Beyond the ring lurks a moon whose very shape—whose very essence—is formed of squirming thorns, tangled hedgerows, and alien trees.

Inside a defunct planetary outpost, a throng of self-made monsters fuses cable and hull scrap to one another's reanimated flesh, each powered by elements never seen by man.

Layered beneath this plane of existence is another: a place of dead stars and skull-ships, a wretched Otherspace, a haunted Underworld.

This is the Infinite Macabre.

This book includes:

• Suggestions and rules shifts on how to incorporate the World of Darkness into a space opera game

• Rules for starships and starship combat

• Guidance on making your own alien species

Credits

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MIRRORS
The Infinite Macabre

the World of Darkness

Space Opera in the World of Darkness

The Infinite Macabre: Space Opera in the World of Darkness

Chapter Three of World of Darkness: Mirrors kicked the World of Darkness in the center mass, cracking it into three different shards, three new Worlds of Darkness. Originally we planned on a science fiction section at the time we were developing it, but the concept of sci-fi ended up being too broad, too all-encompassing to cram in 15,000 words. But after the book launched, fans clamored for sci-fi worlds for their monsters to explore and terrorize.

So here's one of those Worlds of Future Darkness.

Think of this as a missing section of Mirrors, a slice of extra meat that we've written from the ground up in the spirit of that book. You don't need Mirrors to use this, but if you're familiar with it, these pages will feel like home.

Beyond the ring lurks a moon whose very shape—whose very *essence*—is formed of squirming thorns, tangled hedgerows, and alien trees.

Floating amidst the asteroids are the slaver ships, Byzantine chassis playing home to the grotesque feudalities of blood-hungry vampires.

Inside a defunct planetary outpost, a throng of self-made monsters fuses cable and hull scrap to one another's reanimated flesh, each powered by elements never seen by man.

Five Watchtowers, hidden on distant planets, each ninety-nine parsecs from the next, each plotted on a map to form a perfect flat-planed pentagon in three-dimensional space—or an upside-down star. Each Watchtower has its pilgrims and proselytes, all with unparalleled power.

Spirits—some invisible, some so alien in their corporeality—flit from moon to moon, star to star, hunted in turn by men and women whose hearts are those of hungry wolves.

Layered beneath this plane of existence is another: a place of dead stars and skull-ships, a wretched Otherspace, a haunted Underworld.

This is the Infinite Macabre.

This is the World of Darkness cast forward in time—or so far backward it ceases to matter—and thrown deep into the bleakest, strangest recesses of unknown space.

The Nature of Space Opera

This product endeavors to show you how you might transform the World of Darkness by thrusting it into the screaming maw of a whole separate genre: space opera.

Is it a strange fit? Hardly. Consider these characteristics which are sometimes considered the core elements of space opera:

• It's often a combination of fantasy and science-fiction. (The World of Darkness is very much a "dark fantasy and horror" roleplaying game.)

• It tends not to be hard sci-fi. (The World of Darkness relies more on magical realism than hard scientific principle.)

• It often features magical elements to go with the science-fiction. (The World of Darkness has magical elements in spades.)

• Adjectives that might be used to describe space operate include: Romantic, romantic (big R, small r, both), operatic, epic, political or astro-political. (The World of Darkness plays well with all these adjectives: think of the florid and terrible politics of the vampire covenants, the grim romance seen in **Changeling**, the epic nature of the Forsaken versus the Pure or the fallen world nature found in **Mage**.)

Yes, your game will still be subject to certain fundamental alterations—for example, the World of Darkness tends to first be expressed on a local level (i.e. "What's going on in your city?"), and here the scope of the game (and the canvas upon which it is painted) grows infinitely more epic. While a game like **Hunter: The Vigil** posits—with the conspiracy tier—a global horror, space opera blows even that out of the water and demands a galactic playing field. In fact, think of this as a "fourth tier" grafted onto the World of Darkness setting: the *galactic* tier.

