

EVERGLOW ... EXPOSITION

Rise of the Human Dominion (2620- 2874)

By the year 2874, humanity stands as the preeminent force in the Milky Way Galaxy, commanding a vast empire that spans thousands of star systems and countless worlds. This empire, often called the **Confluence Hegemon**, is not a democratic or harmonious unity, but rather a patchwork of directly controlled colonies, semi-autonomous vassal states, and subjugated alien dominions. Humanity's rise to galactic dominance began two centuries prior, after a catastrophic conflict known as the **Iridian Wars**, named after the now-extinct Iridians, a once-great alien civilization whose fall marked the beginning of human hegemony. The Iridian Wars were the first major galactic conflict and resulted in the near-total destruction of several powerful alien empires, leaving a vacuum that humanity ruthlessly filled.

The Confluence is a hyper-centralized state, its power concentrated in only two core systems known as **Sol** – home of the empire's former de-facto capital **Earth** – and **Empyreon**, home to the current capital world **Vollaryn Prime**. From here, the **Primarch Council** -- a ruling body of twelve human elites -- dictates policy across the empire. These Primarchs who are genetically enhanced and functionally immortal have ruled for centuries. By 2874 they have grown complacent and incompetent, however. Though humanity's technological prowess and military might have kept alien dominions in check, the empire is far from stable. Subjugation and exploitation of alien species, as well as extreme resource extraction from human colonies, have fostered deep resentment and unrest across the Confluence's parts of the galaxy.

The Frontier Rebellions (2862-Present)

For nearly a hundred years, peace was maintained through fear and brute force. However, by the mid-2800s, the fringes of the empire -- remote colonies on the periphery of human-controlled space -- began to fracture. Many of these colonies, which were once verdant worlds terraformed to support life, had become over-industrialized and stripped of resources, and their populations were left to toil under oppressive conditions. The Confluence's neglect of these outer colonies sowed the seeds of rebellion, combined with the rise of new ideologies and regional autonomy movements.

The rebellion began in 2862 with skirmishes initially on the icy world of **Vastis** before it quickly spread to other frontier worlds. The rebels, who called themselves the **Free Reach**, were a loose confederation of dissidents, rogue governors, and even former military officers angered with the Primarch Council's authoritarian and incompetent rule. The Free Reach was not initially a formidable force; they lacked the technological sophistication and military discipline of the Confluence's Space Corps and its fleets. But over time, alien species -- many of which had been defeated or subjugated by humanity in the past -- began to secretly funnel weapons, ships, and supplies to the rebels. Chief among these covert supporters was a hostile alien empire known as the **Zal'kahn Syndicate**. It was a large coalition of several hundred star systems collectively governed by federated warlord dominions, who saw an opportunity to weaken the human empire from within. By 2870, the rebellion had escalated into a full-blown civil war. The Confluence's forces, still dominant though, struggled to suppress the insurgency due to the vast distances between colonies, logistical challenges, total complacency, and the growing sympathies for the rebels within the Confluence Space Corps itself. Being increasingly desperate, the Primarch Council would authorize the use of **the Ascendants** -- elite human supersoldiers genetically engineered to be the ultimate warriors. These soldiers, whose origins predate the Iridian Wars by over a century, were seen as the empire's last hope for maintaining control.

The Ascendants

The Aegis II Ascendants are not mere soldiers; they are the culmination of centuries of genetic engineering, cybernetic augmentation, and bio-enhancement programs, most of them originate from Sol or Empyreon. Known officially as the **Aegis Protocol (I through III)**, the Ascendants are humanity's ultimate form and weapon, designed to operate in the most hostile environments and against the deadliest foes. Each Ascendant undergoes a rigorous and often fatal selection process, followed by extensive augmentation that makes them faster, stronger, and more resilient than any human and most alien species. Their neural architecture is enhanced by **ConxuMind Implants**, which allow them to process data at superhuman speeds, interface directly with advanced military technologies, and even predict enemy movements in combat through algorithmic foresight. Given their physical resilience, some Ascendants can live up to 200 years of age before dying of natural causes – however, their usefulness on the battlefield would have been far overstretched by then. Ascendants usually are KIA or discarded to non-frontline roles before they can reach a hundred years.

