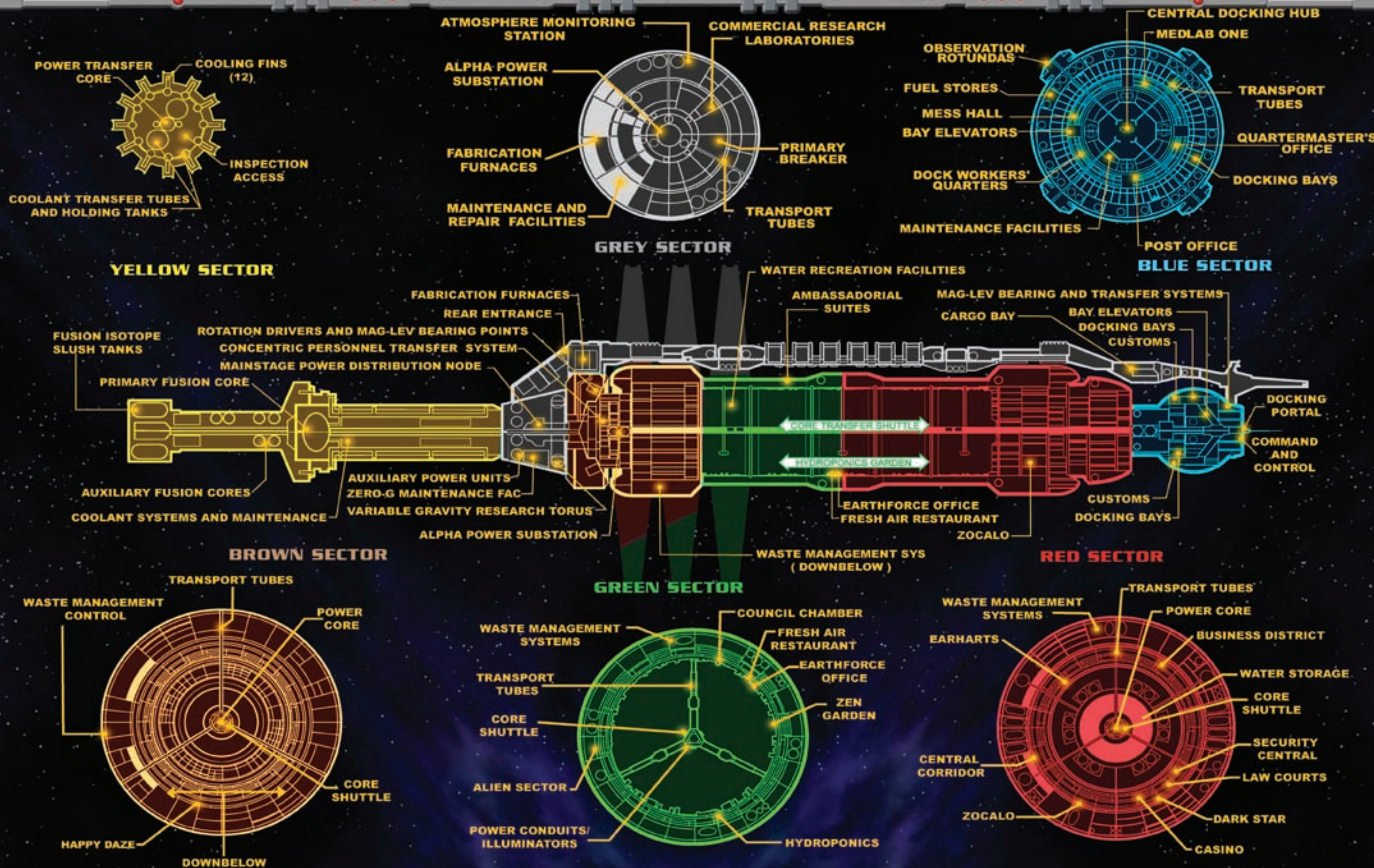




All Alone in the Night

The Babylon 5 diplomatic station is a city in space, located within neutral territory in orbit around Epsilon 3, a desolate and uninhabited planet. Designed as a political meeting place for all races of the galaxy, its goal is to prevent war through negotiation, compromise and the active promotion of peace. However, it is also a vibrant and rich marketplace, attracting traders and merchants from hundreds of worlds to meet and do business. Babylon 5's success has ensured its place in the galaxy, as a centre for alien races to meet, engage in politics and further understanding between them.

As implied by its name, Babylon 5 is the fifth space station spawned by the Babylon Project, all of which were constructed after the Earth/Minbari War in order to avoid such conflicts taking place in the future. Babylon 1, 2 and 3 (the first was actually called the Babylon Station) were destroyed during construction, either through structural failure or sabotage by terrorists opposed to humans forming closer relationships with alien governments. Babylon 4 simply disappeared without trace twenty-four hours after it went on line and its fate remains one of the galaxy's greatest mysteries. EarthGov initially resisted efforts by certain senators to fund a fifth station after the

disappearance of Babylon 4 as the entire project seemed ill-fated, with many humans beginning to believe in the 'Babylon Curse'. However, the goals of the Babylon Project were still worthwhile and, many felt, more needed than ever. Diplomacy among the major races of the galaxy, including the Minbari, acquired additional funding so Earth would not have to bear all costs of construction alone and so Babylon 5 was finally approved and built in the same system its predecessor, though in orbit around another planet, Epsilon 3.