But despite those changes, the base components remain the same. Instead of telling a story about the betrayal of the vampire Prince, you're instead talking about the betrayal of a vampire Imperatrix. Instead of werewolves protecting their territory from spirit invasions, they're chasing spirits across distant nebula. Mages can appear anywhere, and the witch hunters of the Malleus Maleficarum come hunting after them with ships that look like industrial cathedrals ripped out of the earth's mooring and thrown into space.

The Big Question

The one big question you really want to ask yourself before you dive into **The Infinite Macabre** at your game table is: has the veil of secrecy shielding the monsters been dropped? You have at your disposal two very different modes of play that branch off from the answer to this question.

On the one hand, if the answer is that the secrecy remains, then you are accepting that the conditions governing the societies of these nocturnal denizens remain firmly in place. In other words, the Masquerade is still in play, werewolves are still protected by Lunacy, a changeling's Mask is ultimately lost to the mad beauty of the Mien, and so forth. Mankind is out there among the stars, and he still doesn't realize that the parasites and goblins and immortal terrors are out there with him. This model leans toward *horror*.

On the other hand, your answer might be that the secrecy has been removed (or, depending on how you play it, it may never have been in place to begin with). More succinctly, mankind knows what monsters have come with him into space. He *knows* that the vampires could come to enslave him for his blood and drag him off to the farthest flung corners of known space. He *knows* that certain necromantic cults hide on distant moons hoping to reanimate dead tissue by fusing it with energy stolen from stars. Mankind is sure to fear the horrible long-limbed "astronauts" that come from within open vents and through rivet holes to steal them away to the place of thorns and bramble. Further, it demonstrates that some of your epic romance and planetary politics are driven by the monsters

as much as they are the humans—it allows for, say, a fringe empire of sorcerers or an armada of vampire cruisers stalking the space lanes. While this doesn't do away with horror, this model leans toward *dark fantasy*.

This product is written with the second assumption in mind. We *want* the monsters out in the open because it creates more fantastical conditions. Instead of having to worry about bizarre-faced aliens wandering the market bazaar or space-dock, we get to have pale bloodsuckers, porcelain Prometheans, and the truly bizarre Lost rubbing elbows with humanity. In this mode, the monsters *become* the aliens so frequently seen in the various iterations of space opera. It is, in its own weird way, a mutation hybridizing **Star Wars** and Lovecraft (or, Heinlein plus **Doom**, or **Firefly** plus **Dead Space**). Sound fun?

The Goal

Despite the title of this product, we do not have an infinite number of pages in which to grant you a full-stocked space opera setting. As such, we're trying to walk the balance beam between "giving you cool original material to drop into your game" and "encouraging you to answer the questions with your own awesome material." The end result of this product is that you, as Storyteller or player, should be able to put together your own unique vision of what "World of Darkness space opera" means at your game table.

This Wretched Universe

It's a mad universe, a black tapestry held together by a million pinpricks of light, by bands of chromatic light, by solar storms and space lanes and rings of comet dust. People are out there, spread out across the stars—but so are the monsters. They once hid in the shadows, but to them, space is one big endless shadow—an infinite nighttime in which to wander.

So, you want to know how the universe out there could work for your space opera game?

The Star Chart

Every good pilot worth his salt has a galactic star chart—shining bright on a monitor, or hanging on a wall, dusty and torn at the edges.

The way the universe *probably* works in your space opera game is just like you've seen in a number of films or video games: the universe features a number of charted galaxies separated by parsecs (*one parsec = 3.3 light years*). These galaxies are either star systems (a galaxy comprising only stars orbiting one another) or planetary systems (a galaxy where planets orbit one or several stars). These galaxies may have names that coincide with what we call them now (Procyon, Polaris, Sirius, etc), but since this is the World of Darkness, don't feel like you can't go with something more apropos to the mood (Black Mariah, Wolf Sun, Red Nebula, Blood Run). They also may be named after those who discovered them.