The Aegis II Ascendants are not without their flaws whatsoever. The enhancements come at a psychological cost; many suffer from severe emotional detachment, sociopathy, cognitive dissonance, and a phenomenon known as **Echo Drift** where their minds become unmoored from reality after prolonged battle exposure. These problems are mostly solved with the upgraded Aegis III Ascendants however, but Aegis II Ascendants remain the most common class. Few Ascendants have even turned rogue, becoming warlords or mercenaries for hire in the outer fringes of the galaxy – 12 of them to be exact. Ascendants have been deployed across the galaxy in an attempt to quell the rebellion and maintain Confluence order. Their presence on a battlefield often tips the scales, but their numbers are few, and the civil war has stretched their resources thin. The battles that involved them often resulted in Confluence victory nonetheless, and had the rebels not used guerilla warfare efficiently, the civil war would have been over before its first year.

The Zal'kahn Offensive and the Collapse of the Outer Rims (2874)

2874 – After nearly a decade of civil unrest and war, the human empire's facade of invincibility has clearly faltered. As the civil war stretched into its fourth year, the neighboring Zal'kahn Syndicate bid its time and its leadership meticulously planned to strike when the galaxy was most vulnerable, after the Syndicate had spent centuries cultivating its strength and influence. In mid-2874, **Imperator Xal'Tun** unleashed the **Rahk'Nir Armada**, striking in a coordinated surprise attack on several key worlds along the Confluence's outer rims, like **Asteria**, **Sky Six**, and **Aurelius Theta**. The first wave of attacks had the fall of several prominent colonies and military installations, including Asteria and the surprise siege of Aurelius Theta. Sky Six was a remote but strategically important moon that housed a major Confluence training facility as well as several orbital shipyards. The Zal'kahn offensive was devastating. They overwhelmed human defenses in a matter of weeks using superior technology and mass swarming tactics on all fronts. Several other alien empires bitter towards the Confluence, opportunistically, also joined the conflict, seeing the human empire as vulnerable. Among these were the **Krell Ascendancy** which was a militant theocracy of insectoid beings, and the **Vokri Nomads** who were a nomadic race of starfarers whose fleets had wandered the galaxy for millennia before finally uniting under a charismatic warlord. The RahkNir's blitzkrieg strategy sent shockwaves through the Confluence's command and exposed the sun-clear fragility and lack of preparedness of the vast empire.

The Zal'kahn, Krell, and Vokri invasions therefore marked the beginning of the **Second Galactic War (also known as the Koryx Wars)**, plunging the galaxy into widespread chaos. The Confluence faced annihilation on multiple fronts. However, certain alien dominions like the **Kalthisia Consortium** and the **Ashen Fold** joined forces with the beleaguered humans. They were promised lucrative trade routes, advanced technology, and restored territories as a token of gratitude should ultimate victory be achieved. Old alliances and enmities resurfaced and galactic-scale warfare broiled across worlds.

Colony-17: Nine City and the 'Key' to Eternal Hegemony

At the edge of the human empire within **Outrim 7**, in the **Everglow System** – the star system of a G7V star – lies the planet Asteria, the third planet in orbit around its sun. Asteria is part of a string of worlds, preceded by the closest planet, **Muse**, and the second planet, **Aspen**, a strikingly beautiful terraformed world with pink-and-blue landscapes. Following Asteria is the cold world of **Kalliophe**. On Asteria is **Colony-17**, a large and seemingly insignificant metropolis locally known as **Nine City**. For decades, Nine City has been a backwater, a place where miners, refugees, criminals, and disillusioned laborers and civilians eke out a grim existence in the shadow of giant mining rigs and terraforming machines. The colony is named for its nine towering spires that are ancient structures of yet-unknown origin that predate human settlement on the planet.

Nine City plays no immediate role in the early stages of the war after its fall into Zalkahn hands. But beneath the surface of Asteria, deep within its crust, lies an ancient alien structure known as the **Veilspire**. This structure is a relic from a time before the Iridian Wars -- a time when a now-extinct race known as the **Xaltheran** ruled the galaxy. The Xaltherans were masters of quantum manipulation and dimensional travel, and the Veilspire is believed to be the key to unlocking a long-lost technology known as the **Worm Gate**.

The Worm Gate is a device capable of opening rifts in spacetime thus allowing for instantaneous travel across the galaxy. More importantly though, it is said to have the power to manipulate the very fabric of reality, bending time, space, and even matter to the will of its user – allowing shapeshifting. The Zal'kahn have long sought the Veilspire, and their invasion of Asteria is no coincidence. They believe that whoever controls the Worm Gate will hold the ultimate power in the galaxy -- a power that could make its bearer eternally unstoppable.

