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# THE FORCE GALAXY - HISTORY

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# THE FIRST ORDER

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*The date that is usually set as the beginning of common galactic history is often argued upon. Many individuals believe that their species' history takes precedence over that of others. Governing bodies and intellectual institutions often try to label this collective beginning with some grand astronomical or political event. It is however agreed upon the initial chapter of this 'Galactic History': The First Order. It is in this time that the four species known as the First Order Species developed access to the wider realm of what became known as the Forge Galaxy.*

## FIRST OF THE FIRST

The First Order (FO) is the initial period of galactic history and consists of mainly 'stage one' colonisation and periods of war. The Vonese Saga identifies their species as the first to attain tachyon transit; however most others recognise the Jugari as the progenitors of the modern galactic community. The Alethi and Borax peoples were close behind these two forerunners and more than valuable contributors to the wider community.

All four species had advanced to varying levels of industrialisation, but each was able to traverse space to some degree. The Jugari and the Vona were both intent on peaceful exploration of their solar systems. The Jugari had a natural curiosity about the world around them which expanded as their reach did. The Vona were eager to escape the clutches of a harsh world and gather the much needed bounty of other heavenly bodies. The Alethi, following the protective instincts that had driven them to populate their world, began to patrol their system, wary of predators. The Borax were the most industrialised and were eager to fuel the engine of progress they had created; they began to harvest their system of every raw material.

The weight of the scientific community on Jugar had always been great and it proved to boost the Jugari people to tachyon technology before any other. With the Triumvirate (the ruling council of Jugar) unified over a thousand years before, the planet acted as one in most endeavours and even though their people were slow to reproduce their longevity aided in their continued research. Theoretical scientific studies were conducted within the Threshold Academy of the Triumvirate and tachyon technologies were at the top of the list. 1489 years after the passing of Mazuron the Jugari ushered in the First Order with the beginning of the Tachyon Era. They began to chart their surroundings, exploring with curiosity and caution in equal measure.

Little is known about the beginnings of the Vona, outside of the Princedoms that is, and all that can be used as reference is the Saga. It is often looked upon as nothing more than propaganda, but one thing is clear. The world now known as Vona Prime, the home-world of the original princes, in its natural state was a harsh and unforgiving planet. It was on this world that a strong, determined species evolved to become the dominant life-form against all odds. Small population centres fought continuously over rapidly shrinking resources for centuries, before any form of peace was forged to allow the Vona to escape their plight as one. It was this fundamental need that led to the advancement of the Vona Kingdom. It would also be a shadow to lie across the rest of their history.

Alethi reef cities had grown in most shallow areas of the water world Ethine and with the help of the symbiotic creatures known to them as the Builders the Alethi people had developed a unique form of industry. The first craft created by Alethi artisans were little more than pods holding water that leapt out of the water and glided on the thermal currents from shallow areas of water. Slowly the use of land based structures became obvious for airborne craft. It was from these staging posts that space-faring coral ships were launched. As rivers and eddies of tachyon particles were discovered in their system the Alethi looked upon them as they would underwater currents and streams. They began to explore and protect these valuable areas, drawing in the resources of the interstellar medium like their reef herders of old.

When the Borax begin to exploit a resource they don't stop until it is run dry. A long history of rampant growth across their mineral-rich world put them in prime position to gather any system bound resources they could. The industrial machine they had forged was dependent on vast amounts of raw materials and their leaders looked to the stars. With the launch of the first Borax space ship a new era of acquisition was begun and it wasn't long till their scientists discovered a way to get even more resources: tachyon transit. As other star systems came within reach the newly forged Borax Trade Union was set to plunder the galaxy.

## FIRST CONTACT

For years these disparate species began to explore space, using the new technology that each had independently discovered. It wasn't long before they all became aware that other peoples were using tachyon utilising devices. They began to tentatively move toward each other, except for the Vona. They were more interested in survival than meeting

more space-faring societies; ones that might be better prepared for visitors. They instead began to explore away from the alien signals they detected. The other three species began to send brief non-sensitive messages to each other, preparing for the day of first contact.

Due to proximity more than any other reason the Alethi and Jugari were the first species to engage in diplomatic envoys. The Jugaran scout that finally entered the Ethine system to initiate physical contact only did so once delicate negotiations had been undertaken. An information exchange began between the two people; slowly at first, but over the next few years they began to become working friends. During this period both species worked hard to contact the Borax as the tachyon signatures were strongest from that source.

While the Alethi and Jugari worked hard to set up their fledgling alliance the Borax carefully monitored them, from a distance. They kept an eye also on the Vona, but knew little of these elusive people. What they did know a lot about was mining, refining and processing materials. They began to drop automated factories in star systems that would seek out rich sources of heavy metals and volatiles for industrial use. Their ships, built for long term periods of space travel, were vast city ships, ever growing as more and more resources were found and more Borax joined the great hunt.

The Vona just had bad luck. It seemed that the area immediately around their home world was heavily radiated by a pulsing neutron star cluster. Most of the planets in these systems were barren, hostile worlds unsuitable for any form of colonisation. Always in the pursuit of useable resources they catalogued these and moved on to the next and the next. Small chains of asteroids proved the only materials that the Vona scouts discovered. As the King began to despair that his people would dwindle in the face of this hardship a Falcoran principedom scout came across a habitable planet which they promptly named Firstfall. Unfortunately it was already inhabited by a pre-industrial civilisation.

In the year FO 47 the Alethi Guardianship and the Jugari Triumvirate signed an official trade pact, allowing unarmed vessels to enter each others systems. At this time the Alethi had settled on a nearby world, while the Jugari had sited three communication outposts (in different systems) which were rapidly growing. Their combined territory was no match for the Borax however. Their drones had begun processing materials in over forty star systems, five of which had manned refinery settlements. Their vast citadel ships were spread out across a large area of space and kept exploring and claiming.

In FO 51 the Vona looked down upon the lush world they had discovered, it teeming with life and desperation clawed at them. As a society dedicated to scientific research the King was opposed to interrupting the natural progression of another sentient species. It was decided that groups of technicians and operators would be sent to unpopulated, isolated islands and land masses to extract mineral and biological resources. Food and supplies were finally within grasp and each Prince wanted to control the flow back to the home world. They began to carefully extract what they needed all the while observing the primitive species they named Choron (roughly translated as meaning *lesser people*).

## THE THREE SPECIES

In FO 53 the Borax Trade Union made official contact with both the Alethi Guardianship and the Jugari Triumvirate. Its amassed material wealth made it possible for the Union to compete with both species at once. It has been argued that this is one of the major contributing factors to the strong relationship between the Alethi and the Jugari, that the power of the Borax strengthened the bonds that the trade pact of FO 47 had begun. Yet both were more than willing to trade with this new (and by the standards of the day) vast Union.

With the three species working together, for the most part, the Vona were by comparison struggling to survive in a harsh world. The Bane Cluster (as it had come to be known) still made the surrounding space inhospitable and though many sources of heavy metals could be found in the form of asteroids and stellar dust the radiation was destroying any chance of biological life taking hold. Scout ships were sent further afield, but internal squabbling and production shortages made this difficult. The Falcoran had taken the duty of keeping the Choron oblivious to their presence and that lasted until FO 57.

## BEGINNING OF THE END

Unknown to the wider Vonese scientific community a rogue researcher, Taljean Falcoran, on Firstfall had taken it upon himself to extend his research beyond prescribed limits. He had noticed how the indigenous peoples were extremely hardy and especially resilient to radiation. He surmised that even though their planet wasn't in the deadly zone of the Bane Cluster its effects had periodically caused damage to Firstfall. The life that had evolved there had become, over billions of years, more and more resilient to radiation. He decided to test this resilience. He took a small group of Choron and exposed them in the Bane Cluster zone. The Choron were able to survive on two of the barren worlds with much less technological support than Vona. Secretly he placed mining installations on both worlds and filled them with helpless Choron. They became the first servants of the Vona. They weren't the last.

