

Sterhaven Settingbook

English Version 0.9

A Live Action Roleplay (LARP) by Fabel Foundation

English readers, please note the following:

The following text has been automatically translated from Dutch, with support of AI.

The setting is as described in the Dutch document only: The game masters cannot be held responsible and are not liable for translation errors and misunderstandings that may arise due to nuances being lost in translation. Hence, please always *do* contact the game masters if something in the automated translation is unclear to you, e.g. via sl@sterhaven.nl or via our Discord channel.

During this LARP, we will only speak Dutch and English in-character. Our game masters understand and speak Dutch, English and German. However, for the LARP you will IC need Dutch and/or English, as those are the IC languages used.

Please also note that we did not create any layout for this translated version. It is a text-only version and does not contain images.

Colophon:

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This rule book was written for the LARP Sterhaven, by Stichting Fabel.*

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contributions during the preparation of this rulebook.*

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01.1 - Introduction

Welcome to Sterhaven: an episodic, cooperative, futuristic Science-Fantasy LARP.

In this setting book, you will find inspiration to build a character and navigate within the setting. In addition to this setting information, please refer to the rulebook for all the rules and what to expect from the game within Sterhaven.

Additions

Discovery and exploration are central to Sterhaven. But it is not necessary to rediscover the same things repeatedly. Therefore, this setting book will be supplemented over time with newly discovered information.

Expectations and game

This rulebook uses sidebars to convey OC (Out of Character) information for expectation management and player information, like this one. The main text represents knowledge that a character may have, but it is not mandatory. The text in sidebars, like this one, is intended for the OC-reader, not the IC-character.

01.2 - Earth and history

Earth is no longer viable

Around 2055, a geomagnetic inversion was discovered, making Earth soon no longer suitable for large-scale habitation. The increased exposure to radiation led to a significant decrease in the life expectancy of humans and animals. Large-scale projects to live underground, underwater, or under magnetic shields were undertaken, but it became clear that they offered little guarantee for the future. The best hope for humanity lies in space travel.

Space Travel

Around 2074, under the Sterhaven program, the first generation ships were built in the shadow of the moon and sent out to distant galaxies. Each ship has one destination. These slow ships will take hundreds of years to reach their goal.

Since the list of volunteers exceeds the available space on the generation ships, the selection for the crew is done through a weighted lottery on Earth.

Unfortunately, not all the required crew positions can be filled voluntarily; while most colonists have willingly signed up to leave Earth, others were selected. Some put their names on the lottery list themselves, or were nominated by a family member, while others, like the Koempels, were appointed by the United Nations to go.

The strict criteria for the generation ships, in terms of mental and physical health and genetic diversity, meant that many people couldn't go, and others had no choice. This led to intense debates in the media around 2075, but ultimately, the lottery ensured that each generation ship carried a healthy and diverse population of people with expertise in the required skills.

Now that the survival of humanity on other planets is assured, the initially fiercely contested debate gradually subsides, and people accept their fate. The result of the lottery means that families are separated, and farewells are forever.

Cooperation

The construction of the ships is a massive undertaking. Most countries, individuals, and corporations quickly realize this, but a few are seeking personal gain. Between 2065 and 2075, sporadic "Acquisition Wars" are fought, armed conflicts between the United Nations and those countries or mega-corps that do not trade their knowledge and materials fairly at a fair established rate.

Departure of the cryosleep ships

Technology does not stand still after the departure of the generation ships; with the goal of transporting more colonists aboard a smaller ship, an advanced cryosleep technique is developed. Instead of using antifreeze, this technique utilizes low doses of microwave radiation to prevent crystallization damage.

This makes it possible to take a broader selection of colonists aboard the new ships. Cryosleep itself cannot entirely prevent aging, but it significantly slows down the aging process. The process even helps to slowly heal radiation sickness and some curable diseases during cryosleep. Although the process is not entirely without risks or side effects, it is seen as the salvation of humanity. A journey of hundreds of years and multiple generations is reduced to several separate periods of a few weeks or months during which the awakened crew works on the ship and their health.

The year 2088, when cryosleep techniques mature, marks a rare positive note in history. The first cryogenic generation ships depart from Earth, carrying many hopeful colonists on board.

The players' cryosleep ship, the Melolonthe, was one of the first cryosleep ships. At the time of departure, many others were still under construction, with plans for dozens of newer, more advanced variants. These later ships, according to rumors in 2088, would be able to transport more crew in greater comfort with more resources. The atmosphere on Earth was cautiously optimistic about the prospects of at least a few successful colonies.

The growing distance between the departing Melolonthe and Earth means that after only a few years, even before the first crew members awake for maintenance, contact between the crew and their home planet becomes impossible.

Changing Earthly culture

In the year 2088, when the Melolonthe departs, the customs and ideas of humanity are already significantly different from those of the early 21st century. Due to the great connectivity through the internet and the far-reaching globalization on Earth, the ease of travel, and the unfolding disaster, many Earthly cultures, religions, traditions, and languages have disappeared, merged, or unrecognizably changed.

