

The Fading Suns™ FAQ

1 The basics

1.1 Disclaimer

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This document is meant to try to answer some of the questions that frequently pop up when discussing the roleplaying game Fading Suns, especially on the Fading Suns Mailing List. However, due to the nature of Fading Suns, most of these are questions pertaining to the game world rather than the rules system. This makes the answers pretty subjective, depending on your personal opinions. I will try to answer them as broadly as I can, sometimes giving you my own opinion, but more importantly, giving you the means to look it up in the books and decide for yourselves. Please remember that the answers may not always be in black-on-white.

1.2 What is Fading Suns?

Fading Suns™ is a Roleplaying Game (RPG) published by Holistic Design, Inc. It is fairly popular, and has been translated to spanish and german. Holistic Design, Inc. (HDI for short) has also produced a computer game in the same setting, called *Empire of the Fading Suns*, a strategy game, and will release a second called *Fading Suns: Noble Armada* in mid-2000, featuring real-time space combat, crusading and trading beyond the borders of the Known Worlds.

The Fading Suns world and RPG was designed mostly by Bill Bridges, the original *Werewolf: the Apocalypse*® developer, and Andrew Greenberg, the original developer of *Vampire: the Masquerade*®. Bill Bridges' brother, John Bridges, is responsible for the general look of the FS world.

1.2.1 What is this crazy roleplaying thing?

Excerpted from HDI's website.

If you're new to this artform and hobby, the idea of roleplaying may seem strange to you. Don't worry; it will make more sense the further you read. Fading Suns is a roleplaying game, a highly imaginative activity which can provide hours of fun and a means of creative expression.

The hobby of roleplaying began in the early 1970s, growing out of miniature wargaming. People got a bit bored with sending historical armies against each other's forces; they wanted to mix it up with elves, orcs and wiz-

ards. Fantasy gaming was born. Then, some people stretched the boundaries further, by playing individual heroes rather than whole armies. Wargaming turned into roleplaying, where players not only fought enemies, but acted out the roles of their characters, creating dialogue for them and histories detailing the character's birthplace, upbringing and what her goals in life were.

The players of the games collaborated in creating whole worlds, environments for their characters to adventure in, usually inspired by the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard. Roleplaying game publishers provided pre-made worlds for gamers to use, and new supplements for the most popular of these worlds were eagerly awaited by avid gamers. Eventually, gamers began experimenting with new genres, such as science fiction, post-apocalypse, superheroes, horror and even Westerns.

The hobby has grown over the years to encompass a wide variety of gaming methods, from hack-and-slash combat with detailed rules for combat resolution, to intensive storytelling with broad rules designed to help move a story forward rather than slow it down with dice rolling. Different people prefer different methods.

Fading Suns is primarily a game about heroes and the dramatic conflicts they encounter, from palace intrigues to cliffhanging combats. It provides a framework for players to create games from any perspective they desire. If they want to play soldiers who fight evil with guns and fists, the rules are here. If they want to play merchants who prefer diplomacy to violence, or priests wrestling with a metaphysical crisis, rules and helpful dramatic hints are also provided. Fading Suns is whatever the players want it to be.

Roleplaying is fun, pure and simple.

1.2.2 Setting

Fading Suns is game of medieval Science Fantasy, taking place in the year 4999 A.D. Humanity has taken to the stars and built a huge republic encompassing hundreds of worlds. But then, the republic crumbled, and a new Dark Age began for mankind. Noble Houses took control, forcing the majority of people into serfdom. The mighty Orthodox Church of the Celestial Sun banned the use of technology for all except those martyrs who were allowed to use it in order to rule the masses – the nobles, priests, and members of the Merchant Guild.

Centuries passed, filled with barbarian invasions and alien menaces, demonic possession and psychic warfare. But now, a new renaissance has seen the light of day – for the first time, the Known Worlds are ruled by an emperor. It is a time for conquest, exploration, and adventure. But even in this brave new world, there is darkness, for the very suns themselves are fading...

1.3 Game Books & Acronyms

As of January 2000, HDI has released twenty-odd books within the Fading Suns game world. Here is a comprehensive list along with their acronyms as used in this document and on the Fading Suns mailing list.

<u>Game Book</u>	<u>Acronym</u>	<u>No.</u>
Fading Suns Rulebook, 2nd Edition	FS	FS#202
Forbidden Lore: Technology	FL:T	FS#225
Lords of the Known Worlds	LotKW	FS#226
Weird Places	WP	FS#227
Priests of the Celestial Sun	PotCS	FS#228
Fading Suns Player's Companion	PC	FS#229
The Dark Between the Stars	DBtS	FS#230
Merchants of the Jumpweb	MotJW	FS#231
Cildren of the Gods: Obun and Ukar	CotG	FS#232
Sinners and Saints	S&S	FS#233
Sinful Stars	SS	FS#234
War in the Heavens: Lifeweb	WitH1	FS#235
Hawkwood Fiefs: Imperial Survey 1	IS1	FS#236
Legions of the Empire	LotE	FS#237
al-Malik Fiefs: Imperial Survey 2	IS2	FS#238
Byzantium Secundus	BS	FS#275

<u>Upcoming books</u>	<u>Acronym</u>	<u>No.</u>
Star Crusade 1: Vuldrok & Kurgans	SC1	
Star Crusade 2: Lost Worlds	SC2	
Hazat Fiefs: Imperial Survey 3	IS3	
War in the Heavens: Hegemony	WitH2	
War in the Heavens: Pantheon	WitH3	

<u>Game terms</u>	<u>Acronym</u>
The Fading Suns Mailing List	fsuns-l
Tech Level	TL
Damage	DMG
Gamesmaster	GM
Player Character	PC
Non-Player Character	NPC
The Known Worlds	KW

1.4 Errata

1.4.1 The Fading Suns RPG Rulebook, First Edition

Page 99: Church and Noble skills are listed as such to signify that those factions are most likely to teach the skills in question. This does not mean that other characters can take them – it is just meant as a guideline.

The last paragraph on page 99 specifically says that certain skills are only taught by the Church or the Noble Houses, and follows this by saying, "These restricted skills are labeled as such." This is wrong – the skills are not restricted in any way, as per the first paragraph.

1.4.2 Byzantium Secundus

Page 54: The statement that Earl Denzzi Fascho Ehr-tanit Decados's cybernetics enhance his Strength and Dexterity by 3, but his statistics state that while his Strength goes from 3 to 6, his Dexterity goes from 8 to 14 is not in

error. One has to remember that his Dexterity is also modified by his Lithe Wire cybernetic.

1.4.3 Forbidden Lore: Technology

Page 61: It is unclear by what factor starship weapons, armour, etc. are more powerful than character-sized equivalents. The table of weapons states Factor 3, but the text states Factor 5. Bill Bridges has said to go with Factor 5; it was in the later revisions, but he forgot to change it on the chart.

1.4.4 Lords of the Known Worlds

Page 113: Every minor House has a listing for suggested traits – except House Shelit. Here is the complete list for the house.

1.4.4.1 House Shelit Suggested Traits

Characteristics: Wits, Introvert, Calm

Natural skills: Observe

Learned skills: Academia, Etiquette, Read Urthtech, High-tech Redemption, Science (Cybernetics), Speak Mirazaran (homeworld tongue), Think Machine

Blessings/Curses: Cybersympathy (2 pts: +2 Redemption with cybernetics)/Weird (+2 pts: -2 Extrovert among provincials)

Benefice: CyberTherapy (see Forbidden Lore: Technology)

Affliction: Dispassionate (+4 pts): In stressful situations, roll Human + Empathy to avoid reacting in extremely insensitive manner.

1.4.5 Fading Suns Players Companion

Page 131: There is an error under the Etyri listing. The cost for Strength should read: (base 2, max 8; cost: +3 pts). The decreased base or max is one point per level.

Page 141: For the Hironem... The cost for their higher minimum Dexterity is wrong; it should be 2 pts. Aliens get a price break on these racial norms. It still costs 3 Extras per level to raise a characteristic above the base (minimum).

Page 149: In the Suggested Species Traits for the Ascorbites, the cost for their Perception should read: (base 4, max 11; cost: 4 pts).

Page 158: The skill God Lore has no associated attributes. This would normally be a Wits, but religious Oro'ym could perhaps substitute for Faith, while in some instances, Tech would be a good idea.

Page 194: The Drexler Gatling Shotgun has some rather strange statistics. The Goal should be blank; there is no bonus or penalty. The damage for the weapon should be 8. Ignore the 3 that is given.

1.4.6 Priests of the Celestial Sun

Page 52: The Brother Battle Adept level is indeed not described in PotCS. I'd wager, though, that all it would have said in that paragraph would be something like:

"Adepts are bad-asses that control forces of the size between batallion and corps (? I don't know, I'm no military geek), which is to say a minor monastery. Nothing is known of their initiation, since no adept has ever left the order. Most adepts have at least some theurgic knowledge, and many are

masters in this discipline. Perhaps a full tenth of this level have the honor of owning an Adept robe of some kind, although only a few are true relics. The robes are passed on if they are initiated as masters (which seems to happen close to never, since the Adepts so bestowed often seek up a battle and die in it). Their symbol is a jumpgate sword with one or two stars above."

Sound reasonable?

Also, the Archbishop level isn't described either, though this has been remedied in the 2nd edition, where the level equal to Archbishop is called Grand Master. It's still unknown whether the leader of the order has a special title, though in all accounts he is called "Master of De Moley". Maybe he rules the order only in a "first among equals" way.

1.4.7 The Dark Between the Stars

Page 72-3: The Nizdharim section states that they have a colony located on Baltos, a watery moon orbiting Pohjola, the fourth planet in the Leminkainen system. However, in Hawkwood Fiefs, this is not mentioned at all, and the fourth planet is called Tantalus. The reason is that the reference to Leminkainen is wrong – it should read Hargard instead (Hargard is a Vuldrok planet one jump from Leminkainen).

1.4.8 The Fading Suns RPG Rulebook, Second Edition

Page 91: It says here that "The opposed trait begins at 1, with the exception of the Other trait". This whole exception should be stricken out and forgotten, see 2.1.2.4.

Page 155 and 171: In the lists detailing what to roll when gaining or losing Urge or Hubris, there are still places where the rulebook tells you to roll the attributes Human or Alien, though they were taken out of second edition (see 2.1.2.4). On page 155, replace "Human or Alien" in the Taboo entries "Exposure to alien occult powers/evil artifact" with Ego (or possibly Faith, if it's primary). On page 171, replace "Human or Alien" in the Deed entries "Exposure to a Soul Shard/Philosopher's Stone" with Theurgy. These corrections are based on an e-mail from Bill Bridges, and by correlating the two tables to each other. (I.e. for psychics, exposure to a soul shard will have you roll Psi, so it should be Theurgy for theurges, and for theurges, exposure to evil artifacts will have you roll Faith, so it should be Ego for psychics.)

1.5 Mailing List

There is a Mailing list devoted to this fine game, running off www.telelists.com. It has been running since 1997. To subscribe, use this link:

http://lyris1.telelists.com/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=fsuns-l&text_mode=0

The mailing list can also be viewed at this page in a way similar to newsgroups, without subscribing. Another way to subscribe to the Fading Suns Mailing List is to send a letter to majordomo@telelists.com with the text "subscribe fsuns-l".

It's been said many times, but I want to say it again – the Fading Suns List (fsuns-l) is an unusually courteous and civil mailing list, and we all want to keep it this way. Please refrain yourself from flames (see 1.5.1.4) and other displays of bad temper and taste – in my two years on the

list, I have yet to see a real flame on the list, which is a record in my experience of mailing lists, at least. Though the list surely has people that can act like assholes or bigots sometimes (sorry), they at least know when to shut up or can convey their thought intelligently. :)

1.5.1 General Netiquette

Netiquette stands for (you guessed it) Net-Etiquette, and quite simply it defines the rules for social conduct on the Internet. A commonly held set of guidelines for acceptable behavior makes the net a more pleasant place for all. While the following information will contain tips appropriate for specific areas of the Internet, the main thing to keep in mind is this: always remember that you are dealing with real people, not just text on a screen. In other words, if you attempt to stick to the same general rules of conduct and common courtesy that you do outside of cyberspace, then the rest will fall into place.

Here are some of the most general rules:

1.5.1.1 Don't Scream

ISN'T IT REALLY ANNOYING WHEN SOMEONE TYPES IN ALL CAPS!?!?! HEY, LOOK – MY CAPS LOCK IS ON!!! OOPS! Some people really hate that sort of thing – it's mostly a chat-room nuance that usually doesn't show up in email. You need to be aware that any time you type in all caps, it may be interpreted by many as SCREAMING instead of talking. You don't see this one much anymore, but it deserves some mention. If you want to emphasize a word or phrase, use asterisks instead of caps. This comes across as *much* more pleasant.