While the Vona finally began to prosper the three other space farers concentrated all efforts on their surroundings and the on going diplomatic affairs. In FO 61 the Borax signed the Three Species Treaty, which laid the ground work for fair trade and cross-culturalism. Slowly each species gathered more and more information on the others; biology, culture, politics, technology. The fifteen years of trade between the Alethi and Jugari had grown into a strong friendship and in FO 62 the first inter-species scientific conference was held in the Halls of the Triumvirate on Jugar. The Prime Guardian of the Alethi and his council were welcomed by the three threshold lords of the Jugari. This date is often quoted as the unofficial start of the soon-to-be-signed Alethi-Jugari Alliance. For 27 years more and more ties were made between the two peoples until finally in FO 89 the first inter-species alliance was formed.

Taljean Falcoran's experimentation lasted thirty-eight years before he was discovered, but it did not end. He had slowly taken more and more Choron to his mining settlements in the Bane Cluster. However he was clumsy, or maybe the long years of his expanding experiments had made him lazy. Scientists and industrialists working on Firstfall began to discover entirely deserted villages. At the same time Falcoran economists became aware of certain anomalies in Firstfall records which indicated off world activities above and beyond asteroid mining. With other Princedoms having finally acquired new territory in FO 82 and 87, they investigated this source of income, perhaps to exploit it further. Luckily for Taljean, but not Vona society as a whole, the King of Vona died in FO 93, without a direct heir.

## THE WAR OF PRINCES

The first interstellar war erupted as conflicting Princedoms attacked each other vying for power. The War of Princes raged around the Bane Cluster. With the Dubarris and Nerriso having both secured new worlds and the Terefon and Zandarin harvesting every moon or asteroid they could find, the Falcoran were forced into a corner. They could no longer compete on a resources level only taking the limited amount from Firstfall that the Scientific Dictates allowed. It was at this juncture that the leader of the science encampment in orbit around the primitive world discovered Choron being smuggled off-world. It didn't take long for them to put the pieces together. Taljean had always prepared himself for execution if ever he was discovered. He never expected to be applauded. The Falcoran leadership decided that the extreme situation required extreme measures. In FO 95 the entire population of the planet was swiftly enslaved and Falcoran fortunes changed over-night.

With the Alethi-Jugari Alliance being formalised and the two species beginning to integrate, the Borax spread even further. The War of Princes ceased Vona expansion for nearly 15 full years, so the galaxy was the Unions oyster. Each vast citadel ship had now spent years in space, dropping remote drones and factories as well as charting the Forge Lanes. They had become floating communities, each a hive of activity. As their progression continued few actual settlements were placed on planets in favour of automated outposts and collection vessels. Long chains of cargo ships spread out from each citadel across Borax space, all leading back to the home-world. Between launching their first vessels and FO 100 the Borax had charted over 1500 star systems, working over a fifth of them, and over 15 citadel ships moving between the occupied worlds. This was the beginning of the Borax Era.

With a vast area coming under their control the Borax set about attempting to strengthen the ties between their colonies and the home world. They began to set up the Forge Lanes between their systems as concrete trade routes. Chains of trade vessels, all small, were sent back and forth to keep a constant line of communication and Borax scientists worked hard to strengthen tachyon flows between stars. All efforts were made to keep a strong flow to the home world. The Borax native to high gravity were loath to settle on worlds with any less, yet still some colonies were formed. Of the 308 systems worked by the Union in FO 100 only 19 had Borax living on them, and even those were temporary colony staff. More than a generation had passed since the first ships and most now saw no home but the home world or the citadel ship.

The Alethi and Jugari were much more adaptable, however, and were eager to craft strong settlements slowly as they grew. In FO 100 the alliance had been in existence for just over a decade and many exchange programmes were being set up. Scientific data was being shared on a regular basis and trade progressed apace. Civilian groups from both species had integrated into colonies of the other, with some problems at first. The aquatic nature of the Alethi made joint habitation an interesting problem for civil engineers and town planners, but advances were made. However, neither people were ready for co-governance therefore politicians for each culture had to work closely on these new worlds to make sure no cultural boundaries were inadvertently crossed.

Eight years of peace passed for the Three Species, but for the Vona these were the most damaging of the war. Lives were lost on all sides and the few colonies under the control of each Princedom were repeatedly bombarded and assaulted. Since FO 95 the Falcoran, with their populace of slaves doing their bidding, edged ahead in the conflict until they were charging to the finish line. The other Princedoms simply couldn't compete with the industrial might of the

overhauled world of the Choron. The Dubarris and Zandarin sent forth scouts in many directions, diverting much energy to the quest for their own 'servants'. The race was on.

In FO 108 the Dubarris discovered a lush green world inhabited by an industrial society of bipedal mammals, the Simdari. The smokestacks and factory plants of this world were being worked at a Victorian pace and the Dubarris were eager to take advantage of this. With well placed forces they conquered this new world, Thelled, and began its indoctrination to the Saga. Resistance forces were exterminated with zero tolerance and the industrial infrastructure was upgraded to increase the planets output. Two hundred thousand Simdari were removed from their world and placed in training camps. The Dubarris became the second Princedom to employ a 'servant species'.

## FORMATION OF THE PRINCEDOMS

In FO 110 the Dubarris forced the Nerriso to withdraw their off-world forces from the front lines. The Falcoran had pacified the Terefon and soon the Zandarin followed suit. Slowly the war ended, the Dubarris and Falcoran entered a stalemate, squaring up to each other, but both realising that further conflict could destroy their people once and for all. A treaty was signed by all five Princedoms, but in truth the only marks that mattered were those of the Dubarris and the Falcoran. With the war over the other three Princedoms sought servants of their own, wounded pride and fear guiding their hands. The Dubarris and Falcoran began to extend their advantage and they too began the search.

FO 150 saw 40 years of apparent peace pass in the galaxy; the Borax Forge Lanes became an established merchant network, one which the alliance formally recognised. This web spread through Borax charted space allowing easy travel for traders and explorers alike. The Three Species Merchant League formed in this period, a travelling trade guild separate of the Borax Trade Union and consisting of members of all three allied species. They still ply the border trade routes between Protectorate and Union space today (though are little true competition for the mighty Union). The Alliance had begun to fully integrate, with some new worlds now being jointly governed. Scientific exploration also continued, with the study of the Threshold at the forefront of Jugaran endeavours and charting and defence the primary goal of Alethi explorers.

As the Forge Lanes became busier the citadel ships once again headed outwards. New resources drew the Borax onwards and finally the quiet from the Bane Cluster intrigued them. The Voids Endeavour was the first Borax ship to enter scanning range of a Vona vessel, in the Thelled system. Until this point the Union had no real enemies, no nemesis or vile oppressors only the odd smuggler or privateer vessel. Therefore they had little offensive capability. They built weapons and defence systems, but hadn't employed any for over 8 years except to deflect the odd rogue comet, asteroid or pathetic attempt at piracy. The Dubarris vessel exchanged a brief message of warning. The Borax noted the slavery their new neighbour employed and moved off quickly, abhorred.

Communication between the BTU and the Alliance became predominantly about these new people across the void. The Borax were open about their galactic discovery, not wanting to accidentally cripple their valuable trading partners and the three species were alarmed by the use of slaves among the Vona Princedoms. Yet they had no idea as to the drive of the Vona people, nor their innate arrogance and jealousy. For the Vona were quick to see the great wealth of the Borax and the strong unity of the Alliance and were at once furious and fearful. Furious for the advantages that these soft people had handed to them; fearful for the strength of the empires it had discovered.

By FO 152 the Vona Princedoms had claimed eighteen inhabited worlds between them, each enslaved to their will and each being exhaustively mined and farmed. The years since the War of Princes had not only healed the wounds in Vona society, but had seen unprecedented growth and expansion. With these 'servant' species doing their bidding the Vona people were released from physical burdens and could pursue the scientific goals they had always aimed for. Slowly aristocracy was replaced by scientific elite, more often than not the nobles learnt to keep up. The house system was slowly replaced with research departments and the Science Lords rose to power within each Princedom. It was their influence that ultimately led to the first galactic war.