Few believed Babylon 5 would share any greater success than the previous stations but, against all odds, it went online in late 2257. Already, the station has experienced disasters and potentially explosive diplomatic situations, including a threatened attack by an entire Vorlon war fleet in retaliation for the attempted assassination of their first ambassador, Kosh. Led by Commander Sinclair and supported by the ambassadors of many governments, the station personnel on board Babylon 5 have proved to be dedicated to their task and, thus far, have cleanly dealt with every emergency situation they have faced. Back on Earth, many still doubt Babylon 5 will survive long, and will soon be claimed by either destruction or financial cutbacks made by a government already pouring billions of credits into other avenues of space exploration. As the station enters the year 2258, it is set to face many more trials in its mission of peace.



Babylon 5 Technical Specifications

- Length:** 7,962 metres
- Diameter:** 840 metres
- Solar Panel Span:** 2,070 metres
- Displacement:** 2.5 million metric tons
- Gravitation:** 0g – 1.41g
- Typical Gravitation:** 0.9g – 1.35g
- Cargo Capacity:** 20,000 metric tons per 24 hour period
- Dock Workers:** 1,500
- Station Personnel:** 6,500
- Transient Population:** 250,000

Arriving on Babylon 5

With an average of fifty to one hundred ships arriving every day through the jumpgate, all bringing visitors and cargo, Babylon 5 is a hub for diplomats and traders. On any given day, the station is a thriving and bustling environment, with visitors constantly streaming through customs, bargaining in the Zocalo or taking advantage of the multitude of facilities available on board Babylon 5.

Whether arriving by shuttle from a large space liner or warship, or travelling on board a smaller spacecraft, a visitor will enter Babylon 5 through the Docking Portal and proceed through the Central Docking Hub that links sixty pressured holding bays to space outside. From here, any cargo is unloaded by the army of dock workers living on the station while passengers disembark and make their way through customs, monitored by EarthForce security teams. Once identified and scanned for weapons or other illegal goods, the visitor is now free to travel through the station though certain areas, particularly in Blue and Green Sector, remain off-limits to unauthorised personnel. This still leaves many areas to explore, with hotels, bars, casinos and shops all supporting a thriving leisure industry on Babylon 5. Few visitors stay long, as space travel can be incredibly expensive, with most arriving and then departing with business complete within just a few days. There are few permanent residents on Babylon 5 aside from station personnel and lurkers in Downbelow who have no money to leave the station anyway.

The vast majority of personnel on the station are human, though aliens can also find work in civilian areas, often in business and diplomatic areas such as translation, information gathering and menial tasks. Though operated by EarthForce, most of the eight thousand personnel are actually civilian contractors, performing the myriad of tasks vital to keeping the station functional, including unloading cargo, sanitation, maintenance and food

preparation. More sensitive or vital duties, such as weapons technicians, command staff and security are all EarthForce, however.

The Command Staff

The most senior EarthForce officers on board Babylon 5 form the Command Staff, and have become well known personalities because of both their position and actions since the station went on line. In overall command is Commander Jeffrey Sinclair, a surprisingly junior rank for such an important position on board a diplomatic station. He is assisted on station operations by Lieutenant Commander Susan Ivanova, a bright and extremely capable first officer from the Russian Consortium. The immediate Command Staff is rounded off by Chief of Security Michael Garibaldi and Chief of Medical Staff Dr Stephen Franklin. Technically, their immediate aides are also considered part of the Command Staff, but together these four have final authority on Babylon 5 and have become well respected by those serving beneath them.

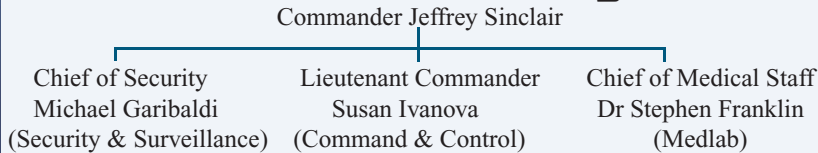
Dockers' Guild

By far the largest workers' union on board Babylon 5, over 1,500 dockers belong to the guild, headed by their foreman Neeoma Connoly (see p213). Bound by government contract and forbidden by law to strike, despite being civilians, relations between the Dockers' Guild and the Command Staff have always been strained as financial cutbacks from EarthGov have consistently cut into the dock working budgets. Life has become hard for the workers and though they are considered an essential component of Babylon 5, being responsible for the loading and unloading of all the cargo that passes through the station, they are understaffed and over-scheduled to the extreme. Miss Connoly has warned that an accident is bound to happen soon, citing the fatigue her workers are constantly experiencing and the poor quality of dockside equipment. Commander Sinclair is sympathetic to her wishes but is in no better position to alter the station's budget than she is.