1.5.1.2 Know where you are in Cyberspace

If you are new to a chat channel, or a newsgroup, or a public mailing list, then you should take time to "lurk" for a while and see what is appropriate and what isn't in the particular forum you are in. If you just jump right in without learning the lay of the land, you risk offending others. Ignorance, unfortunately, is *not* accepted as an excuse by most other net citizens – the net does not suffer fools gladly. Also, reading the FAQ, if available, is a great way to learn more about the forum you are investigating.

1.5.1.3 Be concise

This is merely a matter of respecting other people's time and bandwidth. One of the inherent luxuries of email is the ability to communicate thoughts in a quicker and more informal manner than letters or phone calls. Because people are used to that, their attention is more likely to drift if letters are too long. In regards to quoting others, if it is not necessary to reprint their entire message then don't do it. Just repeat the part(s) that are pertinent to what you are saying.

1.5.1.4 Avoid Flames

A flame is any kind of inflammatory email message newsgroup post. Any message sent with the intent of provoking an angry response from its recipient(s) is considered a flame and should be avoided. A flame war occurs when members of a newsgroup or public mailing list get involved in an online dispute and continuously send flames back and forth. Avoid getting caught up in them.

15.1.5 Respect the privacy of others

This means that you should not repost private messages, either partial or in their entirety, without express permission from the person who originally wrote them. This is the online equivalent of gossip, and doing so is a really good way to get people to not trust you. On the flipside, you should be aware that anything you send over the Internet may not be as private as you might think. An email rule of thumb that many follow is to not send anything via email that you wouldn't write on the back of a post card.

15.1.6 Spam is Evil

Spam is the name most often given to any type of unsolicited commercial email. Think of spam as electronic garbage. In regards to email, it is junk mail, pure and simple. In regards to newsgroups, it is any message posted to an inappropriate group, or advertisements posted to any group. No one wants spam, and no one likes the people that send spam.

15.1.7 Avoid repeat messages/postings

If you have posted a message to a newsgroup and have not received a response, or emailed an individual or list and not received a response, just be patient. Many people will perceive multiple copies of the same message as pestering. Often people don't check their email as often as you might, so just give them time.

15.1.8 Replies and old text

If someone posts a 4-page writeup of something and you want to reply saying "good job!" at least be courteous enough to delete the 4 pages of text below it. Not doing so is a waste of space and bandwidth, and since not everybody can have an ethernet link to the net, this can really bog down their systems. Remember this also when you respond to long mails – delete everything but what's necessary to understand your post.

15.1.9 Be careful when using Humor

This is especially true of sarcasm. Without the benefit of face to face communication, your intent may be misconstrued, and may even come across as criticism or maliciousness. Be aware that the Internet is an international community, and your sense of humor is probably different from others.

15.1.10 Read the FAQ

FAQs are compilations of information which are the result of certain questions constantly being asked in a newsgroup or public mailing list – hence the name FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). Before asking a question in a newsgroup or mailing list, check out the appropriate FAQs. If you can't find the answer to your question there, then you can post your question to the newsgroup. Frequently asked questions in a newsgroup tend to make the news hard to read, and annoy the regular patrons of the group who are forced to sift through the same information all the time.

15.1.11 Share expert knowledge

The Internet is a wealth of information precisely because so many are willing to share what they know. If you

know the answer to a question someone is asking, answer it. Isn't that common courtesy? Who knows, that very same person may assist you someday!

15.1.12 Be forgiving of mistakes and Newbies

Yes, it's true that the net in general is not very forgiving of "newbies" (those that are new to the net and find everything strange and unfamiliar). That does not mean that you have to treat them with disdain. After all, we all had to start learning at some point, right?

15.2 List-specific Netiquette

Here are some rules that have been agreed upon by the members of the Fading Suns Mailing List.

15.2.1 Obey our charming list-admin!

The Fading Suns Mailing List is admin:ed by Deird'Re M. Brooks (<mailto:xenya@teleport.com>), who appears on the list under the name Marizhavashti Kali. Mail her if you have questions or suggestions about how the list should be organized. Don't play netcop on your own, or you might get into deep trouble...

15.2.2 This is a civil list!

This is more or less a repeat of 1.5.1.4, but it still deserves mention. We've had surprisingly few "flames" on the list and we'd like to keep it that way – this is not to say there is no creative criticism, it's just more constructive to say "I think things should be *this* way" than to say "shut up you \$?@*!!!". If you have something unkind, cruel, disrespectful, etc. to say, say it through private mail. The mailing list is not there to prove who is "top dog" or whose dad can beat up someone else's dad. If you have something nasty to say and don't know how to send private e-mail, don't say it on the list. I've gotten some hate mails but at least I can respect those idiots because they send it to me directly.

15.2.3 Long-winded yet civil debates

There was a time when we'd get new people about every month posting about how travel times from the gate to the planet are mathematically wrong, which would spur a long discussion about physics and math. This is not necessarily bad, but most of us are on the list to hear new ideas and such, not argue about equations. After a certain point the discussion needs to be taken off-list – don't think this only happens with scientific discussions – I can recall several philosophical and religious debates that should have been moved off-list, some of which I started or was involved in. Some have even suggested that after a certain point you should change the subject header to more closely include your subject. For example – when heavily discussing technology which only 4 other people on the list understand, include the header [TECH] in the subject line. Use your own judgement – if you think that the list would benefit from hearing about something, by all means, keep the discussion on the list.

15.2.4 Be courteous and kind to the HDI folks

Yes, Sir Bill Bridges is subscribed to the list and, to my knowledge, reads everything sent to it. You'll probably eventually get his email from his replies, and he's pretty good about answering questions. However, don't go abus-

ing this – the folks at HDI are there to write books, not spend all their time answering questions. They are also sensitive to our needs – the whole reason the fief books series was published was because people on the list were wanting to hear more about the individual worlds – so don't go accusing them of not caring about our opinions.

1.5.2.5 HTML posts to the list

Some people's mail programs have difficulty reading HTML messages. If you are posting HTML to the list, please consider using text for your message, as some people are actively archiving posts to the list, and attachments of HTML garbage do tend to eat up a lot of space.

1.5.2.6 Spoiler alerts

Always remember that the list doesn't consist of GMs only – there are some players out there, too. Respect their wishes and try not to spill too much information about any secrets in the supplements a player might want to be kept ignorant about. If you want to discuss these things anyway, please start the message with the words "SPOILER ALERT", and at least twenty (20) empty lines before the real message begins. Just including the word "Spoiler!" in the Subject isn't enough, since while digesting large amounts of mail, subscribers will start reading the message before they notice the subject line! Yes, all those empty lines is a waste of space, but if the list should have spoiler alerts at all, they have to work, too (and when you think about it, 20 returns is just 20 bytes...).

By a ruling from our lovable listadmin, supplements need not be discussed below a spoiler alert if it has been out for more than six months. Before that time, put up a spoiler alert if you want to discuss something a GM might not want his players to know about (all material needn't be labeled with spoiler alerts – use your better judgment here!). After that time, the players on the list have to use their own judgment if they want to avoid reading spoiler material.

1.5.3 Archives

There are mailing list archives kept at Matthew Seaborn's site, http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~cepgmas/fading_suns/section6.html. They are available in .zip and .html format, starting September 1997. Check them out if you missed some posts, or just want to search old messages for ideas.

1.6 Web sites

A few important links concerning Fading Suns:

1.6.1 Holistic Design, Inc.

The creators of Fading Suns have their own homepage, where you can read all the news concerning Fading Suns, and look at the current release schedule.

<http://www.holistic-design.com/>
<http://www.holistic-design.com/FS/FSmain.htm>
<http://www.fadingsuns.com/>

1.6.2 Fading Suns Webring

While I'm quite certain that all Fading Suns webpages aren't registered at the Fading Suns Webring (or Jumpweb,

as it's called on the home page), it's a good place to start from. And if you're not registered (shame on you!), get over there quick and sign up!

<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/3027/jumpweb.html>

1.6.3 Mailing List Home

This is where the Fading Suns Mailing List is based. On this page, you can subscribe or unsubscribe with but a single click!

http://lyris1.telelists.com/htbin/lyris.pl?enter=fsuns-l&text_mode=0

1.6.4 Mush

There is an active FS MUSH going on out there in the cyberrealm. If you have the time, please do not hesitate to sign up, and get involved in some serious gaming!

<http://saturn.planetmud.com:4996/>
<http://206.245.140.168/>

1.6.5 WebRPG discussion forum

I'm not really sure if this forum is active or not, but it sounds like a good idea. You'll find it at:

<http://www.webrpg.com/?link=townhall/78/index.html>

1.6.6 Player Directory

If you're lacking players or maybe even a GM, this site might be able to help you. It contains a list of many FS players and GMs all across the globe. One could be living nextdoor, even! The only way to find out is on this page:

<http://members.tripod.com/Lexitus/directory.html>

1.6.7 Matt Seaborn

Lastly, I must again plug for Matt Seaborn's excellent site, which contains the most interesting tidbits spawned by the fsuns-l, as well as the archives for said list. Quite possibly the best and largest of all Fading Suns sites.

http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~cepgmas/fading_suns/fading_suns.html

2 The rules

2.1 First and Second Edition Comparison

As you might have guessed, before the Second edition of Fading Suns, there was a First edition. But what exactly is the difference between the two? Read on, and ye shall be enlightened.

2.1.1 Holistic Design's teaser

This text is a combination of two newsflashes taken directly from the HDI website just prior to the release of FS 2nd ed.

Here are only some of the changes to expect for the 2nd ed hardback – note that all of this is subject to change (especially rules).

2.1.1.1 Hardback

The new Second Edition of *Fading Suns* is Hardback, and just over 300 pages long. On the inside cover is a new jumpweb map. While no worlds have been added (that's what *Star Crusade* is for), it's a gorgeous new version. Also, the book opens with a new Alustro's journal – his first letter since 1st ed. to his uncle, the archbishop of Byzantium Secundus.

2.1.1.2 History advances

It is the cusp of the year 5000; Alexius has cemented his power and is now reaching out with new quests and reforms – rumblings about a coming crusade into Barbarian Space are heard in every court (the *Star Crusade* campaign setting this fall).

The ranks of Alexius' Questing Knights are swelling. The Emperor has instituted two tiers – the highest for the most qualified knights and those who joined early on, and a new level for young, unproven nobles who wish to give their fealty to the Emperor over their own houses. This causes grumbling among the elite of the houses, as second and younger sons and daughters, fearing to inherit little glory and wealth from their own houses, seek to win it from the Emperor through adventure. In addition, Alexius has opened the ranks to the guilds and sects, creating the role of Cohort, aide and companion to his knights. Cohorts are promised a share in the spoils of Imperial adventures (wealth and fame, or the chance to spread the good word).

2.1.1.3 Modified combat rules

- Combat damage is done the old-fashioned 1st edition method, except that the rules recommend 6-sided dice for damage and armor rolls (although you can still use d20s). This way, all the weapons listed in any FS book are compatible (as is the one-die roll chart from the *Players Companion*). An optional method using different goal rolls for different weapons and maneuvers will appear on the website later (see 2.1.2.4, below).

- Armor no longer has a constant rating, only dice (a new armor chart). In addition, different armor types have different goal numbers: polymer knit provides 3 dice of protection against guns (roll 15 or less). Against other attacks, however, it only provides 2 dice, each of which rolls 8 or less.

- Accenting: It costs 1 Wyrd to accent up or down. There are different victory charts for either option: when accenting up (giving it all you've got), one victory point is gained for every two successes rolled (rather than the usual three); when accenting down (playing it safe), one victory point is gained for every four successes rolled.

- Many weapons from other books are collected into the 2nd ed weapons charts.

2.1.1.4 Money

A list of common wages and costs is included, along with more details on the Wealthy Benefice. Beginning characters no longer spend Benefices to gain equipment; they now must buy the Riches Benefices (two kinds: cash or assets) and use firebirds to gain starting equipment. The exceptions to this method are artifacts and relics, which can be bought with Benefices.

2.1.1.5 Streamlined character creation

New character creation method (although the old custom method is still here, too). Quick purchase backgrounds for each faction (common skills, benefices, etc.). This allows quick creation of Character Histories, taking characters from Upbringing through Apprenticeship and then Early Career, with variations in each stage (i.e. apprenticeship in the League Academy or on the Streets). Some examples: Monastery, Parish or Cathedral Background for priests; High Court, Rural Estate or Landless Upbringing for nobles; etc. Additional career stages allow wider options (Questing Knight or Cohort status, occult packages, etc.).

Emperor Alexius has opened the ranks of the Company of the Phoenix to young knights, allowing beginning characters to become Questing Knights. He has also created the role of Imperial Cohort, allowing guildmembers and priests to join Questing Knights in their travels with some authority of their own.