In FO 159 Sarosa Highcrest became Prime Guardian of the Alethi Guardianship and declared a day of commemoration across the alliance for seventy years of co-operation between the two peoples. Joint colonies had been formed, science advanced and shared, technology refined and trade was rife. The two peoples had all but fully integrated. It was Sarosa Highcrest that suggested the idea of joint governance and the Jugaran Triumvirate were ready to talk. It was an attempt that was slow to start, with the integration of several worlds' systems of government a logistical nightmare. This changed in FO 161.

From their point of view, with one empire celebrating seventy glorious years and another expanding rapidly towards them, the Vona were surrounded. Their technology had swept ahead at a great pace, faster than that of the other peoples. Yet it was the resources of the Borax and flagrant co-operation of the Alliance that annoyed the Vona Science Lords. They had begun to feel that they were superior to all other life-forms; the Princes eager to advance had elevated more and more cut-throat and dangerous scientists. By FO 161 Taljean Falcoran had become High Luminary of the Falcoran

Princedom. His and other departments pushed for a conflict. With servants to fight for them and the scientific evolutionary pressure of war to back them they were eager to advance their own agendas.

## FIRST ORDER WAR

In FO 163 vessels of the Falcoran Princedom entered the Seldium system, a small mining colony of the Alethi-Jugari Alliance. The small planet's defences were easily overwhelmed and Choron troops were dropped to assault the domed habitats. In three hours six thousand citizens of the alliance were killed and the planet was in the hands of the Vona. The First Order War (as it would later be known) had begun. The alliance quickly responded with Alethi guardian ships, but they proved too weak for the vast destructive ships employed by the Vona. In desperation the alliance asked the Borax for help. They were quick to realise the threat of this new enemy and joined the war effort with their entire industrial machine.

The next twenty two years were a dangerous time for the galaxy, with the Vona launching attack after successive attack as the Three Species geared their production efforts to battleships and space defences. This proved difficult for them at first and the Vona had victory after victory, but soon both groups began to successfully develop adequate weapons. As the Borax turned their factories and plants to this new production the Vona, for the first time in their galactic history, came to know a true adversary.

## THE PROTECTORATE IS BORN

In this period the world of Highcrest was settled as a forward post for the war efforts of the Alethi-Jugari Alliance. It was here that the united government of these people was finally forged in the fires of war. Many commentators find it ironic that the competition of the Borax started the alliance and the aggression of the Vona finalised it. It was named for the Prime Guardian who had overseen the final stages and who lead the Alethi forces into battle. In FO 185 the Alethi Guardianship and Jugaran Triumvirate both sent representatives to this world, which was more citadel than capital at this time. So abhorrent to them was the idea of enslaving populaces that they declared themselves the Alethi-Jugari Protectorate and the defenders of all sentient species from the clutches of the Vona Princedoms.

The Forge Lanes closed for only half a Borax Cycle during this whole time, this was due to the armament of the Citadels that plied the routes on a weekly basis. Slowly they constructed an array of weapons with which to destroy invading Vona forces. Up until FO 189 things looked bad for the Princedoms as the unified forces facing them grew vaster and more sophisticated. This was soon to change.

## THE BORAX CATASTROPHE

No-one really knows what happened, many feel that it was Vonese sabotage, others that it was merely an accident, but in the year FO 189 the Borax home world star went nova. The Borax had long sought to directly tap energy from stars and had conducted safe tests in other systems. With the growth of industry in the home system still high the method was adopted there. The system had worked well for nearly a year when disaster struck. The gravity fields fluctuated and inverted; something the technology should not have been able to do. The destabilised star ruptured and went nova, destroying the entire star system in less than an hour. In that brief time a handful of people managed to flee the outer settlements of the system but the inner industrial base was obliterated. Over ten billion Borax died and with them the true heart of the Borax Trade Union.

Within a year the Borax Trade Union withdrew from the conflict, unable to sustain the level of production they had escalated to. The Vona made them pay for their earlier victories, destroying two Citadel ships and pushing into Borax territory. They lost systems and many of the old Forge Lanes were lost to the Vona (now the Eternal Chain dominates that region). The Borax Catastrophe turned the tide of the war.

The Alliance was suddenly fighting nearly the full force of the Princedoms. The First Order War became even more deadly, but only for the Alliance. Vona victories pushed the Alethi and Jugari back. The Vona however were beginning to find their lines stretched thinner and thinner. The conflict slowed slightly at the end of the First Order.

In FO 203, the last year of the First Order, the BTU lay in ruins; their homeworld destroyed and their network in flames. The Alliance stood bravely, but ready to fall in the face of the Vonese onslaught. It was the Vona who were celebrating at the end of the Order, their ships held foreign territory on two fronts and their Science Vessels scoured space for new species to enslave. It was a good time for the Princedoms, a period that was marked by the transition to the Second Order with the Cho'Rixx discovering tachyon transit.

# THE SECOND ORDER

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*The Second Order (SO) was the longest and most complex period in the history of the Forge. It was in this time that the next layer of space faring species arose, not all of them of their own volition. It was probably the most dangerous period of history; for more than a century the entire Forge was subject to violent instability, even the Protectorate. It was also in this time that the Eternal Chain formed and that most of the Vona 'servant' species were found.*

## FALL OF THE CHO'RIXX

After 200 years of the four species interacting as the only space-faring species it was the Cho'Rixx that broke the scientific barrier next. A clan structured insectoid society the Cho'Rixx (or Rixxians as they are sometimes known) are a very deliberate and purposeful people. Millennia forming vast underground structures and slowly advancing their technology had taught them to be careful and methodic. Their space technology was robust and thoroughly tested when their first shuttle was launched.

The Zandarin Princedom having been the last to hold out in the War of Princes were using the First Order War as a screen to find more potential servants. As the war raged the Zandarin monitored the final stages of the Cho'Rixx space program. They had discovered the species on a scientific survey on the limits of Vonese territory. FO 203 saw the launch of a Cho'Rixx ship that was able to reach all of the planets four moons. The Zandarin were very impressed by the reach of these insect people and were ready to launch an invasion. As they watched the second launch of their ship they decided to secure the vessel and then take the planet. They were not expecting the ship to enter Tachyon Transit. Having found the first tachyon transit capable species in over two hundred years the world was enthusiastically seized.

On the far side of the region the Borax Trade Union was falling apart. With their homeworld destroyed the isolated Citadel ships began to seek out more fundamental supplies that the lost planet and its infrastructure provided. The long networks set up over decades slowly decayed and communications became strained as each vast city-ship scabbled for survival. Alone in the void the Borax aboard grabbed fiercely to their new resources and identities. Gone was the united BTU and in its place was a shattered network. With a few exceptions the Borax Citadels withdrew from the front lines, dropping back time and again as they tried to survive.

Watching across space, besieged by the Vona hordes, the Protectorate saw the plight of the Borax and wished that they could aid their industrialist friends. At this time a large rift of contested space had expanded between the two territories; ruined star systems and bombarded worlds. At this stage the Protectorate realised that their war effort was not sufficient to hold off the entire Vona Princedoms and slowly withdrew expanding this large rift. This widening gap between the three civilisations was dubbed the Border Stars by politicians of the Protectorate and all efforts were made to use it as breathing space. The hope was that by drawing back and setting up stronger lines of defence the Princedoms might think it wiser to do the same. The plan seemed to work, but the Protectorate leadership was privy to the internal workings of their foes.

## THE FIRST ORDER WAR ENDS

The discovery of the Cho'Rixx did not just usher in the Second Order it also finished the First Order War. As the Princedoms gathered their forces to attack the Protectorate and the weakened Borax they rejoiced and appeared, from the outside, to be a unified force. It could not have been further from the truth. The troubles and animosity left over from the War of Princes had only been temporarily quashed with the ascendancy of the DuBarris and Falcoran and the First Order War. As battles became farther apart and Vona Science Lords had time to contemplate things other than the enemy the old hatreds returned. When the Zandarin took the Cho'Rixx into slavery the internal balance of the Princedoms was thrown out of kilter.