Transport Association

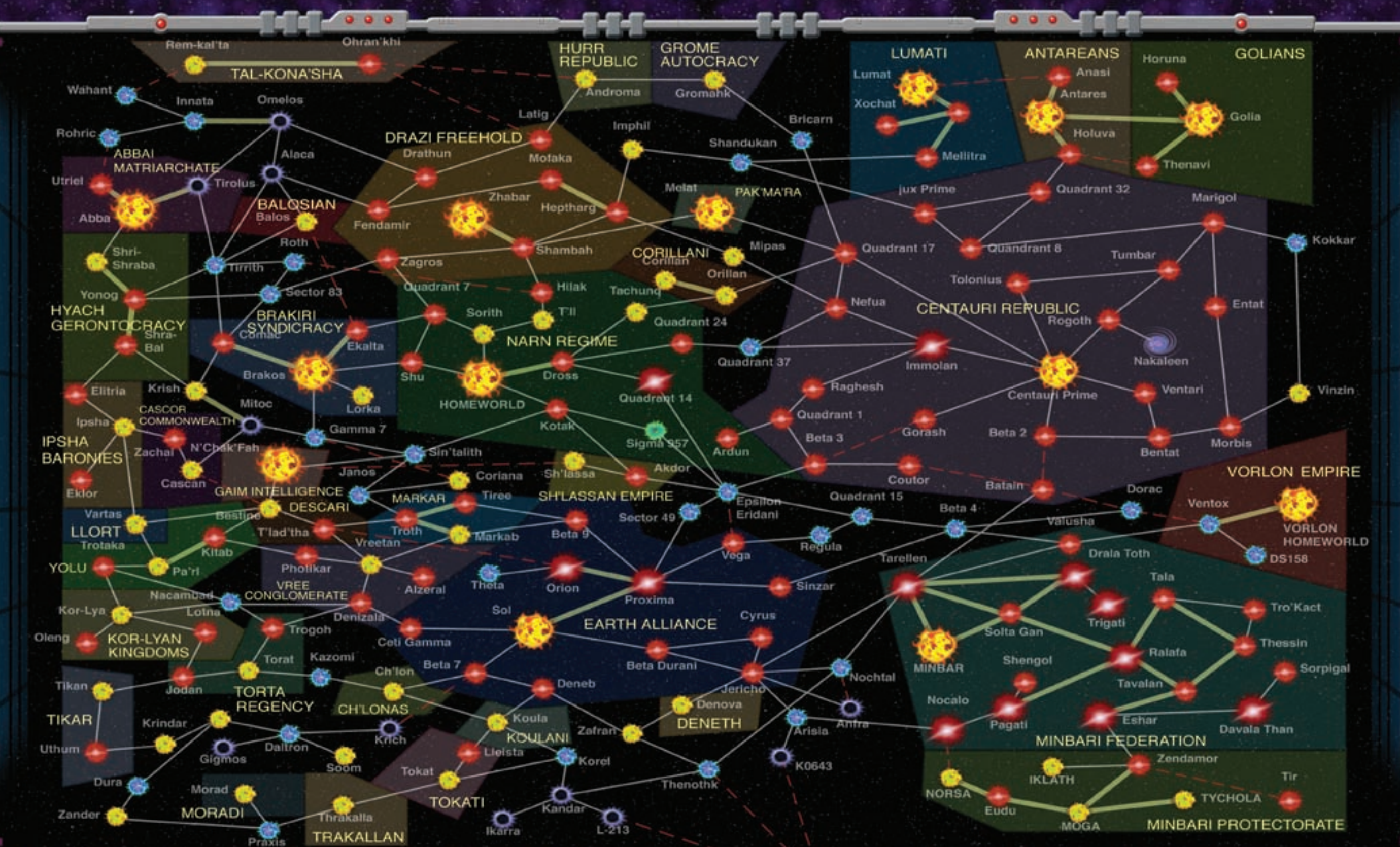
Steadily growing in membership, the Transport Association is a collection of freelance pilots and ship captains who have grouped together to form an ad hoc union in order to gain a better bargaining position against EarthForce directives. In reality, the Transport Association has little real power, as members have too many interests of their

Command Staff of Babylon 5



Alone in the Night

Alone in the Night



MAJOR SYSTEMS AND GOVERNMENTS OF 2257

MAP KEY		VREE	
Neutral Uninhabited	Major Colony	Major Race Homeworld	Minor Jump Route
Neutral Inhabited/Occupied	Minor Colony	Minor Race Homeworld	Restricted Jump Route
Dead World	Quarantined World	Major Jump Route	MINBAR System Name
			Place
			Territory Controlled By a Race

present on Io in December, whether in EarthForce or as private citizens, they would be advised to clean up any operations currently being conducted under the radar, so to speak, as Lianna will be ruthless in her pursuit of presidential security, leaving no stone unturned with respect to potential threats – unfortunately, she has a good nose for problems and will happily inform Io's security teams to deal with any wrong-doing she discovers.

- 5 The plot to assassinate President Santiago is a good one to get the players involved with if they are serving the Earth Alliance in any way, though it is recommended that they never know exactly what tasks they are performing in order to make the assassination a reality. They may be called to ferry various people and equipment from one part of the galaxy to another, or relay information. It should never be obvious that there is a link to any treasonous activities and, in fact, the Games Master can go to great lengths to hide a connection. However, at the end of 2258, there should be some event of piece of information that comes to the players (perhaps via an ISN broadcast) that hammers home the fact that they were, unwittingly, part of the overall plot. Fortunately, the official explanation of an overloaded fusion reactor in EarthForce One will mean that there will be few, if any, investigations. However, the players may find themselves targeted by EarthForce special agents eager to keep the plot secret, especially if they begin talking to the wrong people about their suspicions. . .
- 5 Lurkers being hired to perform various tasks by those wishing to avoid official scrutiny is nothing new, and Petrov is by no means the first to have fallen foul of seeing or hearing too much. Players living in

Downbelow may have many opportunities to earn a few extra credits unloading cargo from arriving ships or performing other errands – perhaps following an ambassador or other important individual, keeping track of security team patrols or flat out stealing treasured items. However, this may bring them into conflict with station security, the targets of their illegal activities, and even their employers, if the job turns sour or absolute secrecy is required. The Games Master can insert any number of scenarios into his campaign through this method, bringing players back on track to his main story arcs, or just providing some lighter and unrelated scenarios within a full blown campaign.

