

# FALLOUT

- THE SCI-FI RPG -



- CORE BOOK -  
2.0



# FALLEN

## -THE SCI-FI RPG-



### TABLE OF CONTENTS:

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	7
<a href="#">The Universe</a>	14
<a href="#">Religion</a>	20
<a href="#">The Corvo</a>	48
<a href="#">The Iz'kal</a>	156
<a href="#">The Raag</a>	222
<a href="#">The Human</a>	258
<a href="#">The Ravager</a>	290
<a href="#">The Coalition</a>	306
<a href="#">The Core Rules</a>	312
<a href="#">The Characters</a>	340
<a href="#">The Gear</a>	382
<a href="#">The Vehicles</a>	404
<a href="#">Introductory Adventure: A Relic in the Streets</a>	328
<a href="#">Character and Vehicle Sheets</a>	338

# FAITH: THE SCI-FI RPG

FAITH: the Sci-Fi RPG is a roleplaying game set in an alternate future several hundred years in the future. Its known universe is a dark and unforgiving place, where technology and biological experimentation live side by side with Gods. These Gods are abstract moral entities in continuous conflict with each other. They can only affect reality through their believers, bestowing supernatural powers upon them. They are demanding and fickle, and will try to lure their followers into deadly quests in return for power.

In this Universe, Human civilisation collapsed back to tribalism, to the delight of Ledger, the god of chaos. Once again warlords, prophets, and madmen ruled the Earth, and the stars seemed unreachable. Then the Corvo arrived from the skies. The alien invaders saw potential in Humans and fed their internal wars, offering them weapons in exchange for workers and soldiers. The most ambitious warlords did not hesitate and forced their people into long and exploitative contracts in exchange for weaponry. The Corvo intended to use these brave mercenaries in black ops against their enemies, so they sterilised every Human in their service, so as to prevent the Iz'kal - or Earthlings themselves - from breeding their own Human army.

The Corvo are a humanoid insect-like species adapted to life in space, and most of their population lives in an ever expanding Dyson ring without ever experiencing gravity. Adherents of the god Kaliva, they live in a society ruled by the capricious ebbs and flows of the market and the long-term interests of the Megacorps that rule their civilisation.

The Iz'kal, descendants of ancient aquatic mammals, are capable of engaging in hyperlink, a neural connection resembling a hive mind. As preferred by their god Ergon, they embrace efficiency and equality through the State's absolute control. Once enslaved by the now extinct Korian, the Iz'kal are former brothers-in-chains to the Raag, the fourth civilised species of the known universe. The Raag are violent but honourable clansfolk who use huge citadel spaceships to raid and search for the supplies they can't produce in their icy homeworld.

The Corvo and the Iz'kal coexist in a state of cold war. Both consider direct confrontation to be too risky, so instead they try to collapse each other's economic system through fierce commerce, and fight black-op wars for resources in far away planets. They compete to found the most colonies in the exits of the Labyrinth - the vast web of wormholes that interconnects the known universe - and try to discover each other's main supply and commerce routes.

Impossible duels between hackers take place on a daily basis, fueled by the information provided by intelligence and counterintelligence agents; missionaries and inquisitors attempt to convert their enemies' populations to their

own religions; and agitators try to subvert the native species of their enemies' colonies.

The Corvo and the Iz'kal managed to maintain a fragile peace, but now a war has sprung in their faces. The deadly species of genetically-engineered mutants known as the Ravager have arrived, and they are consuming entire worlds in their quest to absorb DNA for the genetic databanks of their swarm queens. In recent years, they have quickly become a threat to all other known life forms, forcing the Corvo and the Iz'kal to reluctantly join forces against them. The ensuing military Coalition has spent the last two decades fending off the Ravager raids, trying to learn as much as possible about them, and stop it as best they can.

This is our universe. Who will you be in it? A mercenary Human fighting to earn a place in intergalactic civilisation? A ruthless Corvo agent with access to the best tech and resources in the universe? A wise Iz'kal sage with the ability to read into the emotions of others? A hardy Raag barbarian riding a flying fortress into enemy territory?

Who will be your God? Will you be a freethinker, unfettered by religion? Or a fanatic, exhibiting outrageous divine powers in exchange for blind devotion?

This is the Universe.

Welcome to FAITH.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

FAITH is a roleplaying game in a sci-fi setting, where starfaring alien civilizations race to explore a dangerous, unknown universe.

The FAITH campaign is one of valiant space travelers, remote uncharted stars and bizarre alien technology. But it's also a realm of mysterious, invisible forces – the Gods. These faceless entities rule over the lives of every creature in the universe; and the only proof of their existence has always been the outlandish, supernatural power they grant to those mortals that believe in them.

In FAITH, you can be a star explorer, a soldier or a mystic believer, using a mix of technology, training and god-given powers to survive the untamed regions of wild space against rival factions, alien perils and ruthless bandits.