What's charted is only "known space." The universe is far bigger than what man and monster have yet discovered, thus giving the expanse of space an uncharted Wild West (or western expansion, or colonization) feel. Usually, the star chart is bordered by some kind of "Here There Be Dragons" line—past that border lies, well, who knows what? Space horrors? Distant aliens? Mad gods exiled from this universe? Ancient vampires who have gone beyond the fringe? The first Promethean? The True Oracles capable of galaxy-shifting sorcery?

For the record, we recommend giving that border a name—we happen to like the "Rubicon," but any name (the Line, the Edge, the Brink, the Bloodline) that evokes *a point of no return*. Characters should know that when they cross it, it's time to worry.

A star chart may also chart the Empires of Man, as noted below (p. 10).

Each galaxy is likely separated by between 100,000 and 3,000,000 parsecs—conventional spacecraft cannot make the journey between galaxies in a timely fashion (i.e. before everybody on board perishes from old age or from madness born in the rigors of space). Thus, traveling between systems requires use of the Stygian Gates found below (p. 8).

Massive Space Objects

Within the galaxies—and, in some cases, between them—are the massive space objects found commonly in space opera properties.

Planets

In space opera, planets are rarely so realistically defined as having different climates, temperate zones or biomes; in fact, they're pretty simplistic in definition. Desert planet. Ice planet. Forest, jungle, tundra, and so forth. Again, not realistic, but that's the nature of space opera: hard sci-fi, this is not.

Curiously, every galaxy has a few planets that feature breathable air. Further, those that *don't* have breathable air still have habitable temperatures (meaning, temperatures that don't automatically sear humans to a crisp or blast-freeze them into bloodsicles).

Some planets likely have a "biome" that is explicitly human—in other words, instead of tundra or grassland, the whole planet is one giant metropolis. (And those that are so-called "city planets" might make use of **The Infinite Macabre**'s sister product, **Bleeding Edge**.)

As above, planetary names in this mode are those best suited when they're grim, moody, and bound up in the feel of the World of Darkness. (The planets in **Firefly/Serenity** are not a bad example: Whitefall, Osiris, Persephone, Shadow.)

Moons

Moons, like planets, are often defined by a single biome: "Oh, this is an ocean moon," or, "We are cleared for a landing on the Veldt."

Moons tend to be wilder, less colonized, often home only to outposts, farms, or industrial faculties (strip mines, weapons manufacturers, work camps).

Stardocks

In those systems without planets, one is likely to find a stardock and space stations. They can look like anything: turning wheels, cathedral-like structures, cubes, shimmering solar fans hundreds of miles wide, spheres, cylinders and so forth.

Stardocks are often home to a permanent population—low as a thousand, high as a hundred thousand—but see far greater numbers coming through the station as traffic.

The purpose of each stardock is driven by those who created it: as a refueling station, marketplace, military base, research and development lab, ore refinery, spacecraft construction depot or ammo dump. Many are a mix of these elements: most stardocks, for instance, have some kind of trading bazaar and refueling capabilities.

The feel, form and function of an individual station is determined by its keepers and creators. If a militaristic empire serves as shepherd, expect Spartan design, an autocratic feel and function that is clearly driven toward war and conquest (fighter bays, martial training facilities, heavily defensible).

Spacecraft

For us, the key word in *space opera* is "space." Characters are going to spend a lot of time in the deep recesses of outer space, flitting between the stars, traveling from planet to moon, from stardock to Stygian Gate. This necessitates one of the most awesome parts of space opera: the spaceships.

The section below will help you determine the stats on a spaceship and, more specifically, how players might buy them for their characters. However, note that the dots do not fully comprise all aspects of the ship in question. Does the ship have a name? What does it look like? Do you find any value in considering how the crafts of different monster types might look? Is the ship of a Ventrue vampire "family" a regal, almost stately affair, decked in chrome, titanium or even brass? What does the floating library of a number of Atlantean mages look like? Or that of a series of dream-scourging changelings (or worse, the True Fae)? Is a Promethean ship as cobbled-together as they are? Could the whole ship "go nuclear" and turn into some kind of living Pandoran lurching its way through the dark void?

