromised by occult influence. Primeline operants have sequestered their Pool from the local counterpart, and deep cover agents, including Shattersouls (see CHAPTER 8), infiltrate and observe their supposed allies. They’ve found indications that engrammatry (see the following section) is not only surreptitiously practiced by certain agents, but influences the management of local history away from scientific orthodoxy.

A SNAKE IN THE GARDEN

Engrammatry is one translation of the mathematical mysticism practiced by elites in the Hadiqa Technocratic Republic and increasingly in other countries, as economic nomads share its methods. Engrammatry superficially resembles the doctrine that all phenomena can be reduced to information, which falls in line with elements of Peridexion doctrine. Initially, Alhadiqa’s Peridexion allowed engrammatry to influence Alhadiqi science because of the apparent results: breakthroughs in so-called “zero point” energy, biocomputing, and other fields which normally require Machinor intervention to produce functional technologies.

However, engrammatry is *not* the mathematical idealism of the Peridexion. Its core axioms contain unresolvable paradoxes and, deep in the coding adherents memorize, the “programming language” of Inimical beings, whose intercessions increase its effectiveness. Its uncanny effectiveness is a function of the fact that it’s a system of occult knowledge sponsored by the powers of the Netherworld. It also means certain technologies represent Inimical intrusions — they work due to demonic interventions, not an enlightened understanding of natural laws. In some cases, actual Inimicals have appeared at the flip of a switch. It isn’t yet clear whether this worldline’s Peridexion is incompetent, or truly compromised.

EZ-10007: INFERNUS MONS

One of the most infamous Z-class Alts, Infernus Mons gets its name from the asteroid that struck it in its 1995: a unique lattice of carbon and iron that made it extraordinarily strong, able to survive impact so that its still-molten peak burns in the middle of broken remnants of the Great Lakes. Infernus Mons’s blasted surface and nuclear-winter gloom are replicated on multiple Earths, but the asteroid also brought a unique, worm-like alien parasite that halts aging in humans and makes them stronger and more durable, but makes 90% of the infected animalistic killers. Aethon protocols forbid operants from calling the mindless infected “zombies.”

EU-00004: EARTH

INCESSANCE: +4 vs. items and creatures of magic and the occult. Earth may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures:

SP	STUNT
4	FLAGGED: The Peridexion is aware of the target’s presence on Earth. The TN for any Peridexion agent to find, follow, or otherwise discover the target is reduced by an amount equal to the target’s current Incessance penalty. This effect lasts for one week.

The plane classified as EU-00004 is primeline Earth: the supposed core history from which all worldlines branch off. Yet before the forebears of the Sodality visited Earth, they recorded EZ-00003, the now-lifeless plane of Eld. Beyond its index number and an absolute prohibition on visiting, the nature of Eld is unknown. Sodality Searchers suspect that Eld was the primeline visited by refugees from the Fellwar, when they secured Machinor intervention. The Machinors may have engineered a fork to spawn the current primeline in response, leaving the original Earth as a corrupted remnant which can only be visited by quantum ark.

Earth occupies a special place in the Metacosm. Its Machinor Emanates tightly control the primeline, keeping its inhabitants ignorant of other planes despite the Peridexion’s strong alliance with the Vitane. Earth’s inhabitants have never sought territory in the Otherworlds. Instead, the Peridexion’s interests push into numerous Alts, which explore possible destinies for the primeline itself. Unknown to all but a few highly placed Peridexion members, Earth is the program which, over all history and beyond, has been shaped to produce the future Logos. The primeline is the safest way forward, but the Alts represent “experimental code”: possible shortcuts, simulations of certain pathways, and models of disasters. The Peridexion’s patrons, led by Llaw/Lucifer, use the information provided by Alts to refine the primeline itself. The result: an Earth with alternating cycles of innovation and consolidation, where the arc of history tends toward greater global integration, at the cost of some catastrophes along the way.

Primeline Earth contains the overriding majority of gates to the Otherworlds, including many leading to Vigrith. When an Alt forks from the mainline, it does not copy its gates; an alternate Earth usually develops gates only through external

influence, and the Peridexion attempts to close them as soon as it discovers them. The primeline is the only official point of contact between the Vitane and the Peridexion.