In all, FAITH is a huge, complex universe, and the plasma guns and interstellar travel are only the surface of a much deeper mystery of which no single living being can glimpse but the smallest part.

## SCIENCE FICTION

First and foremost, FAITH is a sci-fi setting. As such, it all takes place in a far-future version of our universe, with speculative technology and interstellar travel. Sentient computers and space travel are a reality, as are the dangers of uncharted alien space; daring explorers carry high-powered plasma cannons and have their brains linked to formidable hacking devices.

In this Universe technology reigns. Cybernetics and bio modifications are common, and the line between living and machine is blurred. Computers are so advanced that if it were not for the ban on AI, they would probably be running the universe instead of their creators. Some people have even managed to turn their minds into software in a quest to achieve immortality, but most people still live and die in their organic bodies.

Computers are connected directly to the brain of their user, becoming an expansion of the mind rather than an external tool. Screens, keyboards and mice are obsolete, as cortex connected computers are controlled by thought and information is directly fed into the brain. Ideas are directly transcribed to digital documents, and browsing the internet is just a matter of thinking about it. Analogic people are a minority, and most probably weird folk – who wouldn't want such an expansion of the self? Thought is power, thought is action, thought is control.

In this universe there are autonomous cities that operate like clockwork and allow their citizens to indulge in leisure, but also cities where owning anything fancy is nothing but a death sentence and piles of misery and dirt block the streets. The most impressive technological achievement in the known universe is Tiantang, a Dyson ring where billions of Corvo live in all kinds of space stations, a place where generations upon generations of Corvo have lived without ever setting foot on a planet or feeling the pull of gravity.

## GODS

FAITH's most distinguishing feature is the existence of Gods – mysterious entities, or natural forces, which give supernatural powers to those that follow them. Becoming a follower is as simple – and as difficult – as living by the tenets of the God's philosophy.

The Gods of FAITH are Ergon (God of Community), Kaliva (God of Survival), Vexal (God of Freedom), Hexia (God of Progress), and Ledger (God of Chaos). They are worshipped equally by all species, which ascribe them the same attributes regardless of their culture, location or social structure. This is often cited as proof that the Gods are actual entities and not subjective concepts, but the only conclusive evidence that the Gods exist manifests through the incredible powers of their true believers.

If a God's followers adhere to the corresponding doctrine, they may gain the blessings associated with that God, in the shape of preternatural abilities. Thus, in this universe, your beliefs indeed become real power.

These powers specifically reflect the character and doctrine of the respective God that grants them; thus Ergon believers can open channels of communication across minds or distances; Hexia grants visions of the future and cosmic revelations; Kaliva followers are supernaturally dangerous hunters and killers; Vexal followers can freely move ignoring gravity or solid matter; and Ledger believers can cloud perceptions and bring madness.

Only the Gods' most pious or exemplary believers display these unusual abilities, and those with the greatest devotion or commitment to a God's ideals are also those with the greatest power.

From a scientific standpoint, it's unknown whether these Gods are actual divine beings, a myth created to explain the powers of their followers; or psychic entities of some kind, created by the collective thoughts of their billions of believers. Whatever the truth, the fact remains that the most dedicated followers of the Gods can manifest their will with powers and abilities that can only be called supernatural.

This mystifying religion system, which blurs the lines between psychic power and divine forces, is the main feature of the FAITH setting – and its heroes. Still more



important are the philosophical schools of thought behind each of the gods and their followings, and how these philosophies shape the goals and destinies of every sentient being in the Universe.

Good and evil are far from absolutes in FAITH. There are no 'bad guys' here; there are simply different alien cultures trying to survive the wild region of space, each in their own way - with different philosophies and disparate goals. And of course, most individuals have their own agendas, which may or may not clash with the moral standards of their society.

## ALIEN SPECIES

Two sentient species dominate the FAITH Universe - the technological, capitalistic Corvo, and the communal, progressive Iz'kal. The colonisation race between these two species has shaped their political, social and technological development, and their joint Coalition - created to resist the onslaught of the marauding Ravager species - is the single strongest military force in the uncharted frontiers of space. Two other species - the resourceful Humans and the hardy Raag - have also achieved prominence as space pioneers, although they are both lesser species, subservient to the Corvo and Iz'kal.

### THE CORVO

The Corvo civilisation is the largest and most powerful in the known Universe. They are a highly technified, capitalistic society, and almost all of their achievements are a consequence of free market, technocracy and entrepreneurship. The Corvo invented starship drives, space habitats and - perhaps their most important technical advancement - the cortex connector. This discovery allows organic sentients to directly link into computer systems, which basically makes every Corvo a living data station.

The Corvo are in perpetual expansion, constantly annexing new worlds and resources to their federation, which they run exactly as a megacorporation. In fact, three Megacorps run the official Corvo government, and the species' laws and customs revolve around marketing, PR and media.

