Races D6 / The Serp

The Serp:

The Serp are a species which is largely unknown to the galaxy, since the last known contact with them occurred just over 3,000 years ago. It is widely believed that the Serp are extinct, but this is not the case. What the galactic community knows about the Serp comes entirely from another species, the Paq Nalthiin, with whom they fought a long and bloody war. All that is known about the Serp was gleaned from a partially intact computer recovered from the wreckage of a Serp vessel. The Serp homeworld is unknown; all that is known about it is that the Serp were forced to flee from it to escape an unknown enemy. According to the fragmentary records recovered the Serp traveled for 75 years before reaching the Pecsus system, and coming into conflict with the Paq Nalthiin. No live Serp was ever seen. For that matter no intact Serp body was ever recovered, only fragments which yielded little information about the species. It has been surmised that the Serp had some sort of incendiary device implanted within their bodies in order to keep the enemy from learning anything about them. The Serp Incursion (as the Paq Nalthiin call the war, or alternately the Great War with the Serp) was fought over the course of 32 standard years in the Pecsus planetary system. Both sides used roughly similar levels of technology, most notably neither side had access to hyperdrives. The only Serp installation on a planetary body in the Pecsus system was a base which they carved out of the eighth moon of Jein Bonnar. In the closing actions of the war this moon was bombarded heavily from space, and it has been quarantined ever since, due to fears that the Serp had heavily booby-trapped it.

While this is what the galaxy as a whole knows about the Serp, there is much more to their tale than this. The Serp evolved from an amphibious salamander- like species on their homeworld of Gerrat. Gerrat was the 7th planet in its star system, and orbited an extremely hot blue star. It was only this heat that kept the distantly-orbiting planet at temperatures conducive to life, and the distant orbit of Gerrat meant that one year by the Serp calendar was equivalent to roughly 17 standard years. Standard time measurements will be used throughout the rest of this writeup. Gerrat had a warm swampy climate near the equator, and it was here that the Serp evolved. The rest of the planet was not so moist or warm however, and as the Serp slowly became sentient they learned to adapt to the conditions on the rest of Gerrat.

The Serp of today have long since lost the ability to breathe under water, and are most comfortable at temperatures of roughly 24 degrees celcius. Serp may be Force sensitive, but it is extraordinarily rare for Serp to become Force users. It is so rare in fact that Force users are nothing more than a legend to most Serp, and any Serp who finds him or herself manifesting Force abilities will typically be terrified by them, and hide them from everyone else if possible. The Serp no longer have any more than a small vestigial tail, walk upright on powerful legs, and have relatively small arms with 6 long rubbery fingers on each hand. The hands and arms of the Serp are not well adapted to heavy lifting, but are extremely good at fine manipulation, and whenever they need to lift something heavy they tend to use their massive jaws. A look at the jaws of a Serp would tend to convince the viewer that a bite would do a massive amount of damage, but this is not the case. The Serp are strictly herbivores, and their jaws are not filled with teeth per se, but rather a tough ridge of skin which is used to chew plants. The ancestors of the Serp would collect large quantities of reeds in their huge jaws, and would then chew them for hours. Modern Serp also tend to do this, and in fact a Serp mating ritual involves the male and female both chewing a particular type of plant for roughly 3 hours. Serp tend to mate for life, with the female laying eggs, and the male fertilizing them and keeping them in a pouch for 4-5 months before the eggs have developed a hard shell. At

this point the eggs are taken from the male's pouch, and for the next 1-2 months are kept warm, traditionally by the female sitting on them, but since the Serp have developed technology they tend to incubate the eggs using heat lamps. Serp males and females enjoy theoretical equality, but in practice females tend to get slightly better opportunities in Serp society. Young Serp (usually 4-10 from a clutch of eggs survive) are completely dependent on their parents for the first 17-21 years of their lives (imagine that a 17 year old Serp is
equivalent to a 5 year old human), and from this point on they continue to rely heavily on support from their parents for the next 12 years or so. A Serp is considered to be an adult at age 30, and they tend to live to the age of about 110 years old. The extended period in which a Serp is cared for by his or her parents results in very strong bonds with both the parents, and a Serp's brood-mates. In the distant history of the Serp this led to the establishment of many small clans, which were fiercely loyal to their clan-mates. This in turn led to nearly 5,000 years of almost constant clan warfare which embroiled the entire planet of Gerrat.