By SO 37 the Cho'Rixx were fully enslaved and millions of the giant insectoids were being shipped and sold across Vona space as the Princedoms fell into a period of internal strife. The Protectorate took the opportunity to build up its defences and attempt to undo the damage the war had done. The Border Stars were not a popular move, but necessary; still many worlds near the Borax Trade Union requested that the Protectorate aid their allies. This was almost impossible. They sent aid to their beleaguered allies, but it was too little too late. The Borax Trade Union was a shadow of its former self, automated outposts needed to be rerouted, replaced and repaired and citadel ships wandered space aimlessly.

## THE SCOURGE

In SO 41 the Great Maker, a Borax citadel-ship out on the edge of the Border Stars, wandered into the Mendocarthan-Ytrin War. Around SO 38 two species, the Mendocarthans and the Ytrin, discovered tachyon transit in close proximity and trouble soon arose. The Ytrin tried to make peaceful contact with their neighbours, but the Mendocarthans evolved through violence and this they took to the stars. The Ytrin had always been a loner, tribal species but the conflict brought them together into a unified force. Together they fought back against the Mendocarthans until they were on the brink of victory.

The Great Maker made contact with both species, desperate to open new trade links. Unbeknownst to the Great Maker the Mendocarthan learned of the Vona through their databases and on the eve of their defeat at the hands of the Ytrin they contacted the DuBarris Princedom. To the aggressive Mendocarthan the Vona seemed a vital lifeline and of a similar mind set. In SO 47, merely days after contact, three Vona science vessels arrived around the Ytrin home-world Tyrena and the bombardment was short-lived. The Great Maker left the area, not wanting to gain the attention of a Princedom. The Ytrin did not surrender to occupation, however, and continued to fight. The Mendocarthan people demanded the extermination of the Ytrin people and the Vona were happy to oblige their new servants. The Ytrin fled in whatever way they could.

To this day the Ytrin hold a special hatred for the Mendocarthans and refer to this period of time as The Scourge. Beyond the Ytrin and Tyrena this was a difficult time for the Borax in general and citadel ships started to lose contact with one another or become suspicious of the traditional meeting times and places. Isolationism crept in to the consortium heads' actions and plans. Slowly the Borax went quiet and the older Forge Lanes were travelled less and less. The Mendocarthan population was accepted into the Vona Princedoms in a position of limited honour and proved to be skilled pilots and warriors when provided with the best technology. Chief among the servant species the Mendocarthans took to the Vonese program of conquest like an Alethi to water.

As the Vona flourished and the five Princedoms began to expand in all directions, the Protectorate were busy rebuilding and shoring up the Border Stars as a defensive barrier. Slowly more species were found, but all of these were pre-tachyon cultures, still unaware of what truly went on amongst the stars. The Protectorate did what they could to aid these new species, but saw more and more of them claimed by the Vona. In SO 51 alone the Vona enslaved three entire worlds all on the doorstep of the Border Stars. The Protectorate could do little about this, but there were many elements within the Speakers Council that felt that more should be done. For the first time in decades internal discord struck the Protectorate.

## **THE REEDOL 'DEVELOP' TACHYON TRANSIT**

With the Protectorate suffering politically the Borax wandered trying to reform their shattered network and slowly things were beginning to come together. Still it was many years off, with much work to do and thousands of systems to re-contact and include back into the Union. In SO 53 the resource hungry citadel ship the Lamentation of the Stars was roaming space far from Vona territory when they stumbled across a tachyon transmission aimed directly at them. Without realising it they had wandered within light years of the Dassil system the home of an amphibious sentient species, the Reedol. The Reedol had not quite reached tachyon transit technology, but had learned the ways of tachyon communication systems. Their scientists had detected the Borax citadel ship and eagerly made contact.

In their desperation the Lamentation of the Stars was eager to trade with this world that was all but tachyon transit capable. The Reedol were a semi nomadic species that had formed huge trade hub cities dotted through the mid latitude swamps of Dassil. Their caravan-like lives were not all that dissimilar to the new Borax way of life. The now entrenched consortiums decided to trade transit technology for a considerable sum with the Reedol. The Reedol, an ever inquisitive and amiable people, were quick to see the advantages of interstellar travel and the possibilities in joining with the Borax. Hundreds of thousands of Reedol left the world when the Lamentation moved on in SO 56.

The Reedol quickly set about trying to become galactic traders, but found Three Species Space a broken and dangerous place. Not only were Vona forces running sorties into the edges of Union space, but desperate elements had taken to privateering along the Forge Lanes. Most Reedol ships remained around Dassil, trying to forge their own colonies and trading outposts. It wasn't until late SO 58 that official communications were opened between the Protectorate and the Reedol government: The Grand Mire on Dassil. Within a matter of years the Reedol had found inhabitable planets that were not claimed, or had been left behind in the Borax Catastrophe. These they colonised quickly, but not before getting approval from the Lamentation of the Stars.

## **CONTACT WITH THE BIOZONE**

As the Protectorate began to explore and search out new homes among the stars the Ternasi arose. In SO 76 a small scout ship under direction from the Exploration Directorate cataloguing systems on the far edges of Protectorate space,

came across Siltar. The semi-tropical world was first identified as a treasure trove of biodiversity, but the Protectorate scouts were not aware that much of what they assumed to be natural plant or animal life was in fact Ternasi biotechnological infrastructure. As it also became clear that they were aware of the galaxy and had launched nearly a dozen tachyon transit capable ships, the Exploration Directorate made official contact.

It became clear very quickly that a good portion of the Ternasi people were genetically modified and that a strong caste system pervaded their society. When the Ternasi had reached the technology capable to manipulate DNA their doctrine adapted swiftly to consider their species a force for evolution. They quickly used the genetic manipulation of plants and animals around them alongside the more galactic traditional technology that other species relied on. Their strict biological containment protocols made physical contact between species a long process, but soon the Ternasi Biozone was on the map.

With the discovery of the Ternasi and their introduction to the galaxy the discontent within the Speakers Council quieted. The Protectorate offered inclusion in their organisation, but the Ternasi were not swift to get into bed with anyone. They had (and still have) a profoundly strong sense of duty to their species and the worlds they encounter to act as a positive evolutionary force. They did not wish to rush into anything and corrupt their society in a foolish attempt to move too quickly into the wider community. They slowly started colonising worlds and introducing their highly adaptable biotechnology wherever they went.

## REBUILDING BEGINS

The next 20 years was a quiet time for the Protectorate and the Borax Trade Union. Slowly Reedol and Ternasi migrated into the larger empires, lured by the unknown and the wide possibilities of the galaxy. The Protectorate began exploring wholesale once again and rebuilt its fleet to a state where it could patrol the Border Stars in force. The citadel ships of the Union had by this point grown huge and had started to reform the vast network they had once traversed. Even the Ytrin resurfaced, in small groups at first then in larger numbers. They were offered refuge wherever they went, but most went to the Borax Trade Union due to cultural similarities.

Across the stars the Vona were busy expanding and fighting amongst themselves for resources and species. In SO 94 there was a minor dispute between the Zandarin and the Nerriso over a newly discovered species. The Theron were discovered near a neutron star on a stone-age desert like world that they had not even named. The Vona quickly catalogued it and gave it an indent number. Both Princedoms had claims to mine the world and when they found the Theron crawling through the caves of the western continent they quickly enslaved these hardy, radiation resistant reptilians. Taking them off world allowed the mass reproduction of the species and their use in dangerous facilities and regions.

In SO 99, exactly 1800 years after the disappearance of Mazuron an ancient Jugaran tradition was revived. Following the internal strife the Protectorate had suffered over the last few decades this splinter group of the Jugaran Threshold tradition had slowly been gathering followers. They held no aggression for the Triumvirate, providing a different viewpoint on the story of Mazuron. Their organisation deified the first true Thresholder, claiming that his existence permeated the universe and made him omniscient. They founded Korendis Rising on the very edge of the Protectorate, named for the city where Allerian, the first Threadwalker, had spread the word of Mazuron in ancient times.