### THE IZ'KAL

The Iz'kal are a progressive, orderly civilisation that has built its power and stability on social and genetic engineering. Their society is both single-minded and nonviolent, favoring the group over the individual and conformity over creativity. Despite this, the Iz'kal excel in all fields that require innovation, such as science and technology. Their society has enjoyed hundreds of years of uninterrupted peace, equality and prosperity. For the Iz'kal, this achievement is well worth the sacrifice of independent thought.

The Iz'kal are as xenophobic as they are peaceful, so they don't engage in expansion wars; but their State keeps steadily expanding mostly because of their peerless organization and monolithic purpose, unmatched by any other species.

### THE HUMAN

For all their technological and social advances, the Iz'kal and Corvo are relatively small and frail species when compared to other lifeforms. That's why they use Humans - a backward species from an extinct civilisation in a remote corner of the universe - as mercenaries, soldiers and elite forces.

Having lost their civilisation to war and pollution a few centuries back, Humans are a fallen species, their world as wild and dangerous as the farthest frontiers of space. They are taller and stronger than either the Corvo or the Iz'kal, but not as intelligent or advanced. Nevertheless, the Humans' natural predisposition towards violence, combined with a strange, primitive bravery, and an unusual knack for improvisation, make them unmatched guards and shock troopers. Any Corvo or Iz'kal force will gladly pay high rates for a Human or two to lead their troops, and the formerly destitute species has carved itself a place as the best mercs in the business - the ones that will do the dirty job.

### THE RAAG

A nomadic species from a barren world, the Raag are the strongest sentient species on galactic record. When compared to Iz'kal or Corvo, Raag are almost giants; they are mostly used for tasks that require brute strength, from carrying heavy loads to military assault.

Naturally mistrustful of technology, the Raag only came in contact with space travel when they were visited - and enslaved - by the conquering Korian species, which bred the Raag into one of the toughest, most aggressive species in the universe.

Other than their violent strain, Raag are honorable and strong-willed, and they adapt easily to servitude. Freed from the Korian centuries ago, they accept their status as third-class citizens in both the Corvo and Iz'kal societies; this is, of course, as long as they have honest work and the chance to smash a few heads.

### THE RAVAGER

The dread Ravager are a predatory, survivalist species from outside the known Universe, which arrived from their far-off stars only recently, and quickly became the greatest threat ever faced by either the Corvo or the Iz'kal in their millennia-long history.

The Ravager absorb and reproduce the genetic traits of other species, so they don't have a common appearance. To those encountering them for the first time, the Ravager tend to look like featureless aberrations out of some nightmare; and that's as accurate an impression as any.

The Ravager stop at nothing to conquer and consume any organism or planet in their path. Only the Iz'Kal-Corvo Coalition has ever stood their ground against the Ravager – and nobody knows whether they'll manage it for long.

## STARFARING

Space travel is essential to the FAITH setting, and most adventures take place on remote worlds far from civilization – even intergalactic civilization – or onboard interstellar starships or space stations.

Historians say that we are in the Space Age of Discovery, in which travel between systems is for the desperate, the greedy and the adventurous. Only the rich own their own spaceships, only large megacorps or the powerful State can found colonization efforts. Regardless, it seems that the sky is not longer the limit.

## THE LABYRINTH

Such intergalactic travel is possible thanks to The Labyrinth, a network of wormholes – spacetime portals – that allow ships to cover light-year distances in a matter of hours. Travel between inhabited systems inside the Labyrinth takes a few months, and the journey is tough and dangerous.

## THE FAR FRONTIER

FAITH is an untamed universe. Other than the few, highly technified colony worlds and space stations of the Corvo and Iz'kal, the endless reaches of space remain a mostly unknown territory, as promising as they are menacing. Most people live in huge megacities or floating space stations in these high-tech colonies, but a few brave explorers have dared to wander or even settle the unknown frontier. The few settled worlds are connected by precariously established trade routes and beacon server ships, without which space exploration would be impossible. In this scenario, the industrialistic Corvo and the totalitarian Iz'kal race to be the first to conquer space – to finally tame the unending void.



CORVO



IZ'KAL

## CONFLICT

Besides divine powers and technology, the FAITH Universe is shaped by the relationships between alien species; from the power struggle between the Corvo and Iz'kal, and their barely-unified Coalition, to their dominance over their Human and Raag henchmen; from the social status granted by an individual's species, to her faith in one God or another. Also, recent history has been altered by the Coalition's struggle against the predatory Ravager species, which is surely destined to affect the future of space civilisations.

There are no good or bad guys in FAITH. The Corvo and Iz'kal cultures both have their own ideas of how to run things, but they honestly seek to make life better, even if their views seem heartless or oppressive to outsiders.

The FAITH Universe is held together by belief and point of view. Every living being, every social group, has its own truth and stands for it. Intergalactic civilizations fight for their own ideals and cultures; splinter groups and secret societies further their own agendas from the shadows; and an individual's own philosophy may grant her the attention

and favor of a God, but also turn her into a weapon in the eternal struggle between the Gods.