2.1.1.6 Starships

New starship rules, including a design/modification worksheet (within the limitations of known hulls, though). These are trimmed down, Noble Armada-compatible rules without the hit location system of that game, but otherwise fully compatible. Includes two sample ships.

2.1.1.7 Cybernetics

New cybernetic rules and a step-by-step system for building devices – a rules system that makes sense but still provides a wide range of options. The Human/Alien characteristic pair have been removed. A cyborg's cyberdevice limitation is now determined by Ego, while the Changed substitute a new occult characteristic (called Meta, explained in LotE).

2.1.1.8 Occult

Two new psychic paths: Sympathy (an extension of Bonding) and Vis Craft (energy manipulation), and a small smattering of new theurgy (Oath to the Saints). (Legions of the Empire will have Manifest Light rites for combat theurges.)

2.1.1.9 Passion Play Roleplaying

An optional way to add a touch of legendry to FS games. Although optional, this is the heart of the designer's own vision for their games.

2.1.2 The real story

Okay, so much for what HDI says the second edition is. But what are the general reactions of the fans?

2.1.2.1 Is it worth it to upgrade to 2nd edition?

Yes and no. It of course depends on your economy. The second edition is not surprisingly better than the first, but you have to be aware that 90% of the material is the same. The changes to the rules aren't major – basically, it's the same system with clarifications (see above), so if you hate the system, that'll be a problem. But unless you have problems with the 1st ed. and feel poor, the 2nd ed. is a good buy, not to mention sturdy.

2.1.2.2 I just bought 2nd edition – can I use 1st ed. sourcebooks with it?

Yes. The rules haven't changed significantly between the two editions, and most sourcebooks contain little more than setting background anyway. The exception is perhaps the Player's Companion, but most rule info in that book has been included and updated in the 2nd ed rulebook anyway, so that's not really a problem.

2.1.2.3 How do I convert characters from 1st to 2nd editions?

Well, the easy way is just to erase all those points. However, if a player has put a lot of points in one of Human or Alien, you might allow the extra points (i.e. apart from the free starting points) to be redistributed. Of course, the more you have played with the character, the harder this becomes (because of xp spent on characteristics), but in general this will even out. You might consider awarding bonus xp to even out large discrepancies.

The NPCs in the various campaign supplements don't have to be converted – just disregard Human and Alien (after checking that cybered NPCs have enough Ego to contain all their modifications).

2.1.2.4 What didn't get into 2nd edition?

There were a few things HDI were working on that never made it into the rulebook:

- Damage dice goal numbers: In the first edition rules, all damage dice have a goal number of 13 or less. In second edition, each weapon and/or martial art/ fencing/ firearm action has a unique damage dice goal number. This allows for finer levels of detail – e.g., it allows a character's Strength rating to play a more active role in damage – a fist action still inflicts 2 damage dice, but the goal for those dice is 7 + the Strength of the puncher (10 or less for the average guy). Martial actions add to damage dice and damage dice goal numbers. However, even though this was taken out of the rulebook, HDI has promised to publish these new rules on their website in the future, though that hasn't happened yet.

- Before HDI decided to strike out the Human/Alien trait altogether, they were considering a replacement pair of Spiritual Characteristics, called Self and Other. These would work basically like Human and Alien, except for the fact that non-human species would now not have an easier time buying cybernetics than humans. However, this was also scrapped at the last minute (so late that references to these two characteristics are still left in the 2nd ed. rulebook), and cybernetics were based off Ego instead.

2.2 Occult

2.2.1 How do I pay for Occult abilities during Character generation?

Well, if you use the streamlined "Character History" method, all you do is take the Psychic Awakening or Theurgic Calling Extra Stages detailed on FS p. 90. If you create your character using the Custom method, you can only buy Occult characteristics (Psi or Theurgy) and Powers by spending Extra points. Psi and Theurgy costs 3 points per level you want, and powers cost 1 point per level. Remember that for psychic paths, you have to pay for each level (so

if you want Soma 4, you must pay for levels 1 through 3 also, totalling to a cost of 10 Extra points), while theurgic rituals can be picked in any order (you pay only 4 points to get a level-4 ritual, but won't get access to lower levels, since you haven't paid for them).

The exception is Obun and Ukar, who get free points in Occult characteristics as part of their racial traits. However, like everybody else, they can only raise those characteristics using Extra points.

2.2.2 Can a character know psychics and theurgy at the same time?

Yes, a character can conceivably be both a psychic and a theurge. However, since the Church fears psychics, it is extremely unlikely that they will teach theurgic rites to psychics. Of course, someone may hide his psychic powers from the priests for a while, but usually his stigma – or their theurgic scrutiny – will reveal his innate powers. Theurgic rites will not be taught to just anyone who walks off the street; a character must have some standing or proof of his moral intentions. Those psychics who are revealed are pressured by the Inquisition to become Penitents, basically "Church approved" psychics who are watched by Inquisition officials; it is a crime to teach a Penitent theurgy.

The most plausible explanation for having a psychic theurge is having a theurge develop his psychic powers at a later stage in his life, maybe because of a Sathra experience. If you feel this is too powerful, you might consider making Psi and Theurgy opposed traits (like the Spiritual traits), where the sum must be 10 or less. (This is used in WitH1, where Symbiosis and Psi are opposed – of course that is a very special situation, considering the symbiots' vulnerability to Psi.)

2.2.3 Why can't Vorox be psychic?

In Second Edition, Vorox are suddenly forced to take the No Occult Affliction from start, while in 1st ed., there was even a sample Vorox psychic NPC in the rulebook. Why? This is from Bill Bridges:

"I guess I should have worded it differently – it is very rare for Vorox to develop occult powers. If a player, with gamemaster permission, wants to purchase a Vorox without that affliction, he needs to pay the points and have a great excuse (he was dropped on his head onto a Philosopher's Stone as a child doesn't cut it, but he was mentally assaulted by an Gargoyle might work...). Never say never, I suppose. But be very careful about the twink level here..."

2.2.4 Do you really need to fail the rolls you make when you're about to gain Urge/Hubris, and why?

Yes, the rolls described on FS, p. 153 and 171 are meant to be failed to avoid gaining Urge or Hubris. This has the strange effect that, for example, theurgists with high Faith and Stoic Mind will more easily gain Hubris when they break the taboos listed (in this example, being excommunicated or exposed to alien magics) than a theurgist with low Faith and no Stoic Mind. The reason is of course (as you might have figured out) that people with low Faith and Stoic Mind have an easier time convincing their subconscious that nothing bad has happened, while people with high scores (and, therefore, well-developed *superegos*,

to borrow a term from psychology) have a harder time ignoring how wrong their crimes are. It's not really that strange – if you have high Faith, you should really try to avoid being excommunicated!

However, when trying to *lose* Urge or Hubris, you have to *succeed* with the rolls suggested in the Losing Urge/Hubris tables – so here, a well-developed moral ethic will help you fight the demons back.

See also 1.4.8 for an errata concerning those lists.

2.2.5 Learning Focus (1st ed.)

Many of the psychic powers use the skill Focus, and logically so. However, Focus is a Church skill and so there are but two ways of learning it (by the rules).

1. Join a sect of the Church (risky, as your heretical powers may be discovered).

2. Become a Penitent (somewhat less than desirable).

So, how do psychics get this all important skill?

Church and Noble skills are listed as such to signify that those factions are most likely to teach the skills in question. Thus, in the society of the Known Worlds, it is the Church who has the best meditators, or Focus skill users and teachers. However, neither the Church or nobility has a monopoly on their skills. They can be learned elsewhere. This is NOT the case with Guild skills, which must be learned from a guild (usually one of the Merchant League guilds); use the Benefice Professional Contract when buying such skills to signify that the character has apprenticed with a guildsman to learn that skill.

2.2.6 So, is it "Antinomy" or "Antimony"?

It's **antinomy**. It comes from the greek – *anti-nomos*, that which goes against the law. The Law is of course the Pancreator in this case – i.e. antinomy is something that is anathema to the Pancreator. (*Antinomianism*, on the other hand, is the belief that Christians are liberated from the observance of moral laws when God's grace is active.)

Antimony is a chemical element with atomic number 51, with the symbol Sb (for latin *stibium*, the mineral where antimony is most often found). It's a brittle silver-white metal used mainly in alloys of soft metals.

If you're an *antimonist*, you're either against the figure one, or against the idea of a single underlying principle (monism, see Spinoza) – which of course might not be that far off if you're also an antinomist...

2.2.7 What is Otherspace and the Sathra experience?

Otherspace is a Vau term for a mental dimension of ideas that only advanced sentients can access – the realm of psychic powers, according to Duras Barbelo, the editor of the Stellar Apocryphon [DBtS, p. 10]. In the Vau language, it is called "Sat'Rama", which can also be translated as "meeting of the minds", and used in the context of psychic powers. This word is reminiscent of the Obun word "Saatari", "guided meditations" [CotG, p. 29], which the Obun gods gave to their followers – "for it is in saatari that we may speak with one another, and with it you shall grow" [CotG, p. 17].

Saatari, as well as Sat'Rama, is easy to associate to Sathra, that strange epiphany that occurs when travelling through a jumpgate without a Sathra Damper. In fact, the Obun glorify the Sathra experience and proclaim it

saatari, and thus holy [CotG, p. 23]. The Vau, also, seem to hold the Sathra experience to be holy [PotCS, p. 6-7].

So, it may be that Otherspace and Sathra are the same thing – a dimension of thought, through which the Jumpgates transmit their signals to teleport ships instantaneously across space – and at the same time, a way to contact the Ur, and to get in touch with your psychic potential.

2.3 Accenting, 1st ed.

In Fading Sun, accents represent two things really: exercising greater control over your blow at the cost of power, or throwing all you've got into a blow at the cost of control. To positively modify your blow – that is, to add to the roll – increases your chances of failing (rolling over your goal number), but will give you a higher number of successes if you do succeed. Negatively modifying your blow – subtracting from the roll – gives you a greater chance of hitting but with less successes. Yes, this does seem to be the ideal way to slip under shields. We are always on the look out for ways to limit use of accenting but we haven't yet come up with any good rule for it. For one thing, accenting a roll should subtract -2 (maybe -3) from that character's Initiative, which may be important in some combats (We thought of this too late to get it into the rulebook). One of the reasons that it is an optional rule is because it is not fully formed yet. We hope to have some guidelines on preventing misuse in the Player Companion. In our playtests, accenting is one of the things players liked most about the system; the ability to throw off the curve of the roll.

3 The equipment

3.1 Tech levels

3.1.1 My character has Tech 3 – does that mean he can't use a Blaster (TL7)?

No, it doesn't. Anyone can use a weapon, regardless of how much they have in the Tech characteristic – well, as long as it's over 1, but that includes all player characters, so there's nothing to worry about. Weapons have a very basic interface, and anyone can be taught how to use a gun, regardless of Tech Level. (You might say that while a weapon operates on TL8, it usually has a TL2 interface.)

The only time Tech comes into play regarding weapons is when you want to repair them or in some other way maintain them. In this context, a character with high Tech will know what to do better than a character with low Tech. However, depending on the situation, the GM might allow rolling anyway, but with a penalty for not having enough Tech (this will be relatively simple tasks, however, like reloading or somesuch).

3.2 Flux Swords

3.2.1 What happens when you parry a normal weapon with a Flux Sword?

This is not covered by the rules, but here is a suggestion:

The Flux Sword can parry a normal weapon, but it's far from a sure thing. In my opinion, since the force field that makes up a Flux Sword is designed to break when hit (thus releasing the deadly plasma), it is badly equipped for parrying a real steel sword. Reduce the Flux Sword's Damage with 5 (to 3) for parrying purposes. Also, whenever the Flux Sword parries a normal sword, roll these three dice for penetration (D6es, rolls of 1 and 2 mean penetration). For every dice that comes up a one or a two, subtract one from the flux sword's parrying armour value, but give the attacking sword damage by reducing it's Damage stat with one. If all three dice come up ones or twos, the attacking weapon has fully penetrated the Flux Sword's blade – the attacking weapon takes three points of damage, but otherwise, the parrying action is canceled and does not contribute to the armour of the parrying character. If a normal weapon is reduced to 0 Damage by a Flux Sword in this way, it is broken, or reduced to slag.

Example: Sister Shayla has broken her leg and fallen to the ground while battling the mighty Vuldrok Hrafn. She can only parry with her Flux Sword while Hrafn pummels her with his huge two-handed sword. In the first round, Hrafn hits her with 3 victory dice – a total damage of 11. Shayla rolls Dex+Melee and gets 4 victory dice. She then rolls three D6 – 3, 5, and 6 – the Flux Sword blade holds this time, giving her a total of 7 parry armour dice. They roll, Hrafn getting 7 damage points, and Shayla only 5 armour points. The Flux blade may hold, but Hrafn's mighty strike has broken through Shayla's guard, and hits her with 2 damage points! Shayla only wears padded clothing, and rolls her 1 armour dice – a 2! She takes only one point of damage to her Vitality.