On Earth, in the years before departure, national borders have blurred. National identity is less important than the ideals and principles one follows. A birthplace in the 21st century becomes merely a geographical point without much cultural baggage. Together with a very strong increase in online life, automatic translations, and a shared cultural identity, this has resulted in many national borders existing only administratively. People identify with their factions or ideas, not with religions or countries.

In the later years, the interconnectivity that arose from new wireless technology has largely disappeared. Groups and factions have resorted to extravagant expressions

in clothing, behavior, or speech to indicate their in-group to outsiders, replacing the ubiquitous social media of the 2060s and 70s.

Religions and spirituality on Earth

In the early 21st century, there is a great diversity within religious beliefs. In the late 21st century, at the time of departure, traditional religions seem to be weakening. The beginning planetary disaster gives many people the idea that the gods and religious leaders have no interest or influence in saving humanity on Earth, nature, and the animal world.

As a result, some people no longer consider spirituality important at all, others desperately seek meaning and find their own religions, while still others get lost in technologies, drugs, or anything that provides distraction. Around 2088, there are many small, separate spiritual groups on Earth with a mix of ideas, in which traditional religions are no longer recognizable. The spiritual themes often focus on physical/mental health and salvation for humanity or aim to offer hope in a dying world.

On P-328, people mainly believe what they individually want to believe and accept from each other that everyone can freely choose their own beliefs or spirituality.

Religion in the game

Players can bring religion/spirituality into the game if they wish to do so. Please note: You are not allowed to roleplay existing real-world religions in the game; preferably, create something new or sufficiently different.

Cooperation on Earth

At the time of the Melolonthe's departure, the United Nations successfully collaborate on a global scale. The large mega-corporations, which were primarily egocentric and capitalistic in the early 21st century, realized due to the geomagnetic inversion that they had to invest all their money in health research and the rapid development of space exploration programs. The significant economic stimulus programs and the nationalization of some corporations made the need for cooperation evident to the less observant companies. Earth is, at the eleventh hour of its existence, finally united. At least, on the surface.

Life on Earth in 2088

Most people do not live past the age of 40. In the early years, there were large flows of refugees to areas where the United Nations could build underground or underwater living facilities. By now, most people live in self-built sunstorm bunkers, which they maintain themselves. Some are nomads who keep moving further to other places with the help of the stars, as local conditions can change every year.

Many people stay close to their families or small groups. Some have children earlier, but most consider it ethically irresponsible to bring children into the world with limited lifespans. Many people cope with their fate through art, music, philosophy, creative projects, and festivals to celebrate life.

Electronics can quickly malfunction if not properly shielded. As a result, bulkier, shielded electrical equipment has become the norm, and mobile devices are rarely used on Earth. However, these devices still connect groups of people to each other, provided solar weather allows it. With these means of communication, a global government is maintained. This government warns of bad solar weather and works on research for solutions to the problem. For now, the only solution they have found is the formation of Sterhaven, an organization that will create havens of people on planets in other parts of space. Apart from these initiatives, there is no significant technological progress.

03 - Journey and Colony

Destination

In the almost infinite universe, the colonists travel to a planet with somewhat comparable conditions to Earth. Experts from the Sterhaven program on Earth have inputted a single destination into the onboard computer. This planet shows many signs of plant and animal life but no signs of an intelligent civilization, at least as far as could be observed from Earth.

Onboard

It is not possible to spend the entire journey in cryosleep. Longer periods of sleep have serious health consequences for the crew member, and the Melolonthe itself also requires maintenance. During the journey, all crew members have been awake for multiple periods of weeks to months. These times outside of cryosleep are necessary for medical checks, physical exercise, and ship maintenance. There was always a brief overlap between crews, as those going to sleep were assisted by a crew that had been awakened a week earlier.

Interpersonal Relationships

Players may have already met each other on the ship, but this is not mandatory. It is possible that new characters are already known among existing characters because they know each other from the ship. Characters may also be familiar with members of the alpha group, but these characters will not be present in the game.

Arrival and Landing

In the year 2571, after a long journey with no contact with Earth, the colony ship Melolonthe arrives at P-328, a planet orbiting the star HIP-56948, which appears perfectly suitable for humans.

Upon arrival at P-328, the Melolonthe deploys a landing capsule with the colonists onto the planet. The rest of the ship enters a long orbit around the planet, where it becomes unreachable until a space exploration program can be initiated on P-328.

The mission planners recognized that a capable spaceship would be useful in the distant future, but the Melolonthe contains no treasures or supplies and is currently inaccessible.

Alpha Group

All players are part of the Beta Group. When the game starts, the members of the Alpha Group are missing, and the players are automatically awakened on the planet, unaware of what is happening.

The landing capsule contains all the supplies for an initial colony, and two groups of colonists. The Alpha Group, which awakens first, consists of leaders, managers, coordinators, and planners. They use parts of the capsule to build the first barracks, workshops, infirmary, dining hall, etc., and make plans for the colony. Based on their plans, selected members of the much larger Beta Group are awakened to further expand the colony.