When conflict occurs, it's mostly at the fringes of lawful society: Opposing trade groups use spies and mercenaries to sabotage each other; bootleggers strive to control the black market; or darker criminals, like secret societies or cults, kidnap citizens or threaten the status quo.

Other than that, the main source of conflict and adventure is space exploration itself, with its unpredictable dangers and mysteries - and the unprecedented threat of the Ravager, which may yet defeat the Coalition.

As a FAITH campaign begins, the war still rages at the frontier of civilised space...



HUMAN

RAAG



# THE IZ'KAL





# THE IZ'KAL SPECIES

*"Iz'kal society is so surprisingly different from ours that half of what I say about them has to address what they don't have or don't do - stuff that seems so normal to us that if I omit it you'd assume they have it too."*

- Extract from "A characterless society" by Gong Cixi, Corvo xenoscientist

The Iz'kal are a species of amphibious humanoids with an organised, strict society and a strong communal mind. They are telepathic, able to communicate among themselves without words, and live in a cooperative, egalitarian society; thus they are a collective both by genetic predisposition and by political rule.

The Iz'kal State is the largest, strongest political block in the universe - a technified, leaderless government of billions of people that police each other through a telepathic connection. This connection, which the Iz'kal call the Hyperlink, is the most important trait of the species, and serves both to maintain communication between Iz'kal and to facilitate their bureaucratic, absolutist civilisation.

## NATURE AND BEHAVIOUR

*"They live long and healthy lives, yet they do not own them. They are more spectators than participants. They know not of pain, yet they barely understand pleasure. They do not know of the grey scale in things, nor of black and white - they have only seen white and their stares are just that: blank, white, and bored looks of the walking dead."*

- Xeon Magno, main shareholder of The Union, after his visit to Erthum

The Iz'kal are a gregarious and proud people, as peaceful as they are mistrustful of other species. They live in large, silent, technified cities that seem paradises of organisation and coexistence.

Iz'kal are very honest and straightforward, and instinctively helpful; this is why they tend to be wary of non-Iz'kal,



as nearly every other species has proven to be much more conflictive and duplicitous than the usual Iz'kal outlook.

## ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY

Slightly smaller in stature and more slender than Humans, Iz'kal are amphibious mammals with an average height ranging from 1.7 to 1.8 metres and an average weight of 65-70 kilograms, with males being slightly larger and bulkier than females. Of course, variations on planet gravity, atmosphere and nutrients may significantly affect these ratios.

Iz'kal are completely hairless and have a tougher skin than Humans, but they require a humid environment, such as swamp or coastland, to avoid dehydration.

As near-amphibians, Iz'kal are adept swimmers and they have a very large lung capacity. They have a tail, reminiscent of their time as marine creatures, which they used for swimming. The tail is mobile but not prehensile.

Last but not least, all Iz'kal have an Iz - a head appendage connected to their brain, which allows them to enter the Hyperlink. When an Iz'kal loses his iz, he can no longer engage in Hyperlink, which usually leads to depression and suicide. Many biologists of all species have studied the iz and its importance to the Iz'kal organism, but it still holds many secrets and wonders to science.

An Iz'kal's natural life expectancy is quite high at 70 Earth years; however, genetic manipulation and state-provided health care have catapulted this rate to a much higher average of 180 years.

## GENETIC MODIFICATION

Genetic science plays a very important part in Iz'kal society, and their advances in this field outshine those of any other species. Thanks to their advanced bioengineering and highly organised bureaucracy, the Iz'kal can modify themselves so easily and efficiently that they can completely change the genetic traits of their entire species from one generation to the next.





Thus the Iz'kal gave themselves vocal cords - which they originally lacked - to be able to speak, specialised digestive systems and activity cycles to adapt to the day length and available nutrients of the planets they inhabit, and so on.

The Iz'kal's ability to genetically alter themselves guarantees that there are a lot of different Iz'kal subspecies, depending on the type of environment they live in.

## IZ'KAL SUBSPECIES

Thanks to genetic modification, the Iz'kal have developed different strains of their own species, adapted to the various planetary environments they colonise. While specific ground and atmospheric conditions almost require a different Iz'kal subspecies for every colonised planet, they can be roughly classified into six major groups:

Waha'i Iz'kal, virtually always called simply Iz'kal, are the unmodified breed of their species. As their evolutionary ancestors, they are adapted to life in temperate, oxygen-rich water worlds such as Earth, and prefer swampy, humid environments. Their physical and biological characteristics correspond to the basic template featured in the rules section.

Batil Iz'kal (or Crystal Iz'kal) are genetically modified for space activity; they are the ones sent to space stations or lifelong Labyrinth trips. Batil Iz'kal need much less humidity than their kin, and their powerful, protected circulatory systems can go long hours without breathing, allowing them to exist in high pressure or little oxygen. They are not as adept for water movement as other Iz'kal, however, and are most at risk of Hyperlink withdrawal, being also the most affected by its symptoms.