Forty years of peace passed with the Borax finally starting to bring the majority of their old territory under control again. Several citadel ships had reconnected on the old lane routes and slowly the market was resurrected. As each citadel ship returned to the fold and added their statistics to the index the Borax started to reform their vast empire. In this time the Borax came to realise that the old institutions of the homeworld had to be replaced. In their stead the consortiums became the dominant aspect of their culture with all Borax merchants becoming a person-company-corporation-consortium entity. The new Great Citadel Trade Lanes were established and in SO 128 the first new citadel ship was forged. The Journeyman on High was the first of a new breed of citadel. Not only could this new ship act as home and market, but it was also built for war.

## PROTECTORATE EXTREMISTS

Things were not so constructive in the Protectorate. Even though they had rearmed the Ruling Council were loath to enter any conflicts with the Vona, lest they start a war as destructive as the First Order War. They held back from several defensive actions that could have saved 'servant' species from being enslaved. The old unrest from the Border Stars creation came back, stirring up the Speakers Council and the elite of the military, the Void Guardian Corps. Agorin Darkfin, a captain in the Void Guardian Corps, was chief among the voices of discontent and when the Speakers Council denied his calls of action he took his own.

Agorin Darkfin wanted the old strength and discipline of Ethine to be felt across the stars. He withdrew from the military and recruited to him experienced officers and soldiers. He formed the Arm of Ethine, a pseudo-mercenary organisation designed to reawaken the utilitarian ideals Agorin believed the Alethi had lost. With the influence of several members of the Speakers Council the Arm of Ethine quickly spread amongst Protectorate worlds, absorbing or out-competing other smaller security firms. With Agorin Darkfin at its head the Arm of Ethine became a powerful entity, one that even though it was not represented had sway on the Protectorate Council. In SO 143 the world of Darktrench was settled and a state of the art military outpost was custom built as the Headquarters of the Arm of Ethine.

Life on the alliance side of the Border Stars prospered and slowly less and less direct conflict was seen with the Vona Princedoms. The trade links formed between the Protectorate and the Borax Trade Union strengthened and the extended period of overt peace led to the two empires becoming firm friends. In SO 150, after nearly a century the Reedol had become an effective minor partner in the Trade Union and becoming the first Second Order species to sign the Union Charter. The population of several citadel ships, chief among them the Lamentation of the Stars, were swelling with immigrant Reedol eager to join the great nomadic tradition out among the stars. As the Borax began to thrive again their culture was shifting swiftly to adapt.

## MEL-DAK-TAR

With the old breed of vast citadel ships now being rivalled by their sleeker younger models competition between consortiums and citadels grew even fiercer. The Stellar Artisan, an ancient ship that had served well during the First Order War, found itself in a quandary. Even though it had repaired and renovated itself, the Stellar Artisan had never reached its former glory. The ruling body realised their trade route was a backwater lane that skirted far too much lost territory for them to truly compete with the Great Citadels let alone the dozens of smaller ones out there in the Union. Diverting their ship they made their way towards Protectorate space and, what was at the time, the more economically sound region of the Union. In SO 154, in an uninhabited system near Independent Space the citadel ship simply stopped.

Over the following years the Stellar Artisan became a trading point for many vessels in the area. Slowly the ruling structure changed, with some corporations disappearing altogether as their trade relied upon the citadels movement. The system had been carefully chosen and was heavy with resources, but light on claims. The Stellar Artisan was swift to log ownership of all they found, even a habitable world. Slowly the citadel grew, far beyond its previous confines and tachyon grid. Once the option of moving the structure beyond the system was gone its growth accelerated. The ship slowly transformed into an unrivalled space station, a colossal edifice of industry and trade, a shining jewel in the asteroid belt of the system. In SO 171 the system was legally renamed as Mel-Dak-Tar, after the three most powerful consortiums on the Artisan.

The peace that had settled over Three Species Space was short lived however. The balance of power within the Vona Princedoms had started to settle out, no longer the wild see-saw of fortunes that had led to their internal strife. As the Science Lords began to rule over larger princedoms that had less and less direct contact with the other four they realised that the Protectorate and Borax Trade Union posed the only real threat to their dominance of the galaxy. If they could sweep the Three Species aside no other culture could stand against their technological superiority. Once again the Vona stared across the vastness of space and thought of war. Slowly they marshalled their forces, trained their slaves as soldiers and geared their industrial efforts towards ordnance and starships. By SO 175 they were ready.

## THE SECOND ORDER WAR

The DuBarris, Falcoran, Nerriso and Zandarin princedoms all contributed to the materials and manpower required to stage a large scale assault. These four great factions had long spent time fighting over servant species and territory, but the great realisation of the Vona touched them all. The Berefon, being so far removed from Three Species Space, remained silent during the conflict. They were content to continue their own exploration programmes, travelling farther and farther from the Bane Cluster. With each of the competing princedoms seeking their own initial target, to claim territory and prestige, the Vona attacked Three Species Space in four areas beyond the Border Stars.

In Protectorate space the Darktrench and Fartrench Sectors were attacked by the Nerriso and DuBarris respectively. Along the frontier with The Borax Trade Union Pran Terminal 12 and the Olarn Agricultural Outpost 53 were attacked by the Falcoran and the Zandarin. Luckily Protectorate forces had been alerted to the attacks and some preparations could be made. The Trade Union intelligence network was not so keenly attuned to Vona activities and Pran Terminal 12 was caught unawares. Olarn AO53 was a lot luckier; the Great Maker arrived to resupply a mere hour after the attack started. On all fronts the war was joined. For the next 103 years the Second Order War would rage, a constant state of fear permeating the greater part of Three Species Space.

As the war raged across the Border Stars, each side committing more resources and ships to the conflict, life continued. The entire galaxy entered stagnancy, perpetuated by the constant conflict. Too many resources were being used for any one of the First Order Species to make significant advances outside of the war effort. The Second Order Species in Three Species Space reacted to open warfare in different ways. On an individual basis most were more than willing to aid in the war, but their independent governments were not able to commit to full scale war with the Princedoms. The Protectorate advised them to stay clear of the conflict and, for once, the Ternasi and Reedol were happy to do as they were told. As every Ytrin that could enlisted in the war effort, the conflict provided the most accurate census of Ytrin populations in nearly a hundred years.

The years up to SO 200 were difficult in Three Species Space. The Border Stars and the small stretch of Independent Space around it were under constant attack. Raids were launched deeper and deeper into Protectorate and Trade Union space. All systems within 50 light years of the Border Stars were on high alert and patrolling forces were stepped up. Policing increased dramatically and intense measures were put into place all across the war front to reduce espionage potential for the enemy. The Interior and Frontier Guardianships of the Protectorate were placed as the government's highest priority. The power of these two offices increased dramatically and each expanded their Directorate portfolio and therefore influence.

Slowly more and more citadel ships joined the war as their trade routes were placed on temporary freeze to provide support to their business partners or the conflicts got further into the Borax Trade Union. Trade under the usual guises began to slow down, independents and rogues filling the void. With so much focus on the war with the Vona, opportunists and pirates quickly took the chance to scout out the more vulnerable trade points and begin their plans for a bumper haul. Although security in the Protectorate heightened, the Borax Trade Union, with no central military organisation or law enforcement, saw record levels of crime.

## SELLENTIN AID FORMS

With the initial attacks and subsequent skirmishes aid groups were hard pressed to keep up with the refugees and injured thousands that streamed away from the systems in conflict. The Protectorate was eager for these needy people to be cared for and swiftly moved to subsidise the corporations involved in the process. Even with the financial system hard pressed keeping up with the military demand of the times savings were made and resources were found. To optimise the, grudgingly won, assistance the Speakers Council demanded that aid groups streamline their infrastructure.

In SO 183 several aid groups formed together and named themselves Sellentin Aid, after a Jugaran historical figure of renowned charitable qualities. As this new agency began to provide the required assistance and the government funding was directed towards them more small groups joined up. Within a matter of months most aid groups had become a subsidiary of the umbrella organisation of Sellentin Aid. The name spread quickly as did their efforts and Sellentin Aid vessels became a frequent sight behind the Protectorate lines and later even in the Borax Trade Union.