Technological Level

Upon the discovery of the impending geomagnetic inversion, the majority of research and development focused on surviving this catastrophe. As a result, some technological areas advanced significantly faster than others. Space travel, cryogenetics, and genetic modification of crops are highly developed, while areas like medical technology, robotics, entertainment, military technology, etc., have relatively lagged behind.

The technology on P-328 is a combination of rugged, durable, and indestructible classic equipment, as well as highly advanced high-tech systems. The colony possesses simple field radios, but also an advanced 3D printer capable of assembling tools at the molecular level.

Life in the Colony

The colonists work together diligently to build the colony and explore the surroundings to organize and survive life on this new home planet. There is no alternative, so the colonists are solely reliant on each other in this wild and unfamiliar place.

04 - Extraterrestrial Beings

From Earth, and en route to P-328, it has become clear that there is a vast amount of extraterrestrial plant life, and it is highly likely that there will be many alien animals as well. There are no signs of a technologically advanced civilization on the planet or in orbit.

Aliens

Over time, players may encounter other groups, unknown civilizations, and Aliens within the setting. The discovery of the world and other civilizations on P-328 is central to this LARP.

Extraterrestrial beings may resemble Earth humans in appearance or differ from them, but their appearance will have a valid in-character reason. Due to Aliens growing up in different conditions than on Earth, they have a different cultural background and may also have different goals, ways, and behaviors than Earth humans.

Certainly, this chapter will be further expanded.

As a player, it is not possible to play an alien character.

05 - Factions

When contact with Earth is lost, and the crew aboard the ship begins to awaken, the crew members align themselves into different factions, if that was not the case already on Earth. This leads to the formation of several Factions that continue to exist after awakening on P-328.

Factions and Skills

All characters start as colonists on planet P-328 and are members of a faction. These factions have different, sometimes quirky opinions. To visually distinguish the factions from each other and to differentiate between your out-of-character life (non-LARP) and your in-character character (LARP), they wear different costumes. Players can choose how creative they want to be with their costumes.

The various factions encompass a wide cross-section of the population and cover a variety of diverse professions and social statuses. You can play any profession in any faction, but not always in the same way.

Friction and Disagreement

Although the factions share a common goal of making the colony a success, they differ in their methods and desires. This sometimes causes friction among the colonists. Additionally, not all members within a faction agree with each other. Most colonists have their own ideas about the direction their faction should take, which occasionally creates friction with other members within the same faction.

Style Guide

For inspiration, a style guide has been created. This is meant to inspire only, not as a minimum requirement: <https://pin.it/6atN1yB>

Belief

How seriously a character takes their faction is entirely up to the player to choose. Some Koku-no-shisha may name their firstborn children after the prophet they follow daily on TV, while others may attend a lecture once a year and believe that there is something in the Void. Some Originalists may do everything by the book, while others see more value in improvisation.

The new colony offers a place for everyone, regardless of how deeply they are involved in their faction.

05.1 - Originalists

*"Dedicated to the first person who ever ventured onto the water in a hollowed-out log."
(Excerpt from the Founder's Manual, Introduction)*

History on Earth

Humanity has always had a drive to explore new territories, to claim them as their own, and to dream big and push their boundaries. These kinds of dreams, to push physical and mental limits, now form one of the pillars of the ideology of the Originalists. The same spirit of people searching for new islands on the quiet ocean, crossing the ocean to colonize new continents, and always looking beyond the horizon to fill in new parts of the map, prevails among the Originalists.

Another significant reason for the emergence of the Originalists is a group of drunk students. There were five of them sitting in the cafeteria on a Friday afternoon, talking about old sci-fi movies. This quickly led to discussions about how to set up a colony on another planet.

And, as it had to happen, Eric said to Aki, *'If you manage to make your internship about this, I'll give you a bottle of whiskey!'*
And she got it.

From a drunken bet and an internship, the Ad Infinitum Institute emerges. The institute engages with questions about colonizing new worlds: from designing spaceships, determining the optimal number of people to take, and which facilities are needed in what order, to understanding what political, cultural, or artistic structures work best in sequence. With the geomagnetic inversion, all of this gains momentum, and there is enough budget available to carry out those plans.

Culture of the Originalists

All factions within the Originalists share a true pioneering spirit and follow the Founders Manual. What binds the faction is a strong culture of debate and a tendency to celebrate not only great achievements but also ambitious plans and aspirations together.

Originalists enjoy things being done according to a set of rules. The Founders Manual states that there's flexibility to adjust the rules occasionally to make them applicable to as many cases and exceptions as possible. This means that faction members enjoy debating which of these principles should apply, often and intensely. Drafting and developing new rules, systems, and practices is also characteristic of the Originalists.

Additionally, among Originalists, it's a common hobby to tell and write (sci-fi) stories. The idea is to imagine as many worlds as possible and then try to make the best of them a reality. Because that's how it works best... right?