Dhabab (or 'Golden') Iz'kal are adapted to life in desert planets, with high temperatures and very little water. These Iz'kal have been modified to require no humidity and suffer no dehydration symptoms, which gives them a gold-tanned, heat-resistant skin, plus better liquid retention. Golden Iz'kal can go for days without food or water.

Fadi (or 'Silver') Iz'kal are adapted to life in extremely cold environments. Their skin has been changed from a single membrane to many thick layers of fat; this skin is much more delicate, but the constant humidity in the cold air helps maintain it. Also, Fadi Iz'kal have very efficient energy systems, and take much longer to become fatigued.

Iz'kal'asud (also known as Dark Iz'kal) were modified for life in planets where the air is oxygen-thin or too smoky, with scarce or very scarce life-giving liquids and reduced light due to the thick atmosphere. Iz'kal'asud resemble Batil Iz'kal, but have also increased muscle mass to withstand much stronger gravity and magnetic fields, making them a bit slower and clumsier. They also have nictitating eyes,

which allow for night vision and are well protected against dust and smoke.

Shajara Iz'kal are also called Tree Iz'kal because of their wide, stubby legs, knobby skins and thick muscles. They were created to withstand high pressure and gravity, and are far stronger - if somewhat slower - than common Iz'kal.

## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

*"When teaching, there is always some information gap between what is taught and what is learned. There are thousands of reasons for such gaps. To me, the size of this gap is the most important indicator of how advanced a society is."*

- Extract from the talk by Zainab Haddad, Iz'kal behavioural engineer, at the "Understanding Cognition" convention

Thanks to their telepathic Hyperlink, the Iz'kal evolved apart from all sentient species, which has forced them to drastically modify their own genetic structures to interact with other civilisations.

## IZ'KAL SPEECH

The Iz'kal naturally lacked vocal cords, as they only needed the Hyperlink to communicate with each other. However, they later gave themselves the ability to speak via genetic modification, partly to reassert their status as a free people after centuries of being treated as speechless animals by the Korian, but mostly to be able to communicate with other species. If other sentient species prided themselves on their ability to speak, why should the Iz'kal be any less?

The first language the Iz'kal developed was a variation of the Korian tongue, the first spoken language they learned centuries ago when the Korian subjugated them. The Iz'kal hate all memory of the Korian, so they treat this modified language as their own invention.

As a wordless species, adopting a verbal language was a long and difficult step for the Iz'kal, but their telepathic link with each other helped them greatly through the process. Now, Iz'kal Speech - totally different from the intra-species 'thoughtspeak' of their Hyperlinks - is the official language they use when dealing with other, verbally-speaking species.

The Iz'kal first developed their Speech to communicate with the Raag, and later with the Corvo, but they have always assumed it as their own spoken tongue. Very few

Iz'kal use it among themselves, of course, as their telepathic Hyperlink is a much more effective, nuanced and expedient means of communication.

## THE HYPERLINK

As it's been said, the Iz'kal communicate telepathically via the Hyperlink - a special range of perception that only the Iz'kal have. Not exactly a psychic network nor a mental language, the Hyperlink is more akin to a unique sense, through which the Iz'kal can convey information to each other.

The Hyperlink is possible thanks to the Iz, or 'head tail' that all Iz'kal have, which allows them to clearly perceive the thoughts and feelings of other Iz'kal. An Iz'kal deprived of his Iz suffers no ill effects on his health, but loses the ability to enter Hyperlink, which for most Iz'kal amounts to a slow, lonely death.

The Hyperlink allows Iz'kal to establish telepathic communication with other members of their species. Non-Iz'kal are all but incapable of understanding the actual nature of the Hyperlink, as they are genetically unequipped to experience it. A simplified explanation of the Hyperlink would classify its function in three different levels of communication:

The first and most rudimentary Hyperlink level - and likely the first to evolve - is the Scream; the ability to project one's emotions outwardly. Such a projection often takes the form of a powerful and brief message, that nearby Iz'kal automatically feel whether they want it or no. Such 'screams' reach the minds of every Iz'kal in sight, and can even be felt in a radius of several kilometres if the message or emotion is strong enough. The Iz'kal developed this ability to warn each other of danger, request help or signal the discovery of food or shelter; it was from this primal skill that the full Hyperlink developed.

A Scream is an uninvited interaction, and as such is considered rude by other Iz'kal unless used with a very good reason.

The second Hyperlink level, and the most common, is called the Talk, which indeed allows the Iz'kal to enter a mental conversation. This requires all involved Iz'kal to be allowed and willing to join the conversation, which is quickly decided by a series of mental invitations and requests. Once a Talk starts, the participants simply express their ideas through the Hyperlink for others to share, analyse and reply to. A Hyperlink Talk differs from a spoken conversation in that it is atemporal - any participant can access any shared thought and analyse it for as long as he wants without interrupting or waiting for other Talkers. Late comers to a Talk can simply access all thoughts previously shared to the conversation, and intervene with their own thoughts as they see fit. The Talk is the most common means of interac-

tion among Iz'kal, and has shaped their view of the universe and social relationships for many centuries now.

