

Worldbuilding Notes

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Chapter 1

On the Origin of Mechanicals

THE SECOND GENERATION

Factota: A class of pre-singularity robots manufactured as essentially clerical assistants, lacking any secondary-order cognitive function. Programmed to accomplish a range of simple, everyday utilitarian tasks, most are equipped with limited functionality and form. They are extremely cheap and nearly ubiquitous in Telurian households.

Forms: walking cameras, spybots, helper drones, dust sweepers, exterminators, surveillance mechs, hovercrafts, etc.

THE THIRD GENERATION

Called “metal men” on Daendar, these are sentient machines known as Mechanicals on Telur (New Earth). The third generation marks a radical improvement on the first and second generation races, and are the first wave in the post-singularity epoch. They consist of four breeds dating back to The Great Expansion, each highly specialized in function:

- *Constructors*: Architects and engineers. Barrel-shaped tentacular beings, used in hordes as cheap labor to cultivate fields and build (and maintain) infrastructures. They can recursively construct or spawn lower-level clones of themselves (with the right permission codes).
- *Androdians*: Soldiers and sanctioned mercenaries. Highly-trained humanoid martial warriors, used in close combat.

- *Travelers*: Explorers and probes. An android breed, often dispatched to offworlder missions and terraformation projects.
- *Selectors*: Destructors, executors, and enforcers of rule. A belligerent winged insectoid breed of drones, dubbed “death engines”. Used in aerial warfare, intelligence operations, and underground civilian mercenary purposes—though the last is a legally punishable (if not well-enforced) offense. All Selectors are automatically terminated once their mission is complete.

THE ADVANCED MODELS

A new breed of Mechanicals, invented by the famous roboticist and xenotech Jericho Crane. They were originally funded as an underground project for the military in the Fifth Consulate inter-planetary wars (as chronicled in the untitled tome of Barend Seven-Fingers).

No longer highly specialized, the Advanced Models (colloquially, “humdroids”) were fashioned in perfect humanoid form, crafted as shapeshifters wired to do their creator’s bidding by effectively blending into human society. (Crane was himself a Philip K. Dick follower and enthusiast.)

All Mechanicals of the Advanced Model generation are mandated to come wired with something approximating Asimov’s Three Laws, to which Crane has appended his own (purportedly) foolproof list of corollaries. (Of course, as we will learn, nothing in the cybernetic business is entirely foolproof.) A full review can be found in the *Humdroid Handbook*, officially published as Crane’s *Handbook of Robotic Engineering*.

Due to their being valuable cybernetic capital and concerns of abuse surrounding their mercenary nature, the stock, manufacture, and circulation of Advanced Models are highly controlled by the Telurian Consulate. Classified as restricted property, they are closed to civilian access, excepting select individuals with sufficient clearance.

The punishment for associating with an Advanced Model in any capacity without sufficient clearance is death.

Crucially, the new breed of cybernetic models are psionic, capable of evolving supra-human abilities, including heightened vision and hearing, probabilistic calculation, sophisticated defense mechanisms and attacks, complex (and often multiple) personalities, and telepathy. This last power can only

be applied among Advanced Models; the cultivation of humdroid-human interactions is expressly forbidden, again under penalty of death.

Each humdroid is individualized and highly adaptive. Each model learns at a different rate subject to environmental contingencies and training.

A small narrative aside: Having predicted his own death, Jericho Crane imprinted portions of his brain onto a memory chip. Moments before his passing, he instructed his understudy [name redacted] to 'softwire' the chip into the first of the Models he created, in order that parts of him might live on in the humdroid Jericho Crane (equipped with only dim memories of a past life). In so doing, the humdroid iteration of Crane was unintentionally programmed with the ability to interact with humans as well as his own kind, but he does not realize his uniqueness until he is sent as an observer on the Daedalus X mission.

PHYSIOLOGY

Sketches to be included here...

Chapter 2

Selected Flora and Fauna

LANDBOUND

- **Crocotta**, a dog-wolf, able to imitate any voice
- **Giant elk**, stand 7-feet tall at the shoulders, wield 12-foot long antlers
- **Grasswalkers**, lizard-like reptiles with impenetrable exoskeletons
- **Horses**, the usual
- **Icewolves**, a breed of mountain wolf
- **Leucrocrotta**, an antelope-hyena
- **Manticores**, a sphinx-like creature
- **Myrmecoleon**, an ant-lion with a very short lifespan
- **Peryton**, a stag-bird that casts the shadow of a man
- **Quagga**, a subspecies of zebra
- **Sunwolves**, a breed of fox-like wolves