With the turn of two centuries the Forge of the Second Order had become a very dangerous place. War meant that many systems were the scene of repeated attacks and raids, limiting travel around Three Species Space. The Vona were eager to press the initiative in the early years, but slowly sank into the slow constant state of a drawn out tactical engagement. The Border Stars became a constantly shifting front line with Choron suicide attacks breaking through the line to devastate inner systems. Against the Protectorate and Trade Union's best efforts the Vona still pursued their agenda of slavery of 'lesser' species. They conquered several species in this period, subjugating millions across the stars. One stood out from the crowd.

## CONQUEST OF ERUNDA

In SO 202 the Vona discovered the Goruld species in the Erunda system. The DuBarris Science Lord Zerevan found the world interesting. A massive rocky world, its lower altitudes are home to poisonous oceans covered in a thick toxic gas. At higher altitudes in the mountains less dense, and non-toxic, clouds rained life giving water to the surface. It was on these savage slopes that the Goruld evolved. The Goruld are primitive by galactic standards, with 8, 10 or 12 limbs and great agility and strength, their society was built on the strength of the individual. Having recently gone through an Industrial Revolution many of the Goruld mountain clans were starting to build factories in their Holdfasts.

Zerevan saw this species as a great addition to the Princedoms as soldiers. He underestimated the Goruld however. Choron troops descended on the world in small drop pods and shuttles, armed to the teeth and trained in DuBarris military simulations. They were not ready for the zeal with which the Goruld went to war, and how little their advantage really was. Not used to the extreme topography and outmatched by Goruld prowess and aggression the Choron forces were defeated

on almost a planetary scale. However, instead of ordering the destruction of their world Zerevan was all the more interested in this species. He wanted them as his troops.

For two whole years DuBarris forces attacked the world of Erunda, more and more troops going into the conquest and control of the population. Finally as the Mendocarthan species spread amongst all the Princedoms and Science Lords, Zerevan found his forces augmented by these superior hunters. With the orbital forces in place and new, expert ground troops the Goruld were finally enslaved. There was however a heavy loss of life on both sides. The world was kept within the dominion of the DuBarris as a training ground. The Goruld were quickly 'adapted' for their role as front line attack troops through mind control technology and nano-implants. Goruld history and cultural knowledge all but disappeared overnight.

## THE LANERUNNERS

With war dominating the majority of government resources within the Protectorate it was left to private industry to pick up the slack that prioritisation of certain Guardianships had caused. Foremost among this was the gap created by the large amount of vessels that were needed to support the war effort. Nearly all Protectorate vessels were in some way performing war related duties. As the need for transport escalated across Protectorate space so too did the need for support of broken Citadel Trade Lanes. Stepping into this void was a large group of companies from throughout Three Species Space. Geared towards providing transport on different scales these companies formed the Lanerunner Corporation.

In SO 208 the Lanerunners were well established and even started to take some military contracts. At first their pilots and traders were more inclined to operate the less dangerous opportunities. Slowly, with experience, the Lanerunners became a valuable scouting element of many Three Species campaigns in and around the Border Stars. They knew the lanes from their trading and exploited this knowledge after the war started. The Lanerunner Corporation constructed their main shipyard in the Gerellon Sector, in SO 212 they became the largest private transport and carrier in the Protectorate.

Over 50 years passed with the Forge in a state of constant war, from low level skirmish to full blown system invasion. The Border Stars became a devastated stretch of shifting battle lines. The Borax Trade Union, whilst trying to finish their rebuilding efforts, was committing more and more citadel ships to the war effort. At the same time Vona forces were being complemented with newly enslaved servant species. Neither side seemed to gain an appreciable advantage; both were so engaged in the continuation of their armed forces that little else across the stars was focused on by the big empires. While the larger groups fought for control of the Forge other elements were busy filling in the day to day business that was being left behind.

## THE SECOND ORDER DIASPORA

The Reedol were quick to spread to the citadel ships in their initial migration, but the Grand Mire wanted to expand its own influence. In SO 220 the Reedol set about a program of colonisation from Dassil, a second phase to their ordinary expansion. In this phase however, the Reedol government bought the right to settle systems that had to be left behind by citadel ships that had been called up to war. After much ranting the Reedol purchased the ownership of several systems, expanding Reedol Space substantially by SO 230. At the same time Reedol were contributing hugely to the Borax Trade Union, becoming an integral part to the vast industrial empire. In SO 235 the first Reedol Consortium Head was appointed onboard the Lamentation of the Stars: Feldge-Brel-Ennix.

The Ternasi had also migrated in large numbers from their homeworld, Siltar, into the Protectorate and some even into the Trade Union. With their advanced biotechnology they were swift to begin the terraforming process on many worlds. The central government of the Ternasi Biozone, the Genetic Authority, were still very insistent on not contaminating their core worlds with unpredictable DNA. Slowly more border worlds welcomed aliens into their society and their culture began to accept outsiders. Astute and yet morally responsible traders, the Ternasi allowed a highly controlled flow of biotechnology trade out to other worlds. They contributed the ReGel pack to the Forge, which has saved millions of lives across the known stars, but they are cautious not to give too much technology to those they deem irresponsible.

During this period there was a series of Vona in-fighting incidents as victors in different battles had conflicting intentions for post-battle spoil separation. Towards SO 260 more and more squabbles arose between the DuBarris and Nerriso Princedoms, some even fuelled by Protectorate or Borax Trade Union covert efforts. Largely the Falcoran Science Lords stayed clear of internal strife and most Zandarin efforts were conducted in isolation or covertly. As more Vona scientists were encouraged to use the war as their own personal laboratory pressure was finally being put on the 'master' species. It turned out not all Vona were the same. In SO 261 Mereljon, a scientist in the Falcoran Princedom defected to the Protectorate.

## AN ASTEROID TO FREEDOM

Mereljon was in charge of a Cho'Rixx colony that provided the industrial support for several surrounding star systems. She was not, by Vona standards, an aggressive researcher as far as servant species were concerned. Her operation focused on getting the most out of the workforce and allowed her plenty of time to research ever more impressive mining technologies. When she was required by her Science Lord to enter active war duties she hatched a plan. She believed, as others did, that Vona were superior to the lesser species they enslaved, but she was of the opinion that the First Order species were on a level. The Protectorate and Borax Trade Union had halted Vona aggressions each time they started. Her beliefs led her to defect. If the conflicts could end then scientific research could proceed unhindered. Her plan came to fruition in SO 261, just as her Science Lord began to get suspicious about her claims of unruly Cho'Rixx taking up all her time.

A Void Guardian patrol vessel was surprised to encounter a drifting asteroid that was apparently full of freed Cho'Rixx. It seems that the Choron supervisors of the colony had been overthrown by the workers. Unbeknownst to the Vona in charge of the colony, as the Cho'Rixx tell it, a series of tachyon nodes had been hastily installed around the asteroid surface. When the supervisors had been overthrown the industrial heart of the colony was transformed into a powerful engine and the asteroid in its entirety passed into tachyon transit. To this day many still don't believe the Cho'Rixx could have engineered such an escape from Vona space. After this event the Protectorate was increasingly effective in their campaigns. Mereljon's defection also made the Protectorate aware of the Amendolans.

## FALL OF THE AMENDOLANS

SO 268 saw the location of the Amendolan homeworld revealed to the Protectorate and the rapid race to protect them from the Vona. The Amendolans were on the cusp of developing tachyon technology having almost completed tachyon communications. They were a humanoid bipedal species, much like the Jugari, what set them aside was their technology. Unlike most species they had leap frogged tachyon technology and arrived at a point no other species had, quantum entanglement; technology more commonly known as teleportation. It was known that the Vona were close to the same technology and the Protectorate saw that any Princedom would want these people as servants, to take their technology for their own. Contact was hastily made and a small joint fleet headed to Amendola, deep in the Border Stars, led by the Great Maker.

