# HYPERLANES

## Unfolding Starscapes

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# Introduction

Being built upon the foundation of *Dungeons & Dragons* 5E rules means that the science fiction of **HYPERLANES** can easily play nice with the fantasy of the source material. This can be as simple a matter of adopting small elements, or as great as pulling in whole systems in a pinch. **HYPERLANES** is another tool in the toolbox of Dungeon Masters, and one that can be used however you see fit. You can easily shave off the serial numbers on a monster, spell, or magic item from officially published material and deploy it wherever you wish. A creative DM can even go so far as to take published adventure modules and rename the places and characters, making them into quick and dirty sci-fi encounters.

This versatility goes both ways. The simplicity of the **HYPERLANES** NPC creation system can easily be applied to fantasy monster building. The technological wonders of Superscience items would work just as well as magical items in your fantasy world. Gambits could be used in the place of spells when dealing with cultures where magic has advanced to the point that it's indistinguishable from technology. The Tactics school might even find a use in more mundane, highly militarized fantasy empires.

There is a lot of grey area to explore, as well. What if your explorers come upon a world filled with dragon-like, sentient lizards possessing the nanotechnology to create seemingly magic effects? What if the players crash land on a primitive medieval world and must live there among the "barbarians" for a while? These kinds of stories can be incredibly fun, play upon existing genre conventions, and work really well since you've got all the fantasy rules you need right there on your games bookshelf.

## Fantastic Stories

Before we dig into to the meat of science fantasy, let's address the dragon in the room. Science fiction, particularly the pulpy, action-adventure variety that inspires **HYPERLANES**, is already closer to fantasy than hard science fiction.

This is by design. **HYPERLANES** aims to use the adventurous nature of those narratives to bridge the gap. *D&D* is designed to facilitate cool fights and the search for riches. It enables a lifestyle of itinerant adventure seeking. The science fiction best suited to pairing with those themes is similarly focused on adventure rather than the minutiae of technological workings.

*Star Wars*, for example, involves an old wizard, a princess, a dark lord, and a farm boy destined to take on an evil emperor. The magic of the Force plays a central role in the heroes' success. It's also explicitly a war story. These things hardly smack of the cold logic of hard sci-fi. That's ok; adventure is fun and that's what gaming is all about.

Keeping this in mind, it's easy to simply take fantasy adventure concepts and adapt them over to **HYPERLANES**-style science fiction. An old map given by a wizened elder in a cantina. A quest ordered by a manorial lord hoping a group of outsiders will take care of an emerging threat to her people.  A strange event in the wild tantalizing a group of explorers to plumb the depths of a ruined outpost. These plots work for sci-fi as much as fantasy. But converting them has the advantage of poking fun at the source material, while allowing PCs the chance to alter the narrative.

Maybe the princess they're sent to rescue isn't really impressed with the plan and makes better use of a blaster rifle than her heroes. Maybe the abandoned space station holds scientific horrors that one of the PCs might even have a chance of understanding, allowing for diplomacy with the alien evil or scientific advancement through study of the original research. Any scenario you can conjure can be turned from fantasy to science fiction, or back the other way around. Subvert expectations wherever you can.

Even low magic settings can be fun inspiration out among the galaxies. What if the five kingdoms in *Game of Thrones* were space sectors in a massive galactic empire, with all the accompanying politics, sex, and dragons? We can take the plots, intrigue, and major characters and simply move them up into a dramatic futuristic setting with all the makings of a beautiful space opera.

## Sufficiently Advanced Technology

If magic is simply that which defies explanation, there's no reason advanced technologies couldn't appear mystical. In science fictional settings, it's not uncommon for societies of varying levels of advancement to come into contact or conflict. As the man said, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

This means that if you're up for it, some parts of your galaxy could be populated with what amounts to magic users. Some of these magics may be transparent and easy to use, cast at the push of a button as with wands and other magical items. Others require a lifetime of study, as with cast spells. Both can be used to spice up your game, whether the effects look like magic or not.

A spell could be an effect caused by a device or the invisible machinery of a nanite cloud. It could be an invisible force that pervades the galaxy and binds it together. It could be localized to a world with just the right technological infrastructure to support its use.

## Psychic Power

Psionics is certainly an element of many *D&D* campaigns. Official support for it in the 5th edition has been light, but recently Wizards of the Coast has released *Unearth Arcana* rules for the Mystic class. That class doesn't fall under the Open Gaming License, so we can't really address it with our own modifications, but we highly suggest taking a look if you plan on using psychic powers in your game.

The gambit schools of Influence, Tactics, and Deception were designed with the idea that some characters would call upon those powers not through training and trickery, but instead through sheer force of mental power. Why not? If the effect is the same, just use the rules for those gambits. In fact, most of the rules for the Ambassador class work perfectly if you think of the class as a mind-bending psychic rather than just a charismatic leader.

But there's more to psionics than just mental influence. Mind powers can include all sorts of pseudo-magical abilities. This is

where the core rules of *D&D* can come in handy again. Spells like *Levitate* and *Fly* are obviously easy to port over, and we use spells of their ilk for Mystical NPCs in the **HYPERLANES** corebook.

Truthfully, the mind as a source of otherworldly power could lead to almost any effect. It simply requires the mind to be involved in the process, which is basically what spells are anyway. The trick is to stick to a theme. Maybe a world full of psychic tree-people would have access to tree bending druid spells, or instead to fire spells due to their overwhelming desire to prevent outbreaks. Maybe an order of honorable monastic warriors could have access to Paladin spells through their mental insights. So long as you justify it within your own fiction, there's no reason it can't work.

In a lot of these cases, knowing how to divvy up the powers is the key, particularly for player characters. You could easily swap out a class' access to a gambit school for access to a magic school from the *D&D Player's Handbook*. You could even allow multi-classing into traditional *D&D* classes. Let the psychic plants become actual druids; let the honorable monks take levels in paladin or monk. Problem solved.

## Why Not Both?

There's really no reason to keep science fiction and fantasy separate in your galaxy. If your group is up for it, why not simply allow magic to exist in space? There are a lot of ways to do this. You could allow galactic societies to access magic as a force of nature that they've either always had or that they have tapped into in time as their science advanced. Or you could envision a galaxy that's a fantasy setting cast forward in time a few thousand years.

Maybe the orcs, goblins, and dragons each have their own planets. Or perhaps there was a single source world that exploded with interstellar travel at some distant point in the past, causing worlds to be less dominated by a single race. Think of the interesting combinations you could come up with, as say goblins and elves make a world for themselves for a few millennia. Think of the fascinating cultures and technologies that would emerge.

Imagine the sci-fi future of *Dark Sun*, *Dragonlance*, or *Ravenloft*. The original or futuristic versions of those worlds could be planets in your campaign worth a visit. They might even have expanded into entire empires, now at odds with one other for dominance over the galaxy. And what of their gods? Are they at war? Have they retreated to their otherworldly domains as the galaxy turned to more scientific modes of thought? Or were they themselves merely an earlier race who fused magic and science?

Magic is a perfectly logical explanation for faster-than-light travel. Once you're operating with access to the impossible, all sorts of inventions become available. What if hyperspace capable ships are fueled by bound elementals, as the air ships are in *Eberron*? Suddenly engineering and piloting have all new, magical implications. Starship techs would probably surround their engineering stations in protective sigils and have their tools blessed by powerful clerics when possible. Pilots might all be spellcasters, since those are the minds most capable of understanding arcane beings.

