

Equinox



SETTING GUIDE

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2014

equinox

SETTING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

*Attention, unregistered ship! You are about to enter
Protectorate space. Identify yourself
and prepare to be boarded!*
—Cpt. Revlar Spaulding



A group of Vagrants prowling a high street on Gateway Station.

Welcome to **equinox**, a future fantasy setting of stunning action, frightening intrigue, and mystical powers! Ride hybrid ships through astral space connecting planets and galaxies, wield awesome mystic powers, nethertech relics, and cutting-edge technology! Take on the role of a restless wanderer—someone living on the fringes of galactic society, scraping by in a war-torn system or even stealing other people's stuff. Whether a misfit, scoundrel, mercenary, pirate, idealist, explorer, or just someone who walked away from his home in search of adventure: you are part of the galactic underground. Fight the nightmares that invaded the universe, start a revolution against the fascistic and corrupted Consortium government and explore space beyond the Veil...

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book presents the setting and background of **equinox**, which you can use for a wide variety of things: as a game world for your favorite roleplaying game system, as inspiration for writing a novel or making a movie, for designing your own computer or board games, or just as a good read for spurring your imagination.

This book doesn't contain any game mechanics, except for some general guidelines you might find useful for adapting the setting. See the **Roleplaying in the Equinox Universe** section on p.8 in this chapter for more information.

A TOUR OF THE BOOK

The **Equinox Setting Guide** is divided into four sections, each dealing with a different topic.

Starting with the **Introduction** you are reading right now, the book aims to give you a broad overview of the setting and its history with **The Equinox Universe** chapter. It is followed by the **Vagrant's Guide**, which describes the nature of the setting's main actors: Mystics and Vagrants. The chapter also explains how they carve their lives from the fringes of galactic society and how they are organized. The **Subspecies** chapter presents the main races of the

Equinox Universe and provides background information for each of them.

The second part of the book is mainly about mystic energy and its effects. Starting off with the general **Mystic Energy** chapter explaining mystic fields, mystic field generators, and mystic materials, the **Astral Space** chapter provides information on astral travel and the realms beyond. The **Mystic Paths** chapter details the nine Paths Mystics follow, each of which defines the nature of a Mystic's powers and abilities. Mystic energy also influenced technological advancement in the Equinox Universe, and the **Nethertech** chapter discusses the history, capabilities, and impact of nethertech in its various forms, while hinting at other aspects of the tech level of the Equinox Universe. In the **Gear** chapter you'll find some of the tech available in the Equinox Universe, along with specific examples. Lastly, the **Mystic Creatures** chapter provides characteristic creatures, spirits, and Demons found in the Equinox Universe.

In the third part of the book, you'll get more information on locales of the setting. The **Sol** chapter gives a tour of the major locations around what's left of the Earth Nexus, providing additional history about the Great Netherwar. It is directly followed by a chapter titled **Behind the Veil**, which details the Consortium and the Ravaged Worlds from a ... well, different perspective.

Finally, the last part of the book provides some aids to put the Equinox Universe to use. The **People and Places** chapter offers advice to create interesting places and personalities set in the Equinox Universe.

SETTING FEATURES

The core theme of **equinox** is *rebellion*. The main characters portrayed are outcasts who are supposed to be heroes. They have special abilities which make them more powerful than normal humans, trained to protect and serve. However, dark forces have claimed mankind's government, the Consortium, and are set to wipe out these people. Forced to live outside society, the rebels have to

find a way to survive and organize themselves against an opponent moving behind the scenes.

Mystic energy is a core feature of the setting. Like magic, this energy is wildly available throughout the known universe, and can even be created using special technology. The main protagonists of **equinox** aren't just rebels, they are also **Mystics**. There are many different kinds of Mystics, each able to control and form mystic energy to their will within a limited focus defined by their personality. From soldiers of superior tactical ability to spellslingers throwing fireballs—pretty much everything is possible. Trouble is, the Mystics are faced with varying mystic energy levels depending on location. The cold darkness of space is void of mystic energy, and certain planets have it in abundance. There are countless levels and possibilities in between: ranging from small generators creating a low base level of mystic energy aboard a spaceship, (even if just for making the Mystics aboard feel comfortable) to habitable asteroids in deep space, featuring higher than usual gravity, moderate temperatures, and an atmosphere that wouldn't be possible without mystic energy.