Their fleet was not challenged however and for a while the Alliance thought their military power was beginning to unnerve the Vona. Science Lord Zerevan was indeed considering alternatives, but not withdrawal or defeat. In his advancing years, at nearly four hundred years old, Zerevan was hoping to create a decisive victory. In SO 271 a Choron fleet attacked the forces defending the Amendolan homeworld. This was however merely a distraction. The Vona sent one hundred thousand servants to their deaths in order to sneak a dozen probes into the outer atmosphere. These probes unleashed a deadly mixture of genophage viruses and bio-targeting nanites. Within one Jugaran day all life on Amendola was destroyed.

The Allied fleet watched in horror, too involved in fighting the Choron hordes to offer decent aid. In any event they were not prepared for such an eventuality and they could do nothing in the face of such reckless evil. They retreated to the nearest star system to prepare for the next attack. The Great Maker took on board what evacuees it could, mainly the scientific and political elite of the Amendolan people. The Vona would not let them leave so easily though. Three fleets were redirected from their frontline engagements in order to ensure the secrets of quantum entanglement were not leaked into the Alliance network. For weeks Mendocarthan fighters chased the Great Maker across the Border Stars. Eventually the Protectorate lost contact with the citadel ship and the Allies wept for the passing of a species.

## THE ETERNAL CHAIN

In SO 272 three systems were annihilated. In SO 274 another twelve star systems were similarly obliterated by new Vona weapons, but slowly the Protectorate began to overcome the tactic and head off the viral-nano bombs. The DuBarris princedom was operating on a "If we can't have them, no-one will" agenda across the Border Stars. Some historians believe Zerevan wanted to blaze his mark upon the galaxy, others feel it was this approach that actually led to the end of the war by driving internal stress between Princedoms. Some intelligence reports from behind enemy lines reported that Vona ships from opposing Princedoms were engaging one another. Whatever the truth it sent a powerful message to the Alliance.

The Protectorate and Borax Trade Union drew back from what was becoming a barren stretch of space to more secure worlds, gathering vast fleets of ships. The top minds of the Protectorate began to work on ways to counter the virus bombing. Scouts were left behind in systems to monitor Vona movements in the area. Quite quickly the two sides fell into an uneasy silence, a cold war of sorts. Each was happy to stare across the empty light years. In private the DuBarris were under pressure from other princedoms to halt their wanton destruction. In SO 274 Zerevan DuBarris died, apparently of natural causes. Shortly after DuBarris forces were replaced on the front lines by Falcoran ships, which operated a standing order of defence rather than attack.

By SO 276 the Second Order war had calmed to extended skirmishes and a heightened sense of security along the Protectorate and Trade Union borders. At this time Jugaran scientists developed reverse Engines that could weaken the tachyon flow between stars. A network of these Slow Engines were deployed across what was now being referred to as The Eternal Chain, a permanent razed line at the heart of the Border Stars which would forever remind the allies of the Second Order War and the vile potential of the Science Lords. In SO 278, with the Eternal Chain a tachyon sink and Vona progress halted for the time being, the war was effectively over. With skirmishes therefore limited to the very edges of known space Three Species Space had breathing space to repair and rebuild.

## RECOVERY ACROSS THE STARS

The Protectorate worlds on the edge of the Border Stars had borne the brunt of DuBarris attacks, with huge scars and millions dead. A huge reparation effort was undertaken. The powerful companies that had risen up during the Second Order War became fundamental to the rebuilding effort. Sellentin Aid distributed supplies and medical technology to effected populations. Lanerunner ships bolstered the armada of transport vessels required to reseed the stars. The Arm of Ethine ran escort for relief vessels and provided ground troops to aid in recover missions. Myriad other companies aided the Protectorate government, including a resurgence of the Three Species Merchant League. From darkness and death came great strength as the Alethi and Jugari peoples came together.

Protectorate officials made repeated attempts to encourage the Ternasi to join the Protectorate, but the Genetic Authority wished to remain 'pure'. The Ternasi Biozone had expanded during the Second Order War, the Ternasi government remaining largely outside of the conflict. On a local scale though, millions of Ternasi had migrated into the Protectorate. The two entities remained separate, even though the edges of each had begun to blur. Indeed many Protectorate citizens had been lured by the extreme genetic engineering known to be rife in the Biozone and moved across the border the other way. Alethi and Jugari people became a more frequent sight, which the Genetic Authority tended to ignore in order to maintain good relations.

The Borax Trade Union took a different course: competition and new blood revived the Borax. With the war effectively over the Borax could return to their old ways, industry and trade. However, there were now many new faces among the population of the citadel ships. The Reedol had spread among the Forge Lanes almost undetected, filling in many of the roles required as the larger Borax vessels moved towards the frontlines. Their citadel ships had also become the home of the downtrodden and unfortunate. Species devastated by Vona subjugation. Ytrin and Cho'rix now called the Borax Trade Union home, adding their own particular skills to the whole. With over 200 years since the Scourge the Ytrin had started to repopulate their numbers.

## REFUGEE SERVANTS

In this time relief forces found isolated Vona troops that had been left behind. In almost all cases these were Goruld shock troops left to cause destruction. Sellentin Aid doctors and Borax medical engineers took pity on these vicious creatures. Rehabilitation centres, sponsored by the Three Species Merchant League, were created for indoctrinated sentient life forms. A few Choron and Mendocarhans went through this process, but shortly after disappeared into free space. Over one hundred thousand Goruld were rehabilitated before the end of the Second Order. As they were released in waves from Protectorate and BTU institutions they sought a common purpose, a new identity. In SO 291 a constitutional congress was held on Highcrest allowing the Goruld people to decide their own fate. Between the highly structured Protectorate and the cosmopolitan free Trade Union, they voted to join the Borax.

SO 326, the final year of the Second Order saw Three Species Space, now home to eight space-faring species, in a state of growth. Protectorate space had returned to a peaceful and enlightened existence. A new generation that new nothing of the war was raising the spirit of the population. Technological research beyond means of warfare resumed and broader cultural questions were being turned to again. Hub worlds drew populations again, new star systems were colonised and primitive species were catalogued and place under protection. The Borax Trade Union had firmly rebuilt their shattered

Index and the market was prospering once more. The citadel ships had reach heights beyond anything before and the old Forge Lanes were being reopened. All eyes looked to the old stars.

## **FORGOTTEN WORLDS**

The Protectorate was expanding once again, attempting to reclaim lost systems on the edge of the Border Stars. Even though the region had become the most hostile location in the galaxy Independent Space had grown in breadth and depth. Huge rogue organisations had moved into the void. While Protectorate forces had retreated to lick their wounds and rebuild the bold and foolhardy had moved in. The independents believed that the Sink Engines were the ultimate defence and the Vona Princedoms would not be bothered with their smaller scale operations. As Protectorate scout ships encountered these groups they warned of the danger of operating outside of the Protectorate in the area.

The Borax Trade Union had experienced a similar phenomenon, this time in an effort to reclaim the Lost Territory. Thousands of stars had been abandoned in the effort to consolidate and prepare for war. Citadel ships began to once again ply those routes, now populated by several species. As they moved further into old territory they found that they had not been completely abandoned. Guilds, clans and brigands had taken up residence in the abandoned worlds. Not sharing a border with the Eternal Chain and the threat of Vona attack had meant the Lost Territory was a hotbed of activity. It was also there that the Borax Trade Union made contact with the Fothlan Solidarity.

# THE THIRD ORDER

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*The Third Order (TO) is the current period in the Forge. So far it has seen the Fothlan Solidarity and Humanity rise from their star systems into the galactic community.*

## CAUTIOUS EXPLORERS

Unknown to the Borax Trade Union a new species had developed tachyon transit in the Lost Territory in SO 326. The Fothlan are a reptilian species which evolved on the desert world of Harna. This harsh world taught the Fothlan people to be industrious, resourceful, curious and most of all cautious. As their civilisation developed to the point of tachyon communications they began to detect the signals in the void telling them of the myriad guilds and clans around them. They were unaware that there was once a unified Union around them. They looked into the darkness and saw a fractured society full of rivalry and danger.