## What's In This Book

The chapters to come attempt to further expand upon these opportunities for borrowing, blending, and expanding.

*Chapter 1: Conversions.* Making the most of the fantasy rulebooks and modules at your disposal.

*Chapter 2: Mysticism.* Rules for psychic power in the far flung future.

*Chapter 3: You Got Your Fantasy in My Sci-Fi.* More ideas for creating full on blends of magic and technology.

# Chapter 1: Conversions

Converting rules and themes from fantasy into sci-fi is mostly simple. We say mostly because It does take an understanding of both genres and of how they connect. Fantasy is often about exploring the fringes of the possible, occasionally through the shortcut of magic. This has largely been done with inspiration from European history and folklore, but by no means ends there. Science fiction is likewise about exploration, often through the parallel shortcut of science and technology. As mentioned earlier, **HYPERLANES** focuses upon a particular style of science fiction. It borrows from genres like spaghetti westerns, space operas, and war stories. In short, it's all about shooting first and staying on target.

The ease with which you can mix science fiction and fantasy is the good news. The even better news is that the rules of **HYPERLANES** makes this even easier. **HYPERLANES** is designed to work fine with whatever *D&D* elements you'd like to pull from. This chapter explores a few ways you might do that, cribbing from fantasy to create an even richer science fiction.

## Adversaries

NPCs and monsters are already a part of **HYPERLANES**, but our particular character design system is built for speed over detail. There's a lot to be said for the more complex design of creatures in your standard *D&D* module or manual. Likewise, there's much you can do with these monsters in **HYPERLANES**, with a little spit and polish.

For one, many weird fantasy creatures are perfect as alien life forms found in the wilds of the many planets in any given galaxy. Both genres draw extensively from the mundane, and they can also draw from one another. If a party of adventurers finds themselves on an unknown world, what better way to establish the stakes and challenges than having some threat emerge from the landscape? DMs talk a lot about filing off the serial numbers to make new monsters out of old. There's never been a better time for that kind of tinkering.

The most important thing to remember is that monsters are nothing without evocative description. Attributes do not make a character, and a stat block does not make a monster. Physically, a creature with an AC of 15 might be almost anything that's moderately hard to damage. Things mostly get specific when talking about its attacks and other abilities, but many of these are easy to fix into what you need.

If an attack deals a damage type that's a little too fantasy, just change it up. No big deal. Maybe it would be silly for your swamp dwelling lizard to spray a cone of icy cold; just make that cone concussion and suddenly it's a damaging howl. Change it to acid and now it's a horrifying defense mechanism. So long as your players can see what you envision, can believe it is truly there, stalking them in the dark or swarming around them, then your monster will work whether fantastic or science fictional.

## Working with Templates

The templates we include in **HYPERLANES** for creature creation can easily be used to modify existing monsters from *D&D*. Want to use a given creature but need it to be speedy to represent its past on a high gravity world, well just add one or more Tiers of the Mobile template. Maybe balance those points out with the Vulnerable template.

Another reason you might use our template system is to change the CR of a creature. This can help to fit the XP you want your encounter to be worth. Normally it's pretty difficult to hit a particular XP goal when balancing an encounter. The **HYPERLANES** templates add a level of granular control that makes hitting those goals easy.

This can also help to integrate the new attack maneuvers into a creature. Just modify an existing *D&D* creature with the power you want to use with Templates until it fits your specific needs.

# Monsters Become Vehicles

The **HYPERLANES** vehicles system is essentially the same as our creature building system, with a few little modifications for Battle Stations and FTL travel. One great consequence of this similarity is that you can use existing monsters as vehicles. Just make sure they're at least CR 7 or so (after any templates you add).

Let's look at an example: *The Phase Spider*. This creature may not look much like a starship, but with a few modifications we can turn it into something memorable for a space battle. Why don't we turn it into a hyperspace-manipulating starship on the cutting edge of technology? Its phasing ability really sounds like a cool sci-fi power. We can turn its poisoning attack into something that draws energy from that strange alternate space. As you'll soon see, the possibilities for modification are endless.

First let's look at its CR. Right now that's just 3, not quite

high enough to take on a starship full of heroes. They might be formidable in a group, but let's still take it up to at least 7. May as well make it a bit more fearsome.

Giving it the Hyper template adds 1/2 CR and makes it a little more useful as a quick attack craft, which is the direction we feel like taking this creature. In fact, let's give it two Tiers of the Mobile template to get it really moving. To determine its speed, we'll just divide by 5 to get the squares and add the extra squares from the Mobile template, resulting in a speed of 8. We'll get its CR up to 8 by adding 3 Tiers of Nimble, giving it a final AC of 16 and granting it a +6 bonus to damage. Finally, let's put in a Vulnerable level to take it down to our 7 CR goal and give it a weakness. We can make its Vulnerability be that it's vulnerable to damage for 1 round when it comes out of its *Ethereal Jaunt* from hyperspace back into real space. Travelling so fast is tough on these guys.

All we need now are battle stations. This creature normally only gets one attack per round, but as a base CR 3 creature (before templates) under the **HYPERLANES** system it would get 2 attacks per round. Let's go with two Gunnery Battle Stations, keeping in mind that it's losing some of its existing ground combat abilities, such as Web Walker and Spider Climb. We'll just turn its "Bite" attack into a power called "Hyper Drain" at two gunnery stations. Make it a ranged attack now and change the damage types a bit. The piercing could be electricity, and the poison could become force, representing this unique starship's ability to manipulate hyperspace itself as an attack. With vehicles, the scrambled condition generally works the same as poisoned, so we'll say that's what the attack has a chance to inflict.

## Phase Spider                    [original stats]

Large monstrosity, unaligned
Armor Class 13 (natural armor) Hit Points 32 (5d10 + 5) Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 15 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 6 (−2) | 10 (+0) | 6 (−2) |

**Skills** Stealth +6
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10 Languages
**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)
**Ethereal Jaunt.** As a bonus action, the spider can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.
**Spider Climb.** The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
**Web Walker.** The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

## Actions

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

A phase spider possesses the magical ability to phase in and out of the Ethereal Plane. It seems to appear out of nowhere and quickly vanishes after attacking. Its movement on the Ethereal Plane before coming back to the Material Plane makes it seem like it can teleport.

# Magic Becomes Superscience

Magic itself is easy enough to convert into science and technology. In fact, the base system just replaces the Arcana skill with the Science skill for a reason. That's the fundamental difference in play between fantasy and **HYPERLANES**-style science fiction: magical things are now technical things. It's that simple.

That said, although the move to technology might seem like hand waving, we're really moving to a different, parallel level of complexity. Magical systems have an internal logic, whether Vancian, Lovecraftian, or any other. Effects can be temporary or permanent, can be classified into varying types of schools or orders of classification, and can be cast as discrete "spells" in certain cases. The kind of technology found in **HYPERLANES** is without a lot of hard science explanations, but still follows a set of rules. Robots are not living and can be spliced just as any electronic device, starships generally have a few basic components that seem universal, and energy weapons can usually fit in the palm of your hand without getting too hot. We hand waive, but there is still some logic to it.