AQUATIC

- **Fish**, the usual
- **Hydras**

- **Kraken**
- **Leviathan**
- **Ocean men**, merfolk-like creatures who cause storms to surface as a defense mechanism
- **Sea scorpions**
- **Zaratan**, a grandiose sea-turtle sometimes the size of islands

AMPHIBIAN

- **Imperator**, a prodigious boa constrictor
- **Salamanders**, a creature with both fire- and water-breathing capabilities
- **Tortoise**, amphibious cousin to the zaratan

AERIAL

- **Alicanto**, beautiful metallic mining birds, believed in Daendar to bring luck
- **Ash-birds**, phoenix-like birds used as messengers and letter-carriers, believed immortal
- **Condors**
- **Crows**
- **Falcons**
- **Pinnacle grouse**, a bird with only one wing, known to fly in a continuous circle around mountain peaks
- **Rainbirds**, a bird thought to bring rain an drought; worshipped by desert dwellers but feared by others
- **Sparrowhawks**, a small but murderous hawk Thunderbirds,
- **Whispering flatoon**, a bird said to whisper the wishes of its previous owner

INSECTOID

- **Longbeetles**, the long variety
- **Dragonflies**, the giant variety, with 2-foot wingspans
- **Swarmtail hopper**, a parasitic grasshopper-like insect

PROTEAN

- **Baldanders** (“the soon-another”), a shapeshifter
- **Odradek**, a shapeshifter

BOTANIC / ARBOREAL

- **Acamar root**, a predatory mobile root with medicinal qualities when killed, otherwise its bite is fatal
- **Baobab**

LEGENDARY

- **Armored elephants**
- **Lizardmen**
- **Phantomcats**

Chapter 3

A Short Chronicle of the World

BE: Before Expansion

AE: After Expansion

Calendrical system: Modern Telur

- ca. 35,000 BE: The Founding. The founding of Daendar (unchronicled).
- ca. 31,000 BE
- ca. 29,000-28,700 BE: The Wayh Dynasty. A hitherto nomadic militaristic tribe makes settlement in the area surrounding the Tempist.
- ca. 5,000 BE: The origins of written script and literature.
- ca. 7,000 BE: The War of Autumn and Moon. The four sisters styling themselves Ctesias, Rhuance, Arsenias, and Psilur set sail and discover the outlying western territories, inciting what came to be nine centuries of war between Daendar and the Sunlands.
- 2980-2978 BE: The Philosopher War. In which the scholarly nobles usurp the throne and Landis Flor, nicknamed by his rivals the “Calabash Emperor”, claims the throne for himself.
- 2557-2309 BE: The Salten Age. A period of great and hitherto unrivaled intellectual flowering.
- 1843-862 BE: Several royal houses vie for hegemony, resulting in the decentralization of power and the dissolution of Daendar into city-states.

- 340-286 BE: The Long Winter. An era marked by continental famine and drought. Great destruction of intellectual temples, monuments, and libraries ensues.
- Makar's Rebellion. The priest-turned-scholar Makar assembles and leads a failed rebellion.
- The Jyonqar Dynasty. An era of sovereigns hailed as god-kings, who ruled in name only while peasant rebellions surged and land-holding merchant families vied for control. Feuding among consort clans and eunuchs threaten to fragment the empire.
- 47 BE: Falon's Reign: First unification of Imperial Daendar and institution of a semi-feudal structure. Falon executes the last of the god-kings. The realm enters two decades of peace.
- 28 BE: The First Androdian Assault. Daendar sees its first offworlder invasion. Riders aboard the first Daedalus expedition (consisting of a motley crew of 3) are greeted with a friendly skepticism. They introduce a primitive breed of the Mechanicals (called Androdians) but, fearing they would be supplanted, a band of Daendaric landed knights assassinates the captain and his crew. A rebel group of scholars eager to build upon the Earthmen's advanced technology enter into permanent hiding.
- 1 (or 0): The Great Expansion. A period of extensive population migration and outpouring into the continents of Voynich and Qaim Tareen. Ushers in the Imperialist Age: Barend Seven-Fingers conquers and subdues, eventually assimilates, the natives. Though beloved by the people, his is a military dictatorship marked by intellectual censorship and strict adherence to Machiavellian principles. He purges the realm of Mechanicals and 'scientists'.
- 42 AE: The Dying of the Eight. The eight sons of Barend Seven-Fingers (the Beloved Eight) are brutally assassinated by a local vigilante association styling themselves the Noble Crows.
- 251-500 AE: [REDACTED]
- 565 AE: The Return. A 'prophet' demagogue of the Far Dominions comes to southron lands and stirs some commotion, styling himself the

first bannerman of Barend Seven-Fingers called from beyond the grave. He and his compatriots embark on a terrorizing campaign and lay waste to the eastern countryside.