The Zal'kahn Syndicate and the Koryx Pact

The Zal'kahn are a terrifying and highly disciplined molluscoid-like race with a rigid hierarchical structure. Their society values strength, cunning, and loyalty to their warlords above all else. For centuries, the Zal'kahn had been biding their time, steadily consolidating power, forging alliances, and building up their forces while humanity's empire became bloated and complacent. Their ultimate goal was: to dismantle the Confluence and establish their own hegemony over the galaxy. But the Zal'kahn were not alone in their ambition. As the cracks in the human empire's foundation began to show, alien species long subjugated by or hostile to the Confluence started to rally to the Zal'kahn's cause. Chief among these were:

The Krell Ascendancy: The theocratic empire of insectoid beings who worship the concept of "The Cycle" – which is a cosmic belief that all life must periodically be cleansed to allow the universe to renew itself. The Krell had been devastated during the Iridian Wars, and they saw humanity as the next civilization that needed to be purged for the good of the galaxy. They are not simply religious zealots; The Cycle was deeply intertwined with their biology. Their insectoid bodies underwent periodic metamorphoses, mirroring their cosmic philosophy of renewal. Their technology is completely bio-organic, absolutely seamlessly blending living tissue with advanced weaponry.

Vokri Nomads: They had once wandered the galaxy aimlessly in massive self-sustaining fleets after their home worlds were destroyed in a series of wars. They are technologically advanced, but they lacked a central government until they were united under the warlord Azhul Vok, a leader who promised his people a permanent home in the galaxy -- one that would be carved from the ashes of the Confluence in a future devastating war, and the time has come to fulfil this promise and prophecy.

These three formed the spine of Koryx Pact together. The name "Koryx" comes from an ancient Zal'kahn word meaning "rebirth through fire." The Pact's goal is nothing less than the total destruction of the Confluence and the establishment of a new galactic order. The Zal'kahn preach the idea of a "galactic purification," a cleansing of the stagnation that has come from humanity's dominance, and this message resonates deeply with the Krell and the Vokri. Nevertheless, the Pact is held together by a shared hatred of the Confluence and a belief that the galaxy must be reshaped into something new – how exactly that shape should come out to be, is a question still unanswered.

The Confluence's Alliance and the Accord Colossus

Factions that had benefited from humanity's reign or feared the Koryx Pact's ambitions rallied to the Confluence's banner, forming an alliance known as the Accord Colossus. The most prominent members of the Accord were:

The Kalthisia Consortium: A mercantile sub-empire of cephalopods who had once been rivals of the Confluence. Their society revolves around trade and economic dominance. They saw the Koryx Pact as a threat to their vast interstellar trade networks and pledged support to the Confluence in exchange for promises of favorable trade agreements and access to resources. They provided the Confluence with vital economic aid and intelligence gathered through their network of spies and traders. They committed a small but extremely potent fleet to the Accord's war effort.

The Ashen Fold: A reclusive and very isolated civilization inhabiting most stars in a large diffuse nebulae rich in exotic resources. Their motives for joining the Accord are shrouded in mystery but some speculate that they feared the Krell's fervor for "The Cycle". They were notoriously slow to mobilize, and their fleets were slow and somewhat needlessly heavily armored, but the Confluence needed all the hands it could get on deck, and the Fold provided a crucial advantage to the beleaguered Hegemon nonetheless.

The Fall of Asteria (Outrim-7):

The Zal'kahn's first major offensive focused on Asteria. The world was under Free Reach control, the rebels having seized it from the Confluence just ten days prior, capturing thousands of surrendered imperial troopers and keeping them hostage. The Confluence were launching a relatively small but extremely deadly force spearheaded by the Ardent Dawn, a colossal juggernaut-class battleship unlike anything humanity had ever produced, accompanied by numerous escort frigates. The Ardent Dawn was a staggering marvel of engineering, possessing a devastating array of weaponry and a seemingly impregnable shield network.

The Confluence forces swiftly dispatched a small Reavian rebel fleet that tried to defend Asteria, securing a path to the surface. As the Ardent Dawn prepared to launch its devastating invasion force, the orbit around Asteria filled with hyperspace wormholes that ripped reality asunder. Hundreds of Zal'kahn warships, smaller but technologically more advanced than the Confluence vessels, including Rahk'Nir cruisers and swarms of Void Serpents (small, agile fighters), erupted from these wormholes. The Zal'kahn offensive was simply decisive.