Eventually nations of Serp began to emerge in place of the familiar clans. Competition between these nations was fierce, and many wars mark this period in Serp history, as they progressed from a stone age society up through the information age. Once the Serp had mastered industrialization they began slowly to turn away from warfare, and disputes between different Serp nations began to be settled diplomatically, with war eventually becoming the final option to be used when all else failed, rather than the method of choice for settling disagreements. The reason for this shift from violence to diplomacy is unknown, but it has been surmised that as an increasingly sophisticated society developed it became increasingly dependent upon cooperation for survival. Of course the wars that did
erupt in this more advanced era tended to be many times more destructive than those that had erupted previously due to the more advanced weapons technology available to the Serp. Eventually a global council was created which had representatives from each Serp nation. This council functioned much as the United Nations function in real life, except that the Serp council had more real power. The council consisted of an executive board made up of the leaders of the 5 most powerful nations, and an advisory council made up of representatives of all of the other nations.

The Serp, like many sentient species, soon found that their population was straining the resources of their homeworld. Space was the logical route for expansion, and the Serp constructed a number of ships to extract resources such as minerals from other worlds in the system, as well as sending deep-space probes towards nearby star systems in order to determine whether there were any planets which could be colonized. By the time that any positive reports were received from the probes the Serp nations had already developed space-based naval forces, with each individual nation having as many as several hundred combat
vessels of all sizes. As soon as the first hopeful data was received the Serp council prepared a manned probe which would travel to the promising system, take more detailed information, and return with samples of local flora and fauna to be fully analyzed. Before this probe was even launched construction began on a number of large colony ships. Each of the 5 nations on the executive board was required to provide majority funding for one of the massive vessels. Each of these boxy 8 km long ships would be capable of carrying and supporting 280,000 colonists, plus over 6,000 crew for the several decades-long journey that they were expected to make.

When the second probe returned from the planet, which had been dubbed Gerrat Eenark (roughly translated as Gerrat Hope), the crew of the small ship were unaware that they had been followed. It seems that Gerrat Eenark was not uninhabited, but was actually the home of a paranoid subterranean species. This species (whose identity has never been discovered, since the Serp simply called them the Enemy) believed that the Serp were a threat to them, and so sent a scouting force to find the Serp homeworld. The level of technological sophistication of the Enemy is unknown, but the small scouting force, which was discovered
soon after arriving at the Gerrat system, was powerful enough to cause severe damage to the

fleets of many Serp nations. After this surprise attack the Serp, never ones to back down from a fight, stepped up production on their common combat vessels, as well as on the colony ships, only the colony ships were now intended to serve as troop transports in order to take the war to the home of the Enemy. Just as a massive allied Serp fleet was preparing to exit the Gerrat system an Enemy fleet, one significantly larger than the previous expeditionary force, arrived in the system. Those elements of the Serp navies which had been designated to remain behind and defend the homeworld moved to intercept this Enemy fleet, and were destroyed in short order. The Serp assault fleet, which had been on an entirely different vector from the incoming Enemy fleet, and which had remained undetected, wheeled around in an attempt to intercept and destroy the Enemy. By this time it was too late however, and the Enemy fleet had reduced the surface of Gerrat to slag using huge mass drivers to cause repeated asteroid strikes. The assault fleet received a final message from the Serp council ordering them to flee the system so that the species would survive.

The Serp fled the system in a random direction so as to throw off any possible pursuit, regrouping a few weeks later to try to head towards a planetary system which might be hospitable. For the next dozen generations the Serp fleet coasted at sublight speeds from system to system, hoping to find a world to settle. Some Serp had advocated sending many of the smaller ships as scouts to find a viable world, but the military leaders scrapped this idea, saying that the war with the Enemy had proven that the galaxy was dangerous, and that the best chance for the Serp to survive was to stick together. After almost 1280 standard years they arrived in the Pecsus system (note: the Paq Nalthiin of the Pecsus system believed that the Serp had only been traveling for 75 standard years based upon information obtained from a damaged Serp computer. In actual fact the Serp had been traveling for a little over 75 years by the Serp calendar, which translates to 1275 standard years). This was the first system they had arrived in which had a planet capable of supporting them. Unfortunately this planet was already occupied by the Paq Nalthiin. The Serp were tired of fleeing by this point, and somewhat unsurprisingly had no trust for any other species. The decision to invade was made in short order and, ironically, the Serp had become the invading enemy that they had fled from so long ago (well, they hadn't LITERALLY become the enemy they had fled from... You know what I mean).