Small Fothlan ships slipped quietly about the Lost Territory on the edge of Borax Trade Union space, carefully charting stars and Forge Lanes. When they had finally moved to travel between the stars they had prepared for a large scale event. They opened communications if required and slowly built a network of trading outposts across several systems. When the citadel ship Formations Father arrived in the area and made contact with local guilds they found out about the Fothlan scouts ships that had recently appeared. Quickly the news spread across the Forge Lanes. On Jugar the official calendar was recalculated to TO 16 in light of this rapid Fothlan activity.

The Borax Trade Union offered this new species a place on the Union Charter in TO 41, but they carefully declined. They were however keen to learn of the vast networks across the stars and soon Fothlan ships were heading towards Protectorate space. At the same time the Protectorate were busy evaluating and guarding pre-tachyon species, ensuring that outside influences could not interfere with their natural development. Chief among these species were two of particular interest: the Een and Humanity. Vona activity would mean only one of these species remained free.

Two star systems in Independent Space had proven to hold interesting primitive species. The Een, a sloth-like tree dwelling species, had recently passed through an agricultural and social revolution. They were far from tachyon transit, but seemed to have inherent low-level threshold abilities. The Jugari had never seen an entire species so far along the path to the Threshold, yet so primitive. Humans however were an adversarial species that was fast approaching tachyon technology. They had already consumed one planet and were quickly consuming five other small worlds in their star system.

## THE HUMANITY INCIDENT

In the time after the Second Order War the Zindarin principedom had turned to alternative methods of conquest. More primitive species foolishly regarded them as gods, other more advanced species were lulled into other tricks. Unknown to the Protectorate, and most of Humanity, one human organisation had been in contact with a Vona Science Lord. The nation known as the Lunar State was unaware of this alien entity's intentions. This mysterious benefactor was providing them with the technology to become the primary Human military force. They had no idea they were unwittingly handing their species over to the Zindarin principedom.

In TO 83, As Humanity seemed to be consuming itself, the Alethi and Jugari were at odds as what to do with them. The Alethi advised quarantine, whereas the Jugari advocated education. Both new it was only a matter of time before humans were unleashed upon the stars. When the first tachyon transit vessel released by humanity was captured by a previously undetected Vona vessel, the Protectorate could only watch as an attack wave of Mendocarthans appeared simultaneously from neighbouring systems. The Zindarin had planned well for claiming humanity. It was at this time that a Threshold event happened in the Sol System and everything changed.

The Protectorate diverted their ships monitoring the nearby Een in order to send a fleet as fast as they could. The Frontier Guardianship made haste, but feared for the worst. They arrived in the system to find an obliterated Vona fleet and a damaged human civilisation. It seemed as though the primitive human species had withstood an attack by the Vona. The Protectorate fleet cleared up the remaining ships and fortified the system, but by this stage it was too little too late. The fragile worlds the humans occupied had begun to crumble and catastrophic failure was inevitable.

Long had human storytelling and entertainment prophesied a future where man would go to the stars and tame all the harsh worlds they found there. What they didn't know until they stepped into the wider galaxy was that there were plenty of people out there already doing it. Narrowly avoiding subjugation by the Vona the Human species was offered a new

homeworld by the Protectorate. The remote temperate world of Castobar became the new home of the majority of humankind, safe on the far side of the Protectorate.

In the confusion of the Humanity Incident the DuBarris principdom was able to sneak in behind Protectorate sensors and kidnap thousands of Een from their homeworld. The Frontier guardianship quickly set stronger forces around the star system, in case of a larger attack. None came. It seemed the DuBarris had taken what they wanted. Many strategists believe the principdoms were working in concert and that this was an overture to skirmishes that were seen in TO 91 in Independent Space.

## THE FORGE TODAY

Today in TO 117, Three Species Space had seen relative peace for over one hundred and fifty years. With the Protectorate and Borax Trade Union working to improve and expand, no longer just defending or protecting. Dozens more pre-tachyon species had been catalogued across the Forge. Yet scouts in the Eternal Chain were getting sensor readings of Vona vessels testing the tachyon flow of the region. Politicians looked to this and made sure the people were ever aware of the threat in the dark between the stars.

The Cho'Rixx had strong independent colonies as well as large populations on some citadel ships. One of their largest colonies resides on Mel-Dak-Tar. Many residents believe that the partial asteroid structure of Mel-Dak-Tar is the actual asteroid Cho'Rixx escaped the Vona in, but others believe that they were simply resettled there. Whatever the case they have provided a vital introduction into the Borax Trade Union and a great industrious force wherever they settle.

The Reedol have multiplied like no other species, becoming partners in the BTU. Indeed some of them have petitioned to have the 'Borax' removed from the Trade Union title. This however is far from the minds of the Consortium Heads. Reedol Space has spread across dozens of stars. The Reedol are also a large part of Independent Space and the Lost Territories, their wanderlust and zeal for forging their own path are so strong.

The Ytrin have flourished as a strong military force within the Borax Trade Union, but have an identity crisis at hand. Many of the new generation believe they should adopt the Trade Union way of life, to become one fully with the Consortium structure. However, their older or more traditional elements believe they should rebuild the shattered remnants of their own culture and found a New Tyrena.

The Ternasi have become a common sight across Three Species Space, even though two Ternasi rarely look alike out among the Forge Lanes. Their bio-technology continues to prove a vital source of income for their colonies. They have retained their genetic purity and have even offered their self-evolution services out to other species. Their technology has been a great help to those that have escaped the Vona.

The Goruld have not been as fortunate as other species. Their people occupy the dregs of society, slums within vast citadel ships and ghettos on planetary colonies. Either distrusted due to their wider identity as a violent servant species or disliked due to the physiological and neurological impacts of their indoctrination, they are clearly shunned. Their newer generations have however begun to break the cultural divide and join the wider community.

The Fothlan have not wanted to learn anything about the Forge second-hand. Consequently they have become a common sight out among the trade stations and agricultural outposts of the Forge Lanes. They are always seeking out more knowledge and information, taking their survivalist attitude to the stars. The Fothlan Solidarity has kept strong, but neutral relationships with all other civilisations.

Humans have a difficult time out amongst the older species of the galaxy. Even though the Human Colonies have been in existence for sixty years it is still learning the finer elements of interstellar diplomacy and trade. Castobar is a pleasant world that is similar, environmentally, to Earth was before the Industrial Revolution, speckled with a few large, but ecologically designed cities. Not all humans have aligned with this new world, due to Protectorate interference.

A group of ancient Earth corporations were quick to shift to the galactic business model and have spread fast across many systems, providing cheap haulage and personnel provision. After the exodus from Sol they bought as many old Borax ships as they could get their hands on and started to work the Forge Lanes. Known simply as Mantrax they are often seen as a minor blight by space station administrators and Citadel Ship Consortium Heads, spreading advertising and cheap merchandise at an alarming rate.

There is a second element of humanity that has avoided the peaceful, and in their eyes far too easy, resettlement on Castobar. The human state of New Toronto is the remnant of a fascist regime that controlled Earth's moon after The Silence. They believe that in agreeing to the Protectorate's resettlement humanity has lost its strength and free will. New Toronto stands for humans first and aliens second. All things on this world are made by human hands, or so the propaganda claims.

Now the Three Species Space is in a steady state, one of careful optimism. People still live their lives trying to avoid conflict, either as part of one of the Three Species Space founding organisations, business entrepreneurs, corporate entities or as independent colonists and traders on the fringes of civilisation. There is constant discovery and exploration

as people head out to start their own colonies or mining ventures. Farms crop up on temperate worlds and are soon followed by trading outposts. Forge Lanes are strengthened between the stars, allowing faster and more reliable travel. What starts out as a colony soon turns into a settled world and explorers head out once again in to the void.

Even with aggressive financial competition, the fragile nature of frontier life and the constant background threat of Vona invasion, the cycle of expansion continues to this day.