Next round, Hrafn hits with 2 victory dice, while Shayla parries with 5! Rolling the 3D6, she gets 1, 4, and 6. Hrafn's sword partially penetrates her Flux Sword's energy field, and she can only add 2 to her parry armour dice, for a total of 7. However, Hrafn's sword gets damaged by the hot plasma, and it's Damage rating drops from 8 to 7. In the end, Shayla manages to avert the blow.

In round three, after another successful attack and parry, Shayla rolls 1, 1, and 2 when checking Flux Sword penetration. Catastrophy! Hrafn's sword completely penetrates the Flux Sword's forcefield, sending sparks everywhere, and Shayla doesn't get any armour dice at all from parrying. Only her padded clothing can save her now from the brunt of Hrafn's attack. On the other hand, Hrafn's sword is now severely damaged, it's edge molten down in places, and parts becoming brittle because of the heat, so it's Damage has dropped further to 4.

Quick and easy alternatives:

- The Flux Sword parries as normal, but with Damage 3.
- The Flux Sword parries as normal with Damage 3, and lowers damage on the attacking weapon with 1 for every hit.
- The normal weapon always passes through the Flux Sword, but takes 3 pts of damage every time.
- The Flux Sword parries as normal, with DMG 8, and for every 1 or 2 rolled in the armour point roll, the attacking weapon takes one point of damage. If it drops to 0, the weapon is cut in two. (If you want to use the more advanced rules above, this might be a possible Fencing Action for Flux Swords, say at level 4.)

3.2.2 What happens when you parry a Flux Sword with a normal weapon?

Roll parrying armour dice and attack damage dice as normal, but for every 1 or 2 rolled in the attack roll, the normal weapon loses 1 point of Damage, effective as of next round. When the damage drops to zero, it has been cut in half.

3.2.3 What happens when two Flux or Mist Swords clash?

Roll parrying armour dice and attack damage dice as normal. The parrying Flux Sword gets to use the full Damage of the weapon (8) as armour dice. No penetration, as discussed above, is possible.

The reason for this is that the nature of the forcefields surrounding the plasma of the Flux Swords prevents penetration – something in the resonance of the field makes them impassable to each other (but easy to pass through normal Energy Shields). When meeting, sparks will fly, or the blades will temporarily blacken. [LotE, p. 59]

3.2.4 So, what about Mist Swords?

They follow the same rules as Flux Swords, since they basically are Flux Swords with an extra zest. So when a Flux Sword and a Mist Sword clashes, the same thing happens as when two Flux Swords clash, or two Mist Swords, for that matter.

3.3 Cybernetics, 1st ed.

3.3.1 When increasing Traits with cybernetics, does that cost the normal number of points, or is that cost taken from the two Extras gained per point put into cybernetics?

It costs the same as other Extras points do to buy traits – see the Extras cost chart in the character creation chapter. All bonuses and modifiers gained through a cybernetic trait must be bought with the cybernetic Extras points (for every point spent to purchase the device, you have 2 Extras to buy traits for the device). These bonuses to natural, organic traits are part of the device; if the device was removed, the bonuses would be lost.

3.3.2 How do I calculate the needed amount of Alien?

When the rules say that a character cannot have more modifiers than twice their Alien score, and mentions that cybertraits are considered modifiers, does that mean that a character with an Engineers' Eye (5 modifiers), an Internal Think Machine (5 modifiers), and an Omnisocket (2 modifiers) must have an Alien score of 6?

The answer is yes. Those characters who wish to be cyberfreaks must buy up their Alien scores. Below we give one possible way around this which will appear in the upcoming sourcebook *Forbidden Lore: Technology*. This has not been fully playtested, however, and may change before seeing print.

New Benefice: CyberTherapy (3 pts per modifier or cybertrait): This signifies that the cybernetic recipient received some specialized training with his implants which allows him to more fully integrate them into his body and psyche. Such training is extremely rare in the dark ages, for few people now remember the arcane Second Republic psychological and physical regime once widely practiced by cybersurgeons. The process utilizes hypnotherapy, meditation (visualization of integration), and carefully coached physical exercises. It requires a coach who can train in all these fields (he or she must know the learned skills Hypnosis, Social (Teacher or Coach) and Focus). The total process takes at least three months of uninterrupted study to complete. CyberTherapy is a Benefice which modifies cybertraits; cybertraits subjected to CyberTherapy do not count against the character's Alien trait for the maximum number of cybernetic modifiers allowed.

3.3.3 Is it possible to have cyberware which increases the Alien trait (and thus the maximum number of allowed cybernetics)?

No. You can't buy Human or Alien with cybernetics. If you want cybersurgery to make you look like an alien, then buy lots of Disguise skill. If you want to posit an artifact which turns you into an alien (as with Delenn in Babylon 5), then it is an artifact, not a cybernetic device (even if it were surgically implanted).

4 The setting

The Setting of Fading Suns is extremely complex at points, and this section is here to try to shed some light on your questions.

4.1 The Church

4.1.1 What do you call the religion they practice in Fading Suns, anyway?

(For the record, the religion referred to is that practiced by the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun and it's different sects.) Well, I've seen many versions of this, but the predominant suggestions seem to be *universalism*, *celestialism* and *illuminatism*. I personally prefer the latter, but I guess it's a matter of taste. You can also use the word *reflective* to describe a person or thing of the faith – unlike the other three words, this is used by HDI in their supplements (though never as a name of the religion, and since *reflectivism* sounds silly, I still vouch for *illuminatism*).

4.1.2 What is their holy book called?

It's called *The Omega Gospels*. The name implies that this will be the last of all holy books – the definitive text on God. The book wasn't written by the Prophet himself, though, but codified by the first patriarch, St. Palamedes, and the first Holy Synods. Like the Bible, the Omega Gospels is divided into several chapters, some of them attributed to the Virtuous Disciples. Some of the chapters include: Lextius, Amalthea (a watered down version of *Libre*

Zebulon, on of the holy books of the Amaltheans), Paulus, Horace, Galaxia, and Chroniculae.

4.1.3 What real life religions is the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun based on?

Well, the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun is supposed to be a mixture of all major modern world religions [FS, p.19] – christianity, judaism, islam, buddhism, and hinduism. However, in reality, it most resembles the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in theology, social impact, and organization. There are elements of buddhism (Hinayana and Mahayana), islam (the Prophet), and so on, but at its core the Universal Church preaches a version of the christian faith, complete with ideas of sin, grace, confession and saints.

4.1.4 Are all Avestites Inquisitors?

No, they most certainly are not. Most members of the Temple Avesti are seriously religious fellows who spend most of their life in an ascetic monastery somewhere, living without sin.

However, the majority of the seats in the Inquisitorial Synod are taken by Avestites, and by the same token, a majority of all Inquisitors are Avestites (with Orthodox priests making up for most of the rest of them). So because of that, most Avestites seen by the public happen to be Inquisitors.

To conclude: most Inquisitors are Avestites, but most Avestites are not Inquisitors.

4.1.5 How do I make an Inquisitor character?

You have to buy the Inquisitor Benefice detailed in PotCS, p. 40. It might also be a good idea to buy the Occult Warrant Benefice on the same page, and purchase a high Ordination [FS, p. 133]. Note that you won't become a full Inquisitor by taking the Inquisitor Early Career step in your Character History [FS, p. 83] – this will more likely make you an Avestite Pilgrim [FS, p. 44-5] or an Inquisitor deputy.

4.1.6 What does Pentateuch mean? I've heard it somewhere...

Well, apart from being a really mystical planet in the Known Worlds, *The Pentateuch* is a name for the first five chapters in the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), who also make up the jewish Torah (Law), one of the three books that make up the Hebrew Bible.

4.2 Space Travel

The specifics of Space Travel in Fading Suns is a tricky question which many ask about. Though most of this is conjecture and speculation, these are the views that are supported by most members of the fsuns-l.

4.2.1 Jumpgate size

It says in FS, p. 238, that "Jumpgates are giant, hoop-shaped artifacts in space, most of them as large or larger

than a moon". It is debatable exactly what this means, in terms of kilometres, but most seem to agree that "moon-sized" does not mean that they are as large as the Moon, neither that they are comparable to the small asteroid moons of Jupiter or Saturn, but rather something in between. Around 500 km might be a good estimate, though it might range from 200 to even 1000. The above quote seems to indicate that Jumpgates aren't uniformly sized.

However, if you examine the artwork in the books (or the cover to the second edition Rulebook), the jumpgates seem to be a kilometer or two in diameter, tops. However, since I'd rather believe the text on this matter, I assume this is due to artistic freedom.

The Jumpgates are hollow, or at least some are. This information was divulged by Bill Bridges, who stated that the final part of the *War in the Heavens* Trilogy (WitH3), called *Pantheon* (release date sometime 2001), will take place *within* the Holy Terra Jumpgate.

4.2.2 Travel to the gate

Travelling to the jumpgate (or any other destination within a system, for that matter) is done by first accelerating constantly for the first half of the trip, until the spaceship is exactly halfway between the origin and destination, where it turns 180 degrees, whereafter it decelerates at full burn for the rest of the trip. The point of this maneuver is to come to a full stop, or close to that, when you arrive at your destination, whether it is a planet or a jumpgate. This is the fastest way you can get from point A to point B, and still be able to maneuver when you reach your destination. See also 4.2.3, below.

4.2.3 Can I jump through a gate when going at full speed (a few percent of light speed)?

It is theoretically possible to jump through a gate at full speed, though it is not advisable. Such a maneuver is very risky, and requires a very good pilot as well as a large portion of luck. There are several reasons why this is so dangerous:

- A jumpgate might be a large thing, but a spacecraft at full speed ahead is awfully fast, and without a good set of sensors and computers, there might not be time to aim through the jumpgate hoop.
- All solar systems save the least important typically have a queue of ships lined up in front of the gate (see 4.2.13). Going at full speed means you are less likely to avoid colliding with those ships unless they move out of the way. Also, unless you have a very good reason (or a high rank), the Charioteers are going to be pissed because you overshot their queue.
- Because of that queue, the jumpgate is resetting for 98% of the time (given that the average reset time is 11 hours [calculated from the table in FS, p. 239] and with the assumption that it takes the queue max. 10 minutes to do the next jump once the gate is reset). Unless you happen to have a reset key [FS p. 239 again], which is very uncommon and mostly limited to military ships, you have to hit those brief periods of time when the gate is reset but the queue hasn't gone through yet. Not the easiest of task, and one where skill is worthless and only blind luck will save you.
- If you miss the gate, or it isn't reset, you will be heading into the uncharted territories beyond the jumpgate,

and won't be able to return until you have slowed down. This extra trip will take you approximately twice the time it normally takes your ship to get to a jumpgate (since you have to slow down this time if you want to pass through the gate, which is only passable from the sunward side). Accounts say that few ships ever return alive from these parts of space [FL:T p. 88] (with most exceptions including being saved by Gargoyles and the like), and there is a good reason for this, because if you avoid the Void Krakens lurking out there, there is still the chance of getting hit by a comet as you enter the Oort cloud or the Kuiper belt (or equivalents in other systems than Urth), or perhaps even entering the interstellar medium and being cooked raw by the intense radiation in that place. Even if you survive, it might be best not to talk about it, since most people will brand you as a trafficker with demons or worse.

- So, to conclude, there is a 1 in 1000 chance you will succeed, and a 90%+ chance that you die if you don't. All you have to ask yourself is if it's worth the risk.

4.2.4 What do I need to make a jump?

To make a jump, you have to have two things: a set of coordinates (most likely from a jumpkey) and a jump-capable ship. For information on the former, see Jumpkeys, below.

A jump-capable ship is a ship with a jump engine. A jump engine is not an engine per se, in that it doesn't give the ship any propulsion. Rather, a jump engine is a complex machine that, working in concert with a jumpgate, can bend space and teleport a ship to another jumpgate. The exact workings of these engines is a closely guarded secret within the Engineers Guild.

4.2.5 What face of a Jumpgate is used?

Jumping through a gate can only be made from one face of the jumpgate, namely the sunward side. This has never been said outright, but considering that it is the simplest solution, and that jumpgates show an image of the system travelled to (see 4.2.7), I think it is fair to assume that ships both enter and leave jumpgates from the sunward side. It might be that you can enter a jumpgate from the spaceward side, but it isn't used because quite simply there is no reason to do that (besides, the inhabitants of the Known Worlds are superstitious, and don't want to travel on the wrong side of the jumpgate anyway). The only reason to use the spaceward side would be if something special happened, and nothing in the books support that theory (and yes, in 2800 years time, someone will have tried it) – of course that's not to say you can't use it if you want to.