The war that the Serp fought against the Paq Nalthiin was extended and bitter. The Serp had become desperate and xenophobic during their flight from Gerrat, and were terrified that the Paq Nalthiin might be able to find a weakness that they could exploit, and so they ordered all of their combat personnel to have incendiary devices implanted into them, and they rigged all of their vessels with high explosives. The incendiary implants were devices which monitored the host's heartbeats (Serp have two hearts, one in the lower abdomen, and one near the throat), and which would ignite if the heartbeats stopped. These incendiaries were specially designed so that they would virtually disintegrate the body of the Serp, while causing little damage to the surrounding area. The idea was that this would prevent the Paq Nalthiin from studying the bodies of any Serp killed in combat. The reason behind setting the incendiaries to cause little damage to surroundings was that many Serp were expected to be killed on thier own ships, and having one of these deaths cause a hull breach was unacceptable. The idea behind rigging their ships to explode was similar in that it was supposed to reduce the vessel to slag from which nothing could be learned, but there was one major difference: this modification was specifically designed to cause as much damage to the surrounding area as possible. The explosives were set to go off on a time delay if the ship lost power. In at least one case this destroyed a Paq Nalthiin vessel which had docked with a disabled Serp destroyer in order to board her.

The Serp set up a base on a moon of the gas giant Jein Bonnar. In the final years of the war the Serp heavily boobytrapped the moon with explosive and radioactive devices in order to discourage any invasion. This strategy has worked, and the moon is considered off-limits even to the current day by the Paq Nalthiin. What the Paq Nalthiin don't know is that the Serp rigged enough explosives in the core of the moon to set up a chain reaction which would shatter the entire moon.

The base on the moon served not as the command center for the Serp fleet, as the Paq Nalthiin assumed, but was actually a mining operation. The Serp had slightly better sensor equipment than the Paq Nalthiin, and had discovered relatively large quantities of radioactive ore, as well as more common metals deep beneath the surface of the moon. Knowing that their limited resources would be a problem if they were forced to fight a war of attrition the Serp set up an operation on the moon. The moon would mine the ores important to the war effort, and they would then ship the ores back to the 5 giant colony ships which were hiding in an extreme cometary orbit. The colony ships, always designed to be self-sufficient, were equipped with massive factories and refineries, and so the Serp were able to replace destroyed ships.

Unfortunately for the Serp their ability to replace destroyed ships was not equal to the rate at which their ships were taken out by the Paq Nalthiin. The Serp resorted to increasingly desperate tactics, such as seeding the atmosphere of Gor Vandar with biological agents to destroy life, and using 'shatterdrones,' ships which were largely automated, and packed with even more heavy explosives than most Serp vessels. Shatterdrones would be piloted by a few brave Serp into Paq Nalthiin formations, and simply explode, causing massive damage to all nearby ships, as well as flooding the area with hard radiation. Eventually even these tactics could not turn the tide for the Serp and after a protracted battle above the Serp moon base those remaining Serp elements were forced to limp back to their colony ships and flee once again. In a piece of calculated misdirection the Serp used the few shatterdrones that they had remaining to convince the Paq Nalthiin that they had not fled the system. The Paq Nalthiin were led on a game of cat and mouse as the Serp pilots of the shatterdrones sacrificed themselves so that their enemies would be convinced that no Serp had survived to flee. In fact the vast majority of the Serp escaped, but this is only because most of the Serp, those aboard the colony ships, never entered the Pecsus system. The colony ships, while dwarfing all of the Serp's heaviest cruisers, had virtually no weaponry. The actual fighting force fielded by the Serp was reduced to less than 20% of its original size by the time the Serp fled from Pecsus. This is despite all of the replacement ships which the Serp built during the war.