Merit: Spaceship (• to •••••)

Effect: The character owns, or has part-ownership of, a spaceship. This vessel may be a small, short-range, single-person fighter or interplanetary transport. It could be a large cargo vessel capable of faster-than-light travel. It might even be an intended-for-decommission military starship that the character has pulled some strings to obtain.

The usefulness of a ship depends upon how big it is, how fast, how much cargo (or how many passengers) it can support, and how well armed or defended it is. In game terms, dots spent on the Spaceship Merit need to be distributed among four categories: Size, Speed, Weapons, and Armor. The nimble short range fighter may thus have no dots in Size, four dots in Speed and two dots in both Weapons and Armor. The cargo ship *Tranquility* may have three dots in Size, two dots in Speed, no dots in Weapons and three dots in Armor. The Task Force: Valkyrie destroyer *Odin* may have five dots in Size, one dot in speed, five dots in Weapons, and five dots in Armor

Spaceship Size: The actual size of the ship, it determines the number of points of Structure a given ship has (for *Starship Combat*, below) and the amount of cargo it can carry (either in a hold or as cargo containers attached to or towed by the vessel).

– Very tiny: either a one- or two-seat fighter or personal shuttle. Not comfortable or useful for carrying cargo. This ship has 20 points of Structure.

• A small ship that can hold four people comfortably, or a couple more with less comfort. Crew hot-rack (squeeze in more than one member per bunk), as the ship has only enough sleeping space for half the crew. There might be a small room to eat meals, and cargo space for a couple of tons of cargo (about 10 feet by 10 feet). This ship has 40 points of Structure.

•• A small-to-mid-sized ship, with cabins for each crew member (up to eight or ten) and cargo space for up to fifty tons of cargo. This ship has 60 points of Structure.

••• A mid-size vessel, probably carrying a dozen crew members and the same again as paying passengers. The ship is capable of carrying a few hundred tons of cargo. This ship has 80 points of Structure.

•••• A large vessel. It can carry a couple of thousand tons of cargo, dozens of passengers and might be quite luxurious. It can contain a hundred plus crew members. This ship has 100 points of Structure.

••••• The largest capital ships and most lumbering cargo vessels, capable of carrying hundreds of thousands of tons of cargo, or thousands of crew and troops (and even smaller vehicles). These are the largest ships capable of traveling between stars. This ship has 120 points of Structure.

Spaceship Speed: An abstract representation of how fast a ship can accelerate, decelerate and change heading. It's a mixture of agility and raw speed, handy to use to compare with other ships, especially if using the optional Starship Combat rules below. The Speed rating is equal to the ship's Handling rating (for combat purposes).

– This ship is effectively a big space slug: low acceleration, poor maneuverability.

• These vessels change speed slowly, but it's enough to get them from one place to another. Ships with this Speed do not need to flit about nimbly. Passenger shuttles and huge, lumbering ships may have only one dot in Speed.

•• These ships move around star systems at a slow and steady rate, taking a few hours to move between a planet and its moons and days or a week to get to the outer worlds. They aren't especially quick or nimble.

••• These ships are faster than average and more agile. The vast majority of fighters and police/military ships move with this level of swiftness. Cargo vessels this fast are used for courier duties or to carry perishable goods.

•••• A ship this fast is almost certainly a military, police or pirate vessel (cargo ships this fast are probably smuggling illegal goods past blockades or security perimeters).

••••• Only the fastest, most expensive fighters are this agile and fast. Private vessels with this Speed rating may be racers or corporate couriers and any cargo ship this fast is going to attract attention immediately.

Spaceship Weapons: indicate the ship's weapons capabilities. Most ships are armed, though only cursorily, enough to distract a pirate and get out of sight. Still, the ships that characters possess might potentially be armed to the teeth. Dots in this Merit determine how advanced