The Handbook for Colonization - the 'Founder's Manual'

The Originalists make use of the 'Founders Manual.' The 'Founders Manual' is the comprehensive guide for colonizing new planets. Everyone on Earth knows this book, even if not in detail, then at least by name. It is a work filled with general principles, plans, and stories, based on the best data available at the time of departure. It also includes a substantial collection of Earth fables, parables, and moral philosophy, serving as cultural baggage for humanity's new home. This part is also referred to as the 'make a human kit.'

'If you ask me, Earth's fables were always a good moral compass. That's much better than supposed messages from the Void. We brought along a lot of fables. We also don't know if those... Void beings?... Aliens?... Or whatever is out there... would even be friendly. And everyone knows it: the Void is empty. And let's say we do end up seeing Aliens, then page 10528 of the Founders Manual already details how we should handle that.' (Yosyp-Valeri Pasternak, distant relative of Eric, speaking about three corners)

The Originalists believe they have the clearest plan for how the colony should be built. The Manual outlines the sequence in which facilities should be established, when and how many people can be awoken from cryosleep, all the way to how the constitution should look and when it needs to be amended.

Founder's Manual

The 'Founders Manual' is only partially available in the game for IC reasons (In-Character reasons). There will be options to recover this book over time and obtain useful information from it. Many colonists will remember parts of the Manual, but it's difficult to prove that this is the truth.

"The most important step is the exploration and surveying of the new planet," as mentioned on page 289, and I also find that useful. The scientists need to ensure that we have more knowledge about the planet: page 4901 states that we'll need measuring stations to examine temperature, air, soil, and the chemical compositions of the atmosphere. In any case, it seems wise for the farmers to start growing food. And we should check if there are dangerous animals nearby or simply edible ones, in case our reserves run out. We better get to work now!"
(Vilhjálmur Kristjani, a concerned Originalist on P-328)

Factions within the Faction

Among the Originalists, two distinct currents emerge shortly after departure. One faction looked at Earth and believed that everything would be much better if there were a coherent plan for the entire society from the outset. As a logical consequence, they want to build the colony strategically from the ground up - and ideally make it better than Earth ever was.

The other faction believes that Earth had the optimal conditions for humanity, and the structures and systems of Earth's society have evolved optimally for humans. Therefore, they reason, P-328 should resemble Earth as much as possible. According to their recollection, Earth was an almost perfect planet with everything humanity needed, and a perfect example to emulate.

"I get that you say soft-serve ice cream on Earth was good! But I disagree. Most of the time, it was contaminated with salmonella or other rubbish. You can't call that 'good'! I propose that we conduct more thorough research on how to make soft-serve ice cream taste better and more hygienic. P-328 is an opportunity for us to build a home of our own, the way we want it. Who knows, there might be a plant here that can optimize the taste of soft-serve ice cream? Maybe we can create a tasty soft-serve ice cream by next Landing Day." (Fiore Giusi Sithembile, former mayor of a small, insignificant Earth city)

Naturally, there are also colonists who once held strong convictions about colonizing unknown planets, but after a long journey on the Melolonthe, they now identify more with the ideas of other factions. Conversely, there will also be colonists who want to return to the core of the mission. They want to strictly follow the Founder's Manual because it's a good plan.

Opinions about Other Factions

- The Originalists find the Koku no Shisha a bit strange but believe that everyone can do what they want as long as they don't delve too deeply into the Kokus' ideology.
- They also get along well with the Seekers. However, the exploration of extraterrestrial beings has much lower priority for the Originalists compared to building and growing the colony.
- The Koempels are the best friends of the Originalists because they work hard and help with building the colony. This is something the Originalists aim for themselves, preferably in an organized and speedy manner.

Originalists' Attire

The faction members have collectively decided to wear somewhat uniform clothing: a standard jumpsuit they wore during preparation and training on Earth. Each individual can choose the color they wear, but they are solid fabrics without patterns. Regardless of their profession, an Originalist dresses in a standard jumpsuit, of

course with all imaginable accessories. They wear various patches and symbols from their relevant space agencies (NASA, ESA, CNSA, etc.).

Additionally, they wear a formal name tag because the name and function of each member must be visible.

Playing an Originalist

Characters with a cynical outlook on the world or characters who struggle with teamwork might not fit well within this faction. Also, characters who are forcibly present on P-328, such as those selected due to necessary colonization skills or other reasons, probably don't belong to the Originalists.

In their faction culture, Originalists will focus heavily on the original mission and the colony as a whole. Their goal is to make P-328 a new home world for humanity. Originalists see their position as "the standard," as their brilliant ideas were the foundation on which the entire mission was built. The success of the original mission is the core of their faction culture.

The Originalists ponder what can be done for future generations of humanity with the construction and society in the colony. They have also brought along a lot of cultural baggage (e.g., fables), which they like to share and enjoy with others. They sometimes find it challenging to choose between the structured approach of the Founder's Manual and their own individual creativity but would likely find a way to interpret the Founder's Manual correctly if in doubt.

05.2 - Koku no Shisha

*"People judge things by their own experience, not knowing of the Void."
(Chizou Jouret.)*

History on Earth

Founded by Chizou Jouret, this group believes that they receive special messages from hypothetical beings they encounter by meditating in the Void, an idea that scientists deem to have no evidence or basis.