In the years since the Serp fled from the Paq Nalthiin they have coasted through the void at sublight speeds, following much the same pattern as they had before their discovery of Pecsus. The only difference in the behavior of the Serp has been that on the few occasions when they have discovered systems with habitable planets they have discovered to their dismay that the systems were already colonized by other sentient species, and they left the systems alone rather than try to invade. The reason for this is simple: the Serp are very aware that they cannot afford to engage in another war which they might not win. The Serp fleet is still fairly impressive in terms of numbers, but the Serp have advanced little in the thousands of years they have spent traveling slowly from system to system, and their fleet is far behind the galactic standard of technology. To say that the Serp have not advanced is a bit of a fallacy however, since they have advanced technologically, but not in most of the fields that this advancement tends to be measured. The one area of technology in which the Serp excel is recycling. This is not surprising considering that they have survived for thousands of years with virtually no new resources. All of the food which the Serp eat is hydroponically grown, all the water they drink is filtered from waste products, all of the air that they breathe has been recycled through scrubbers. When Serp die their bodies are processed to extract nutrients which will help grow the food plants in the hydroponics labs. Serp recycling has become so efficient that over 99.5% of all waste is recycled in one form or another.

The Serp are ruled by a council which is based upon the council which used to rule their homeworld. Since each of the 5 major Serp nations that made up the executive board of the old planetary council was responsible for building one of the massive colony ships, each colony ship is now considered to be a separate 'nation' and each provides 1 representative to the executive board, as well as 5 other representatives to the rest of the council. All of the smaller ships are considered to belong to one or another of the nations, and are divided as evenly between them as possible. When the Serp fleet was originally formed it was divided evenly between the 5 colony

ships, but the Serp forces were decimated during the war with the Paq Nalthiin. According to the Serp laws each nation is responsible for replacing its own ships under normal circumstances, but the war with the Serp was a joint Council-led operation, and so it was decided that the losses of ships should be shared equally between the nations. As a result of this many ships were reassigned from one nation to another after the war. This created a certain degree of bad blood between the nations since the Shoonat and Grinaar nations, who had lost the fewest ships during the war, felt that they were paying for mistakes made by the other 3 nations. The Suloit, Charnatto, and Krinuut nations, on the other hand, felt that they had borne the brunt of the fighting, and that their heroic service to the Serp as a whole should be recognized. This resentment has continued to a certain extent to the present day, and although it is much reduced now these emotions continue to dominate Serp politics.

Serp society has changed somewhat during their long journey between the stars. Whereas before the Serp were very fragmented; owing loyalty to family first, clan second, nation third, and the species last; they have been forced to become more united. The old rivalries between the nations still exist to a certain extent, and some new rivalries have surfaced, but the Serp have become adept at working together well despite their differences. In fact many of the old ties have been broken down entirely. Many of the Serp on board the fleet at the time of the departure from Gerrat were from nations other than the 5 major nations which had commissioned the colony ships, and these Serp were simply absorbed into the 5 nations after the destruction of the homeworld. During and after the war with the Paq Nalthiin national ties were broken down again because the council would often require Serp from one of the 5 nations to join one of the other nations in order to keep each nation strong and healthy. This caused a period of some civil unrest, as those Serp being absorbed into new nation frequently resented being forced to leave their homes, and other Serp tended to view the newcomers with some distrust. Eventually this changed however, and the Serp nations today are relatively stable, with little immigration from one nation to another. The Serp clans have been abolished wholesale, but the strong family ties between related Serp still exist despite, or perhaps because of, the extremely communal nature of life aboard the colony ships. All Serp eggs are incubated in huge incubation chamers on the colony ships after they are removed from the father's pouch, but the parents of an egg can tell by smell which egg is theirs. The importance of family to the Serp is reflected in the fact that most titles of authority are derived from the Serp words for mother and father.

There have been various movements in Serp history, typically appearing when the fleet passes by a life-bearing system, in which dissident Serp have lobbyed to invade and secure a new homeworld, rather than spend an eternity fleeing from all life. This is possibly the most destructive social problem in Serp society, as it is a recurring issue which tends to pit Serp violently against one another. In the past few centuries this movement has been gaining more and more popularity, and
more sympathy amongst the council. If the Serp were to encounter a life-bearing world today there is no telling what would happen (hint hint... adventure ideas here...).