When converting an item, spell, or other magical effect over into technology, it's best to fit things into the existing logic of the setting. Be our guest not to. Sometimes the baffling nature of science so advanced it seems like magic, and that could be exactly what you want. But considering internal logic rarely hurts, and almost always helps. For instance, golems can easily be converted into robots for our purposes; magic weapons are probably energy blasters or made of space-age materials; and spells that create gouts of fire become effects that require a power source or explosive device.

## Magical Items

Magical items are perhaps most amenable to ease conversion from fantasy to science fiction. Think about nearly any magical item in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. They're all there to make lives easier, to take down foes, or to do something beyond the normal. The important thing to remember is that conversion will often mean changing the form of the item. Magical weapons are more likely to take the form of ranged weapons, such as rifles and cannons in **HYPERLANES**. That's just what's most likely to be able to wield such power.

Magical boots and cloaks don't need to change much. Certainly boots are infused with interesting technological improvements in sci-fi. Cloaks and capes might become sashes or bandoleers, but sometimes they'll remain cape-like, adding a bit of panache to those characters seeking to utilize them.

Armors will look different, but are fundamentally the same. Just look for similar **HYPERLANES** armors to form the basis. Half-plate becomes a half suit, chainmail becomes a scavenger set. Trust your gut and just go with it. It's Superscience, you don't need to explain it too much.

Scrolls and potions are a great inspiration for Superscience items. We already include Med Packs as conversions for healing potions, but you can go a lot further with other one time use items. Some settings might have expendable devices that splice into computers, so just put a few Splicing school gambits into those things and hand them out like candy.

Other items might represent drinkable chemical enhancements or nanotech swarms. They could be memories or skills programmed into data cards that cyborgs can plug into, granting nearly any gambit. A handful of items along these lines can go a long way towards personalizing your campaign to the technologies you envision in your galaxy.

## One-time Item Examples:

***Espionage Drive [potion].*** A handheld computer drive the size of a finger. Pulls the Download gambit as a 3rd level character when inserted into a computer system as a bonus action. Does not require concentration to complete, but does need to be inserted for two full rounds. Once finished, the data is stored on the drive, ready for transport and retrieval.

***Valuable Intel [scroll].*** A set of files which, when used by a character with access to the Tactics school, pulls the Observation gambit on any target the user knows about, regardless of the distance.

## Spells

Spells are a little trickier. The important thing when selecting a spell is figuring out which equipment will be needed to fill the role of components. **HYPERLANES** gambits don't use verbal or somatic components and tend not to use up material components. They just require the right tools, weapons, or systems.

Deciding if a spell should be allowed in vehicles combat is also an important task, which generally just requires common sense. Spells that seem like they should only work on the small scale, really focus on creatures' minds and bodies, or that can't really be sent out into space will often only work for personal scale combat.

Just as with monsters, you shouldn't feel limited by the physical description or damage type of the spell in question. If you love Flaming Sphere, but want your mad scientist to control a ball of roiling radioactive waste, just change the damage to radiation and describe it as a creepy green glowing orb. Problem solved.

# Adventures and Setting

Converting published adventures over from fantasy to sci-fi can be a fun undertaking, if a little bit tricky here and there. The goal should be to adapt the core concept over to one that fits the galaxy you're playing in. An adventure to escort a caravan can be easily turned into a starfaring job to do the same task with a squadron of starfighters. A dungeon crawl can become a delve into an armored fortress or ancient alien ruins. Technologies can derive from traps, spells, and other hindrances.

The trick is to get specific about the implications of any given adventure, in terms of where it's happening and who it impacts. If the fantasy version has our heroes working for an important local figure, it's helpful to come up with an equivalent personage in your **HYPERLANES** galaxy. By connecting to the location or larger events within the galaxy, even a mundane side quest can help flesh out your setting.

Maybe the magical supplies dealer is now a junk collector, plying the boneyards of this sector for useful parts. Perhaps that wizened village elder is now a corrupt bureaucrat on a backwater world, looking for a way to increase that world's importance in the star system. Stories are more interesting with colorful characters and with high stakes. Take the time to figure out why the adventure matters to the big picture and to whom it impacts.

## Dungeons

Converting a fantastical building into a technological one is the most common task you'll find in adventure work. Simple things like warehouses and even mansions are easy, as they work pretty similar in both settings. Totally magical locations tend to be more difficult. Just remember: high magic = high tech and high science. Things and places that float and fly still do that. Magical barriers are just force fields. Powerful spells are just advanced alien technology or the work of rare genius scientists.

Literal dungeons or caves are trickier. Characters need a good reason to leave the comfort and safety of their starship. Places in sci-fi are far more about their importance to the greater world or galaxy than places in fantasy. In fantasy it's ok for a dungeon to just be there, ready for plunder. It might have a little backstory just for logic's sake, but in general the conceit is that old places full of magic and treasure just exist here and there.

In **HYPERLANES** things tend to be more connected. That massive cave houses an old starship hangar with a few ships still inside. Why are the ships there? What's inside them? Who left them there? Does this have to do with the galactic war or is this the hideout of an infamous space pirate? What silent alarms are already going off, alerting the owners of this place that their stash is being raided? Oh, and what creepy crawly creatures dwell here while the pirates/rebels are gone?

## Technological Theme

One powerful tool in building and converting adventures over is keeping with a theme centered on the technology or scientific oddities present in the locale. Maybe the region is covered in fungal spores. Maybe the rogue scientists discovered a new way to transmit electricity.

You can find a major thematic element with a lot of visual punch such as bioluminescent fungi or purple bursts of electricity in the air. You can make sure the logic of this theme works for the players, giving them ways to solve problems and defeat foes. Some enemies might have vulnerabilities related to the theme. Others might guard precious tech artifacts or computer access points.

Finally, you can turn the central problems of the adventure into variations on the theme. The pirate leader could have ingested so much of the local fungi that he's become half fungus himself. The final vault of the hidden fortress could be covered floor to ceiling with conductive material, rippling with that strange purple electricity.

Making the final problem relate to the tech and other sci-fi weirdness they've already encountered wraps up the adventure in a nice neat bow, rewarding the players and their characters for the lessons learned along the way. In some ways this is just good storytelling and can easily be found in much of fantasy. It's just much easier in sci-fi, where there's a kind of logic to the systems encountered.

## Encounters and Monsters

The basics of a *D&D* encounter don't change much when doing them with **HYPERLANES**. The main difference is the use of ranged weapons. While bows and slings abound in medieval fantasy, they're still not quite as prevalent as ranged weapons in futuristic settings. **HYPERLANES** was designed with this in mind. Characters do best when employing gambits, finding vulnerabilities, and changing the nature of the fight to suit their advantage.

When converting encounters, it's easy to fall into the trap of converting literally everything over one-for-one. The ranger with the crossbow on the wagon becomes a sniper positioned on an anti-gravity truck. This can become a problem because creatures in fantasy encounters are not as well designed for fast, moving, cinematic action. They tend to charge up into melee, form lines, and stand in place. This is boring.

To make an encounter more **HYPERLANES** you need to mix things up. Give characters a reason to charge, climb, or fall back.

Give characters advantage for specific types of weapons, and give foes vulnerability to certain conditions they fear most.

Most importantly, give creatures situational modifiers and plot twists based on the tech theme of the encounter. A leader might have the dead man switch for a bomb. An alien creature might spew a necrotic gas that grants the effects of the *Spider Climb* spell. A jailer might have disadvantage on attacks against foes who insult her. Anything you can do to add secondary goals add flavor and most importantly movement to the encounter.