- 5 It should be noted that this is the time that N'Grath (see p179) flees Babylon 5. Though he was in no way involved with the plot to assassinate President Santiago, the alien was well aware that many in Babylon 5's security force would suspect him in the shooting of Garibaldi. Suspecting that security officers would fabricate evidence if none could be found linking him to the attack, N'Grath fled not only the station, but the entire Earth Alliance, hoping to reconstruct his business somewhere in the League of Non-Aligned Worlds. This has left something of a vacuum on board Babylon 5 among the criminal elements, one that will not be filled for at least another four years. During this time, players will have the opportunity to carve out their own niche among the underworld, though with so many factions moving in to fill this void (even coming from off-station to try their luck), confrontations among criminal gangs will steadily increase as time goes on, matching the political upheaval that is to come.



Campaigns on Babylon 5

The Babylon 5 roleplaying game has enormous scope for exciting scenarios, emotionally charged storylines and grand-sweeping campaigns. The events of 2258 to 2262 and beyond shaped an entire galaxy and players have a full living, breathing setting to explore. Whether fighting alongside the armies of light, consorting with dark powers or simply looking out for themselves, any player visiting Babylon 5 is in for the adventure of his life. The fate of entire races and worlds may be in their hands, and a great deal may depend on their actions.

In a way, there are two methods of playing the Babylon 5 roleplaying game. Players and Games Masters used to other roleplaying games may start by using the diplomatic station as a base or centre of operations from which to explore the rest of the galaxy, engaging on a series of scenarios in which their characters slowly develop to carve their own niche in the setting. However, games of Babylon 5 can be transformed if both players and Games Masters are willing to take the next step, creating a complete campaign whose conclusion may greatly affect entire planets. The

Games Master will weave multiple plot lines into his scenarios, providing his players with a wealth of adventure as he draws inexorably to the campaign's conclusion which should prove momentous. This takes a great deal more work than a series of unrelated or semi-connected scenarios, for both the Games Master and his players but, when it is complete, the campaign will prove to be memorable for all concerned.

Neither method of approaching the Babylon 5 roleplaying game is inherently right or wrong. So long as the Games Master and players all enjoy themselves, or otherwise derive satisfaction from the game, there can be no right or wrong way to play. In this chapter, we will look at both methods of play but focus upon the epic campaign as the ambitious Games Master will soon find he needs all the help and advice he can get if he has never attempted roleplaying in this fashion before. When he has finished running the campaign, both he and his players can be assured they have created something together that will live on in their imaginations for a long time.

The Television Show

It should be noted that it is not necessary for either the Games Master or his players to have seen all five seasons of Babylon 5, the Crusade spin-off series and films to gain



the maximum satisfaction from this game. In fact, there is a lot to be said in creating Babylon 5 campaigns for players who have never even seen a single episode – just imagine what they have in store for themselves as they take their characters through all five years of the television show, witnessing galaxy-shaking events as they unfold around them!

What may prove vital is that players should never use information within the game that their characters have no way of knowing. For example, a player who has seen the television series may get a little spooked when a certain Mr Morden approaches him and starts asking questions. Their character, however, may only see a very helpful human who can promise them a great deal while asking for so little in return. This is a basic tenant of roleplaying, where a player separates his own knowledge from that of his character. In effect, he assumes another personality and, around the gaming table, he *is* his character. This is something that every Games Master should make apparent before he begins any campaign of Babylon 5, though he need not be draconian in enforcing it. A simple reminder to players whenever they begin using such privileged information before their characters learn it will usually suffice and anyone familiar with roleplaying games in general will know what is expected of them to this degree.

Many readers may initially believe that the very best group for playing the Babylon 5 roleplaying game will be one that comprises a Games Master who knows the setting implicitly and players who are entirely ignorant of it. After all, the Games Master would effectively take the place of J. Michael Straczynski himself, revealing the unfolding events of the galaxy episode by episode as his players sit in awe at his imagination and story-telling ability. However, that is by no means the way it has to be.

A clever Games Master may even use a player’s knowledge of the television show to heighten any sense of tragedy he wishes to convey throughout his campaign. Tragedy is a basic component of Babylon 5 and its key element is that the character concerned knows exactly what terrible fate awaits him but will be unable to alter its course no mater what he tries, an nowhere is this more apparent than in the development of Londo Mollari. Throughout the first few seasons, both viewers and Mollari himself are made aware of the vision of his own death, and his eventual arise as Emperor. However, when his end finally comes, the element of tragedy comes into full effect – no matter what he tried, his final fate could not be avoided even though it was well known. This is the very essence of tragedy.

Using the example of Mr Morden again, players who have characters working for one of the governments of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds may very well know the events this man’s arrival heralds and what it may cost both them and their patron. The Games Master may have ensured that, without Morden’s help, the players will be destroyed that much sooner, perhaps by another government

aided by the Shadows. By accepting Morden, they avoid impending disaster but in doing so, seal their own fate further down the road. The characters may not realise this at the time but the players might – feeling trapped in this fashion is a superb way to appreciate Mollari’s position a whole lot better.

Most gaming groups are likely to comprise a mix of players. Some will know every episode inside out, some will be familiar with the basics behind each season, while others will have no knowledge of Babylon 5 at all. Ideally, the Games Master in such groups should be one who knows the television show best, as he will be less likely to be caught out by the actions of other players within the game. He will also have the advantage of being able to describe locations on board the station, the appearance of alien ships and even mimic the main personalities as second nature, a huge advantage when running a scenario.