4.2.6 So what's this "dayside/nightside" thing then?

It's not a reference meaning you jump into one face of the jumpgate and out of the other – it's a way to measure distances between systems in the Jumpweb relative to Byzantium Secundus, the center of the Empire of the Known Worlds. So, when we say Gwynneth has Criticorum on its dayside, Ravenna on its parallel, and Bannockburn on its nightside, it means that Gwynneth and Ravenna are farther from Byzantium Secundus than Criticorum, but nearer than Bannockburn.

4.2.7 Can you see the destination system through the jumpgate when it is opened?

This one directly in e-mail from Bill Bridges:

"The view when entering a jumpgate is a hologram image (from the jumpgate's data banks) confirming the jump route keyed in; it is not actually a current view of the system on the other side. So, no, you can't open a gate, look through, see the Inquisition ship waiting for you and then decide not to take the journey. You can see a view of the system as it appeared at the time of the last jump made to that system through the gate in question. (Which may include an image of whatever ships were on the other side at that time. When the jumpgate from Pandemonium to Iver was first opened, it first showed an image from when the gate was originally sealed.)"

4.2.8 How do the jumpgates work?

No-one knows. It's an ineffable mystery. Many on the fsuns-1 seem to think that the jumpgates are responsible for the fading of the suns, somehow being powered by energy drawn from the sun, but nobody knows. Possibly, some answers (or hints) will be made in WitH3.

4.2.9 What are jumpgates made of?

A copperish-purple metal that has yet to be identified [SS, p.18]. In all probability, this metal is very tough, enabling the jumpgates to take hits from meteors and comets without being affected. Possibly, the jumpgates are also guarded by some sort of energy shield. The jumpgates also seem to be able of self-repair [SS, p. 19].

4.2.10 Can anyone with a key open it at any time and go right through?

Yes, as long as it is reset (see 4.2.11 below).

4.2.11 Does it take time to "reset" itself before it can be used again?

Yes, it does. The reset time is random, being a period of time between 1 second and 1 day, the average being about 11 hours. However, this reset time is only needed for the transmitting jumpgate, while the receiving jumpgate just spits out the travelling ships and continue to go about their own business (probably resetting itself). The rulebooks talk about "active" and "passive" jumps – from a ship's point of view, you of course make both an active and a passive jump simultaneously, but from the gates' points of view, this is the distinction between which gate does the actual energy transfer. Think of radios – the transmitter will need a heck of a wattage to deliver far away, while receivers need only a penlight battery to listen in. That's why the "sender" jumpgate will need a reset time after a jump, while a "receiver" gate will not.

Some ships are equipped with "reset keys" that allow them to instantaneously reset the jumpgate, no matter how long time it has left before it is recharged. (This proves that the bit about recharging isn't completely true, but it's still a good analogy.) When such a ship (and its convoy) has passed through, a new reset time is rolled.

Perhaps a little overexplained, but there you go.

4.2.12 ... or can one ship after the other after the other make their own individual jumps?

Yes, they can, but that would mean a lot of reset times piling up, so instead ...

4.2.13 Perhaps ships have to wait in a queue and all jump together?

... ships organize themselves before jumping (probably while waiting for the gate to reset), and jump in groups (space-caravans, of sorts) if they have the same destination. This is (most likely) run by the senior Charioteer present, who will organize the queue and decide whose turn it is to jump next. The books say any number of ships can jump together simultaneously given that a) they all want to go to the same place (otherwise, tough luck) and b) all ships enter the jumpgate at exactly the same second. Only one of the ships have to have a jumpkey, but all ships need to have jump engines. However, ships without jump engines can also be transported through a gate by attaching themselves to the hull of another, jump-capable ship, or being transported in its cargo hold, shuttle bay or the like.

4.2.14 What would it be like if I had a jump-capable ship and wanted to go through?

This one is mostly speculation, but good speculation...

As long as you have a jumpkey and a jump-capable ship, you're ready to jump (as long as the jumpkey works on this particular route). However, if you're not a Charioteer, you will have to have some really good reasons for infringing on their monopolies – spacepiloting and jumpkey access. Not that it's impossible, only rare.

Coming up to the jumpgate, there will most likely be a queue there, unless it's a very desolate and untravelled system. This means of course that you have to join in that queue, and slow down to a stand-still (remember, when travelling to a jumpgate you accelerate for half the time and decelerate the other half (well, unless you're insane, that is), so you're already going slow). You hail the senior Charioteer in the queue, who organizes it, and tell her where you're going and what your priority is (or something). You also verify that you are cleared for making this jump by proving that you have your own copy of the jumpkey needed for the jump in question, most likely by sending parts of the coordinates to her ship instead of to the gate. (Though you might not have to use it yourself, you still need the key to the road you're taking, since the key proves that the Charioteer guild allows you to use this jumproad.) She then assigns you to a group of ships going to the same destination, and tells you to join them and wait for your turn. She may, depending on your priority, consider allowing you and your group jump ahead of other caravans, changing the rotation. Anyway, then you wait.

When it's your time to jump, the senior charioteer will radio you and the rest of your caravan and tell you so. The senior Charioteer in the caravan will then direct the whole group closer to the jumpgate waiting for it to reset from its prior use while keeping out of the way from incoming caravans (passive jumpers). When the gate is reset, all ships maneuver into a tight formation, keeping their front bows in a line parallel to the gate's imagined wormhole surface,

and keeping the same speed. The caravan leader will transmit the jumpkey information to the gate, the gate will open, and hopefully all ships will enter at roughly the same time, and then come through at the other side. The caravan will then disband, all ships homing in on their own destinations and accelerate there at the top of their ability.

That's how I imagine jumping is organized. Remember also that the head Charioteer will change from time to time as new ones join the queue and the old make their jumps. However, all information will be handed over to the new space traffic controller, keeping the rotation fair.

Of course, it's possible (should you have a fast ship) to break out and try to reach the gate before the ships in line can get there. This will of course win you the enmity of several Charioteers and a hefty fine.

Also, noble fleets will always ignore the line, at least if they own the system they are jumping from. Military fleets will always go first, unless someone has a death-wish.

4.2.15 Would I have to wait for someone operating the gate to "unlock" it?

No, you can open it yourself should you have the right jumpkey. However, you might have to wait in the queue, as I described above.

4.2.16 Would I be able to simply open it, and risk the wrath of the local authorities who run it on a schedule for various reasons?

Yes, you can, and unless there is no queue, you will be noted as a criminal (or whatever), at least by the Charioteers.

4.3 Jumpkeys

4.3.1 How many jumpkeys do starting Charioteers get?

One for every rank he attains past the first – in other words, he gets his first jumpkey when he becomes a Chief (5 pt. **Commission** Benefice [FS, p. 132-3]). Beyond that, he can buy extra jumpkeys with the 2 pt. **Jumpkey** Benefice [FS, p. 129]. (Though he can just as well spend those two points on an extra Commission level, since that will give him an extra key as well as more power – letting Charioteers buy the Jumpkey Benefice for 1 pt. might be a good idea in my opinion.)

4.3.2 Can non-Charioteers own jumpkeys?

Yes they can – however, unless you are of high noble or church ranking, it is illegal, and the Charioteers does not see lightly on such infringement on copyright. To have a jumpkey from the start, buy the 2 pt. **Jumpkey** Benefice [FS, p. 129] – this is mainly what this benefice is there for. To buy one later, go to the seedy parts of town and search for the Black market...

4.3.3 How does a jumpkey work?

A jumpkey contains pre-programmed coordinates to a specific destination system (that only work in one departure system, see next question). By inserting the jumpkey into a special computer panel on the bridge, the ship will send out a series of light transmissions to the jumpgate, which will then open up to the system of the destination, if that system can be reached from the departure system, and if the code was correct.

4.3.4 What do jumpkeys look like?

They look like small metal cylinders, probably with letters burned in on the side denoting which jumproad it contains. The woman on the cover to Merchants of the Jumpweb has three jumpkeys hanging from her belt.

4.3.5 Do I have to have a jumpkey per system, or one per jumproad, or something else?

The standard jumpkey works both ways along one jumproad (see FS, p. 129: "Each key holds coordinates for a jumproute between two planets: the departure planet [read: "solar system"] and the destination planet; the key works both ways (coming and going) between these worlds."). However, there might be jumpkeys that go only one way, and there are also keys with several jumproads programmed into them [FS, p. 238]. When creating a new character, consider each jumpkey he gets as a standard, two-way key, though he may combine several keys into one single multiple-road key if he wants to. However, since many jumpkeys is a measure of Charioteer status, and it's easier to bargain with single keys, not to mention that it lessens the risk of having your entire livelyhood pickpocketed away, most Charioteers go for many single-route keys.

Once again, the specific coordinates to a destination system work only on one departure system jumpgate – using the same coordinates on a jumpgate in another departure system (or even another jumpgate in the same system) will produce no results, even if that jumpgate does lead to the same destination system.

4.3.6 So, do I really have to have a jumpkey to make a jump?

No, there are two exceptions.

First, you can enter the coordinates by hand using the spaceship's computers [FS p. 238-9]. However, this takes time and approximate knowledge of the coordinates. Also, the Charioteers aren't particularly fond of this, and will probably extract a fee if they catch you doing it.

Second, you can pass with a caravan. When a caravan of several ships pass at the same time to one destination, only one ship has to relay the coordinates to the jumpgate. However, if this caravan is run by the Charioteers (as it most often is), they will probably try to control that all ships in the caravan have permission to pass this jumproad (i.e. check if they have the correct jumpkey). It might be possible to buy a one-time permit or bribe the Charioteer official, though.

4.3.7 What is data drift?

The term is applied to the phenomenon that jumpkeys after some time become useless. Supposedly, this is because the coordinates in the jumpkeys cannot take into account the fact that every part of the universe is constantly moving and spinning – a set of coordinates coded into a jumpkey half a century ago won't connect to the jumpgate it's supposed to link to anymore, since those coordinates no longer describe the location of the jumpgate. [MotJW, p. 24]

Critics scoff at this idea, however, and mean it's just a way for the Charioteers to force everyone to buy new jumpkeys every now and again, because the Charioteers outfit the jumpkeys with a timer that destroys the key after a set amount of time.

4.3.8 Why do planets become Lost?

There are a number of explanations to that question – and as with many other questions, we do not know the specifics. However, there seems to be three main reasons why planets become Lost:

a) Because of data drift (see 4.3.7). Possibly, this phenomenon can sometimes lead to all jumpkeys for a specific jumproad becoming dated and unusable. This has been speculated to be one of the reasons why the jumproad between Aylon and Cadavus has become lost [LotKW, p. 91].

b) Because someone shuts down the Jumpgate at one end of the jumproad. This can be done in many ways, but there are indications that sabotage can do the trick. (This might be done with enough explosives, but there are also "fuses" on the Jumpgates that can be removed, disabling them until they self-repair [SS, p.19].) Also, by sending the correct signal to a Jumpgate, it might shut down – this method seem to be used by the Kurgan Caliphate to some extent [PC, p. 34]. It is also possible to use this more sophisticated method to shut down only specific jumproads going from the Jumpgate in question, but that is probably even more difficult.

When a system loses all its jumproads that connect it with the rest of the Known Worlds, it is considered a Lost World. For example, if the jumproad from Nowhere to Stigmata was to be shut down (either at the Nowhere end or at the Stigmata end), Nowhere would become Lost. But it's not only the systems at the edge of the map that can be affected this way – e.g. if some lunatic would place a shaped charge on the Criticorum Jumpgate and shut it down, Criticorum would become a Lost World, even if it has seven jumproads leading to it, because all those roads will be shut at the same time.

4.3.9 What are Night Roads?

Night Roads are jumproads leading to Lost Worlds – jumproads that previously have been forgotten, but now are beginning to be found again, due to the exploratory work done by Emperor Alexius' Questing Knights. The name implies the unknown destinations on the far side of those roads.

Night Roads are also a part of illuminated (see 4.1.1) theology. According to them, star travel, and especially travel using the Jumpgates, tarnishes the soul mirror – the Dark can taint even the brightest souls in the void of space, and using the gates, associated with the heathen Ur and Sathraism, can endanger it further. However, the nature of the Prophet's death (inside, or possibly halfway through, a Jumpgate) sanctified all the jumpgates known at the time

of his death, and thus paved the way for spiritually safe space travel. Other jumproads have also been purified by saints, and especially the travels of St. Paulus. [PotCS, p. 19]

Although human space at the time of the Prophet's death was probably larger than the Known Worlds of 4999, the Church holds all jumproads leading to systems not in the Known Worlds to be night roads. This is one of the reasons why the Church doesn't like the way the Questing Knights are (supposedly) sent along those roads to locate Lost Worlds.

4.3.10 Does the Jumpweb map show real physical relationships of distance?

No. The jumpweb is drawn with the sole intention of fitting all the worlds and jumproads into one opening.