The Ardent Dawn, supposed to be seemingly invincible, was overwhelmed within an hour as a barrage of powerful weaponry tore through its defenses and its powerful shield. The Rahk'Nir's signature orbital bombardment, fueled by volatile energy from a piece of a Neutron star, caused the Ardent Dawn's systems to overload and completely fail by the end of the battle, and the ship eventually shattered with unimaginable force, and most pieces of it crashed onto Asteria. The Ardent Dawn that was supposed to be the ultimate symbol of human might was reduced to a burning hulk within the first hour of a major war – an unimaginable catastrophe by all means. The Confluence marines on board the Ardent Dawn had been forced into emergency escape pods while the ship was still relatively intact. Most of those that survived the initial bombardment were hunted mercilessly down on their way to the planet surface, becoming victims of a gruesome, deadly hail of fire.

Many troopers were lost, turning Asteria's atmosphere into a graveyard of smoking wreckage and plummeting escape pods. Despite the overwhelming loss of life, a handful hundreds of marines, crew members, and the two veteran Aegis II Ascendants – Aurelian-class Vendarian One and Centurion-class Jack Seven – survived. Meanwhile, the Zal'kahn launched their own ground forces onto Asteria. The Confluence soldiers who landed on the planet found themselves stranded, surrounded by and forced to fight alongside the very rebels they had come to defeat. Then ensued the subsequent fight for Colony-17, and it was brutal, with both Confluence troopers and Reach militias desperately fighting the Zal'kahn invasion. All across Asteria, the Zal'kahn were overwhelming the rebel defenses and securing the settlements, and eventually Colony-17 fell at a costly price after a four-Asterian solar day campaign. Though officially considered conquered by the Koryx, a fierce resistance movement continued through Asteria's vast and ancient underground tunnels. Reach and Confluence survivors, fighting side-by-side now, utilized guerilla tactics and sabotage to counter the Zal'kahn and dragged them into a prolonged war of attrition, and it significantly hindered Zal'kahn excavation efforts regarding the Veilspire.

Siege of Aurelius Theta (Outrim-4):

The assault on Aurelius Theta, a major industrial planet-city in Outrim-4, was equally as brutal as the invasion of Asteria. The Zal'kahn, deploying an overwhelming wave of Rahk'Nir strike teams and devastating orbital weapons, utilizing wormholes once again, quickly decimated the Confluence's defenses. The planet's strategically important military installations were quickly targeted and destroyed in several consecutive efficient strikes, cutting off any hope of reinforcement or communication. Though not as fast as the Asterian offensive, as the Theta operation took over a week in the end. The Zal'kahn did not use wormholes to bring their own powerful warships and fighters, which took a few days to arrive. The fighting saw brutal ground combat, where the Zal'kahn used their superior atmospheric bombardment and tactics to outmaneuver the humans in the planet's urban areas.

The Confluence forces, caught completely off guard, were predictably overwhelmed in the end. The planet's key orbital defense platform known as the "Oracle's Eye" was destroyed only a few hours after the offensive began, leaving Aurelius utterly defenseless. For an additional 3 days, the remnants of the Confluence forces and surviving civilians barricaded themselves in the remaining untouched parts of the planet and engaged in fierce street fighting before eventually being defeated and falling prey to the Zal'kahn invasion, same as Asteria.