Some ways to use the Serp in your campaign include having the PCs dropped out of hyperspace by the mass of the huge colony ships, and then have the paranoid Serp capture them. The PCs will either have to convince the Serp to let them go (which should be difficult in the extreme, especially considering the Serp don't speak any language known to the galactic community), or make a fighting escape, fleeing from Serp soldiers and evading fire from Serp vessels long enough to jump to hyperspace (assuming the Serp haven't already taken their ship apart to learn from it). Another possible senario involves having the PCs in an isolated star system that the Serp happen upon and decide to invade. Role playing possibilities here are endless. The PCs could organize the inhabitants of the system to fight back against the Serp, who would be outmatched technologically, but would tend to overwhelm the defenders with sheer numbers. Alternately the PCs could try to infiltrate one of the Serp colony ships to try to sabotage it (the colony ships are unarmed, but the loss of one of them would certainly make the Serp think twice

about continuing the assault. Of course the PCs would first have to find out that the colony ships exist at all, as they are likely to be hanging back just outside the system). Another option would be for the PCs to run the Serp gauntlet to escape the system and bring back help. Convincing people that some unknown species is mounting a massive assault on such an out of the way target may be difficult. If the PCs know something about Paq Nalthiin history they may realize that the aliens are the Serp, in which case they may go to the Paq Nalthiin Confederacy for help. If they do this the Paq Nalthiin should agree to send a small force to the system to assess the threat. Once the Paq Nalthiin know for certain that the aliens are the Serp they will do everything they can to help. The trick to making this exciting for the players would be to have them involved with the small Paq Nalthiin expeditionary force, a force which would be greatly outgunned by the Serp, and have them try to gather conclusive evidence that the invading force is in fact the ancient enemy of the Paq Nalthiin. Another possible adventure idea would be to have a Darksider (possibly Serp, or possibly a Dark Jedi or Sith who happened upon the Serp in deep space) take control of the Serp and use them for his own purposes. The Darksider could use the Force as well as play on the emotions of the Serp in order to get them to invade virtually any target the Dar Sider desires. The ideal thing for the PCs to do in this situation would be to free the Serp from the insidious enslavement of the evil Darksider, and possibly find a new
homeworld for the Serp... This would be an ideal game for scouts.
These are the ships that the Serp fleet currently contains, eventually I'll make up stats for them:
5 colony ships (length 8047m)
30 assault carriers (length 284m)
55 heavy cruisers (length 326m)
45 light cruisers (length 240m)
125 destroyers (length 165m)
40 frigates (length 140m)
180 fighters (length 23m)
Here are the vital stats for the Serp:
Attribute Dice: 11D+2
DEX 1D/3D
STR 1D+2/4D
PER 1D+1/3D+2
KNOW 1D+2/4D
TECH 2D/4D+1
MECH 2D/4D
Move: 7-10
Height: 1.8-2.3 meters (most often hold themselves hunched over slightly)
Special Skills:
Recycling Technology (A): This advanced skill (requires Industrial Machinery Repair at 5D) allows the user to design, repair, and refine technology associated with all kinds of recycling (from air scrubbers to solid waste recycling etc.)
Agriculture: Hydroponics: This specialisation of the Agriculture skill is used to grow and tend to plants (usually crops) grown using hydroponics.
Special Abilities:
Manual Dexterity: The Serp have good manual dexterity, and recieve a +2 bonus when performing any skill requiring fine manipulation. Conversely the Serp have weak arms, and would have difficulty using pieces of equipment such as light repeating blasters.
Story Factors:
Unknown: The Serp are unknown to the galaxy as a whole, and conversely the Serp know very little about the galactic community. Serp are unable to put any skill dice in skills such as Alien Species, Cultures, Streetwise (except specialisations for Serp ships), and any other skill that relies on galactic knowledge.

Family Loyalty: Serp are incredibly loyal to their families, and will do anything for blood relations.
Xenophobic: Serp history has left them very xenophobic when it comes to dealing with other species.
Nomads: the Serp are galactic nomads, lacking a planet to live on.

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