

Crimes Against History

Ancient History

The Universe, Etcetera

c. 10,000,000 years ago

The first conscious life in the universe develops. The culture in question can reasonably be described as humanoid, and immediately begins to imprint its own principles on the universe around it, if not actually causing the proliferation of hominid forms throughout the rest of history then certainly making it easier for hominid species to survive. As the first self-aware tenants of the continuum, this primal culture can't strictly be considered alien", or even a species, as such: these are the ones who set the template for the rest of sentient life, and therefore can only be considered a force of nature, or at the very least a force of history. Creating a technology, they perfect stellar manipulation, and the resultant energy source gives them (theoretically) complete control over the temporal sciences. From this point on the Homeworld exists in an unusual relationship with the rest of history, and its occupants increasingly view themselves as the neutral arbiters of causality, observing - and on occasion policing - the "lesser" species which evolve in their wake." The price they pay for this power is sterility. Natural childbirth and natural death both become passe on the Homeworld, almost as if mortality's beneath them, and the culture divides itself into Houses: aristocratic bloodlines which maintain the balance of power and (occasionally) produce new members through biological engineering. Removed from the traditional sex-and-death cycle, the Houses become static, and progress becomes almost as rare as procreation. The Homeworld initially answers to the authority of a clique of ruling Houses, the five leading Houses being overseen by a Presidency... and more than anything else, it's the purpose of the Presidency to maintain the status quo. The Spiral Politic - those parts of history which can be overseen from the Homeworld, which is to say, the whole of history - is of purely theoretical interest to the academicians of the Homeworld.

The Great Houses will remain in control of causality throughout the aeons to come, despite occasional run-ins with the emerging lesser species, most of which remain ignorant of their existence. At the heart of the Houses' power are their timeships, structures so complex that even their own engineers have only an arbitrary understanding of the processes involved, and which can only be constructed by the careful manipulation of the timeline (each timeship essentially collaborates in its own creation, the more complicated systems being beyond the knowledge of the Houses themselves). Over the years it's established that although the timeships are in some way intelligent, it's not an intelligence which in any way resembles the intelligence of a living thing. The ships certainly aren't self-willed even though psychological bonds with their pilots become common. During the experimental" phase of this grand new technology, the Houses inadvertently punch several large holes in the continuum, and as a result the Spiral Politic is briefly assaulted by an influx of biological forms which clearly don't belong there. These things are so inimical to life in the mundane universe that the Houses can only regard them as monsters, referred to in the Homeworld's own overblown tongue as Yssgaroth: more a hostile form of anti-structure than a species, many of the Yssgaroth's victims become grotesque, corrupted things in the intruders' own image, often at odds with the rest of linear time. After a monumental struggle, the holes are sealed and the Yssgaroth are largely vanquished from normal-space. One (previously minor) House distinguishes itself in battle to such a degree that it takes on the role of "security adviser" to the ruling Houses, and although the original protocols of the Homeworld

refer to an inner circle of five ruling Houses it soon becomes traditional for a sixth to attach itself to the Presidency. It's the last major change to House political structure for some considerable time.

In the years to come, the Great Houses will take the Yssgaroth incident" as clinching proof that too much progress can be a bad thing. In a society as static as theirs, it must be a very reassuring thought.

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