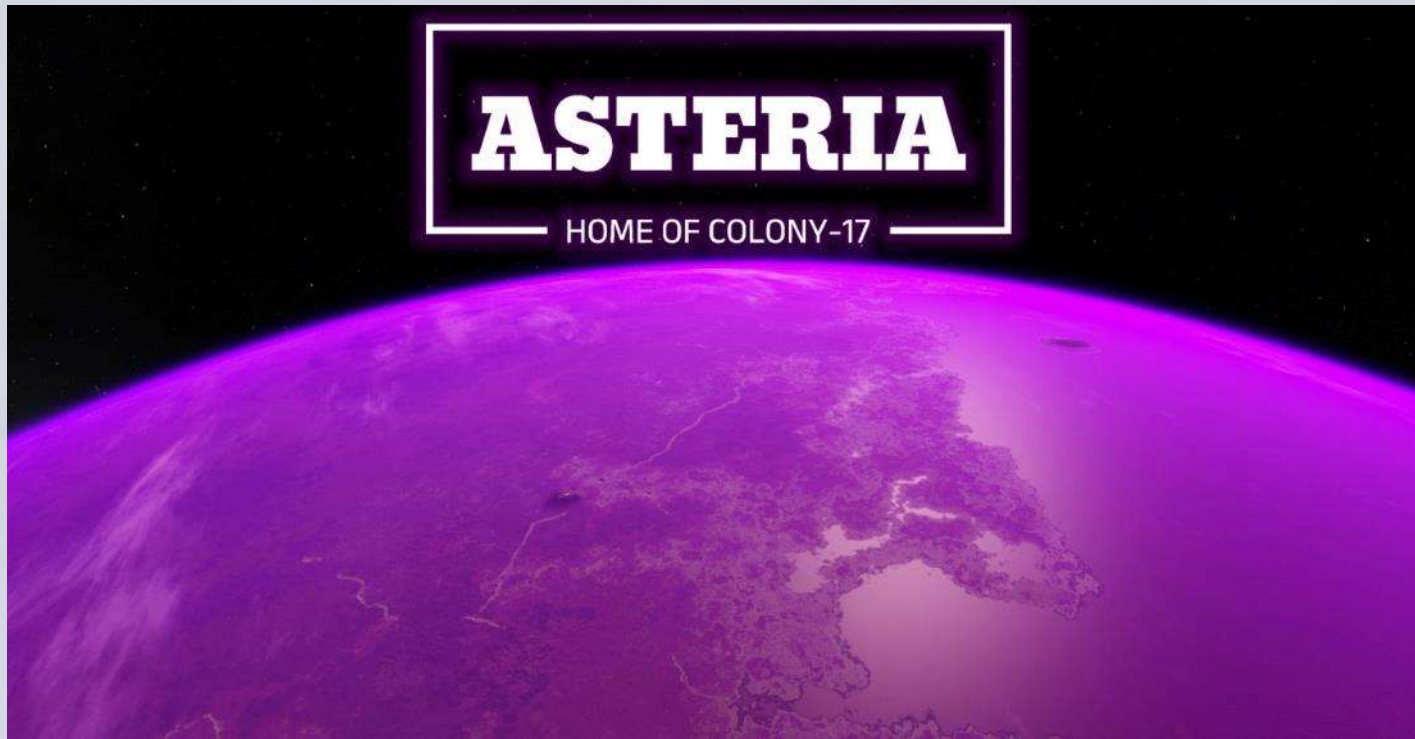
The Destruction of Sky Six (Outrim-6):

The small moon world of Sky Six was annihilated in a single brutal strike by a force of Krell Ascendancy forces, aided by a contingent of Zal'kahn troops. The moon was a crucial center for the Confluence space fleet training facilities and held several shipyards which were being used for the construction of new spacecraft. The Sky Six shipyard also had a few research centers which were working on their own advanced and secret weapons which would have been vital to the Confluence's future war efforts. The Krell, with their bio-organic technology and superior understanding of orbital warfare, successfully breached the moon's advanced defenses, deploying a devastating array of bio-engineered weaponry. The moon's orbital defense grid was overwhelmed in 6 hours, then Sky Six was subjected to a relentless bombardment of specialized "hive" missiles (The Krell term for guided missiles) and organic-based weapons that eventually ended with the Krell Colossus ship focusing an ultradestructive beam on the moon, melting its crust and collapsing the moon's core.

Sky Six, along with everyone and everything on it, was obliterated in a matter of hours, leaving nothing but a cloud of debris in orbit. It was the first and last line of defense for several sectors behind it – and now the path was open for the Krell and Zal'Kahn to venture deeper from the Outer Rims.

The **Andromeda Sector** that bordered south of the Outrim-6 Skygrid saw *some* of the worst atrocities as The Krell systematically purged planets of humans, in an absolutely chaotic and bloody display of their cosmic cleansing and renewal belief, leading to the death of hundreds of millions of humans across multiple now-defenseless worlds as the Confluence pulled most fleets from the Outer Rims and scrambled to reorganize.

GALLERY:



PLANET ASTERIA



CENTURION AEGIS II ASCENDANT JACK SEVEN – ARMOR VARIATIONS



VELVET "WHISPERWIND" HECATE



AURELIAN AEGIS III ASCENDANT NASH
VENDARIAN



AEGIS II ASCENDANT NASH VENDARIAN



FREE REACH SQUAD LEADER "MALIK"