By meditating in the Void, some members of this faction claim to receive messages from beings within the Void. Around this concept, a group of people formed on Earth who transmit these messages to others or interpret messages from others on their behalf. Those who believe in and participate in this practice form their own clique and call themselves the 'Koku no Shisha,' which translates to 'Messengers of the Void.'

According to the Koku no Shisha, these beings always speak cryptically and mysteriously. This is because they have little in common with us and must make an effort to be understood. Naturally, these beings only have the best intentions for us, and it's the task of Koku no Shisha members to receive and interpret these messages. Everyone is encouraged to meditate in the Void and get acquainted with the messengers from the Void. It's wise, however, to seek advice on what you see or what you've been told.

Culture of the Koku no Shisha

Given the complexity of the matter and their desire not to spread incorrect wisdom, there is a multi-tiered system for interpreting the messages.

Chizou Jouret himself occupies the highest tier. Traditionally, the tier below him is left empty, waiting for the 'Shin no Kenja' or the 'Sage of the Void.' This is a group of beings from the Void predicted by Chizou to be the only ones capable of sufficiently supporting him. At this point, Chizou Jouret, the original Tier 0, is likely deceased. Who currently holds that position is unknown to the generation ship travelers.

*"Want to reach a higher Tier? Let me explain how it works:
You can move up a level if at least 5 members of your current level and at least 1 member from a level above you agree. On the other hand, 3 members from a level above your current level, or 1 member from more than 1 level above your current level, can block this. Simple, right?
In any case, I'm going to do my best to move up."
(Maighread Chaliun, Interpreteur)"*

The lowest level of the Koku no Shisha is also known as the Void Lifers. This group receives their information from the higher tiers, their Interpreters. Each tier serves as the Interpreter for the tier below.

The majority of the Koku no Shisha are content with the interpretations of their own meditations provided by the Interpreters. Additionally, they are highly interested in the cosmic truths known by the predominantly high-tier Interpreters.

"I meditate often, at least once every month. Since I'm not so good at understanding all that the beings say - it's quite cryptic, actually - I ask an Interpreter. Usually, what they say makes sense, so I'm happy. It does cost a bit, but it's important to me to hear these messages for myself. Hopefully, I can attend a performance by Chizou himself someday; he always manages to extract the best from every message he receives. Unfortunately, I'm not that advanced yet, but I'm working hard to follow my training." (Seósaidh Fhaolain-Chan, Void Lifer, started three months ago)

The Koku no Shisha, especially those of lower tiers, paid a reasonable amount on Earth to meditate in the Void occasionally (often a few times a year). Additionally, on Earth, they paid a small fee for interpretations from higher members. Furthermore, the Koku no Shisha on Earth occasionally received cosmic truths from the highest-tier Interpreters via TV and radio. Members of each tier could also attend a performance by Chizou Jouret himself or another high-tier Interpreter. On P-328, Earth currency is no longer relevant, but the Koku no Shisha do expect something in return, such as knowledge or items through barter.

The Void and Portals

"Then I noticed that our laser configuration created a kind of portal. It looked like a black void, surrounded by the light of the lasers. Of course, that was a, uh... Eureka moment for our team! We wanted to know everything about it right away! But as a scientist, you have to set up proper experiments to systematically test your hypotheses. Science isn't a trial-and-error matter. You can't intuitively do random things. You have to establish valid and reliable measurements. ...Hm, ...unless you have a free evening."

(Prof. Dr. Dr. Fabioli Silverstein, around 2047, Earth)

Around the year 2050, humanity discovered how to open a portal to the Void, a strange dimension that appears completely empty. Through measurements and experiments, it is soon learned that on the other side, there is actually nothing: a space, entirely black, without gravity, without matter. A human can enter this space with external life support and experience this emptiness. Thus, the name for what lies on the other side of this portal is coined: the Void - the emptiness.

Knowledge about the Void

After years of experimentation, scientists became disinterested in the Void. They learned much about it, but the practical application of the Void remains elusive to both scientists and engineers. Everything that can be accomplished through the Void can be done faster, cheaper, or more practically using other methods. As a result, the Void quickly becomes a curiosity without clear utility. A significant number of entrepreneurs have already gone bankrupt in their pursuit of a meaningful application for Void portals. The general consensus on Earth is that the Void is an extremely expensive version of a basic Swiss army knife: nearly useful for everything, but not truly beneficial. This sentiment is certainly not shared by the Koku no Shisha.

Interaction with Other Factions

In principle, the Koku no Shisha are accepting of everyone, provided they show an interest in their ideology. They can get along with all factions, as long as those individuals don't have issues with the Koku.

- The Koku no Shisha believe that the Originalists think too much about establishing the colony and not enough about seeking contact with the Messengers in the Void to guide the colony in the right direction.
- They can get along well with the Seekers, as they have an interest in making contact with "Aliens," and technically, the beings from the Void are a kind of "Alien" too.
- They don't have a strong opinion about the Koempels. However, Koempels are interesting to the Koku no Shisha if they have an interest in cosmic wisdom.