Within this rulebook, we have tried to give both players and Games Masters everything they could possibly need to run scenarios based on the Babylon 5 diplomatic station within the year 2258. That said, the galaxy is a huge place and there is plenty of room for everyone’s ideas. Games Masters should take the information provided in Chapter 7 to heart and allow players to leave the confines of the station and explore other worlds. We will never detail every single world in the galaxy, so a Games Master can create new planets and systems (and even entire alien races native to them) safe in the knowledge that they will not be outmoded by a later supplement. By the same token, any Games Master even slightly familiar with the Babylon 5 timeline can construct an entire campaign that takes place before or after 2258. All the rules necessary to play out the Earth/Minbari War, or the events that led up to the construction of any of the previous Babylon stations are within this book – they will just take a little more work on the part of the Games Master to flesh out as he moves further from the main focus of the game. Those looking to expand their campaign beyond 2258 should consider obtaining the Babylon 5 roleplaying game sourcebooks that relate to each subsequent year. These sourcebooks will give full episode guides, along with suggestions for incorporating them into existing campaigns and rules for new characters, equipment, ships and more. For the reference of the Games Master, the sourcebooks and the years they pertain to are listed below.

Year	Sourcebook
2259	The Coming of Shadows
2260	Point of No Return
2261	No Surrender, No Retreat
2262	The Wheel of Fire

Other sourcebooks and supplements will allow Games Masters to greatly expand their campaigns to include other worlds and new races but it is important that they do not come to rely solely on this material. The Babylon

5 roleplaying game benefits from everyone’s ideas when scenarios are being created and a Games Master should look to his own imagination to fuel his campaign rather than the pages of rulebooks.

Finally, Games Masters may have certain episodes on video or DVD and wish to use them within scenarios. This can be a great way to create a certain mood before play begins, with perhaps the players gathering to watch the Deathwalker episode before beginning a scenario that starts in the aftermath of those events. Alternatively, it may work the other way around, with players having been instrumental in providing someone within the episode with a particular key item or piece of information that then allows that character to play out events on the television screen. In this way, the players can watch the episode after the scenario is complete and so enjoy the fruits of their labours. Throughout Chapter 8, many scenario ideas are presented that suggest ways in which Games Masters can integrate their players within specific episodes.

Epic Campaigns

As Games Master, you potentially have a lot of work ahead of you though it should prove to ultimately be one of the most satisfying roleplaying experiences you have yet attempted. The epic campaign in Babylon 5 involves a series of tightly inter-connected scenarios that portray one or more story arcs leading to a final momentous conclusion. A great many things can happen at once in such a campaign and between game sessions, players should be working out how best to proceed as they move along several plot lines to witness the final end of each, building to a grand finale that will end one story and, possibly, begin another with new characters.

At all times during the creation of a new campaign, you should keep in mind those elements that make the Babylon 5 television show what it is, and so impart your own scenarios with the same atmosphere, above and beyond including things like Starfuries, Minbari and Mars Colony as readily identifiable iconography. All epic campaigns for this roleplaying game should concentrate the players’ minds on the following concepts.

Consequences: There are no free rides in Babylon 5. Players should be aware of the consequences of their choices, even if they do not realise they are actually making those choices at the time. Further more, they must be held accountable to those consequences. For example, in any other science fiction game, a group of players may be willing to open fire on an alien ship in order to resolve a problem or get out of a tight fix. In Babylon 5, such an action is likely to have powerful consequences later on with perhaps the aliens breaking diplomatic contact from the players and the people they represent, which in turn could involve many lives being lost when an attack occurs and the players do not have any potential allies. On a more minor scale, players in official positions may play fast and

loose with rules and regulations, annoying powerful people in the process which could in turn lead to an investigation into their activities. The Eyes episode (see p234) is a good example of this.

Choices: Every main character within the television show is presented with a series of choices throughout the story arcs and, for better or worse, they follow their convictions to the end. Players should never be railroaded by the Games Master into performing certain actions and they should only rarely be utterly barred from making any decision, and then only by the greater powers of the galaxy. This is not to say that they will not pay for their actions, perhaps with their lives – see consequences above. However, a central theme in Babylon 5 revolves around the ability to make choices freely and this should carry through to even minor levels in a campaign. After all, even Jinxo was able to make the decision to stay on board Babylon 5 for a year in order to save every man, woman and alien present, at great risk to his own life. Players should also become aware that this applies to other characters in the game just as much as themselves and so may well find presumed allies working against a common goal because of choices *they* have made.

Tragedy: When one thinks of tragedy in Babylon 5, Mollari usually springs to mind though in truth, a great many characters experienced it – Sheridan knew when he was going to die, Garibaldi realised he may one day succumb to his alcoholism and we all knew that, at some point, Babylon 5 would be destroyed. The key element to this, as described earlier, is that players should know something bad is going to happen, how it will occur and maybe even when, and yet be utterly incapable of avoiding it without falling to ruin anyway. They can be given knowledge of the consequences of their actions through visions, dreams, incorporating elements of time travel into the story arc, or receiving wisdom from a greater power, such as the Vorlons.