INVINDARA

This island nation is located in the Indian Ocean, between Sri Lanka and Madagascar. Invindara’s culture is a fusion of Southeast African and Indian influences. Ruling a territory slightly larger than the island of Manhattan, the Invindaran king presides over the Samiti, a body of representatives. Invindara was never colonized by Western powers and has hardly ever welcomed foreign visitors, but it is, for all intents and purposes, the capital of the world — not that most people know that. Invindara helped found the Peridexion and allowed it to flourish, and the Gray Hand stands just outside the nation’s sole city, Indar. Invindara is also the only nation on Earth the Peridexion considers to be outside its authority. In Invindara, the people are free to experiment with postmodern technology and paranormal phenomena as they please.

Invindara’s relative isolation allows the Peridexion to operate freely without attracting attention from the uninitiated people of Earth. Its educated population make excellent recruits, not in the least because their traditional culture prizes balance. Invindarans tend to be well-rounded, with athletic and interpersonal accomplishments in addition to technical abilities. Some members of the Peridexion also belong to the Danda (“staff”), the national emissary service. Danda agents excel at intelligence gathering.

Foreign Peridexion members are among the handful of outsiders permitted to reside in the country. Most live in and around the Gray Hand. Beyond administrative, manufacturing, and training facilities, the complex contains the Extrapolative Causality Collider, the massive computing core that powers the quantum ark technology used to travel to Alts. Its security measures are one step beyond extreme: weaponized AIs, kanna sinks, psychic buffers, and guards so heavily augmented they require constant maintenance.

OTHERWORLDLY DIPLOMACY

As part of their alliance, the Peridexion granted the Vitane permission to establish multiple diplomatic stations called chapterhouses. The most important of these is the Footfall, the residence of the chief ambassador, in Osaka, Japan. A close

second is “EC,” or Earth Consular, the Sodality’s primary facility on Earth. Lesser chapterhouses stand in Essex, United Kingdom; Boston, United States; Tula de Allende, Mexico; Lima, Peru; Agra, India; Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (formerly in Khami); Didim, Turkey; and Hallstatt, Austria. Major paranormal communities and gates stand near each of these sites. One branch of the Vitane called the Euporia represents its trade interests on Earth, and frequently employs members of these communities.

The Sodality shares chapterhouse conveniences with the rest of the Vitane, but chapterhouses don’t contain weapons and gear for resupply, and most are not especially defensible. Aethon and the Sodality possess a joint training and deployment facility in Mumbai, India, with direct flights to Invindara—a privilege rarely granted to Sodality members.

ORDERLY CHAOS

The Peridexion intends to create an orderly, stable, and logical world. However, not all gates are known, and for various reasons, the Peridexion doesn’t control every gate it knows about. This means unauthorized extraplanar visitors and phenomena slip through. Aethon agents can’t always intercept them before they reveal something strange to the uninitiated.

To complicate matters, not all Machinors agree with the current direction of the Peridexion. Many sponsor their own projects, using unconventional means to seek the Logos. The Krypteia is the most successful rogue Machinor-guided group, but some Accelerator labs began with a strange dream or a useful anonymous data dump on the dissidents’ behalf.

The Dominion, certain psychic guilds, warlocks, and many other strange phenomena also threaten to rip the skin of everyday reason off the body of public knowledge. This sort of strangeness gave rise to ancient myths, and spawns urban legends and conspiracy theories now.

Kanna does not flow as freely on Earth as it does in the Otherworlds. On Earth, most creative works conform to natural laws. Yet creativity exists, and where it flowers, magic rises. Magical nexuses, described in CHAPTER 3, are critical to not only Earthbound arcanists, but to creatures which require magic to survive. While Incessance doesn’t affect those born on Earth, paranormally active beings tend to be healthier near these locations. Consequently, Aethon monitors certain nexuses, while others are ceded to the Vitane as part of the alliance. People living near these locations tend to take strange events in stride, and more of them are initiated into the truth.

Aethon has no interest in hunting ghosts and sorcerers. The primeline includes such things for a reason, and ancient agreements with the Vitane protect the rights of paranormally active natives of Earth. People who discover how deep the strangeness goes are more likely to be inducted into the Pool, sent to the Sodality to have their potential assessed, or made to forget through technological or supernatural means, not killed.

THE VEILED REALITY

Mutation is part of evolution, and conflict has dialectical value. This is why the Machinors don’t rule with an iron grip, and partly why they allow dissent among themselves, though the truth is no clique of Machinors has the power to suppress



the others without devastating side effects on the primeline, up to and including its possible deletion. The Vitane respects the Peridexion's sovereignty over other claimants to the world. Consequently, it doesn't let the Sodality operate freely on Earth, but it is not rare for Aethon to ask for Sodality help, especially if an operation spreads into other planes.