The existence of mystic energy and mankind's long-lasting familiarity with it lead through an age of mystic industrialization which made **Nethertech** possible. Nethertech is mundane technology infused with mystic energy to create superior devices and machines. Adding spirits to the mix, the characters in **equinox** have access to technology that is vastly intelligent and reliable. The possibilities go beyond imagination, and have even led to the creation of a purely artificial species powered by the spirits of mankind's ancestors.

The last defining features of **equinox** are the **Demons** and their spawn. Lurking in the shadows and in certain corrupted places of the universe, the Demons are a species of beings from beyond the physical world. Their intention is to conquer the physical realm because of their need to feed upon it. To the rebels, it appears they have achieved that goal and have fooled the majority of mankind into believing the exact opposite. Their nefarious plans to root out the rebels and rule over their sheep are prominent in most stories set in the Equinox Universe.

ROLEPLAYING IN THE EQUINOX UNIVERSE

Because this book comes without rules, you can adapt it as a backdrop for your favorite game system. This section holds a few tips showing you how to do that with a minimum of effort. The amount of work you have to put into this depends on what game system you intend to use, and how well it covers the core features of **equinox** already.

The player characters of the game are supposed to have special powers making them stronger than average humans, which is a feature most roleplaying games already support. **equinox's** Mystics are divided into nine different core types, each with a different focus ability-wise. These Paths are broadly defined, serving as background concepts for pretty much all character classes imaginable. We recommend using the character classes or concepts as featured by your game system, and design characters for that class with the background concept of the Path in mind. Each Path lists a number of sample Archetypes to help with this (see the **Mystic Paths** chapter on p.83 for more information).

Supernatural abilities, powers and spells of your game system can be used as they are, within certain limits. Review the **Mystic Energy** chapter (p.63) for the laws governing the mystic forces—if any of the abilities your game system violate these, you should consider dropping or replacing them.

Changing mystic field levels is something that's harder to adapt while keeping the game fun. You might consider simply capping a player's abilities according to the five mystic field levels available (see the **Mystic Energy** chapter on p.68), disallowing their use if no mystic energy is available. You may also chose to limit or expand the effects depending on field strength—which can be a lot more work, however.

Nethertech is mostly a matter of imagination. Nethertech devices and weapons can, of course, just be more efficient or deadly. However, things would be boring if that was the only effect available! Shotguns shrinking their targets, pocket portals to endless storage space, and invisibility pills making you and your gear vanish from prying eyes are what

make a game of **equinox** more interesting. The **Gear** chapter (p.99) holds a vast array of ideas for Nethertech and other items found in **equinox**. You can likely adapt these using existing mechanics for similar items found in your game system, or with little effort create them within the confines of the mechanics.

Spaceships and stations are supposed to be a bit larger than most other settings, as described in the **Vessels** section on p.115. These are mainly intended to serve as interesting backdrops for the stories told, but you might want to enter the territory of large-scale ship-to-ship or ship-to-station battles. In that case make sure your favorite game system is able to support such a thing, or use an existing boardgame to help with this.

The **People and Places** chapter (see p.189) covers basic guidelines to create people and places within the setting. This supports a collaborative approach, enabling you to set up the basic background for your group and their homebase fairly quickly. This doesn't really require adaption work on your part, simply follow the steps outlined here and create characters using your favorite game system as part of the process.

Lastly, the **Mystic Creatures** chapter on p.133 holds descriptions of quite a number of signature beasts, spirits, Demons and other critters to keep your players on their toes. Adapting these will require some work on your part to devise game statistics for the creatures and villains you intend to use, but this chapter also gives you an idea of the types of creatures existing in the Equinox Universe. Simply add those creatures designed for your game system that fit the pattern, or adapt their descriptions slightly to let them have a place in your game of **equinox**.

INFLUENCES

The **equinox** setting is inspired by a number of movies, TV-Series, novels, games, and real-world events. Each of these may provide you with further ideas and inspiration:

Aliens (Movie Series): A small influence, but still—a corporation seeking to exploit an alien race for developing

COMPATIBLE GAME SYSTEMS



You should be able to play in the **equinox** setting with any generic game system available. Cortex, D20 Future, Fate, HERO, GURPS, Savage Worlds, Open D6, TriStat, Unisystem, etc—all of these feature all the mechanics needed for this and come with guidelines for adapting futuristic settings. Just add a shot of magic!