Don't forget, in your own sci-fi galaxy much of the monsters are totally unknown to your players. Take advantage of this. A player might have the Monster Manual memorized front to back, but when your version of trolls have five arms and evolved on a high gravity asteroid your players might not catch on exactly how you're cribbing from the fantasy sourcebooks. You've got the element of surprise, and that gives you dramatic power. Make them fear every slimy creature in the dark. Make them strain to decipher every scrap of information about their foes. Fantasy is new again, because you're able to call it space opera and nobody will notice.

# Building Worlds and Galaxies

Converting whole campaign settings over is probably the ultimate task in taking medieval fantasy as inspiration for cinematic science fiction games. The classic *D&D* settings are an obvious starting place. Your home campaign worlds can work too. The key is having fun with it.

You can wink at the original source material when you can, but explore the differences between the genres as well. Few players are going to overlook that the lead characters from *Dragonlance* are now important figures in your space game. Embrace the fun of playing with what's known, but establish that differences do exist as concepts get extrapolated out. Dragons ridden into battle are now ancient intelligent starships. Famous weapons don't necessarily just become space-age equivalents. They can represent whole technologies.

Kingdoms becomes worlds, star systems, and entire sectors of galactic space, with cultures amplified and extrapolated out. Use the cultures from the **HYPERLANES** species creation system as a guide. Think about new kinds of governments these cultures could become. Maybe even think about how those kingdoms might have evolved over millennia as they became spacefaring.

## Culture, Religion, and Government

Most fantasy governments are autocratic monarchies that are either outright tyrannies or might as well be. While those are easy to work with, it can be fun to explore vast differences that could emerge between the factions that claim vast tracts of space.

A culture dedicated to the gods could lose their faith, or they could continue to search for their gods among the stars. What if they thought they found them, in the form of extraterrestrial life or unusual energy beings? Would they capture their gods? Would they bend to their will if they found they could actually kill them, or would they champion themselves free from their capricious whims? How would their ethics evolve as their leaders and scientists grew increasingly knowledgeable about the nature of their supposed creators? What if the aliens they find actually were the beings their ancestors thought were their gods? How could they harm them? How could they respect them?

Alternatively, a culture dedicated to their gods could have found their pantheon as they discovered space travel, gaining theocracy over time as greater and greater proof of their beliefs manifested in their explorations. Are the gods objectively real? That's up to you to decide. Your campaign could allow the cleric or paladin class, or you could keep things mysterious. Maybe the gods do exist, but their miracles are only major events. And even if they do exist, they could still be simply powerful beings beyond the normal experience of physical beings. They could still be threatened by powerful alien foes or the death of stars.

## Magical Effects in the World

Magic is often an important element in an existing fantasy setting. As always, magic can simply get converted into science, reinterpreted as a form of advanced technological knowledge. A curse upon a fantasy race could become a plague or mass genetic manipulation of a species.

The tiefling traits, for example, could be a result of crossbreeding or other manipulation with extra-dimensional, barely understood "demons". The same apprehension and outright racism could follow them, for a similar reason to their fantasy cousins. Who can trust someone who looks like a terrifying being from beyond this reality?

Massive physical enchantments can also play out in scientific ways. Vast regions of space could be affected by barely understood forces. Our own scientists' experience with dark matter and dark energy imply that there's a great deal that we don't know about the nature of the galaxies in the cosmos, including the basic forces at work in its movements.

Plus big disruptions with cool nicknames help to give regions of space character. It's far easier to remember that strange region of space where starships fly backwards (called "The Reversal") than it is to remember the silly made up name of yet another space-duchy. That odd effect might come into play in a few space battles there and the players might even be able to use that knowledge to their advantage.

# Chapter 2: Mysticism

Mysticism is our term for supernatural powers commonly found in sci-fi settings. In many cases mystical powers will be presented as an amalgam of science and spirituality, implying that through powerful study a mind's abilities may be unlocked.

These powers might be scientifically studied paranormal abilities or the product of millennia of religious seclusion and training. It's up to the DM to determine just where these types of effect fit in to their galaxy, if at all.

For best effect we reference existing spells you'll find in your Players Handbook. It's easy to convert them for use in HYPERLANES games and they're different enough in their deployment and description that they're suitably "mystical" compared to the existing gambits. In many cases it's probably best to ignore any material components required by the spell, or to substitute components that make more sense in your particular galaxy.

## Mystic Subschools

The following spell lists work as subschools of "magic", serving as loose groupings of effects useful in constructing mystical player characters and their adversaries. Though the mystical archetypes listed later in this chapter refer to these lists, the DM should feel free to edit these lists to best suit their galaxy. Making one or more of these off limits is perfectly reasonable, as all should be considered optional content.

## Emotion

Control over the raw emotions of others.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Empathy\*, Vicious Mockery* |
| Level 1 | *Dissonant Whispers, Hideous Laughter* |
| Level 2 | *Calm Emotions, Enthrall* |
| Level 3 | *Crusader's Mantle, Fear* |
| Level 4 | *Confusion, Staggering Smite* |
| Level 5 | *Awaken, Dream* |

\* Supplied in this book

## Mind-Body

Mastery over the body, through powers of the mind.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Autonomic Control\*, Resistance* |
| Level 1 | *Cure Wounds, False Life* |
| Level 2 | *Alter Self, Enhance Ability* |
| Level 3 | *Feign Death, Water Walk* |
| Level 4 | *Protection from Energy, Water Breathing* |
| Level 5 | *Greater Restoration, Mass Cure Wounds* |

\* Supplied in this book

## Prescience

Knowledge of events far away in time and space.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Guidance, True Strike* |
| Level 1 | *Bane, Hunter's Mark* |
| Level 2 | *Augury, Locate Object* |
| Level 3 | *Bestow Curse, Clairvoyance* |
| Level 4 | *Divination, Locate Creature* |
| Level 5 | *Commune with Nature, Scrying* |

## Psychokinetics

Power over objects around you.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Blade Ward, Mage Hand (without any visible hand effect)* |
| Level 1 | *Feather Fall, Thunderwave* |
| Level 2 | *Cloud of Daggers (or other debris), Levitate* |
| Level 3 | *Fly, Wind Wall* |
| Level 4 | *Control Water, Resilient Sphere* |
| Level 5 | *Animate Objects, Telekinesis* |

## Space

Bending the shape of reality to your whims.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Apportate\*, Dancing Lights* |
| Level 1 | *Expeditious Retreat, Longstrider* |
| Level 2 | *Misty Step, Pass Without Trace* |
| Level 3 | *Haste, Meld into Stone* |
| Level 4 | *Dimension Door, Freedom of Movement* |
| Level 5 | *Planar Binding (works on extradimensional creatures), Teleportation Circle* |

\* Supplied in this book

## Thought

Access and control over the conscious thoughts of others.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cantrips | *Friends, Message* |
| Level 1 | *Command, Comprehend Languages* |
| Level 2 | *Detect Thoughts, Suggestion* |
| Level 3 | *Hypnotic Pattern, Sending* |
| Level 4 | *Compulsion, Dominate Beast* |
| Level 5 | *Dominate Person, Modify Memory* |

# Spells

## Apportate

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cantrip** | |
| **School** | Conjuration |
| **Target** | An object you possess weighing less than 5 pounds |
| **Casting Time** | Bonus action |
| **Description** | You teleport the target object from your hand to a pocket or bag on your person, or move the object from somewhere on your person into one of your hands. You do not need to see the object to move it with this spell. |

