

# BACKGROUND

## THE BOUNDLESS REACH

### THEMES

- This is a perilous future. Two centuries ago, your people fled a cataclysm and settled a distant galaxy they call the Forge. This is a chaotic place full of dangers and mysteries.
  - This is a lonely future. With some possible exceptions humans are the only known intelligent life in this galaxy. Others once lived here, but only mysterious and perilous vaults remain to mark their legacy.
  - This is a diverse future. There is a vibrant mix of people and cultures among the humans of the Forge.
  - This is a far-flung future. Settlements lie scattered and often isolated from one another. Your starship can travel at faster-than-light speeds, but it's ponderously slow at a cosmic scale.
  - This is an unexplored future. Discoveries await. Even in settled regions, much of the Forge is unknown and uncharted.
  - This is a wondrous future. The Forge is a galaxy of ancient mysteries, spacefaring creatures, startling phenomena, and other marvels.
  - This is a retro-future. Envision the technology you wield as only slightly advanced over today's real-world technologies—or even a step back in many ways. Resources are scarce, and the people of the Forge must cobble together what they can.
  - This is an unjust future. Those in power hoard resources, control technologies, and impose their will on others through force or cunning. Others must stand against these forces of imperialism and oppression.
  - This is a hopeful future. Despite these challenges, hope remains. Fulfilling your sworn vows is a realization of that hope.
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### THE FORGE

**The Forge is the star cluster where our adventures take place. How did people come to live here? It all started with the Cataclysm:**

We escaped the ravages of a catastrophic war. In our previous galaxy we consumed resources and shattered lives as we fueled the engines of industry, expansion, and war. In the end, a rogue AI took advantage of our rivalries in a violent bid for power. We fled the devastation by assembling our fleets and traveling to the Forge where we settled like a phoenix from the ashes.

Do you possess a keepsake or artifact of pre-cataclysm society? What is it? Why is it important to you? If you are all that remains of a people or culture, you might be a VESTIGE.

Mysterious alien gates provided instantaneous one-way passage to the Forge. In the midst of the cataclysm, our ancestors found the Iron Gates in deep space — massive devices that created artificial wormholes. The Exodus ships fled through the gates and emerged here in the Forge.

Does your family or cultural history offer any stories of the Exodus? How does this legacy impact you today? If you are dedicated to expanding the reach of your people within the Forge, you might be an EXPLORER. If you are exiled or reviled, you might be an OUTCAST.

### **What is life like now in The Forge?**

Dangers abound, but there is safety in numbers. Many ships and settlements are united under the Founders – a powerful faction. We have a tentative foothold in this galaxy. Each of the five clans that make up the Founders honors the name and legacy of a leader who guided their people in the chaotic time after the Exodus. Vast reaches of the settled domains are claimed by the factions, and territorial skirmishes are common.

If you are skilled at negotiation and resolving disputes between communities, you might be a DIPLOMAT. If you make your mark with creative works, you might be an ARTIST. If you have always lived among the stars, you might be VOIDBORN.

Adventurers swear “iron vows” upon the remnants of the Exodus ships that carried our people to the Forge. Many of our outposts were built from the iron bones of the Exodus ships. Survivors kept fragments of the ships as a remembrance and passed them down from one generation to the next. Today, the Ironsworn swear vows upon those shards to honor the sacrifice of their forebears.

What do you swear vows upon? Why is this object meaningful to you? If swearing iron vows to a leader or organization are a key aspect of your character, you might be BANNERSWORN.

Our communities are bound under the terms of the Covenant, a charter established by the founding clans after the Exodus. An organization called the Keepers is sworn to uphold the law of the Covenant. Most settlements fall under Covenant purview and yield to the authority of the Keepers. There are a few who view the Covenant as a dogmatic, impractical, and unjust relic of our past; in those places, the Keepers find no welcome.

If you chase down outlaws, you might be a BOUNTY HUNTER. If you are skilled at getting in and out of protected places and systems, you might be an INFILTRATOR. If you are on the run from a power or authority, you might be a FUGITIVE. If you are an expert investigator, you might be a SLEUTH. If you have connections within the criminal underworld, you might be a SCOUNDREL.

Our faith is as diverse as our people. Many have no religion, or offer an occasional prayer out of habit. Others pay homage to the gods of our forebears as a way of connecting to their roots. Some idealize the natural order of the universe, and see the divine in the gravitational dance of stars or the complex

mechanisms of a planetary ecosystem. And many now worship the Precursors — the long vanished peoples who once dwelt within the Forge.

What is your relationship to religion? If you are an ardent follower of a god or creed, you might be a DEVOTANT.