The truth is, the real physical locations within the universe of the different worlds, and thus their physical distances from each other, have never been calculated. The reason can be found first (of course) in the nature of the jump, which gives no clue about where the traveller is going, and secondly in the social context – since discovering the Jumpgates, humanity have only had time for pure science and research during a 500-year period – the Second Republic. During this period, an effort *was* made to try to calculate the physical relationships of the different worlds, but it is not known if the calculations were ever finished. [MotJW, p. 47]

This has led to several debates on the fsuns-I whether the Known Worlds are spread across a galaxy, across the entire universe, or perhaps even across multiple dimensions. Opinions are split on the question if it even is possible to calculate these distances, but given time and the right data, it could probably be. The question is what the results would be. I may speak for myself here, but personally, I believe all of the Known Worlds are to be found within the Milky Way, and possibly even in the same galactic arm as Earth, since new calculations estimate that most stars similar to Sol may harbour planetary systems – and because, as Ellie Arroway says in *Contact* (the movie based on Carl Sagan's book): "Otherwise, wouldn't it just be an awful waste of space?"

4.4 Universal Communications

Interplanetary communication in the Fading Suns universe depends on ships going through jumpgates to deliver messages. Thus, you have to have a jump-capable ship. If you've got radios and people to receive the message, you can relay it to the planet of destination once you're through the gate. However, the speed of communication depends on the type: radios are slower than more advanced light wave transmissions developed by the Second Republic. For now, the Emperor has the most high tech options. It is not an easy task to maintain an empire in such a universe. That's one reason noble houses rule supreme on their worlds. They have accepted an Emperor because he won the war and they're too tired to fight – for now. The Church also supports the idea (for now) and thus most of the populace falls into line. However, as revealed in the forthcoming supplement, "Byzantium Secundus", it is now an uneasy time of peace; the Known Worlds could fall into war again at anytime.

4.5 The Ur

The biggest mystery of FS is of course the Ur, that fabled protorace of the Obun and Ukar, that left behind the jumpgates and numerous other artifacts.

4.5.1 Who were the Ur?

Until WitH3 comes out, we can only speculate about the nature of the Ur, but here are some of the basic ideas.

The Ur is a catch-all term for the race or races that built the artifacts known as Jumpgates, as well as many other edifices around the Known Worlds, such as the Gargoyles. The Ur are commonly divided into two major parties, who may or may not have been the same race. These two groups are called the Gatebuilders and the Marauders.

Known Worlds mythology has it that the Gatebuilders were an elder race, who built all the Jumpgates, while the Marauders were a younger race uplifted by the Gatebuilders who eventually rebelled against their elders. Whether this is really true is unknown – it may be just a later interpretation of the facts, made by people who were anxious to give the story a moral dimension. However, the facts seem to indicate that there really was a war.

The Second Republic xenoarchaeologists were of the opinion that the Ur races were a group of alien species with an amazing technology and knowledge of psychics that gave them incredible powers. However, both the Vau and the Obun and Ukar look down on this theory, instead holding on to their beliefs that the Ur were indeed gods.

The Ur seem to have had several other races at their side – there is mention that the Oro'ym was part of a great community of sentient races that travelled the stars along with the Ur. Apart from the Oro'ym, we know of one other such species, called the Sons of Rillos (or Krillos, depending on whether you use the Ukar or Oro'ym name), apparently a violent race adept in warfare and associated with the Marauder Ur.

4.5.2 The War in the Heavens

The two factions of the Ur eventually clashed together in a conflict of enormous proportions that has been called the War in the Heavens. The marks of this war can be found on the remains of Ur civilization all over the Known Worlds – cities leveled by high-tech weaponry, and nowhere a single Ur skeleton found (an assumption I made when learning the Second Republic researchers didn't know how the Ur really looked [SS, p. 18], except for guesses that they might look like the images on Jumpgates and Gargoyles).

The reason for the war is shrouded in the myths of more primitive species. In the New Dark Ages, the conflict has taken on a moral dimension, with one of the Ur parties being good (aided by Empyrean powers) and the other evil (helped by demons), as portrayed in the infamous Stellar Apocryphon [DBtS, p. 10; WP, p. 65-7], although the truth is probably not so clear-cut. The Obun say the Ukar gods fought the Obun gods in an attempt to usurp their positions as the Lightbearers (the Ukar gods being minor gods), and allied with the darkness in order to do so. The Ukar claim their gods rebelled against the Obun gods' corrupt, stagnant system in order to try to bring freedom to the younger races.

Whatever the truth, the Ukar gods, led by Anikrunta/Anakrein, eventually lost. They disappeared after ordering their servants, the Sons of Rillos, to relocate the

Ukar to Kordeth ("The Place of Trials"). According to Ukar myth, Anikrunta "took the last essence of escaped time and wove it about his allies, creating a dark web for their escape, so that they could grow in power again and one day liberate the younger races" [CotG, p. 50].

After the war, the Sons of Rillos continued looking in on the Ukar until 98 AD/868 DK (Dar Kadani, after the relocation), when they disappeared forever. However, their visits had become rare 500 years before that. One might draw the conclusion that the Sons of Rillos lost power after Anikrunta's departure, and were driven away by the Obun gods.

The Obun gods remained with their people for about 400 years more, until around 511 AD, before leaving for unknown parts. The Obun are unsure of why – some say they were unworthy, others claim the Lightbearers were needed elsewhere. They vowed to return, though, when the Obun themselves had learned to ascend to heaven, and urged them to remember "saatari", that they might communicate with each other. Saatari is probably related to the Sathra experience (see 2.2.7).

The War in the Heavens has been prophesied to be waged again. According to the Vau, the arrow of time moves in all directions, and so the War in the Heavens continues all the time in some metaphysical way. However, the conflict will return to the universe of the living some day, possibly to be waged by the current sentient races, rather than by the Ur come back from beyond.

4.5.3 What connections are there to other alien species?

The Ur had contact with several sentient species, and obviously tried to uplift some of them to a space-faring status. It might even be possible that they created intelligent species themselves, molding them into the shape they wanted them to have. We will now investigate some of those relationships.

4.5.3.1 The Vau

The relation between Vau and Ur will probably be addressed in WitH2: Hegemony, dealing with the Vau, but there are some clues from earlier supplements [S&S, p. 86; WitH1, p. 8-9]. From these, we can surmise that the Vau have been groomed by the Ur for some special cause. Apparently, they have in their possession a great deal of detailed prophecy handed to them by the "Progenitors", obviously a reference to the Ur. The Vau go to great lengths to follow these prophesies, even fulfilling them themselves at times.

The Vau is probably not one of the species that was part of the Ur community during its heyday – rather, it seems probable that the Vau, like the Children of the Ur and the humans, were but primitives when the Ur disappeared (this is supported by the mention that the Progenitors (Ur) shepherded the Vau in their pre-history [S&S, p. 86]). Possibly, the reason why the Vau have to guard the prophesies is that they have to ensure some sort of Second Coming of the Ur, or just be ready when the War in the Heavens comes again.

Again, remember that the Vau achieved spaceflight only around 1800 AD [FS, p. 17]. However, considering the general appearance and psychology of the Vau and this date, some of the fsuns-I have speculated whether perhaps the Vau visited Earth beginning in the 20th century and are responsible for the "abduction phenomenon" – simply put, if the Vau might not be the "Greys" of popular culture.

The way the Vau do exactly as told in the prophecies could explain why they are considered a "non-expansionist" power, when they quite demonstrably must have expanded at some time in their history (since they rule an empire said to contain hundreds of systems). The answer could quite simply be that they were prophesied to rule a certain number of systems, or perhaps even a certain set of systems, as described in the texts handed them by the Progenitors. So the Vau expanded to meet those criteria, and then stopped. This can also explain why Vau technology seemingly has come nowhere in the last two millennia.

4.5.3.2 The Children of the Ur

The Obun and the Ukar have obvious connections to the Ur, although they themselves would deny most allegations made by Second Republic xenoarchaeologists and anthropologists. Obviously, the Obun and Ukar were one and the same race, and are separated only by three millennia of different social and environmental conditions. It seems obvious that this proto-Obun/Ukar race, having its origin on the Obun homeworld Velisamil, was manipulated by the Ur in that distant past. In fact, it's possible that the proto-Obun race was created by the Ur, either in their entirety, or by genetic manipulation by some earlier sentient being. Perhaps the proto-Obun were in fact members of the Ur race, since it seems like they look the same – the obviously Obunish faces on Jumpgates and Gargoyles are proof of this. Of course, it might just mean that the Ur created their children in their own image.

The Obun/Ukar were obviously an experiment of some importance to the Ur. In fact, the entire conflict known as the War in the Heavens might have begun as a dispute over how this experiment should be managed. Of course, the myths of the two species put things in another light (see 4.5.2).

4.5.3.3 The Oro'ym

The Oro'ym were only simple hunter-gatherers when they were visited by the Dionak, an ancient, starfaring race, who uplifted them into star-faring explorers within a few centuries. The Dionak are portrayed by Oro'ym myths as amphibians like the Oro'ym themselves, but it seems likely that they were in fact the Ur, and that the Oro'ym later put amphibian faces on their demigods for convenience. Together with the Ur, the Oro'ym travelled the stars (apparently by some magnetic drive) and interacted with primitive sentients, teaching them culture.

In fact, they claim to have visited Earth in early prehistory, from 12,000 to 6,000 BC (see 4.5.4). The Oro'ym supposedly taught those primitives to guard places of "magnetic power" used to fuel the Oro'ym ships – possibly a hint that they initiated the mysterious "megalith builder"-culture that was responsible for structures such as Stonehenge, and emerged along the western coast of Europe around 7,000 BC.

However, this period was smashed to pieces by the War in the Heavens. The Oro'ym homeworld (Madoc) was torn by catastrophe, and the Sons of Krillos destroyed their cities as "child wars against ancient" and "the unseen rises" (possibly a reference to demons or the Dark Between the Stars). The Oro'ym star-culture was lost, and all that remains is the curious ability in Oro'ym to instinctively activate Ur artifacts (called God-Lore).

4.5.3.4 The Nizdharim

The Nizdharim emerged on the same planet as the Oro'ym, and gained sentience just a short time earlier. They claimed descent from Nidderdak From Beyond the Stars, a god of darkness and wisdom said to belong to a pantheon of deities who claimed to have hurled time back on itself [PC, p. 160]. The Nizdharim were supposedly destroyed long before the Dionak/Ur came to the Oro'ym, but have resurfaced beyond the Vuldrok borders in 4999. How did they get there, and how did they flee Madoc (since they were beaten by a gang of hunter-gatherers, they can't have had access to starships).

The obvious answer is of course that they were rescued by Nidderdak and the rest of his pantheon. And who were they? Well, if you consider the claim to have "hurled back time on itself", we can assume that Nidderdak came from the future to the time when the Nizdharim were primitives, probably a million years BC. Examining references to timetravel, the only plausible explanation is that Nidderdak is Anikrunta (the epithet also fits), and therefore that the Ukar pantheon used the tear in the time-space continuum created by Shelkoro [CotG, p. 49-50], to travel back in time to a time when the Obun gods were not active.

4.5.3.5 Humans

As we shall see (part 4.5.4), there are several connections linking the Ur to the humans. For example, the Ur have left many remains of their civilization on Earth [SS, p. 18], including perhaps the Sphinx (since Gargoyles looking vaguely like the Sphinx have been found [WP, p. 22, 27]) and the Pyramids. Also, similar things have been found on Mars [FS, p. 17], possibly including pyramids of different shapes (between three and seven sides) and a giant human/obun/ur face.

The stangest thing, however, is the close resemblance between humans and the Children of the Ur, making some believe that humans in some way are related to Obun and Ukar. The fact that it is possible (albeit with technological help) to produce human/obun [LotKW, p. 104] and human/ukar offspring [S&S, p. 70] seems to reinforce this claim. However, the opinions diverge on whether it is the humans or the obun who are the original species, and which planet is the original home [CotG, p. 8].

4.5.4 What connections are there between the Ur of Fading Suns and real Earth mythologies?

Ur, of course, is a connection to the Babylonian civilization, being the capitol of said country at one time. Ur is also a prefix which means "primal, ancient" in most germanic languages.

Anunnaki, one of the names for the Ur races, is a term from Babylonian and Sumerian mythology, meaning "those who from heaven to earth came". The term is related to the the hebrew *Nephilim*, "those who have come down, from the heavens to the earth" (if you translate very liberally – in reality, it's more like *fallen-down-ones*). Both these have figured in the writings of Erich von Däniken, Zechariah Sitchin and others, whose ideas about "gods from the stars" and "ancient astronauts" have had great influence on modern science fiction, and whose thoughts are readily obvious in the Fading Suns prehistory.