The Void

As a player, you can experiment with the Void and portals in-character if you wish, but note that the game primarily involves the Void and not the portal. There won't be a portal present in the starting colony.

Koku no Shisha Attire

The Koku no Shisha enjoy distinguishing themselves through their clothing from those who don't use the wisdom of the Void. They wear black attire with individual stripes and decorations in bright neon colors that contrast against the black background. Some opt for a Tron-like look, while others choose their own pattern. The black background with clearly contrasting neon colors can be found in all Koku no Shisha Void Lifers and Interpreters. Some may also wear stylish helmets.

Playing as a Koku no Shisha

Characters will spend a significant portion of their time assisting with colony work. However, when it comes to the bigger questions of life (What should we build first?

Who should lead?), consulting the Void would be the preferred approach. You will also be more inclined to listen to Interpreters of a higher tier than yours, provided they can reasonably claim to have received knowledge from the Void on the topic. In their faction culture, they will strive to live by the messages from the Void while also working on the colony. After all, you need a place to live and were sent here for a reason. Chizou also received messages from the Void before departure, stating that this generation of ships would be crucial for humanity and that further messages would follow for each ship. Receiving, interpreting, and acting upon these messages is the foundation of this faction's culture."

05.3 - Seekers

History on Earth

The idea that humanity is not alone in the universe is as old as humanity itself. However, the origin of the Seekers is a matter heavily debated within the group. Most Seekers trace their existence back to the "discovery" of "canals" on Mars in the second half of the 19th century, while others go as far back as the time of Epicurus. More radical Seekers claim that their ideology has existed since prehistory, and some believe that extraterrestrial civilizations have had close but secretive contact for as long as humanity has existed. Regardless of when these ideas originated, modern Seekers form a much more cohesive group than any previous believers in extraterrestrial civilizations.

Before the catastrophe struck Earth, Seekers were a widely dispersed group. Some actively focused on the search for extraterrestrial life using radio telescopes and space probes, while others delved into researching humanity's past. Still, others engaged in theoretical subjects such as Xenobiology. A smaller faction attempted direct contact through meditation, alleged psychic abilities, or other creative methods. Post- and transhumanists also find philosophical affinity in the ideas of the Seekers.

Seeker Culture

Since the geomagnetic inversion and the unfolding catastrophe, along with the rapid development of space travel technology, Seekers have come together more as a faction. This is partly due to renewed global interest in everything beyond Earth and partly due to their hope for Earth's salvation. However, most people would point to the publication of the Three Axioms as a significant factor. The Three Axioms have no clear author or originator and lack a fixed wording. Nevertheless, they form a shared philosophical foundation for the Seekers.

"Of course, I know them by heart: they prove that extraterrestrial beings exist, that we'll find them on another planet, that they are benevolent towards us, and that they are more advanced than we are." (Folke Viveca Kron, spent a lot of time on online forums on Earth).

The Three Axioms

First Axiom: 'When an Extraterrestrial Civilization is encountered, shared interests in the meeting location exist.'

Considering the vastness of the universe and the immense distances between stars, any encounter with an extraterrestrial civilization will indicate a shared interest: the discovery of that planet. The extraterrestrial civilization will have the same interests as us (similar atmosphere, gravity, warmth, etc.), simply because the likelihood of randomly encountering an extraterrestrial civilization is astronomically low.

Second Axiom: 'An encounter beyond a fully inhabited world is a sign of more advanced technology than humanity possesses.'

According to the Seekers, humanity has reached other planets with the absolute minimum level of technological development. Since P-328 shows no signs of a planet-wide civilization, extraterrestrial beings would not reside there. Therefore, any encounter with extraterrestrial beings indicates that they have traveled to P-328. This journey, without humanity's large generation ships, requires technology that is far more powerful and advanced than what humans can create. This technology will also enable a civilization to fulfill all their desires completely.

Third Axiom: 'Advanced technology requires an advanced culture.'

Time and time again, humans have demonstrated that better technology leads to larger wars, more casualties, and greater danger to the planet. A civilization capable of traveling between planets is capable of self-destruction. The higher the level of technology, the more potential for destruction. With the extraterrestrial beings that humanity encounters, this has not occurred, which is a sign that this civilization is culturally superior to humanity.

Factions within the faction

The primary goal is for humans to learn everything about and from the Aliens, to emulate them as much as possible in their actions and preferences. In misunderstandings, the problem lies with humans, never with the Aliens, as they are far more advanced than Earth's inhabitants. An extremely advanced culture like the one the Aliens possess is not always straightforward for humans to comprehend, leading to mistakes.

"Back on Earth, I lived on the thirteenth floor, and one night, I saw something silver outside my window. Before I knew it, I was flying out the window myself, and there they were: they had large eyes and long fingers, their skin was silver. On P-328, I've also had a few instances from the colony where I felt like they were calling me? ... By the way, do you think this silver cloth is suitable for a meeting with them?"
(Sepi Martikainen, ex-fashion designer)

There are roughly two currents within how Seekers want to emulate Aliens.