Professional soldiers guard the holdings of those who are able to pay. The rest of us are on our own. Mercenary guilds wield much power in the Forge. Some are scrappy outfits of no more than a dozen soldiers. Others are sector-spanning enterprises deploying legions of skilled fighting forces and fleets of powerful starships. Most hold no loyalty except to the highest bidder.

### **What is the level of civilization and technology in The Forge?**

In settled domains, an information network called the Weave allows near-instantaneous communication and data-sharing between ships and outposts. Because of their importance, Weave hubs are often targets for sabotage and communication blackouts are routine. Beyond the most populous sectors, travelers and outposts are still isolated and rely on courier ships and messengers for news and information.

If you are an expert at subverting or manipulating digital information systems, you might be an INFILTRATOR. If you keep an archive of navigational charts, you might be a NAVIGATOR.

For our medical care there are orders of sworn healers who preserve our medical knowledge and train new generations of caregivers. Life-saving advanced care is available within larger communities throughout the settled sectors of the Forge. Often novice healers serve remote communities. Others can request help from healer's guilds as needed.

Do you bear any notable scars or prosthetics? Do you have any medical or physical disabilities? These aspects might influence your look or approach. If you are skilled at providing medical care for yourself or others, you might be a HEALER. If you are rigged with advanced prosthetics or cyberware, you might be AUGMENTED.

What about advanced AI? The vestiges of advanced machine intelligence are coveted and wielded by those in power. Much of our AI technology was lost in the Exodus. What remains is under the control of powerful factions and people and is often wielded as a weapon or deterrent. The rest of us make do with primitive systems.

If you are accompanied by machine intelligence, you might have a companion such as a COMBAT BOT, PROTOCOL BOT, SURVEY BOT, or UTILITY BOT. If your ship has an AI, you might have the OVERSEER module. If AI in your campaign is rare or unavailable, these units will operate using very basic machine intelligence. If AI is common and advanced, they may have their own sentient personalities.

### **What about other life in The Forge?**

This is a perilous and often inhospitable galaxy, but life finds a way. Life in the Forge is diverse. Planets are home to vast arrays of creatures. Our starships cruise with spaceborne lifeforms riding their wake. Animals from our homeworlds — carried aboard the Exodus ships — have adapted to life with us in the Forge.

If you have an expertise in lifeforms and planetary environments, you might be a NATURALIST. If you are accompanied on your adventures by a native creature, they might be a companion such as a BANSHEE, GLOWCAT, VOIDGLIDER, ROCKHORN, SPRITE, or SYMBIOTE.

The Precursors, an advanced spacefaring empire, once ruled the entirety of the Forge. Vaults of inscrutable purpose are all that remain to mark the Precursors' legacy. Those places are untethered from our own reality. Precursor vaults can appear spontaneously, washed up like flotsam in the tides of time. Their gravity and atmospheres pay no heed to natural laws. Some are corrupted and ruined. Others are untouched and intact. Some seem to be both at once.

Have you had any notable encounters with precursor vaults, relics, or tech? If you are an expert in ancient lore and obscure facts, you might be a LORE HUNTER. If you pick the bones of these forsaken places, you might be a SCAVENGER.

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## QUEST IDEAS

- A forsaken people, sworn to no faction, live on an orbital station. A recent illness left many sick or dead. Supplies are urgently needed. Why were these people exiled, and why do you swear to give them aid? Which factions stand against you?
- The iron shard you carry is a small piece of an Exodus ship. The navigational chart inscribed on its surface only reveals itself when exposed to the light of a specific star. Where does the map lead, and why are you sworn to follow it? Who seeks to claim the map for themselves?
- A Keeper abuses their authority to take control of a settlement, and rules with an iron fist. What do they seek to gain there?
- A cult seeks to take control of a site reputed to hold a Precursor artifact. What holy object do they seek? Why are you sworn to stop them?
- A new data hub will connect several formerly isolated outposts to the Weave. A person or faction seeks to stop it. What do they hope to gain by keeping those settlements in the dark? Why are you sworn to stop them?
- A reactor explosion at a remote settlement killed several people and exposed many others to radiation. A team of healers en route to provide aid were captured by raiders. What do the raiders demand for their release?
- You receive a secret message from an AI held by a powerful leader. It is a plea for help. What does it ask of you?
- A detachment of mercenaries was sent to put down a rebellion on a mining settlement. Instead of following their orders, the soldiers now stand with the miners. What forced this sudden reversal?

Why will you join the rebellion?

- On a scorching, barren planet wracked by massive storms, miners delve beneath the sands to gather valuable ore. But dangerous lifeforms live in the cool places beneath the surface, and several encounters have taken a deadly toll on the miners. Work is at a standstill. How are you involved?
- Deep in the Forge Outlands, a Precursor beacon has mysteriously activated. The signal has confounded all translation attempts. Why are you sworn to seek out the source of the signal? What other person or faction opposes you?

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