Faith and Compassion: There is a sense in Babylon 5 that if you act with charity and good will towards others, and believe in the rightness of your own actions, things will work out. Faith and compassion are two sides of the same coin in Babylon 5. Belief is a very real force in the galaxy and can shape worlds as readily as diplomacy and military action. The true seeker prestige class (see p288) is a manifestation of what faith can achieve if a character believes in his cause passionately enough, though in a roundabout sort of way, so is the terrorist (p285). Events can occur simply because one person, be they a player or not, believes enough in what he is doing that he succeeds in his goals. By the same token, those who work hard to be compassionate towards others should be rewarded within the game. This does not mean such players should be showered with millions of credits but rather that in their darkest hour, friends and allies will readily stand shoulder to shoulder with them to fight a common enemy. If they are stranded in space, help will arrive, and if they are stabbed

and left for dead in Downbelow, someone will rescue them. Overall, players should eventually discover that if they act with compassion rather than deceit, things will go a lot easier for them – that is just the way life works on Babylon 5 and, perhaps, in the real world too. . .

Starting at the End

When a Games Master begins planning his epic campaign, who better to learn from than J. Michael Straczynski? Once you have the general concept of the campaign in your mind, begin by working out the possible conclusions of the main story arcs. Typically, you may have to work out at least two – what will happen if the players succeed in their goals and what will happen if they fail.

There are two important concepts to note here. First off, players should never be railroaded into the conclusion of any campaign. Just because you have planned a galaxy-shaking ending, it does not mean that your players will automatically pick up on all the clues you lay in scenarios, nor make decisions that seem obvious to you. Be ready to adapt your campaign to your players' choices and their desires.

This leads us nicely into the second point – failure in Babylon 5 is not something to shy away from. Veterans of other roleplaying games often get into the habit of helping their players along when plot lines are missed or when bad choices are made. Other characters may be brought in to give the players clues and even deities may descend from the heavens to resolve problems they have been unable to deal with satisfactorily. In doing so, the Games Master ensures the continuity of his campaign and future scenarios can proceed with the minimum of fuss. However, in Babylon 5, this need not be the case at all, and you need only look to the television show to see how many of the main characters not only fail in their objectives but greatly added to the power and emotion of the story arcs in doing so. What this means is that you should always have a number of contingency plans just in case the plans of the players go awry. It may be that the players will have a chance of regaining the threads of the main plot line if they have not already reached calamity and should be given every opportunity to do so. At the end of the day though, if the players screw up then they should take responsibility for the consequences that befall them and others. You can always create a side-campaign with the players adopting new characters attempting to create the mistakes of the previous group.

In starting at the end of your campaign when writing scenarios, you gain the benefit of hindsight when constructing story arcs. This will greatly ease the

construction of a new campaign from scratch as you can begin guiding your players to the grand conclusion right from the word go, whether they realise it or not. This is detailed further in the next section.

The end of any campaign should be shattering, poignant and memorable. It need not shake the entire galaxy but it should involve great stakes for the players and make them work hard for success. The finale should also greatly effect people and locations immediately around the players, whether it is finding the cure for a disease wiping out an alien race, achieving ultimate victory in an ongoing war or determining a use for incredible but dangerous technology discovered on a deserted world and pursued by several alien governments. Whatever else the players may have been doing throughout the campaign, all their efforts should have steadily built up to this objective, and any questions they may have had about the motives and actions of others should now be answered. Some Games Masters like to put a twist in at the end of their campaigns, suddenly reversing the direction their scenarios have taken just as the campaign wraps up in order to keep the players on their toes. This technique can work well in the Babylon 5 roleplaying game, but neither is it necessary – in the television series, we all knew the Babylon 5 station would eventually be destroyed. The only questions were how and why, and this can be more than sufficient to keep your players interested in continuing the campaign, even if they are able to guess the conclusion earlier on. Of course, if you are planning a disastrous ending, it may benefit the campaign enormously if you actually allow the players to discover the nature of the conclusion during a scenario (see Tragedy above). This is exactly what the television series did for several of its plot lines.

Sowing the Seeds

Once you have a firm idea of where your campaign is going to head and the types of scenarios required to lead your players there, you need to begin sowing the seeds for the conclusion early on. When the campaign begins,



your players should have no idea what is in store for them. Whether they are playing nobles within the Centauri Royal Court, or EarthForce officers on a far-flung outpost, the players will likely have all sorts of preconceptions about what they will be trying to do and how to accomplish the goals they set for themselves. For example, the Centauri nobles may have plans to expand their houses while the officers will be ready to defend their small part of the Earth Alliance from hostile forces. They will have no way of knowing that the campaign will greatly expand their sphere of influence to the extent where they may discover organic technology powerful enough to tilt the balance of governments in the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, become wrapped up in a plot to assassinate the Centauri emperor or take an active part in a sweeping war that will dominate the lives of millions. This is for you to know and for them to find out later.

You must be aware that nothing exists within a vacuum and so great events such as these should not be suddenly sprung upon the players. Instead, little hints and tips should be sown throughout early scenarios to begin directing players towards the ultimate conclusion of the campaign. These seeds should not be dead give-aways and, indeed, they can be very subtle. Ideally the players should not have any idea of where the campaign is going until it is at least two-thirds complete, and the initial hints may be nothing more than general flavour and background – in the case of the assassination of the Centauri emperor, the players may initially be made aware of a growing dissatisfaction among the Centarum of the current leadership in the Republic. It does not have to be anything more than that, simply letting the players know that there are certain factions with grievances against the current Emperor. Later on they can be confronted with failed assassination attempts, introductions into radical or fringe groups within the Centarum and finally they may be put into a position where they must act in order to kill or save the life of their leader. All this, of course, takes place within the context of a multitude of scenarios that has the players battling for the status and position of their houses and, probably of themselves.