## Autonomic Control

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cantrip** | |
| **School** | Transmutation |
| **Target** | Self |
| **Casting Time** | Action |
| **Duration** | 1 hour |
| **Description** | You master your own heart rate, breathing, and other natural processes. For the duration, you double the length of time you may hold your breath or undergo strenuous activity before suffering exhaustion or other negative effects. |

## Empathy

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cantrip** | |
| **School** | Enchantment |
| **Target** | Sapient creature |
| **Range** | 10 feet |
| **Casting Time** | Action |
| **Duration** | 10 minutes |
| **Scale** | Personal |
| **Description** | A target within range must make a Charisma save. Failure indicates you learn the target's current emotional state (content, giddy, unhappy, jealous, etc.), granting you advantage on emotional Charisma skill rolls against them for the duration, such as uses of Intimidation or Persuasion. |

# Mystic Knight Spellcasting

**-Spell Slots per Spell Level-**

| Muscle Level | Cantrips Known | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3rd | 2 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 4th | 2 | 3 | - | - | - |
| 5th | 2 | 3 | - | - | - |
| 6th | 2 | 3 | - | - | - |
| 7th | 2 | 4 | 2 | - | - |
| 8th | 2 | 4 | 2 | - | - |
| 9th | 2 | 4 | 2 | - | - |
| 10th | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | - |
| 11th | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | - |
| 12th | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | - |
| 13th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - |
| 14th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - |
| 15th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - |
| 16th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | - |
| 17th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | - |
| 18th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | - |
| 19th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| 20th | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 |

# Mystical Archetypes

The following archetypes could be useful in sci-fi settings that err on the side of psychic power or other supernatural effects, though within such settings those powers may be considered perfectly normal or at least scientifically explainable. They make strong use of the previously listed subschools of magic to provide a number of thematic options for DMs and players.
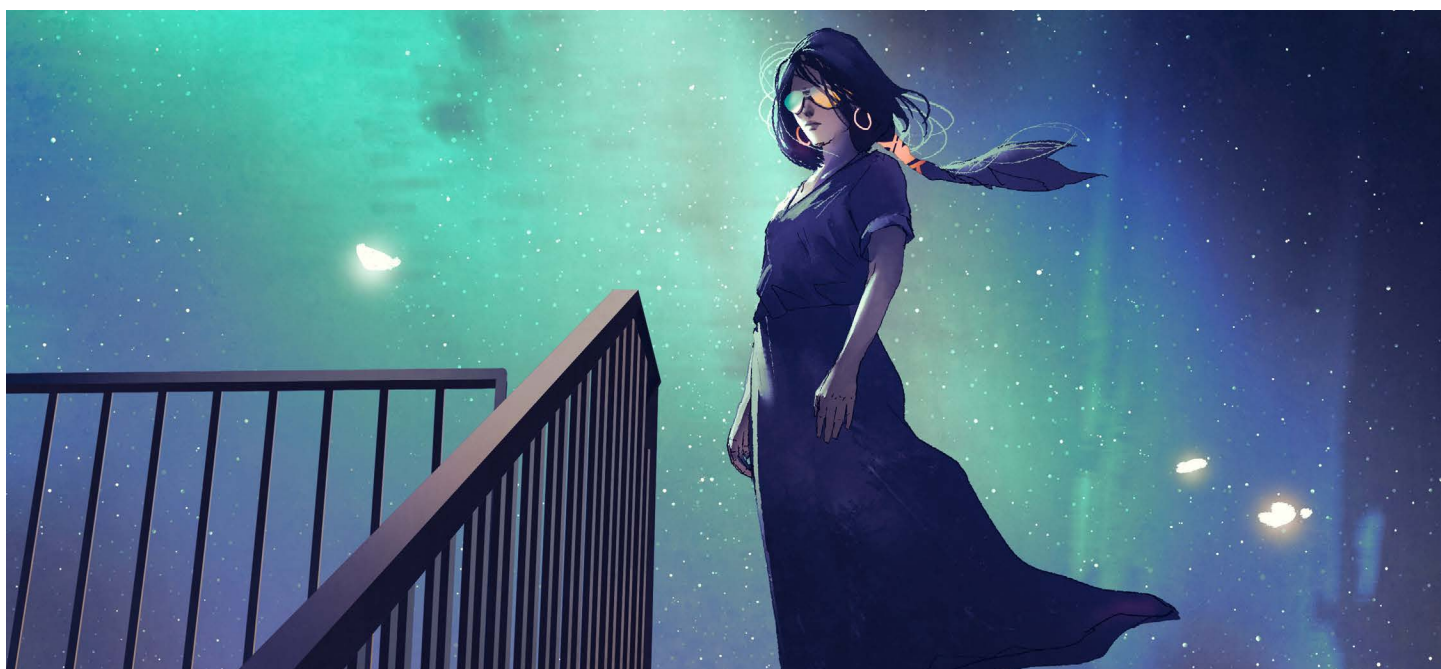
## Mystic Knight [Muscle Archetype]

Trained by a mystical cult or powerful religious order, the Mystic Knight is a paragon of either corruption or virtue. Mystic Knights might gather their power through devotion to a strange code, worship of an obscure god, or allegiance to an advanced alien intelligence beyond our understanding. In any case, they're strong in the mystic arts and ready to do battle for their strange cause.

### Spellcasting

When you reach 3rd level, you enhance your physical prowess with the ability to cast spells. Select two Mystic Subschools from which you will draw your spells.

**Cantrips.** You learn two cantrips of your choice from your selected Mystic Subschools. You learn an additional cantrip of your choice from these schools upon at 10th level.

**Spell Slots.** The Mystic Knight Spellcasting table show how many spell slots you have to cast your spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

**Spells Known of 1st-Level and Higher.** You know all of the 1st level spells from your chosen Mystic Schools. As you gain access to higher level spells, you learn all of the spells listed for that level in your two chosen schools.

**Spellcasting Ability.** Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for your Mystic Subschool spells, as you draw upon the lore and self-knowledge of your mystical tradition.

**Spell save DC** = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

**Spell attack modifier** = your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

## Mystical Weapon

At 3rd level, you learn the ways of a special weapon used by members of your order. You gain proficiency in this weapon and find a way to either build or find one (though your DM may make this into a side quest for you). You should work with your DM to figure out the nature of your weapon.

When wielding weapons of this type you may spend a bonus action to enter a mystic fighting trance until the end of the encounter. While in this trance you are immune to opportunity attacks and may not be surprised.

## Weapon Secrets

As you gain in Muscle levels, you come to master your mystical weapon. At 7th level any weapon of your mystical weapon type counts as a +1 weapon while you have it equipped, just as though it were a magic or Superscience item. At 10th level this bonus increases to +2, at 15th level it's +3, and at 18th level it's a +4 weapon in your hands (or tentacles, paws, or whatever).

## Deflection

Beginning at 10th level, while you are in a mystic fighting trance wielding a mystical weapon, you become able to defend yourself from ranged attacks. As a reaction to a ranged attack against you, you may make an attack roll with your mystical weapon. If your attack roll exceeds the attack roll of the ranged attack, the attack does not hit you, essentially parried by your weapon (or its ammo, if it's a ranged weapon).