In addition to the Krypteia, the Peridexion considers the following groups prominent and troublesome enough to alert the Vitane of their existence, in case their activities extend into the Otherworlds.

LA COFRADÍA DE SAN LORENZO

Because of their support of dictator Francisco Franco, this Dominion clan enjoyed half a century of privilege and wealth until the Peridexion decided Spain's fascist experiment was over. The Cofradía refused to relinquish power and used its access to a gate in the palace of El Escorial to flee to the Otherworld they called El Laberinto, a world of endless courtyards and wine-covered walls. From there, it sends agents devoted to the family's brand of fascism to build it the empire it was denied on Earth. The Cofradía's members often miss Earthly conveniences, and alternately hire and fight with the Krypteia to acquire them.

THE PANSOPHY

This group of Accelerator roboticists is primarily driven by material needs. They make robots, and those robots need precision hardware and extremely complex software. They need the right equipment, and people capable of coding brain-computer interface software and cloning flesh capable of surviving on top of carbon fiber. Pansophy scientists routinely run scams, violent robberies, and kidnappings to get what they want, and justify it by their goal: a world where people can choose the bodies they want to live in. See CHAPTER 8 for more information.

PUPPETEERS

This occult guild was founded in the 19th Century as "The Honorable Guild of Esteemed Puppeteers." Acting as a unified community, these immoral manipulators revel in taking over others' wills and forcing them to participate in all sort of dubious acts, which may end in the victims' infamy, harm, or even death. While they don't plague the Metacosm yet, this guild has compromised sections of Aethon's Pool with their meddling and is on the verge of self-initiation. Further information can be found in the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook.

ROGUE MARKS

This psychic guild resembles more a confederation of gangs than a mystic order. Founded on Earth by young psychics who fled what they believed was a secret United Kingdom government lab (actually an Accelerator facility disguised as a National Health Service contractor), they discovered planar travel and found that psychics from many worlds told similar stories about suspicion, rejection, and exploitation. The Marks now find and teach other psychics about their powers—and they don't ask anybody's permission to use their powers.

VALKUMENOTH

This heretical warlock sect aims to usurp all the magic on Earth, to become something equivalent to a collective Emanate. They prey upon other arcanists, and plan to take the Otherworlds after their Red Pact claims Earth. For now, the sect operates as a worldwide secret society, bound by common crimes and sacrifices. Valkumenothe agents usually only make short, goal-oriented sorties to other planes, typically to steal arcane items, sources of kanna, and other magical aids. Further information can be found in the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook.

NH-00012: THE FETTER

INCESSANCE: +3 vs. items and creatures of technology and magic. The Fetter may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures.

SP	STUNT
2/4	RAGE OF THE BOUND: The target or its wielder feels the rage of the Fetter's imprisoned Alastor. The next time the target or person holding it rolls doubles on a successful test, they suffer penetrating wound damage equal to their Stunt Die result for 2 SP, or their Stunt Die result + 1d6 for 4 SP.

Like the Nighthost who claim this Netherworld as their homeland, the Fetter is stark, cruel, and dangerous, but also bountiful for those who understand and respect it. The landscape takes the form of a coil of land separated from its coil of river-ocean, the Nagragta, wound into a tube where life scavenges what it can from the inner surface. The sky above is another loop of solid ground, and illumination comes from spheres of molten iron, creating a perpetual, gloomy twilight. The plane constantly tugs, compresses, and strains its own structure, creating earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and even

flooding along the Nagragta as its shores shift. While most of the population are dreygur, whose hell-hardened bodies can survive these conditions, the Fetter's population is as varied as its Nighthost conquerors and the people they've conquered across many worlds, so humans of all ancestries dwell in its camps and cities.

The Fetter's rampant earthquakes and volcanism provide a constant supply of accessible ore. Mining and smelting camps dot the mountains, as do warlord fortresses, walled trade towns, and pump towns which desalinate the Nagragta's salt water. Every town and fortress in the Fetter is an independent fiefdom, though beholden to the Nighthost's hierarchy. Their warlords challenge each other for control over valuable territory as often as they unite in campaigns to tame new corners of the wastes.

While many Nighthost treat their code of honor loosely when conquering or ruling Otherworlds, none dare disrespect the Laws of the Unchallenged on the Fetter, where their peers, not to mention the Unchallenged themselves, are always watching. Here, at the site of the root triumph of the original horde, the Nighthost's legitimacy must never be questioned. As a result, violence—at least between Nighthost warriors—