

# Alien Races

## Mrashan

Humanity's first contact with intelligent alien life was with the mrashans. They allowed us to enter the galaxy by providing information about Jump Gates and HEH. Later, they also provided LEH and Warp technology, for which the crelos bombed them back to the stone age. It took years for them to return to the galactic stage, and they had changed a lot. Originally they were friendly and gregarious, but after they returned they were quiet and secretive. Such a skill they had made of stealth and intelligence gathering that they were employed as spies during the Civil War and long afterward.

### Physical Description:

Mrashans are short, averaging about 130cm in height. They are covered in soft fur which ranges in colour from a dark burnished gold through brown to almost black. Their eyes are small and wide-set, and their noses long and pointed, usually drooping to below their mouth. Their hands have four long fingers and an opposable thumb. Their feet are padded like those of a dog or a cat, and they never wear shoes or boots. Females are slightly larger and stockier than males. When 'abroad' mrashans usually wear dark robes with hoods that cover their heads. They rarely carry weapons.

### Society:

Little has been observed of mrashan social activity since the Change. It is known that there is a limited caste structure based on fur colour. The darkest fur results in a higher social status. Several mrashan ships have been observed to have dark-furred captains and first officers, while the gold-furred mrashans are relegated to menial roles. It is observed that fur colour is not hereditary - not in a strict Mendelian sense. A pair of gold-furred mrashans may bear a child of brown or dark fur, or their offspring may be gold like them. Mrashans are happy to work for human employers. They were friends to humanity since before the crelos attack, and they appear to have long memories.

## Slorel

Slorel were encountered soon after the mrashans opened the galaxy to humanity. It seems that they are everywhere, and they always have something to trade. It doesn't matter to the slorel whether it is a valuable item or not (although they have a good sense of value), the slorel will trade it. They appear to understand concepts like market economy instinctively. It is not known whether they first developed spaceflight themselves, or whether they traded something for it. It is certain that their bizarre cyst-like ships can be found wherever there are other races to trade with. The interesting thing about slorel trading practices is that they will never trade for credit. It is always goods for goods with them. They will assess the value of what you have and offer something of equal value.

## **Physical description:**

Possibly the most bizarre of the races to share the galaxy with, the slorel are amorphous bags of protoplasm with many writhing tentacles and internal organs pulsing inside. They excrete gases such as nitrogen, sulphur dioxide and methane through their skins. All this adds up to make the slorel quite repulsive to many humans, a fact which the slorel respect. The slorel can squeeze its body through an opening many times smaller than itself. Its tentacles are highly sensitive and appear to be sensory organs as well as versatile manipulatory and locomotory appendages. Slorel consume much like protoplasmic single-celled organisms, but physically absorbing nutrients through the skin. They are carnivorous and cannibal (see Society below) but in fact are rather polite about it and will not readily consume their trading partners.

## **Society:**

Little is known about slorel society or their homeworld. All of the slorel encountered by humans are ship-dwellers, inhabiting strange organic hives in space. They have a good grasp of technology, but many functions (such as life support) appear to be biological in origin. The ships themselves are bizarre, globular amalgams of metal and organic goo. Some carry defensive armaments. As noted, slorel are traders by nature. They are basically peaceful, and no slorel has ever been documented to attack another race for any reason. Their own race is a different matter though - most slorel disagreements end up with one slorel 'eating' the other by absorbing its mass into its own.

# **Tal**

Humanity's first contact with the tal were unfriendly at best. At the time they were the allies of the crelos and khalroth, and they participated in the attack on Bonanza and the beginning of the Pogrom. At first they agreed with the khalroth's desire to keep LEH technology from humanity, but after the beginning of the Pogrom, they saw exactly what the khalroth had in mind and had a fundamental philosophical disagreement with it. Tal are technologically very sophisticated. They are honorable and proud. They consider themselves to be warrior-philosophers, and they ruminate frequently on the fundamental nature of existence. They will take up arms for any cause they see as a good one. Although they were very friendly with humanity throughout the Golden Ages, the Great Civil War forced them to look at our race with another eye. Since the War they have been extremely aloof.