If your roll exceeds the ranged attack roll by 5 or more, you redirect the parried attack back at the attacker. If your attack roll would hit the attacker, they are struck by their own ranged attack, with all of the attack's normal effects.

## Advanced Fighting Style

At 15th level you must select two fighting styles you do not already possess. From now on, whenever you enter a mystic fighting trance you gain the benefits of the fighting styles you have chosen (in addition to your existing fighting style bonuses).

## Wisdom of the Masters

Upon reaching 18th level you have come to understand the deepest teachings of your order. You may now select a third Mystic Subschool from which you gain spells. All of the 1st through 4th level spells on that list are added to your spells known once you are able to cast spells of that level. You may now learn cantrips from that Subschool, and may trade out one of your cantrips known for one from that list now if you desire.

## Gifted [Genius Specialty]

The gifted are geniuses with access to a more exotic kind of power. Bending their minds to more than just intellectual pursuits, they harness a specific set of mystical powers through will and unseen talents. Hidden amongst their many other brilliant abilities and ideas, others may not even notice that the insightful thinker before them is actually capable of much more tangible and horrifying results. The gifted is a wonder to behold, sought out for exploitation by governments and underworld kingpins alike.

Gifted walk a careful line between doubt and hubris, power and danger. Gifted specialty features revolve around this constant struggle to harness their power and use it without destroying themselves.

## Gifted Subschool

Beginning when you select this specialty at 2nd level, you must select one of the Mystic Subschools. From here on out, those spells are available for you to learn whenever you gain new gambits. You must still inscribe them into your procedures book to do so.

At this time you may switch over one or more of your known tricks to cantrips from that Subschool.

## Confidence

From 2nd level on, when you cast a spell from your Gifted Subschool of 1st level or higher you gain a kind of hubris or self-assurance, protecting you from harm. This "Confidence" begins with a number of hit points equal to twice your genius level, plus your Intelligence modifier. This is its maximum value. Whenever you take damage, your Confidence takes damage instead. If this reduces your Confidence to 0 hit points, you take any remaining damage.

While your Confidence is at 0 hit points, it can't absorb damage, but it can be replenished. Whenever you cast another 1st level or higher spell from your Gifted Subschool your Confidence regains a number of hit points equal to twice the level of the spell, up to its maximum.

Once you create this Confidence pool, you may not do so again until you take a long rest.

## Overconfidence

Starting at 6th level, whenever your Confidence pool is at its maximum, you gain advantage on saving throws for which you are proficient. However, you also gain disadvantage on saves for which you are not proficient. In order to avoid this penalty, you may choose to chide yourself for 1 psychic damage as a bonus action, taking yourself down a notch (and your Confidence down 1 HP).

## Self-Control

At 10th level, when you score a critical hit on an attack roll against a hostile enemy, you may choose to deal damage normally and instead regain 1 spent spell slot of any level. Once you have used this feature you may not do so again until you have taken a short rest.

## Raw Power

Beginning at 14th level, when you Confidence pool is at its maximum, you may choose to reduce its hit points to 0 to boost a spell from your Mystic Subschool. Your distance for the spell is doubled, any spell attack roll you make for the spell is made with advantage, and any saves your targets make are rolled with disadvantage.

## Hyper Navigator [Pilot Archetype]

Some are more than mere pilots and copilots. Some have a connection to the stars in their blood and in their psyches. They may unlock their abilities with rare psychotropic compounds or through enrollment in specialized guilds, but however they find it, their power is one which folds space itself.

In some settings Hyper Navigators may be the only Pilots capable of interstellar travel. In others, they are freakishly rare savants at moving faster-than-light. They are the masters of space, and space is what spacefaring is all about.

## Gambit Selection

You select your gambits from the schools of Tactics and Vehicles, as well as from the spells in the Mystic Subschool of Space.

## Sense of Place

At 1st level you always know your current location in relation to known landmarks. This applies to both your location on a planet, moon, or starship, as well as your location within the star system and galaxy. You know exactly where you are.

You have advantage on all skill rolls related to navigation.

## Connection to the Stars

Even as early as 1st level, the stars call out to you, begging you to explore them. Whenever you enter a new star system or land on a new planet you temporarily gain proficiency in a skill of your choice at the time. This proficiency lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Pilot level.
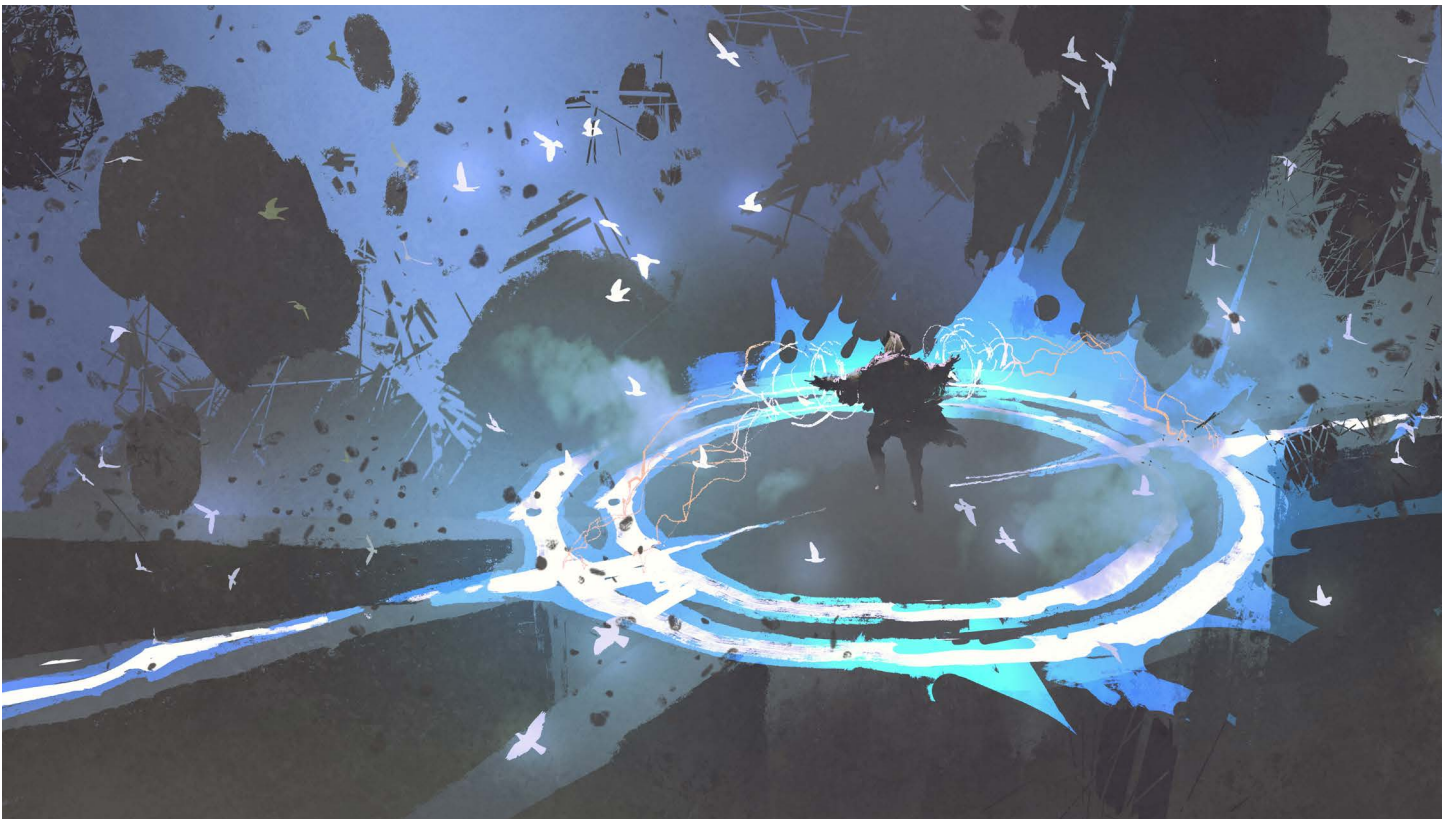
## Wrinkle Space