Other game systems are usually tied to their respective settings, meaning they require more effort for adaption and may alter the feel of the setting in more profound ways. However, if you know the system well enough, you will likely be able to manage and have fun along the way.

In case you seek to make your adaption “official:” we’re open for submissions. Contact us and we’ll find a way to get your rules adaption out in the open. We’re also working on our own game mechanics designed specifically for **equinox**—the **Match System**. You can find more information on that one on our website at vagrantworkshop.com.

technology is a theme **equinox** handles as well. A number of corporations research Demon and shanrazi technology for the same reasons—and likely with similar consequences in the far corners of the Sol System. Alien’s androids were the main inspiration for the synth.

Babylon 5 (TV Series): Babylon 5 served as a role model for various aspects of Gateway Station. The PSI Corps and how it treated telepaths was a major influence on how the Consortium treats mystics.

Conspiracy Theories (Real-world Events): Theories about grey eminences steering the US government have been in-cresed ever since 9/11. Many of these perfectly show how a large-scale deception of the masses could work, brandishing those who raise concerns as conspiracy

theorists or even terrorists. Paranoia, conflicting stories, and medial control are a main influence for the Consortium's actions.

Deadlands, Shadowrun, Earthdawn, Fireborn (Novels and Games): These great role-playing game settings have inspired the magical backdrop of **equinox**, which created a game universe that stands on its own. **equinox** can still easily be adapted to serve as a future version of these game settings—but then, that only makes sense if you are planning a story which references an earlier age. The Equinox Universe can be adapted to serve a wide variety of ideas, and a combination with other game settings is always possible.

Farscape (TV Series): Cast through a wormhole into a distant part of the galaxy, the main character seeks to find a way back home. Living among a group of outcasts aboard a living ship, he is fighting the forces of an oppressive government. This excellent series even has a form of magic, even though it is a subtle thing. The existence of living ships was inspired by this one.

Firefly, Serenity (TV Series, Movie): A group of outlaws and honorable criminals making a living on the fringes of galactic society, raiding and salvaging to make a living among the stars. This gripping TV series inspired life in the Sol system, as well as that of the main characters featured in **equinox**. While *Firefly* doesn't contain any funny-looking species or magic, the stories told match those of **equinox** to a great degree.

Military Dictatorships (Real-world Events): The darkest chapters of human history has been an influence to portray the Consortium's executive forces—most notably the Protectorate. Hunting down, imprisoning, and exploiting those who pose a threat to the regime is what they do—even if the Protectorate has no dictator personality steering it per sé. Also, the allied invasion of World War II has inspired settings and stories of the Great Netherwar.

Modern-day Piracy (Real-world events): The rise of piracy in recent years, especially off the coast of Somalia, was and remains an influence for piracy in the Earth Belt and the

struggles of the Protectorate to contain the threat. From mercenary units protecting ships, over the ransoming of captured ships and/or hostages, to pirate stock trades—there are a lot of ideas here, even if the environment is a different one.