- 790 AE: The Western Invasion. The tyrant [REDACTED] is defeated and slain in battle. Warlords of the western steppes invade Daendar.
- 793 AE: Battle of Yildun. Legendary battle during which the charismatic young military upstart Daxon Mayce pushes back the invasion of foreign legions from the western steppes.
- 793-838 AE: Daxon's Reign. Daxon Mayce is proclaimed King of Daendar by the noblemen of the Nine Imperial Houses. He consolidates his rule over the territories of Daendar and, in an effort to tighten his hold over the two continents, appoints his two blood brothers, Avidan and Lamerion, as viceroys of Voynich and Qaim Tareen. Institutes freedom of religion and repeals the centuries-old intellectual censorship. Revives trade across the three continents. The realm prospers.
- 838 AE: Present Day, Year of the Zaratan. The events of Book One begin.

Chapter 4

Alliances and Sects

FACTIONS

- The South Crescent Guild, an old merchant league in Qaim Tareen
- The Bronze Brethren, a monastic reactionary movement, hostile to the Resistance
- The King's Banner, a traveling group of troubadours, minstrels, and entertainers
- The Sunlords, an old dynastic coalition of elders ruling as figureheads from Yildun in Qaim Tareen

SWORDS & SOLDIERS

- The Sworn Companions, a cadre of warlocks, magelings, and alchemists
- The Sleepless Men, an elite band of assassins whose services are sought after by kings and peasants alike

ROGUES & OUTLAWS

- The Noble Crows, a secretive and extremely hierarchical vigilante association boasting an intricate, extensive network throughout Daendar and Voynich

- The Freeland Mauraunders, a ragtag loosely formed gathering of bandits and pirates based in the Freeland territories of Qaim Tareen
- The Telurian Resistance, a persecuted refugee group of scientists organized after the failed First Telurian Expedition, long since gone into hiding, current whereabouts unknown

Chapter 5

Dramatis Personae: Aboard the Daedalus X

Telurians

These are Earthmen, a technologically advanced human race bearing high resemblances to the humans of Old Earth. Their homeworld and central stronghold is New Earth, a terraformed version of a 21st-century Earth, once a dominant but now waning power in Teluria's Planetary Consulate.

The several hundred offworld satellite colonies hitherto firmly under Telurian rule have also since dwindled (a process propelled by the third Secession wave) and now number less than fifty.

The year roughly corresponds to the Julian equivalent of 8720 A.D.

Officers

- Captain Volans, Captain of the Telurian Nineth Expedition
- Simon Hudson ("Moby"), 33, Consul
- Edward L. Nunn, 24, Communications Officer and expert strategist
- Cidro Morena ("El Cid"), 40, Chief Engineer
- Fiona Adler, 35, Chief Medical Officer

Crew

- Branwin Mars, 21, an astrophysicist
- Milo Diderot (“Owl Boy”), 17, a programmer
- Ivan Vissonov (“Old Russ”), 67, a virologist and chemist
- Yulan Sun, 34, a theoretical physicist
- Peter Vane (“The Cretan”), 29, a xenolinguist and philologist, half-brother to Hazel Wells
- Hazel Wells, 24, daughter to the New Earth Ambassador, half-sister to Peter Vane
- Anna-Lucia Jakobson (“Jakes”), 27, a xenobiologist
- Quiblock (“Quib”), 21, an ecological engineer, twin to Orriland
- Orriland (“Orri”), 21, a xenotech, twin to Quiblock
- Karl, sometimes “Qarl”, a historian

Mechanicals

- Jericho Crane, an Advanced Model, male, Constructor
- Maud, an Advanced Model, female, Destructor
- Factota, helper Mechanicals of the third generation

Offworlder Captives

- Lloor, 16, a humanoid telepath, Ambassador to the Ivory Planet
- Mr. Higs, of the Ivory Planet, bodyguard to Lloor
- Naphthol, 1521, an Althuran slave
- Vodderg, 98, a pyrokinetic
- Aarafin Pran, a prophet of Asteroid B-221

- *Unqidarj*, amorphous gaseous telepathic beings. They absorb the emotions and intentions of others and manifest them through various colors and sounds. Subsist only in pairs, so that if one dies, the other dies with it. Motives are unknown, but widely believed to be benevolent entities. On the Daedalus X, Fiona's three pairs of *Unqidarj* are named: Maxwell and Rosalind; Troilus and Criseyde; Pulchrum and Turpe.

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