At 6th level you learn to fold space around yourself, warping the landscape. By expending a spell/gambit slot of any level you may project this aura, which follows you, causing all of the squares immediately around you to count as difficult terrain. This effect lasts for 10 minutes and may be used in vehicles combat, in which case it affects all of the squares around the vehicle you are in. This effect never hinders you or your own vehicle's movement.

## Folding

By 14th level your capacity to alter the shape of space allows you to move to nearly any place you know of. You may cast the Teleport spell, as though it were a gambit without expending a gambit slot. Once you do, you may not do so again until after you have taken a long rest. Doing so is quite draining and causes you

to take 20 force damage that cannot be mitigated in any way.

You can cast the spell normally, or in vehicles scale combat if you are at a piloting battle station. Casting while piloting only teleports your current vehicle, not the additional targets around you that the personal scale version can.

## Hyper Real

Beginning at 18th level your mastery over space and hyperspace allows you to become essentially intangible for short periods of time. You may cast Etherealness, pushing your body and mind into hyper reality. Once you do, you may not do so again until after you have taken a long rest.

If you are piloting a vehicle you may instead cast this on the entire vessel, affecting it and everyone inside for the normal duration.

# Psychic [Ambassador Profession]

Psychics are the ultimate mind-benders of the galaxy, coupling the socially powerful gambits of their parent class with the honed mental training of a psychic juggernaut. Some learned their abilities through sheer luck, barely understanding their power, but using them to make their way through the galaxy as tricksters or potent diplomats. Others trained at monasteries or secret government laboratories, becoming living weapons of the mind and master spies, able to pry secrets from their unsuspecting victims.

Psychics often become military leaders, politicians, and other climbers of social hierarchies. They have a knack for saying the right thing and commanding respect. A few however are malformed mutants, grown from vats to their mental perfection, as experiments or inheritors of some twisted religious prophesy.

## Psychic Powers

At 3rd level, upon developing this profession, you gain access to the Thought and Emotion schools of Mysticism. The spells on those lists, from level 1 through 5, are now on your gambit list, allowing you to learn them when you learn new gambits.

Many of your existing gambits from the Influence and Deception schools will now become psychic in origin. It may be difficult to tell where your natural charisma ends and your mental powers begin.

## Psychic Tricks

At 3rd level you also gain access to the Thought and Emotion cantrips. You learn one cantrip from either of those lists now, which does not count against your trick's known for this class.

From this point forward when you learn a new trick, you may alternatively select a cantrip from the Thought and Emotion schools.

## Mental Protections

As of level 6 your mental acumen has advanced to the point that you've got a mind like a steel trap. You double your proficiency bonus on Charisma save rolls and are now immune to being charmed. You now also have resistance to psychic damage.

## Psychic Assault

At 14th level you may attack the mind of another as though your own psyche were a ranged weapon, lobbing glowing bolts of psychic energy at your foe. This weapon has a maximum range of 30ft and attacks using your Charisma attribute. You always count as proficient in this weapon and on hit it deals 1d12 psychic damage to living, sapient targets. On a critical hit, the target suffers the frightened condition for 10 minutes. Normal ranged weapon rules apply in terms of concealment and visibility.
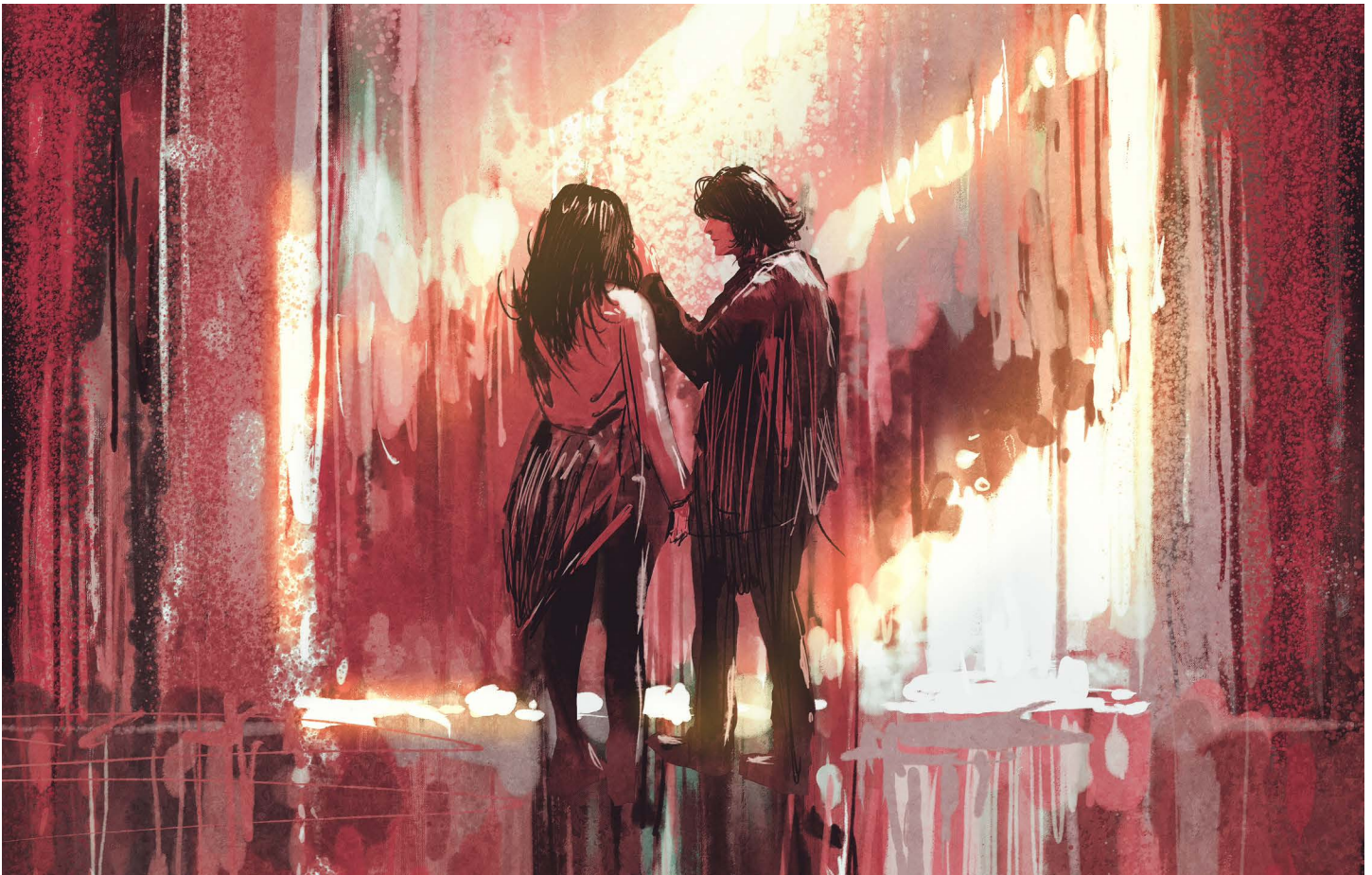
# Chapter 3: You Got Your Fantasy In My Sci-Fi

There are a lot of different ways to blend science fiction and fantasy. Quite a few of them mix with cinematic action adventure gaming quite well. Magic can explain the many unbelievable things going on, such as faster than light travel and hand-held energy cannons that don't burn your arm off. But there are so many more interesting things you can do with this heady blend of natural and unnatural laws. Let's explore a few of the ways you can integrate magic and science as one in your **HYPERLANES** galaxy.