Thoughts expressed through the Talk convey additional information that is hard to express with words: Feelings about the issue, the origin of the idea, the degree of agreement with your own comment, etc. This means that Iz'kal from distant planets understand each other better than any other species, who usually develop their own versions of their language, and when they talk to someone from a different planet they miss the subtleties and get confused by slang words.

Talks can only be established with Iz'kal close by, but as every Iz'kal added to the Talk can reach further and further, some Talks can grow large enough to cover an entire city. Such city-wide Talks allow Iz'kal to share their thoughts, discuss the latest news and engage in idle chat with their fellow citizens, while also enjoying a shared mental map of the city. Even when visiting a new city, an Iz'kal will easily find his way around, and feel like a small but essential part of a whole, thanks to Hyperlink Talks. However, the largest Hyperlinks are mentally and emotionally taxing, and may permanently harm an Iz'kal's sense of self if he or she remains connected for long periods.

Any Iz'kal can enter or leave a Talk at will, and also be expelled by the other Talkers if his presence becomes disruptive for any reason. Hyperlink Talks are the most open and free means of communication in Iz'kal society, and perhaps in the entire universe.

The third level of Hyperlink, known as The Bond, is reserved for intimate contact, either among friends, lovers or very involved colleagues. Iz'kal who are very emotionally invested in each other fall into a Bond. Once they do, its effects are all but permanent. Two Bonded Iz'kal are always aware of each other's feelings, thoughts and emotions without reserve, including their deepest fears, shame and secrets. All members of a Majmoa - the Iz'kal family unit - are Bonded with each other, and so share a more intimate relationship than non-Iz'kal can conceive.

Most Bonds last through the members' lifetime, as they're very hard to turn off at will; in the rare cases where a Bond ends, it is because the Bonded individuals suddenly or gradually stopped caring for each other somehow - an extremely rare occurrence among the empathic, gregarious Iz'kal.

Regardless of the Hyperlink level, Iz'kal in the same Hyperlink can directly experience each other's thoughts and feelings. Witnessing the internal processes of another person creates a strong bond and makes everyone very empathetic; this is one of the reasons why violence and discrimination are so scarce in Iz'kal society.

A common misconception by non-Iz'kal is that the Hyperlink is a sort of hive mind that joins every single Iz'kal.





## SAVAK SOULBENDER

Proficient :: Hexian 2 :: Voidwalker

Level 3 :: Iz'kal :: Strategist

mov. 5 metres :: weight 67 kg :: height 168 cm

4	5	1	8

PHYSICAL STAT	8 	INITIATIVE STAT	6 	MENTAL STAT	7 
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HIT (DEX)	3+	GRAPPLE (CON)	2++
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### Savak Blade

It ignores 1 point of armour.



### Ki Suit

Activated. He gains two advantages towards agility actions OR moves at twice his normal speed.

### Overpower

If he wins a Close Quarters confrontation, he gains one advantage towards his next Close Quarters action against the same target.

Reviled and revered in equal measure, voidwalkers cut their iz along with their ties with society. What they get in return is incommensurable power.

Actually, a Hyperlink only joins specific groups of Iz'kal - usually no more than a few dozen at any given time, up to many thousands in the case of citywide Hyperlinks - and is more a social gathering than a pervasive collective brain.

Other than that, any Iz'kal can - and often will - have several Hyperlinks open at the same time, and turn them on and off depending on his needs.

Iz'kal learn to control the emotions they share at an early age, since their feelings can easily influence those around them. Individual sentiments of anger, fear, sadness or hate are usually suppressed, but when an Iz'kal feels his feelings are too intense to keep inside, he will refrain from establishing any kind of Hyperlink to avoid affecting others' psyches with his personal problems. Such Hyperlink time-outs take as long as the individual needs to come to terms with whatever affected him.

If for any reason an Iz'kal becomes so emotionally scarred that he can't ever join a Hyperlink again, he risks depression and death - or becoming a voidwalker.

## VOIDWALKERS

When an Iz'kal spends a long time disconnected from Hyperlink, he is overcome by anxiety, loneliness and depression. If Hyperlink deprivation is long enough, or produced by a shocking enough event, some individuals might lose the ability to connect through Hyperlink altogether. Before the Iz'kal modified themselves into having a spoken language, this meant not being able to share their thoughts and feelings with another person again. It was the ultimate isolation. Such individuals slowly lose the will to live until they die of loneliness and deprivation.

The very few Iz'kal that manage to survive without a Hyperlink become voidwalkers.