The first current identifies itself as Cultural Seekers. They will dress entirely in silver suits or even undergo body modifications to resemble their idea of an alien as much as possible. Others might focus more philosophically on what they believe extraterrestrial civilizations will value, limiting their identification to a simple silver-colored sash.

Yet another group wants to explore as much as possible of the advanced technology, biology, and culture that the extraterrestrial visitors are sure to possess and generously share.

"If you make contact with an extraterrestrial civilization, whether it's through a signal or suddenly find yourself facing a superior being, you should immediately inform the other colonists. And you should make the necessary preparations for a warm welcome with that being. And I don't mean you should grab your gun, Yuki! I mean more that we also emotionally prepare ourselves for their eminent cultural diversity, communication, and respect for their behaviors and possibly their territory."
(Minu Jokela, First-year Astrophysics student)

The second faction of Seekers consists of transhumanists. They believe that biological evolution is not the right path for the advancement of humanity. They are convinced that extraterrestrial civilizations will focus on robotics and cybernetics. The limits of the human body are surpassed by replacing it. This subgroup is often seen as misguided by the rest of the Seekers because they are too desperate to anticipate the solutions of a superior society. If the Seekers already had the answer, why would they need to search?

"If we ever have an idea of how we can better structure our own colony, then it's a meaningful step for the extraterrestrial beings to be as involved as we are in all our affairs, advising our leaders and committees on better technologies."
(Daniela David, friends with Sepi, sewer system builder)

The Seekers are a broad group, without a designated leader or rank structure, yet they have found each other aboard the Melolonthe. The drive for a common identity leads this group to identify themselves through shiny metallic fabrics and accessories, to varying degrees.

Playing as a Seeker

It's no secret that the setting of Sterhaven will include Aliens. This is fantastic for the Seekers in-character (IC), but out-of-character (OC), it could mean that there's no need for further searching. However, attentive readers will have noticed that the Three Axioms are far from watertight. There's plenty of room to argue that 'these aliens are not the ones we're looking for' or to come up with another excuse. Naturally, these moments can also be used for character growth, joy in success, or even disillusionment.

Playing as a Seeker is not solely about Searching. Like with the other factions, there's ample space to play any role or niche, engage in interpersonal interactions, or break things. Seekers are well-suited for characters who want to work with unknown technology, engage in cultural interactions with extraterrestrial beings, or unravel mysteries. Additionally, there are some gameplay aspects related to the history of P-328 that the Seekers will find highly intriguing.

05.4 - Koempels

"To start your new colony, you need helping hands that can turn your conceptual plans into reality. The government sends an ample number of Koempels on each generational ship, so that our colonization manual can be followed. The Koempels can assist you with various tasks in your new colony - from providing meals and raising your children, to building schools or golf courses, or whatever you might need in your colony. They are always willing to help. And they come completely free! After all, we're not sending you into space without resources; no, you are the future for all of humanity! So, give it your best shot, darn it, it's our only chance to survive."
(Gen. Tekuang Filemonsén, in the speech: "How to Build a Colony", Earth, 2072)

History on Earth

Since time immemorial, there have been individuals and groups on Earth exhibiting illegal or undesirable behavior, posing a threat to society. As space became more available on colonization ships around 2085, the United Nations came up with the idea of having criminals support the colonists in building new colonies.

However, this quickly proved to have disadvantages; a large population of criminals was not suitable for the survival of the colony. As early as the 19th century, psychologists worked on a method to help people lead purposeful lives. The United Nations subsidized the development of an implant to achieve this. After several years of successful tests on animals, it became a best-practice standard to give criminals such an implant.

By 2085, the population on Earth needed all their energy to cope with radiation sickness, short life expectancy, and related problems. It seemed wasteful to invest so much time, money, and labor in prisons when it could be allocated to building colony ships. The implant was placed in the neck and was not visible to the naked eye. The procedure for implantation was painless, and in 93% of cases, patients survived the procedure without complications.

For the United Nations, this was a pivotal moment, a true win-win situation. On one hand, there would be sufficient workforce available in the colonies through this approach. On the other hand, the criminals would have a new chance at reintegration into society.

"The enthusiasm of the Koempel - often praised and often sung about. Only those who have swung the pickaxe themselves can understand, those who have stamped in the deep bosom of the Earth, hammered themselves, and worked themselves, and who lose strength and youth over the course of long years. But a Koempel always warmly greets back: I gladly do so! And I also wish you good luck!"
(From: "Songs of the Koempels, Part I", approx. 2086, Earth)

While human rights organizations voiced themselves in the media and organized demonstrations, the general consensus was that it was a good idea; the end justifies all means. The debates that were initially heated quickly faded from the media. By the time the first generation ships left Earth, it had already become the standard procedure to equip criminals with an implant. The Melolonthe, too, receives an allocation of workers before departure to assist in building the new colony.