## **Physical Description:**

Tal are very tall and thin. A bluish exoskeleton extends from the back of their heads down their spine, ending just above their hips. Their faces are soft and their eyes are large. They often have a slight smile, which tends to make humans describe them as 'vague'. The opposite is the truth. Females are much smaller than males, and do not share their philosophical or martial bent. In fact the females and children are rarely seen by other races, being kept safe either at their homeworld or in specialised protective chambers on ships.

**Society:**

Life on the tal home worlds is usually very peaceful, until two tal disagree on some fundamental philosophical matter and war breaks out. These skirmishes never last for very long though, and in general the tal society returns to normal within a few weeks or months. Tal technology is usually prominent on any world or ship they own. There are some devices that the tal use regularly whose function is a complete mystery to human observers. For example, it has been observed that many tal have a metal implant in the back of one hand. Its function is unknown.

**Crelos**

Big, vicious predators, the crelos cannot possibly have developed spaceflight on their own. The truth is that they have always been used by the khalroth to carry out their 'dirty work', and crelos ships are usually of khalroth manufacture. It is thought in some circles that the crelos were 'uplifted' by the khalroth, who gave them the technology and the science they needed to enter space. Crelos science is still unsophisticated, although in matters of war they are masters.

**Physical description:**

The typical crelos stands about eight feet in height - more when rearing. Their vaguely insectoid body is an obvious product of a biological arms race millions of years long. Several body parts, such as the secondary arms, appear to have been evolved for the express purpose of killing. The crelos has four locomotory limbs, which end in large claws. Their body is held horizontally, with the torso upright at the front. The torso bears two sets of arms. The lower pair are physically weaker, and bear fine manipulators like fingers. The upper pair are strong, and end in cruel blades. These can be shot forward over the crelos' shoulder in a fast muscular contraction. The lower arms can also carry weapons. The whole body is covered in a chitinous exoskeleton. The crelos head can only be described as frightening. Four beady eyes ring the front edge, while underneath large mandibles flank a mouth full of grinding teeth. The crelos language consists of harsh clicks and grunts, but they can learn other languages with ease.

**Society:**

Few make the mistake of considering the crelos stupid. While perhaps not as intelligent as their masters the khalroth, they are very cunning and able to handle sophisticated technology with ease. On their home worlds and on their ships, the strong rule by force. Assassination is the usual method of being promoted. A crelos will eat almost anything, as long as it is meat. They keep herds of prey animals on board their ships, which they will always slaughter before consuming. They seem to enjoy the very act of killing, whether it is a prey beast or an intelligent opponent.

**Khalroth**

The khalroth are puppeteers, manipulators of events. It is rare that any khalroth will be seen at any outset of interracial strife, but you can be certain that they are there. It is thought that the khalroth

effectively competed their way into space - a technological and political arms race that brought them in contact with other races.

### Physical description:

The few accounts of khalroth that exist describe them as robed and hooded. A long fleshy nose and six tiny red eyes can sometimes be seen inside their hoods. They are bipedal, as far as anyone can tell, and have long arms and fingers. All of their fingers are opposable - there are five, equally spaced, which converge on a central point of the palm. Khalroth rarely use their own ships. They will usually ride aboard crelos vessels, where they rule from the shadows. The crelos will never attack khalroth - there seems to be some bond between them, because the crelos will attack anyone else with relish.

### Society:

Khalroth are at their best when manipulating events on a galactic scale. War and strife are their bread and butter. It is not unknown for there to be different factions of khalroth, but all will stand united in the common goal of wiping humanity from the face of the galaxy. They hate and resent humans first for defying their decree of technological restriction, and second for successfully beating their crelos allies so convincingly. Khalroth also bear this grudge against the tal and the mrashans for similar reasons. The only race that the khalroth do not despise (apart from the crelos) are the slorel.

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