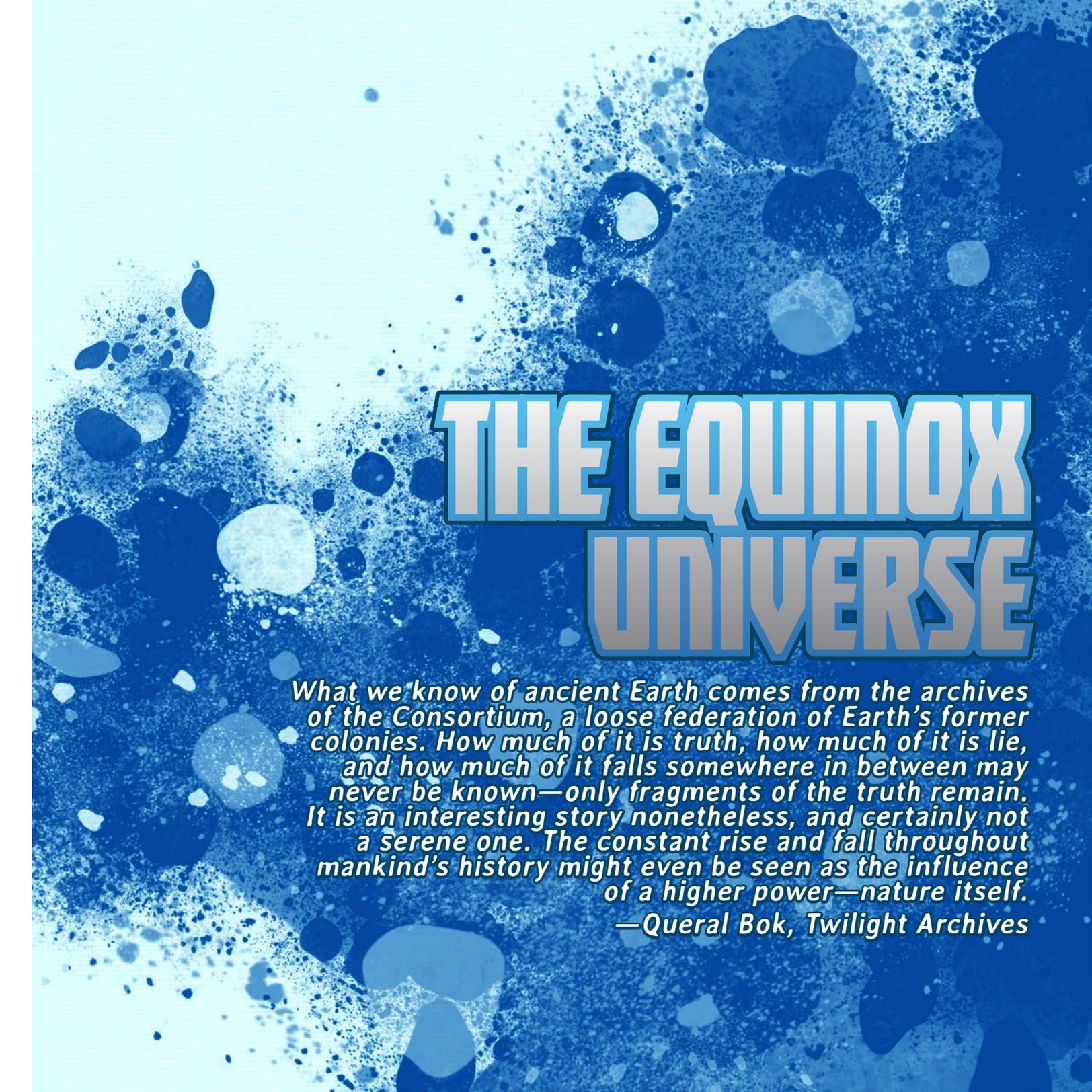
Outlaw Star (Manga, TV Series): A very fun series featuring various factions of space pirates in AI space ships fighting with oriental magic at times. While we weren't aware of this series until we were deep into developing the Equinox Universe, it seems to be a very fitting influence.

Star Wars (Movie Series, Novels, and Games): There's no denying that the mother of all science fantasy movies didn't inspire **equinox**—of course it did. The Mystics in **equinox** are a more diverse and focused form of the Jedi, and the oppressive Empire seeking to destroy them is a role model for the Consortium.

The Ice Pirates (Movie): A tongue-in-cheek movie from the early 80's, this movie is about a group of space pirates raiding for the most valuable resource of the universe: water. There are a lot of interesting gimmicks and features in this movie that can also be found in **equinox**, as well as the piracy found in the Earth Belt.

Titan AE (Movie): Mankind's homeworld was destroyed by an alien force, and humans live as outcasts and homeless among other alien races. Seeking the lost starship Titan, the group of main characters hopes to give mankind its home back. While there is no magic in this movie, it inspired several of the core themes of **equinox**.

Warhammer 40,000 (Novels and Games): This space-fantasy setting is set roughly thirty-eight millennia into the future, centered on a decentralized yet totalitarian interstellar empire that has ruled the vast majority of mankind for millennia. Demons, magic, fantastic races, warp space travel, gigantic ships—all these features influenced the Equinox Universe. Our focus is not so much on war and bloodshed, however.



THE EQUINOX UNIVERSE

What we know of ancient Earth comes from the archives of the Consortium, a loose federation of Earth's former colonies. How much of it is truth, how much of it is lie, and how much of it falls somewhere in between may never be known—only fragments of the truth remain. It is an interesting story nonetheless, and certainly not a serene one. The constant rise and fall throughout mankind's history might even be seen as the influence of a higher power—nature itself.

—Qeral Bok, Twilight Archives