The Anunnaki is a group of gods in the Assyro-Babylonian mythology mostly associated with the earth and the underworld, but also of the sky. Their leader is Enlil or Ellil, who was once the leader of the pantheon but then relinquished this place to Anu, the father of the Anunnaki and king of the Igigi. Enlil is the creator of mankind, and guards the tablets of destiny. He was responsible for the great flood. His symbol is seven circles for the Pleiades. Other Anunnaki include Ninhursaga and Enki, and sometimes An/Anu. The Igigi are another set of gods, mostly of the sky, who rebel against Enlil and the Anunnaki after they have been given the task to dig out riverbeds.

The Nephilim [Gen. 6:4] is a group of angels who fell from heaven for coveting human women [Gen. 6:2]. With them they begat children, "mighty ones", called Rephaim, Emim, Anakim etc. [Deut. 2:11, 3:11]. The Nephilim are also known as Watchers or Grigori, for they were set to look over humanity – which is why they fell (indeed, some say it was their own fault, since they taught women the art of cosmetics). The leader of the Nephilim was called Samayasa [Book of Enoch], and his underlings taught many secrets to the humans – Baraqueel taught man the secrets of astrology, Gadreel introduced man to the weapons of warfare, Kokabel gave man knowledge of the starsigns, and Asa and Asael taught mankind sorcery and magic. Some pseudohistorians try to make a connection between Nephilim and Anunnaki by mentioning that the Akkadians, who replaced the Sumerians, spoke of "The Land of Shumer", which meant the Land of the Watchers.

In the Player's Companion, the Oro'ym are said to have visited earth in early times, sometime between 12,000 and 6,000 BC. It is said they "taught Babon's children" and their leader was "Dagan Oanis". Babon is a reference to Babylonia, which we can suspect the Ur races visited. Oannes is another name for Enki or Ea, the bringer of civilization in Sumerian mythology.

Dagon is a name of the creator deity of Canaanite mythology (also called El, possibly a form of Ellil, see above), and also the name of a Great Old One within H.P. Lovecraft's C'thulhu mythos, the god of the deep ones, a race of amphibian creatures. The association of Dagon to mermen is actually a mistake, made by 4th-century scholar St. Jerome, who found a picture of a merman close to a temple to Dagon (in his form as the Philistine god of agriculture, whose priests opposed Yahweh, see 1 Samuel 5:1-6), thus making the assumption that Dagon was a fish-god. The connection has carried over to FS, though, as the Oro'ym actually are amphibian humanoids.

Also connected to this is the Dogon tribe of Mali, who according to some anthropologists for a long time have had the peculiar beliefs that the star Sirius is not one but two (or even three) stars (which is indeed true – the Sirius system consists of a blue giant, a white dwarf, and possibly a red or brown dwarf), that the earth rotates around the sun, that Jupiter has several moons and that Saturn has rings, all this without having telescopes or outside influence (which of course is questioned among serious researchers). In Fading Suns, Oro'ym legends state that they indeed had a colony on a planet close to the star Akata, identified as Sirius – the conclusion we're supposed to make is of course that the spacefarer Dagan Oanis of the Oro'ym taught the proto-Dogon about Sirius and the solar system.

For more on occult theories and mythology, see <http://home.fireplug.net/~rshand/streams/query.html>
<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cbsiren/myth.html>

4.6 Is Fading Suns an allegory?

Both yes and no. An allegory is a narrative in which the characters, events, and setting represent deeper truths or generalizations than those suggested by the surface story. For example, in Edmund Spenser's *The Faërie Queene*, the story about Queen Mab and her court (only barely) conceals a chivalric allegory praising England and Elizabeth I; in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the fantastic voyages serve as backdrop for a cynical jab at humanity's faults; and in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* the fable retells the story of the Russian revolution and how it led from one dictatorship to another.

But back to Fading Suns. With its neo-historical theme, Fading Suns has all the markings of an allegory. In many ways, the Known Worlds is a mirror of medieval Europe. We have a powerful church, a Holy Roman emperor who might not actually rule the known world but is allied with many of the major noble houses, there are Viking incursions (the Vuldrok), an Islamic jihad (the Kurgan Caliphate), a Reconquista (the Hazat and their tries to take Kurga), a Crusade (coming soon), an Inquisition, and a plague (the Symbiots). The Known Worlds can easily be made into a game where history replays itself once more.

There are of course more parallels you can draw within the history of the Known Worlds – for example, the relocation of the Shantor mirrors that of the Native Americans, while the Incarnates are almost exact replicas of the Protestants.

Of course, an allegory doesn't have to be a story which mirrors a political or historical event, like *Animal Farm*. One form of allegory is the Morality play, a form of theater popular during the middle ages, where actors took the parts of concepts and ideas. This is a form of allegory Holistic Design suggest you try to use – they call it Passion Play Roleplaying.

However – and this is very important – Fading Suns doesn't become an allegory unless you want it to. Indeed, making Fading Suns an allegory might be to water down the richly flavoured mix HDI has come up with. But it might be nice to try just once – and maybe, using only Animalized and aliens as player characters, you can even play out a fable!

5 The other

5.1 Recommended products

It's really difficult to make a list of recommended Fading Suns supplements to buy, considering the generally high quality on those supplements. But here is a try, at least. (No, this is not an advertising campaign for Fading Suns. I really think these books are that good, at least compared to some crap put out by other game companies.)

5.1.1 First buys

The first thing to buy is of course the **Fading Suns RPG Rulebook, Second edition**. There is absolutely no reason to buy the first edition instead, should you find it, except if you're very short for money and the 1st ed. costs less than half of the 2nd. It might be expensive, but the second edition is certainly worth the price.

Second, you should get the **Player's Companion**. While it is getting outdated, and a lot of the info found

here can now be found in the second-edition rulebook and other supplements such as LotE, it still has a nice cross-section of information that allows you to go a bit deeper into every faction without having to buy all faction books. *Warning:* it is possible HDI will release a second edition of this book in the future, so if you feel unsure, skip it.

5.1.2 Second buys

Next you should buy at least one of the three major faction books – **Lords of the Known Worlds**, **Priests of the Celestial Sun**, or **Merchants of the Jumpweb**. Which one to buy (if you don't want them all) depends on which faction your epic will deal with the most. In terms of quality, I'd say they are about equal, with perhaps PotCS being a bit weaker in my opinion (since it doesn't detail the everyday religion and only touches lightly upon the theology of illuminatism), and MotJW having the bonus of detailing law in the Known Worlds and having an extensive price list of goods. *Another warning:* it seems like HDI will re-release LotKW and PotCS this summer ('00) in one volume, with some added material.

Not a faction book, but still very interesting, is **The Dark Between the Stars**, the book on the occult. It is a must-buy for anyone planning to include psi, demons and other strangenesses into their epic.

5.1.3 The other excellent stuff

Holistic Design has succeeded in bringing in some very solid material into their product line, and there are few real disappointments, in my opinion.

For example, they may have written the only equipment book for an RPG that's actually worth reading – **Forbidden Lore: Technology**. Perhaps a bit outdated now as the second edition has come out (especially the chapter on spacecraft), but still a solid book that puts some perspective on the social dynamics of the game.

The book on the Obun and the Ukar – **Children of the Gods: Obun & Ukar** – is also a very good book, if a bit thin, detailing the mythology and psychology of these cousin races.

The recently released **Legions of the Empire** is a faction book about the military forces of the Known Worlds. It doesn't really come up to par with the other faction books, but gives some ideas about how all those wars really were fought. Also includes a much longed-for write-up on Stigmata.

For more information on the planets of the Empire, refer to the **Imperial Survey** books. So far, two have been released: **Hawkwood Fiefs** and **al-Malik Fiefs**. They are admittedly thin and a bit overpriced, but pack enough story ideas to compensate for that.

Now, many people hate adventure or campaign sourcebooks, but the ones published for Fading Suns can possibly have merit for them also. **Byzantium Secundus** describes the throneworld of the empire, and the movers and shakers of the Known Worlds – a must for any epic, empire-shaking campaign.

War in the Heavens: Lifeweb is 75% sourcebook for the Symbiots and 25% adventure. It has taken a lot of heat from fans mainly because the Symbiots didn't turn out the way they expected, but it's still good stuff. Just don't make up your mind about exactly what the Symbiots are and aren't before you buy it, and you'll be satisfied.

5.1.4 The rest of the stuff

I'm not saying these sourcebooks are bad, because they aren't. However, the very concepts as such do have some problems – and that goes for similar books in other game-lines too. So before you buy these, you'd better think if you really want to have a book with NPCs or not. If you do, the contents won't disappoint you. If you don't, then steer clear.

Weird Places is a collection of seven short place descriptions with adventures. Among the places described are Pentateuch – the planet of mystery, a Lost World covered in Ur artifacts, and Barter – the largest moving space station in the empire.

Sinners & Saints is a collection of NPCs, about one from each faction, some of whom can be used as starting PCs. The variation here clearly shows the incredible potentials of the Fading Suns universe.

The Sinful Stars is an anthology of short stories written directly for the Fading Suns RPG. There are some good stories here, and some bad, as with all anthologies.

5.2 Recommended reading

The *Dune* series, by Frank Herbert (*Dune*, *Dune Messiah*, *Children of Dune*, *God Emperor of Dune*, *Heretics of Dune*, *Chapterhouse: Dune*). A series so obviously an inspiration for Fading Suns that you almost forget it, this milestone in SF literature involves high politics, mystic philosophy, noble houses, a merchant league, and much more. Like many series of books, however, this one also loses pace and direction after a while. Recently, Frank Herbert's son Brian Herbert has teamed up with Kevin J. Anderson to write three prequels being released in the year 2000 (*Dune: House Atreides*, *Dune: House Harkonnen*, and *Dune: House Corrino*). Also coming is the *Dune RPG*, published by Last Unicorn Games. *Dune* has been made into a movie, which sucks mightily, at least compared with the brilliant book. In fact, the story is so complex (and therefore impossible to cram into a movie) that when it premiered, the film company handed out reference sheets to moviegoers so they wouldn't lose track of what happened. The movie is only worth the effort for the costumes and scenography. A *Dune* miniseries will premiere on Sci-Fi Channel in October '00, which promises to be much better.

The Book of the New Sun by Gene Wolfe portrays a half fantasy/half sci-fi universe of castes, bizarre and byzantine politics surrounding the Autarch barely on his throne facing alien outside threats and a dying sun. Lots of thick symbol and allegory. Original titles: *The Shadow of the Torturer*, *The Claw of the Conciliator*, *The Sword of the Lictor*, *The Citadel of the Autarch*. It helps to have a reference work for this series – Steve Jackson Games has recently released a *GURPS: Book of the New Sun* sourcebook, which is very good. Optional read is the sequel *The Book of the New Urth*, which is possibly even more strange and convoluted than the tetralogy. There's also supposed to be a book called *Book of the Long Sun*, but I know nothing about that one.

The *Keltiad* books by Patricia Kennealy-Morrison (*The Copper Crown*, *The Throne of Scone*, *The Silver Branch*, etc.). A series of books taking place in Keltia, a future star-empire inhabited by refugees from ancient Ireland. Very much a "celtic fantasy" series, with magic, stone castles, and Tuatha de Danaan, but also with blasters and spaceships galore.

The *Cantos* cycle by Dan Simmons (*Hyperion*, *The Fall Of Hyperion*, *Endymion*, and *The Rise of Endymion*) deals with the fall of a great Hegemony and the rise of a powerful Church. Very much Fading Suns, although the Jump-gates are a bit smaller in these novels.

The *Culture* books by Iain M. Banks (*Consider Phlebas*, *The Player of the Games*, *Use of Weapons*, and *Excession*) portray a utopian society of high technology. Maybe not very related to Fading Suns, but good SF nonetheless. *Against A Dark Background*, however, has some obvious similarities to Fading Suns. The nations and cultures of the star system have advanced to great heights, and have bombarded themselves back into the stone age on numerous occasions. There's all sorts of artifacts, buildings, and places left over from previous times. There's also all kinds of unusual cults and factions. *Feersum Endjinn* and *Inversions* also have a less high-tech setting with nobles and other elements of science fantasy. There is also the anthology *State of the Art* which has some good ideas in it.

Peter F. Hamilton's books (*Reality Dysfunction, vol. 1: Emergence*, and *vol 2: Expansion*, plus *Neutronium Alchemist, vol 1: Consolidation*, and *vol 2: Conflict*) are fast-paced space opera stories which can spawn some good ideas for Fading Suns.

The Videssos Cycle, by Harry Turtledove: a fantasy Byzantine Empire meets the Republican-era Romans. Original titles: *The Misplaced Legion*, *An Emperor for the Legion*, *The Legion of Videssos*, *Swords of the Legion*. There are other Videssos books – *The Krispos Cycle (Krispos Rising*, et al), *Time of Troubles Cycle (The Stolen Throne*, et al) – but the first four are the best.

The Cthulhu Mythos stories by H.P. Lovecraft and others, if you want to have some ideas for the Dark Between the Stars.

Byzantium, by Stephen Lawhead, is a good historical fiction novel taking place in medieval Byzantium.