## Magic is Science

This one's a fun premise, and it has a lot of branching possibilities off of it. If we assume that the laws of arcane magic are truly just fundamental laws of nature, then sciences will naturally develop to take advantage of them. The equivalents of chemistry, physics, and any other physical science would develop, perhaps even along the same lines as the *D&D* schools of magic.

This is an option which favors the more studious classes such as Cleric and of course Wizard, but there's no reason Sorcerers and other fun character classes couldn't join in, using more innate talents to take advantage of those natural laws. A gymnast utilizes physics in their endeavors, but doesn't necessarily need to know any equations to do so. Such would be the same with the more natural casters here.

What's fun about magic as science is that many technologies would naturally develop. If you can conjure energy or matter from another plane, or even just the sun, you can use that as fuel. You can banish parts of your enemies. You can take nearly any existing tech to the next level.

Imagine computers with circuits that make the most of magical laws to think at a nearly sentient level. Robots and golems become one and the same. Now imagine similar circuits that could alter the world just as wizards do, performing incantations over and over and over. Automating the processes of magic could mean spell effects at the push of a button, and spells with vastly improved effects.

These sorts of galaxies could be utterly chaotic, as new magics develop out of mad experiments as they blend with science and automation. Or magic could be carefully controlled by a powerful order of high wizards. A galaxy at war might have both scenarios, with some species specialized in particular magic-tech solutions to the problems of interstellar war.

# Magic is Mysterious

Magic may not be understood all that well. It might be just as weird and personal as it is in many fantasy settings. This can work particularly well if you're interested in truly separating magic from science. If scientists exist, and wizards exist, but they have no common language or understanding, then magic might be truly miraculous and rare. This option might seem less interesting than the Magic is Science option, as you don't get to make up all kinds of scientific implications for magic, but it does allow magic users to be special and rare. Players with sorcery in their blood or apprenticeship on the hidden wizard world will be heroes of legend.

Imagine the power wizards would wield if they were alone in understanding the laws of magic not just on a fantasy world, but in the entire galaxy. Imagine how jealous they would be when usurper mages arise on forgotten planets. Imagine how much scarier a dragon would be if they weren't just sentient dinosaurs, but the sole practitioners of otherworldly powers.

Magic as mystery has the benefit of leaving magic as it is, and keeping it strange and unknown. To a scientist, magic is all the more fascinating if it doesn't subscribe to what is known and proven, or if it doesn't perform well in laboratory conditions. To the average lowly serf in your science fantasy galaxy, magic might not even be believable.

Magic could have once been understood in this scenario, perhaps forming the foundation of a now fallen empire. It could be forgotten but ready for the bright or naturally talented heroes to come along and bring it back. Alternatively, magic could be undiscovered or totally new, an ability granted to a few in tune with mystical forces now active in the universe. A cosmic shift allowing for these strange powers to emerge.

# Magic isn't Magical

Another option is to simply say that magic is an effect created by technological means. Nanite clouds or high tech force manipulation devices could allow for the same effects as magic most places, without the need for a mystical force pervasive in the universe. Manipulating of these technologies could remain arcane, in that only a few with the right talent or training can wield them, allowing for the existing D&D classes to serve the role.

In this situation you may wish to alter spell lists a bit to account for your magic explanation. Enchanting the minds of others might not make sense if tiny wormholes move energies around in your magic system, but Evocation and Summoning might be perfect.

# Magic is Alien

Any of the earlier options could work great with a scenario in which humans and other more mundane species live lives full of tech and science, but where some aliens know about more magical effects. Magic could simply be more advanced technology, or simply very strange forms of science. PCs that learn it may need to study with the rare aliens who use it, or undergo genetic splicing or blood transfusions. In any case, magic becomes quite precious and mysterious if it's more of a representation of alien thinking than simply a set of motions and words that make things happen. The culture of the alien species might shine through in the kinds of spells available.

This option opens up the possibility of the Warlock class more than any other. Warlocks might be tapping into the power of these aliens directly, by calling upon those aliens through pacts. Maybe pact patrons are trans-dimensional beings, capable of exerting some power over this plane of existence through magical effects and contact with "warlocks". Or perhaps alien magical practitioners have discovered that the laws of physics themselves are so complex as to be sentient. Imagine bargaining with time, gravity, or nuclear radiation.

# The Starchild

## [Warlock Otherworldly Patron]

You are beholden to a being or collective of beings who live within the stars. Utterly alien in their motivations and biology, they lend you inscrutable powers beyond understanding. The powers they grant tend to be flashy and relate to energy, light, heat, and survival within the stars themselves. At times you may feel a strange pull to a distant star. There you may receive psychic images of baffling tasks you must perform for your celestial masters.

## Expanded Spell List

The children of the stars provide you with an expanded list of spells to choose from when you learn a warlock spell.

Starchild Expanded Spells

| Spell Level | Spells |
| --- | --- |
| 1st | *Burning Hands, Feather Fall* |
| 2nd | *Flaming Sphere, Invisibility* |
| 3rd | *Hypnotic Pattern, Protection from Energy* |
| 4th | *Greater Invisibility, Resilient Sphere* |
| 5th | *Conjure Elemental, Seeming* |

## Starshine

Beginning at 1st level, your starry patrons extend to you the ability to project their light whenever you need it. You gain the Light cantrip, but whenever you use it your patrons (the star creatures) take notice of whatever falls within that light. Use that power with caution, as too much attention can be troublesome.

## Secrets in the Stars

Starting at 6th level, whenever you are able to see the stars, you may call upon them for knowledge. The stars look down upon much in the galaxy, but understanding the secrets of the universe can be difficult. Calling upon your patrons for knowledge as an action grants you a number of obscure facts equal to 1d6 plus your Charisma modifier. These facts will all relate to your current situation, conflict, or location. They may not be useful, but they will always be true. Once used, you may not employ this feature again until you finish a long rest.

## Heart of a Dying Sun

At 10th level, you have become like a star, with your bones becoming vastly denser. Your weight doubles, and you are now resistant to bludgeoning damage. Your bones themselves are nearly impossible to break.

## Body Inferno

Upon reaching 14th level you are able to become a starry, fiery version of yourself. Igniting in this way takes an action. For the next 10 minutes you are immune to heat and radiation damage, can fly at twice your normal walking speed, and deal 1d10 heat damage to anyone who touches you. In this form you do not need to breath and can survive the vacuum of space unharmed. Once used, you may not employ this feature again until you finish a long rest.