The Babylon 5 television show demonstrates this sowing of seeds early on superbly and prospective Games Masters can learn a lot from its pacing, either from the episode guides of this roleplaying game, or by actually watching them. In Chapter 8, for example, we mention early on that there are potential security breaches that the players can take advantage of on the station, but it is not until the final episode, Chrysalis, that we learn that it is Garibaldi's



second in command that is the snake in the grass for the entire Command Staff. This then goes on in 2259 to expand the plot further, by introducing links into Earth's own government that suggest all is not well back home and that the main characters may well have to contend with more than just alien races wanting to carve a niche in the galaxy. Ultimately, this plot line results, in 2261, with Captain Sheridan leading an insurrection against his own government and freeing Earth from a tyrannical leader.

This is what is known as a story arc. We started with a couple of security breaches on board the Babylon 5 diplomatic station and ended up with the salvation of Earth – no one could have guessed the implications back in 2258 but, with hindsight, all the signs were there. As Games Master, you should sow seeds for the final conclusion of your campaign in much the same way. As the campaign progresses, the players will gradually learn more and more about their final goal until they reach an epiphany of sorts, where their final aims are made clear to them, if they have not begun to suspect already. How they actually go about accomplishing the campaign will still have to be worked out but that is a task for them to decide.

Multiple Story Arcs

Another facet of the Babylon 5 television series that is worth incorporating into an epic campaign is that of multiple story arcs. Although you will already have planed out your main campaign plot line, you can greatly muddy the waters for the players, as well as vastly expand their enjoyment by introducing multiple and even competing plot lines to run alongside the main story arc. Again, the television show is an excellent demonstrator of this and while the main story arc could be said to be the creation of the Interstellar Alliance and the salvation of the entire galaxy (I am afraid you will have to wait until the 2262 Sourcebook, *The Wheel of Fire*, to learn the full details of this!), many other major story arcs are woven into this main thread.

Designer's Notes

When the first season of Babylon 5 appeared on television, I was immediately hooked – here was something completely new, a science fiction series that went beyond the one-shot storylines of its predecessors to spin an epic stretching over five years. I remember thinking at the time that the characters and locations would make for a superb roleplaying game. . .

Despite the years since it first appeared on our screens, Babylon 5 has lost none of its appeal and is set to stay with us for many years more. This roleplaying game is part of this process, following on from movies, comics, novels, a spin-off series and a spaceship combat game. Babylon 5 has become a joint creative effort, with many people coming in to give their own views and explore areas not fully detailed in the television show, or only briefly touched upon. In just a few short years, a tremendous amount of information has been published for Babylon 5, whether in print or on the screen. As I write this, season one has just been re-released on DVD, allowing fans to watch the show all over again and drawing in new people to experience the greatest science fiction ever.

Upon starting this huge project, which expands beyond this rulebook to include complete campaigns and detailed sourcebooks, we had to decide exactly what we would include from the Babylon 5 universe – and we quickly settled on everything! No stone would be left unturned, no detail omitted and no fact judged too minor. We immediately increased the page count for the main rulebook and dropped the text size but it rapidly became clear that some information would indeed make it into the rulebook and some would have to be left to future supplements and sourcebooks. As a fan of Babylon 5 myself, I fully supported this approach as it mirrored the television series itself. The story of Babylon 5 could never be told in a single episode or even season, so it stood to reason that no rulebook of even three hundred pages would hold everything. Instead, we decided to begin by focussing on the absolute core of Babylon 5 – and where better to start than the beginning?

We decided to concentrate on the year 2258 (the first season of the television series) and the Babylon 5 space station itself – after all, how could we possibly do a roleplaying game based on Babylon 5 without including the station? This allowed us to closely examine the smallest detail and include it within the game, digging under the surface to fully expand on the information available within the television series itself and the huge amount of source material already available, as well as include a few new things of our own. For this reason, there are no Shadows, Rangers, White Stars and Interstellar Alliances in this rulebook, for they could never have been done justice. Three hundred pages can contain a lot of information but

it is by no means infinite. However, fans of the series need not worry, as all this and more is yet to come. Epic adventures in the Babylon 5 roleplaying game have only just begun.

This approach immediately lent itself to two new approaches never before touched upon by roleplaying games. First, it would let us retell the story of Babylon 5 all over again. Whether you are a long time fan, just coming into the series with the newly released DVDs or a newcomer looking to explore an entire galaxy, the story will unfold before you over the course of entire campaigns, retold by Games Masters and players alike.

Second, it gave us a powerful tool for Games Masters to utilise in their own campaigns. Every roleplaying game worth its salt attempts to create an entire world or universe around the players, permitting them to believe they are exploring a setting that is vibrant and alive, continuing with its own concerns even when their characters are not present. Traditionally, roleplaying games have achieved this by including a rich and vibrant history of everything that has gone on before the players appear, and by featuring rich or powerful characters who become movers and shakers in the setting, such as kings, emperors, conquerors and great wizards. It quickly became apparent that Babylon 5 has both of these tools but one more extremely powerful device that could be harnessed for Games Masters – events. The television show depicted a timeline that stretched across five years and beyond which was a rich and fertile ground for many parallel plot lines. This provides a ready made structure for any Games Master planning a campaign and imparts upon the players that not only are there great and powerful characters who can limit what they try to achieve but that the galaxy will move inexorably along no matter what they do. Through their actions, the players will be able to influence and guide events but will find that other characters have their own agendas that are constantly being pursued, goals that are forever being striven towards and this can make a campaign become instantly alive. By using the structure of the Babylon 5 television seasons, a Games Master can advance his campaign year by year, building up to a colossal finale that parallels that of the major characters in the galaxy. The players will always remain in the centre of the action around the table but there is an entire galaxy out there that will not care whether they succeed or fail in the scenarios they face. All this goes towards making the Babylon 5 roleplaying game one of the most vibrant settings yet around the tabletop.