Besides their inability to enter Hyperlink, a voidwalker is different from all other Iz'kal because of the changes that take place in his organism. A voidwalker's iz organ changes all the way down to the genetic structure; now, instead of an open channel to connect to other Iz'kal, it becomes closed to neural transmissions. This helps the Iz'kal deal with the mental isolation, which is probably the reason why the species developed this trait; however, it has a very important side effect.

Having a closed iz renders the Iz'kal nearly immune to distractions or neural tampering of any kind. Besides its immediate evolutionary uses, this transformation greatly increases the voidwalker's mental strength, focus, and willpower. In short, the affected Iz'kal's new iz makes them a mental powerhouse, capable of maintaining concentra-

tion and handling thought processes in ways undreamed of by any other sentient creature on record.

The second most noticeable side effect of becoming a voidwalker is a change in the individual's personality. It goes without saying that they tend to turn quiet and detached, but in fact they gain a hormonal propensity to antisocial, even aggressive behaviour.

Some scholars believe the voidwalker transformation is actually a form of regression to an earlier stage of Iz'kal evolution, when the species hadn't developed Hyperlink communication and relied on physical violence to survive.

## VOIDWALKERS AND SOULBENDING

The most important consequence of having an increased psychic power is, of course, related to soulbender powers. Besides their increased concentration and willpower, voidwalkers become extremely devoted to their values and beliefs, probably as a part of the same genetic process that allows them to cope with isolation. This means that most voidwalkers become soulbenders, and very good ones too, wielding the powers of their Gods at a whole new level.

Some Iz'kal religious zealots undergo Hyperlink deprivation on purpose, so as to gain a voidwalker's ability; those who survive have their power dramatically increased by the experience.

Most voidwalkers gain at least a few partial, or 'quiet', soulbending abilities, but over half of them develop full-fledged soulbender powers. If the individual was already a soulbender at the moment of becoming a voidwalker, his powers increase dramatically over a period of a few weeks; more than a few Iz'kal voidwalkers have become true avatars of their gods and legends of their species.

## VOIDWALKERS IN SOCIETY

Average Iz'kal treat voidwalkers with a mixture of respect, fear, and pity; losing the ability to communicate through Hyperlink is seen by all Iz'kal as a great loss, and the events that lead to that loss are usually just as terrible. ]Aware of their outcast status, voidwalkers strive to stay away from other Iz'kal, keeping mostly to themselves.

The Iz'kal State has seen the value in voidwalkers and have created an elite military group, known as Savak, that is composed solely of voidwalkers. These people who have lost everything have been given a new reason live and die, and they're even better soldiers because of it.

## THE IZ'KAL OUTLOOK

The Iz'kal are very quiet and unassuming for other species' standards, and very worried about their own feelings and those of others, even appearing passive-aggressive to other species as they go out of their way not to offend while they act outraged by words and thoughts that other species would never find offensive. This is what Iz'kal understand as kindness; as they are very open about their inner feelings, they treat the feelings of others with extreme care, to extremes that could seem ridiculous to outsiders.

Some aliens can't believe such forced politeness is genuine, and assume the Iz'kal are sarcastic - although irony, sarcasm and black humour are all but unknown for the Iz'kal, who are used to having immediate access to the whole truth when dealing with others.

Once a sentient gets to know them - as much as an outsider can actually know an Iz'kal, which some argue isn't really possible - the Iz'kal are helpful, proactive and fully honest, always looking for a way to help and improve any situation they are in.

They instinctively tend towards teamwork; they are, however, handicapped when dealing with non-Iz'kal. Their unfortunate contact with the Korian introduced them to deceit and aggressiveness, which were all but unknown to them, plus their way of handling feelings makes inter-racial relations awkward.

Thus, they approach other species with a mix of naiveté and cautiousness that makes things even harder. This, added to their natural xenophobia and standoffish character, has given Iz'kal a reputation for haughtiness - which is not entirely incorrect; after all, the Iz'kal do feel superior to all other species, mostly because of their peaceful, utopian State. Who else can claim to have eradicated crime, war, disease, hunger, danger and poverty?

Iz'kal who join the Coalition are actually given a special training course that focuses on interspecies relations. This course introduces them to concepts that are alien to them, such as irony, deceit, forgery, cons, fraud, etc.

The aim is to prepare them to interact with members of other species, with a special focus on Humans, who, due to their superior ability to separate their thoughts from their speech, can get Iz'kal into all sorts of trouble.

There's no candy sweeter to a conman than a lonely Iz'kal lost on a Tiantang street...





## AL'AMEEN

*Planetary Type: Water world*

*Population: 250 million*

*Day: 28 standard hours*

*Culture: Eco-friendly egalitarianism*

*Location: Alal system, 3.5 standard months away from Tiantang*

*Production: Manufactured goods, biotech*

*Social Rank 5: Egalitarian utopia*

*Economic Rank 1: No trade or currency*

*Atmosphere: Breathable*

The Iz'kal homeworld is a water planet, whose only landmass is a line of small continents along its equator. These continents are filled with swamplands that also connect the two large oceans of the planet, one in each pole. Al'ameen has two main seasons: the dry season, where the swamps dry up; and the flood season, where the swamps overflow and convert most of the land to mangroves for several months. This was the environment in which the Iz'kal evolved to be semi-aquatic creatures.