Tuf Voyaging, by George R. R. Martin: a set of short stories about a fallen Republic with high tech and a wierdo who wanders around using it. Lots of neat ideas for Symbiots, as Tuf ends up with a bio-warship.

David Zindell's *Neverness*, et al., is a very esoteric, very far future series of novels about an Ancient Order of Pilots. Perhaps good for ideas for Sathraists?

One might also look at *The Snow Queen* by Joan Vinge, and *Lord Valentine's Castle* (and the other Majipoor novels and stories) by Robert Silverberg.

C.J. Cherryh, especially the *Alliance/Union* novels. Quite possibly the SF writer that comes up with the best and most original (but plausible) alien species

Also Brian Stableford's *The Werewolves of London* trilogy (*The Werewolves of London*, *The Angel of Pain*, *The Carnival of Destruction*) is interesting for its cosmology and explanation of Ur-beings.

Also on the theme of dying suns, specifically earth and its dying orb, Clark Ashton Smith's *Zothique* tales (not a direct inspiration, but in its medieval-ness and dark deeds, it communicates some of the same themes).

A Distant Mirror by Barbara Tuchman is a wonderful history of the 14th century, and seems to have a lot to contribute to Fading Suns.

The Heritage Universe series by Charles Sheffield

Deathstalker books by Simon R. Green.

The Monument Builders.

Chariots of the Gods by Erich von Däniken, if you want to read up on the Ancient Astronaut theory (see 4.5.4). Be sure to have your BS-detector handy, though.

The World of Megaliths by Jean-Pierre Mohen.

5.3 Recommended music

A lot of music has been recommended on the list for using while playing Fading Suns as mood music. Below are some of the suggestions (of course, remember that these suggestions very much depend on your general musical preferences).

If you want a listing of good music for any RPG, the Dream Pod 9 website has a listing of several good pieces: http://www.dp9.com/Funhouse/On_The_Ball/Ball1211.htm

5.3.1 Generally suitable music

Classical music: *The Planets* by Holst, *The Ring of the Niebelung* by Wagner, almost anything by Liszt (but especially *Hungarian Fantasy*).

Dead Can Dance: Very recommended – especially *Within the Realm of a Dying Sun* and some of Lisa Gerard's solo stuff – great cathedral music. *Into the Labyrinth* also has a great arabian and byzantine feeling, good for al-Malik and Byzantium Secundus.

Course of Empire: A group whose music is all appropriate for Fading Suns. It takes on some seriously grandiose stuff in "Initiation," (which makes me think of Brother Battle when I listen to the triptych of "Sacrifice," "Minions," and "Initiation/Tomorrow") but their stuff has become hard to find.

Delerium: A german group with members from Front Line Assembly. The music is organic, beautiful, and disturbing, all at the same time. *Spheres* and *Spheres II* sample heavily from 2001. Murky, spacy ambient music. One of these always plays on repeat when our group plays Vampire.

In *Semantic Spaces*, the group's sound changed drastically. Think of a mix of Enigma and Deep Forest, but better than either, and throw in beautiful angelic voices singing sweetly about dark subjects (appropriate for the end of history). *Karma* is slightly more "pop-ish," but still gorgeous, and features a song with Sarah McLachlan.

Chanting: Naturally, Gregorian Chants are very appropriate for Fading Suns, especially in church. However, you might also try out Byzantine Chant (for formal gatherings of all kinds), Russian Plainchant (good for just about everything in this game but especially monasteries, wilderness, "action"-scenes), and Coptic and Maronite Chant (for Vau and exceptionally "Ur" events).

On the net, you could find this at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, which is accessible on the net at <http://www.cybercom.net/~htm/>. In their catalog, the "Chants from Valaam" and "Russian Medieval Chant" are the "plainchant" mentioned above. They also have a lot of good Byzantine, particularly the "Selected Hymns from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom" which is done by nuns and very ethereal. You can also "sample" Byzantine chant at: <http://www.goarch.org/access/byzantinemusic/>.

Jazz: Miles Davis (particularly "Kind of Blue", "Sketches of Spain" (very Hazat) and "Bitches Brew"), Egberto Gismonti (who really spans jazz and classical music), possibly Charles Mingus, and you might want to check out some avant-garde "free jazz" as well.

Suitable soundtracks: The Usual Suspects, Conan the Barbarian (good for those times when the blades come out and the projectiles start flying...), John Carpenter's *The*

Thing soundtrack (by Ennio Morricone), The Shadow, Terminator 2, Last of the Mohicans

Various modern: *Cohen Live* by Leonard Cohen, Tony Levin's *World Diary* and *From the Caves of the Iron Mountain* (with Steve Gorn and Jerry Marotta), Peter Gabriel's *Passion*, Tom Verlaine's *Warm and Cool* (very Twin Peaks), various Fripp & Eno things, Pink Floyd, Morcheeba, Philip Glass, Steve Reich.

George Crumb's *Black Angels (13 Images from the Dark Land)* is an excellent piece, and can be found on the Kronos Quartet's album of the same name. The opening section, *Night of the Electric Insects*, would brilliantly set the atmosphere for any sort of jungle adventure... You might also find the other pieces on the album good.

You might also want to try music by Toru Takemitsu, Olivier Messiaen (get *The Quartet for the End of Time* for its own sake!), Ligeti (his music was used for the soundtrack of *2001: A Space Odyssey*), Stravinsky, Ives, Bartok or Shostakovich. There's a lot of good stuff to be found in 20th century "classical" music.

The instrumentals from David Bowie's "Berlin Trilogy" (*Low*, *Heroes*, and *The Lodger*) are good, and there's probably a lot of dance/jungle/techno stuff that could be used as well (Roni Size/Reprazent's *New Forms* is spinning in my CD player right now, Primal Scream's *Train-spotting* from the soundtrack album is good).

Also, if you have the Fading Suns Computer Game (*Emperor of the Fading Suns*), it has some good material on it. Some of the arrangements on there have a strong Russian/imperial type feel that seems to work pretty well.

5.3.2 Thematic music

Imperial Themes: Starship Troopers Soundtrack, or even a little Star Wars Imperial music.

House Hawkwood: First Knight soundtrack, *Capriccio Italien* by Tchaikovsky, the soundtrack to *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* (for some light entertainment or dancing at a Hawkwood party), anything by Sir Elgar.

House Decados: Hector Berlioz – *March to the Scaffold* or *Symphonie Fantastique*, *The Omen* Soundtrack, Type O Negative, Cradle of Filth (quote: "litanies of damnation, death and the darkly erotic").

House Hazat: *Bolero* by Ravel, *La Donna del Lago* (The Lady of the Lake) by Gioacchino Rossini.

House Li Halan: Henry V soundtrack, *Sigfried's Funeral March* by Wagner (a little dark but powerful), Mozart's *Requiem Mass*.

House al-Malik: Portions of the soundtrack from *The English Patient* (the score music), *Dead Can Dance* albums.

The Orthodox Church: Gregorian choirs (of course).

Bother Battle: Soundtracks to *Glory*, *Red Oktober*, *Crimson Tide*, and any kind of martial or military musak!!

Temple Avesti: Requiems (a dedicated Avestite mourns for the sinners he has to punish).

Sanctuary Aeon: Enya (quiet and soothing).

Guild Music: Any Techno or Modern Rock, or Holst's *The Planets* for the Charioteers. *Godfather* Soundtrack for the Scravens. Ministry & Iggy Pop for the Engineers

The Obun or Psychic Covens: Anything by Vangelis, *The Pines of Rome* by Ottorino Respighi (esp. the 3rd movement: *The Pines of The Catacombs*), Tangerine Dream.

The Vau: Old songs by Yes (weird, complex and to almost everyone either disgusting or fascinating).

Annunaki themes: Soundtracks for *Legend*, *Dune* and *Alien 1, 2 & 3*.

5.4 Who will Alexius marry?

In the various FS books, we have learned of three different contenders for the place beside Alexius as his Empress. There is Lady Penelope Hawkwood, favoured by Alexius own mother, the Lady Regnus Octavia; the Brother Battle Adept Theafana al-Malik, who Alexius previously was engaged to; and there is Duchess Salandra Decados, the most evil person in the entire Empire, or so they say.

During a poll on the fsuns-l made in march 1998, the votes seemed to favour Salandra, possibly for the very fact that she's considered the most wicked woman in the world. Listmembers argued that Penelope was just out of the question, since the other Houses would rebel under an all-Hawkwood empire. Also, the Theafana fling was considered old, and an alliance with the al-Malik unnecessary. The Salandra affair, however, is very much in progress, and a political alliance with the Decados is sound and would help to stabilize the nascent Empire. We'll just have to wait and see what HDI thinks of it.

5.5 Which is the coolest...

During december 1999, a short survey was made to see, once and for all, who really has the coolest hairdo in the entire Known Worlds. OK, so that question wasn't in the survey, but it should've been! (And the answer is of course Beliah the Black, with extra credit for the beard...) Anyway, these are the results:

5.5.1 Favourite Faction?

Of the five alternatives (Nobility, Church, Guilds, Aliens, or Legions), the Nobility won with a good 3 votes above the competition, the Guilds.

5.5.2 Favourite Noble House?

The Decados by one vote. Hawkwoods were next. I guess there is something to that Mantis-Lion controversy, huh? Surprisingly, not a single vote for the Li Halan.

5.5.3 Favourite Church Sect?

Eskatonics by a landslide. They had a four votes above their competition, the Avestites.

5.5.4 Favourite Guild?

A tie between the Scravens and the Charioteers. The next front runner was the Engineers.

5.5.5 Favourite Alien Race?

Ur-Ukar by the biggest margin of any category. They had a six votes above their closest competition, the Vorox.

5.5.6 Favourite Elite Legion?

Dervishes. Phoenix Guard were hot on their heels, though.

5.5.7 Favourite Book?

Tie between the Players Companion and the Bark Between the Stars (*I just won't edit that typo! –ed.*). Behind by one vote was Merchants of the Jumpweb.

5.5.8 Favourite NPC?

Salandra Decados beat out our beloved Emperor by one vote. (*How can you not love a girl with Faith 1 and Torture 9? –ed.*)

5.5.9 Favourite Occult Power/Tech Item/Toy?

Energy shields won this category out. The Path of Sathra was next with three votes.

5.5.10 Least Favourite Book?

Sinners & Saints won this one (*if you really can call it winning –ed.*), followed closely by *War in the Heavens: Lifeweb*.

5.6 Frozen fish!

During a debate about jumpgates (what else?) and space stations around them in december '98, Benjamin Inn suddenly asked the question we all had been wondering about:

"For example, I was thinking of Madoc, and how it has many ocean delicacies which can't be shipped offworld (or so it says in the main book). Why is that? Couldn't one just freeze the fish or something?"

There was a quick retort from Lee Watts:

"Anyone with a distinguished sense of taste will tell you that a frozen fish is anything but less than desirable. Perhaps the unwashed masses could eat a frozen fish, but not we nobility. And who among the poor serfs could afford imported fish? None that I know of. So the idea of importing expensive frozen fish for the poor makes no sense at all. I would never serve frozen fish at any of my parties." – Earl Dylan de LeCant"

This developed into the legendary "Frozen Fish" debate of 1998, still talked about in some circles of cannibal aboriginies in the darkest parts of New Guinea. The list was filled with good advice on how to transport frozen fish, how to incorporate frozen fish into adventures, and other red herrings. And still in this day, veteran listmembers will sometimes mention frozen fish out of the blue, and all around the globe, there will appear a silly smile on the lips of their fellow fishfreezers...

5.7 Some crazy HDI jokes...

5.7.1 Li Arvi

In PotCS, you can read about the trial of one Li Arvi on p. 90. He is accused and convicted of having murdered an Archbishop Geraltus while he was visiting the shrine of a fallen pre-Diasporan king on the northwestern continent of Holy Terra, somewhere near the Mississippi river.

This is all a pun – Li Arvi is of course Lee Harvey Oswald, and Geraltus is John F. Kennedy, or at least he was visiting JFK's grave. While this Li Arvi, unlike the real Lee Harvey, seems to have a tight alibi (he was dining with his family on the other side of the planet...), the famous

Inquisitor Bishop Argus shatters it by calling Li Arvi an antinomist and worse – the fact that he was on the other side of the planet only proves that Li Arvi used "that violation of natural laws known as bilocation"!

In fact, Bishop Argus further proves Li Arvi's sorcerous ways by mentioning the fact that he must have used a magic bullet, since he hit Geraltus seven times from three directions with three different bullet calibers in only two seconds, while the gun he had used could hold only six bullets and in two seconds only fire three of them, and his position in the Library Tower greatly exceeded the range of that weapon...

5.7.2 Gwyneth Paltrow

Much to the disdain of FS fans, on the planet Gwyneth, there is a continent named Paltrow, according to IS1.