With this, we had laid down the principals of the roleplaying game and roughly what the final publication would look like. Now we needed a rules system to back these ideas up and turn them into a roleplaying game that could be used by anyone interested in exploring Babylon 5.

The d20 System was chosen early on, as we were looking for rules that most roleplayers could pick up and use with the minimum of fuss (and so concentrate on the more important matter of high drama and heroic action), as well as rules that were highly adaptable. The latter was by far

the most important and the last thing we wanted was simply to produce 'd20 in space with Babylon 5 tacked on'. It is a fundamental law within Mongoose Publishing that rules must always be bent to fit the genre, never the other way around. So, we went to work, breaking down the d20 System and completely disassembling it before building it up once again, this time in Babylon 5's image.

I was very happy with the way the abolition of Armour Class and its subsequent replacement with Defence Value went with the Judge Dredd roleplaying game released last year, so these were refined and updated for Babylon 5. However, whereas many science fiction television shows and films portrayed great heroes braving a torrent of enemy fire as they fought against villains, something that fits in very well with the d20 System, it just did not feel right for Babylon 5. When even a major character is struck by PPG fire, he goes down and is landed in Medlab for a long period of time. Firefights are truly dangerous on Babylon 5 and this needed to be reflected in the roleplaying game, with the reaching for weapons a last resort for any character – this would also mirror the importance of character interaction and development of the television series, for players would need to find solutions other than force to problems if they hoped to survive. I felt it was time we took a new look at that old chestnut of the d20 System, hit points. We had already proved that we could change Armour Class, but would the rules survive a fundamental change in the use of hit points?

I am a sucker for simple solutions to any problem and when writing rules always look for the elegance of one rule to cover a situation, instead of pages and pages of rules and tables to handle every eventuality. So, when a simple reduction in the amount of hit points was proposed, it was difficult to knock it back. I removed the concept of Hit Dice and gave characters only a small number of bonus hit points as they gained levels so that even high level characters would have trouble surviving more than a couple of PPG shots. In fact, there were even fewer hit points for the character classes in the first draft of these rules than are now present in order to build in some leeway for bad luck and ensure that players were not constantly rolling up new characters. To balance this, healing is a little easier and a high Constitution will allow badly injured characters to stabilise quicker as they await medical attention. With a few modifications, the reports from the playtesters soon indicated that we had got this right and that it fits in perfectly with the way characters are portrayed in the television show itself. As in real life, players will now have to think around problems instead of just barging in with guns blazing. Just what I was trying to achieve! As an aside, this game very nearly used a level-less and possibly class-less version of the d20 System, something that I found very attractive during initial development. However, I was wary of changing rules just for the sake of it and keeping both classes and levels allowed us to include logically progressive prestige classes such as the Psi Cop – no way was I going to let a player become a Psi Cop right from character generation. If you want that kind of character,

you will have to work hard at it, much as Psi Cops do in the television show. . .

Individual rules systems quickly fell into place from there. Many of the combat rules originated from Judge Dredd and Armageddon 2089, though there are many subtle changes in Babylon 5, so make sure you read the Combat chapter closely! The rules governing the use of vehicles and spacecraft were adapted from FFG's Dragonstar game under the Open Game Licence, as they melded all scales of vehicle into one solid system and yet integrated it at character level too – vehicles have hit points and Damage Reduction the same as characters do and so all units within the game work at the same level with no need for readjustment. By including Special Qualities, we could build upon these rules to reflect the unique craft and weapons that appear in Babylon 5. My favourite has to be the pivotal thrusters of the Starfuries. We could have made the spacecraft rules in particular a lot more complex and detailed but this is something I shied away from early in the development process, as I believe that is simply not what a Babylon 5 roleplaying game should be about – characters and their interactions are the centre of Babylon 5 not the technology, which forms a solid backdrop but should never overshadow what the heroes are doing.

So, what about the future? Well, the rest of the Babylon 5 story needs to be retold and fleshed out for use in roleplaying games. Forthcoming supplements will take detailed looks at each successive year beyond 2258, the different races present in the galaxy and complete campaigns ready for use by Games Masters. We will introduce new worlds and revisit old ones, examine the innermost workings of the Earth Alliance and the Centauri Royal Court, and reveal the full might of the Vorlons and Shadows. Players will be able to take the role of free traders plying the space lanes and visiting each system within the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, or Rangers working to safeguard each race from its own worst enemies. Looking further ahead, Games Masters will be able to set entire campaigns during the Dilgar War, Earth/Minbari War or within the period after the television series when the Interstellar Alliance will face truly terrifying challenges. The Babylon 5 roleplaying game is only just beginning and anyone taking a trip into the galaxy of 2258 will find plenty to occupy their time for many years to come.

Everyone here at Mongoose Publishing is a huge fan of Babylon 5 and we have produced what we believe you, as a roleplayer, want to see in this game. We always love to hear feedback, so if you think we have got something dreadfully wrong or hit the nail right on the head, let us know! You can do this by visiting our web site (the address can be found on p02) and either emailing us directly, or raising any issue for others to debate in our open forums. Either way, welcome to Babylon 5 and I hope to see you in some lost part of the galaxy righting terrible wrongs and aiding the forces of light to finally triumph over horrific adversity!

Matthew Sprange