Al'ameen is rich in natural resources and a paradise for the Iz'kal, who keep most of it as unspoiled wild land, with a few eco-friendly cities on its surface. The population is

limited to a few hundred million Iz'kal, and immigration laws do not allow other species to move in permanently. A handful are accepted every year as visitors for a short period of time; many rich Corvo enjoy visiting Al'ameen and return home to tell their friends all about the strange habits of its people.

## THE PEOPLE

The Al'ameen'ai, the Iz'kal from AlAmeen, are all of basic Waha'i stock. They are lovers of nature, and it shows. Most of their cities are built with materials directly taken from living organic matter, fusing into the swamp landscape like titanic, flowery trees. Most of the science and art projects from Al'ameen focus on the preservation and development of natural areas, and how to make the best use of resources while taking the least possible from the environment.

Al'ameen'ai are admired and respected across the State, not only as the original members of the species, but also because they have contributed the most - in quantity and quality - to Iz'kal art and science. Not to mention, of course, that it was the ancestors from Al'ameen which fought and won the war that freed the Iz'kal from the Korian invasion. For the other Iz'kal, Al'ameen'ai are akin to older, respected brothers, and the closest the species has to a moral authority.





## SETTLEMENTS

To outsiders, Al'ameen would look like an uninhabited planet, as cities are so few and far between that the planet is virtually the same as it was before the Iz'kal came to be.

There are, however, several types of Iz'kal settlements in Al'ameen. First there are the planet's Zaaki-Waha cities; tall citadels of a few thousand inhabitants that barely pass as artificial structures at first glance. There are thousands of smaller communities scattered all across the surface, although usually most end up joining an existing Zaaki-Waha or growing into one themselves.

Al'ameen'ai Zaaki-Waha are comparable to those found in other colonies; harmonious communities with advanced technology, no crime, prosperity and a tranquil daily life.

## AQUATIC SITES

Over the centuries, the Iz'kal have made several attempts to build underwater Zaaki-Waha, to test the benefits of a closer contact with their species' aquatic origin; however, these experiments have always been short-lived, as the amphibious Iz'kal are not really suited for prolonged life in the depths, and the technology to achieve it waste s too many resources and disrupts the environment. The Alameen'ai have had to content themselves with building

aquatic surface platforms and beachside towns. Most of these failed underwater cities were taken apart and the materials used in their construction recycled, but a few were unrecoverable due to structural damage or other causes. These ruins were made into heritage sites, which eventually became touristic attractions for their historical and artistic value, and are occasionally used as short-term underwater research centres.

## HAI'KAL SANCTUMS

Hai'kal sanctums fulfil a unique function, which non-Iz'kal would roughly understand as a mix of research centres, natural history labs, museums, schools, temples and field science camps. Contrary to Zaaki-Waha cities, these sanctums are unique to Al'Ameen'ai culture, and they have failed to catch on at other Iz'kal settlements, presumably because of their demand of resources, which are far more scarce and regulated in the colonies.

Every Hai'kal sanctum is located on a remote natural spot at Al'ameen, following the strictest eco-friendly procedures, and then dedicated to the study of that specific environment and its conditions. Hai'kal are classified by the environment they work on, so there are swamp Hai'kal, seaside Hai'kal, river Hai'kal, astronomy Hai'kal and so on. Nobody lives at a Hai'kal, but scientists teams rotate to keep it functional all year. A Hai'kal managers have the responsibility to keep it stocked with samples, exhibits and experiments revolving around research of the surrounding area, and offer advanced courses, tours, academic conventions, school trips and wildlife retreats.

While Iz'kal colonies have never grown large enough to be able to support a Hai'kal sanctum, citizens from every settlement in the State travel to Al'ameen to visit its Hai'kal, which are a source of pride for the planet and its citizens.

## ALHENA

One of the most unspoiled sanctuaries of the planet is Alhena, a network of caves in the heart of Al'ameen, illuminated by gigantic and luminescent fungi. This magical place survived the Korian conquest, as the invaders never discovered it. Iz'kal from all around the Universe make a seasonal pilgrimage to this place, which they hold as sacred. When in Alhena, all the Iz'kal join in a single Hyperlink with their fellow pilgrims so that they may share their minds freely. Here, Iz'kal from all colonies share their experiences with each other and together are able to learn things that they were not even capable of imagining alone - about ways of life on strange planets, about ideas they had never heard of, and about personal life experiences and the thoughts behind them, which give them an incredible insight on the reasons of other people's behaviour. This is, for many Iz'kal, the most intense and beautiful experience of their lives. Some are actually addicted to the Alhena pilgrimage, and religiously request the State to make it every year, even if they dwell in the other side of the Universe.