The Koempels largely didn't choose to be on P-328, but they're fine with it themselves, thanks to their implant. Koempels have a wealth of practical work experience that they can contribute to the colony's growth - this can be in any position/profession. While it's possible that an individual Koempel might have a brief moment of difficulty, that usually quickly turns into the deep and genuine enthusiasm of a loyal and dedicated worker. If you were to ask the Koempels about their life on P-328, they might answer, for instance:

"I'm perfectly fine with everything! Today, I got up early when it was still dark to take care of the food supply. Back on Earth, I wouldn't wake up before noon, but now I find getting up in the middle of the night really great. The water source was blocked, so I fixed that first. Well, we didn't have enough materials, so I also took a quick trip up and down to get some stones from the mine before I started working on the water source.

But it's nice, a morning walk like that. And lifting those stones trains your muscle mass, which helps you work better. Oh, I just heard they need someone to cook. Sorry, but I'll talk to you later! I'd be happy to help you with your cables tonight, I won't forget, see you then!"

(An anonymous Koempel, P-328)

Koempel Culture

Koempels are usually cheerful, proud, and optimistic. They help with pleasure but won't undertake tasks that would mean suicide. If it's clear that a task would likely cost them their lives, they'll politely find an excuse or leave the situation. While their implant prevents them from exhibiting aggressive behavior, a Koempel can still perform the role of a soldier out of a sense of duty.

The Koempels are a very close-knit family. They know that all Koempels have undergone a significant change in life, and shared adversity brings them closer together. Thus, they'll always support another Koempel, as long as it's not contradictory to the goal of collectively building the colony.

All Koempels leave Earth with significant debts to repay their implants. However, they believe that their descendants will eventually return to Earth. Therefore, they collect objects that appear valuable, whether financially or culturally. They also delight in receiving gifts that appear valuable, such as something made from a unique material.

The Coffee Break of the Koempels

The most valuable possession of a Koempel is their tea set, usually in a 1950s style. This item is crucial to them because they left their families on Earth and were only allowed to bring along a tea cup, no other belongings. The tea cup holds emotional value, so if it breaks or goes missing, it's still painful for a Koempel.

Additionally, the tea set holds a practical meaning: relaxation! Before heading to work, Koempels always have exactly one cup of coffee from their favorite tea cup (yes, it's a tea cup, not a coffee cup). During this time, no one from another faction is allowed to approach the Koempels. They usually gather as a group of Koempels somewhere. There is at least one official Coffee Break (capital C) for the Koempels, but that doesn't rule out the possibility of more breaks. You can even have in-character coffee during those breaks (lowercase c). However, Coffee Drinking (capital C and D) is reserved for the Coffee Break (you know the principle now: using capital letters, of course). All Koempels observe this ritual at the start of each day (Saturday and Sunday, right after time-in). They take great pride in it. Players can decide themselves how to precisely shape the Coffee Break in-character. Koempels always bring their 1950s tea cup for the Coffee Break.

Koempel

From an out-of-character (OC) perspective, 'Koempel' roughly translates to something like 'friend,' 'companion,' or 'colleague.' Historically, OC-wise, the Koempels were miners. They worked hard to extract tons of coal from the ground - manually. The real Koempels also had a strong work culture. Many songs exist about their pride, even though working underground without daylight was grueling. With the end of work in the mines, the culture vanished, but the word remained. In Sterhaven, we've translated this partially into a sci-fi setting.

Interaction with Other Factions

- Koempels seem to get along very well with all other factions.

Koempel Attire

Koempels wear practical clothing in the form of a work jacket (solid color) and sometimes a construction or miner's helmet; work attire. Unique to this faction is that they always have (a part of) a '1950s' tea set with them. This is very important to them, serving as a reminder of home and for their Coffee Break.

Playing as a Koempel

If you choose this faction, you're likely to have interactions with everyone who wants your character to do something for them. However, Koempels are not slaves

or servants. Your well-being is always the priority, both OC-wise and in-character (IC). IC-wise, you always have the choice to do what you want, as long as you believe it's in the best interest of the colony.

When playing as a Koempel, your starting character likely has lower status, as everyone knows Koempels are ex-criminals with implants. This isn't official: everyone is considered equal on paper. However, the violent criminal with a passion for breaking rocks initially won't have a good chance of winning an election. Other players will also trust you, as you've already collaborated well on board the Melolonthe.

Conflicts are quite intentional, both within the Koempels and outside. These can certainly be (potential) elements of gameplay if you desire.

There are tasks that IC-wise make Koempels happy (you choose these) and others that make them unhappy (like severe criminal activities). For gameplay purposes, this means you don't have to perform all the tasks other players IC-wise ask of you. You can also choose to perform tasks during downtime, off-screen IC, as in: 'I'll definitely do this for you! I'll get up early. It'll be ready by 10 o'clock tomorrow.'

In character creation, you don't necessarily have to envision a low-wage worker Koempel, though that's possible. You're free to invent what your character did wrong according to Earth's law and how you want to deal with it IC-wise. A Koempel may recall their past, and introspection about their former life is part of the game, if desired.

Note that the Koempel Coffee Break doesn't actually represent the only break a character gets. It's true that the Coffee Break (with capital letters) is an important cultural aspect for every Koempel."