

THE CORE FOUR

PART-II

By Brian Conway

YAZIRIAN'S

The ancient and magnificent Yazirian's! If they were not so much at each other's throats, they might be almost as bad as the Sathar. (That might be a little harsh...)

According to ancient legend, there was a single planet from which all life sprung. This planet has had many names, but the most important one is Yaziria. Supposedly, ancient spacefarers populated the Yazirian systems with life, bringing with them all the abundance and verdancy of Yaziria. This paradise-planet has long since disappeared into myth. Nevertheless, the Sons and Daughters of this Eden, this Yaziria, are named Yazirian's. To some, this myth is historical fact. To others it is a tenet of their religion. A certain number think it is just an old story. In any case, they call themselves Yazirians.

The actual location of Yaziria is claimed by different planets, weakening the spirituality of the myth. On the other hand, the Yazirian's many vicious wars have created many gaps in their historical narrative, and the archaeological record is inconclusive as to the actual origins of the race. In much of Yazirian history, tradition, myth, and legend is all that has survived. Even some precious artifacts that survived certain periods were destroyed centuries later in subsequent wars, removing whole chunks of the historical record.

Yazirian's have the most violent history of any race other than the Sathar. Clan violence finally ceased several hundred years ago after the Enlightened Ones came down with Jesus-like religious conviction and got the Clans to respect each other, at least in terms of life, limb, and property.

Yazirian religion revolves around the teachings of these Wise and Peaceful Brothers, who taught the Yazirian's to take their tremendous energy and enthusiasm and turn it into something else besides war - especially on other Yazirian's.

Hence, the Yazirian's make a major and massive break with the development of the Sathar. Unlike the Sathar, the Yazirian's had always a strong philosophical, religious and peaceful streak in them. It just took hundreds of years to finally take root and change the warrior-culture of the Yazirian's.

Yazirian's are dour, easy to insult, and take slights very seriously. Most have poor senses of humor, and "not getting the joke" just makes them angrier. This



problem makes them think that they are the butt of the joke, worsening the situation.

Ritual is vital to Yazirian's. Their Enlightened Brothers saw rituals as a way to soothe the violent ways of the Yazirian reptilian mind. It helps, to a point. Yazirian's have ceremonies for almost everything, even relatively mundane events and holidays. Major events and honors have ceremonies that can last hours. Screwing up a ceremony is a serious insult. This is another reason the Yazirian's don't get on well with Dralasites, who have a lot of trouble suppressing their giggling during Yazirian these somber scenes.

Clan is everything to Yazirian's. Being "Disinherited" (being cast out of the Clan) is devastating. Many of

these Yazirian's become criminals. The only fate worse than Disinheritance in Unjust Disinheritance. However, some Clans do allow an atonement process. Many Yazirian's simply kill themselves when faced with such dishonor.

There are many Yazirian folktales and myths of ancient heroes who were unjustly disinherited. They bring tears to the eyes of the most grizzled and battle-hardened Yazirian veteran.

Although their society is as varied as the others in the Frontier, the Warrior Ethos among the Yazirian's is still very strong. Their Battle Rage is symptomatic of their readiness to fight to the death at a moment's notice. Battle is in their blood.

Yazirian's do not get on with people outside of their clans, let alone with other races... However, an excellent way to make a friend of a Yazirian is to share their sacred Life Enemy and help destroy it, or participate in battle with him or her.

A Yazirian friend is a friend for life, in most cases. The ultimate honor that a Yazirian can bestow upon another is invitation to join their Clan. Although this is rare, it does happen - mostly with Humans and Vrusk.

Once inside of Yazirian's clan, the true warmth and spirit of these beings is displayed. Yazirian's among their Clans "let their fur down" and have wild parties. Yazirian's love large halls that can capacitate the entire clan for parties - always involving massive amounts of alcohol and other intoxicants. Dancing, singing, storytelling, gliding from the rafters, sexual ribaldry and all the other things one would associate with a drug and booze soaked party often occur at these Clan gatherings.

Non-Yazirian members of Yazirian clans become pretty much Yazirian's themselves to the Clan members. Money is loaned freely at zero or low interest. All Clan members are expected to put up other visiting members of the Clan. Generosity for other Clan members is one of the most endearing qualities of the Yazirian's. Many down-and-out humans have been saved by long-forgotten Clan members who have happened upon them.

Clan membership also comes with duties. Many funny holoshows have revolved around human families suddenly burdened with having to accommodate, entertain, and clean up after large bunches of Yazirian clan members on an interstellar visit! Hilarious when viewed from the outside - as the humans desperately try to parse all of the clan rules, rituals and traditions while trying not to go bankrupt paying for all the hospitality.

At a minimum, expect a Yazirian to show holos of his clan, with long winded descriptions of everything that everyone is doing, combined with a cavalcade of gossip, if you meet a fellow clan member after a long period of time.

Yazirian's hate crowds. They do not like to touch or be touched. Many a barfight has been caused by bumping into a drunken Yazirian. Yazirian's do not shake hands of non-Clan members - that is a very special gesture to a Yazirian. They believe that part of the soul of the Yazirian passes on to the being whose hand is being shaken. This has led to some serious misunderstandings among those who do not know this about Yazirian's.

Some Disinherited Yazirian's travel to the mixed-race planets, relaxes some of their more intense ways, and adjusts quite well to their new situations. The mixed race planets are full of these kinds of Yazirian's, and others who find the rituals tedious and the attitudes too strict. Most Yazirian's do not have this kind of wanderlust, however. The Clan serves as a huge social and cultural cocoon for most Yazirian's.

Tragically, some Yazirian's still judge others by their clan membership. Many were enemies during the Wars centuries ago, and have never forgotten their feuds and slights. This is especially prevalent among the older, more conservative Warrior Clans. Violence does break out from time to time, but only (it is said) among individuals, not ordered by the Clan itself. Clan War in Yazirian society is considered utterly Un-Enlightened. It has not occurred among the major clans in hundreds of years. It is the greatest of sins in Yazirian society - going against the most vehement and passionate teachings of the Great Brothers.

Most Yazirian's, being very intelligent; understand that not everyone from the other races knows all of their quirks and sensitivities. As a result, most Yazirian's that come into contact with other races are prepared mentally for the inevitable gaffes and faux pas that occur with inter-racial contact. Their patience is limited, however.

Certain clans are also mellower and less intense, especially the ones with high numbers of technicians and scientists among them. Some clans even have renounced violence completely, embracing the Ways of The Great Brothers with a monk-like dedication. Generally speaking, the more warrior-influenced the clan, the more intense and unforgiving that it is.

Yazirian society is still a little male-dominated, but much of this has unraveled since the Enlightened Brothers. Today, most Yazirian females have a more-or-less equal footing to the males. Again, it varies from clan to clan. Some clans are even matriarchies. Again, the more conservative Warrior clans have a male-dominated slant, for the most part.

Magnificent in battle, capable of spectacular feats of agility, possessed of ancient wisdom, great intelligence; and yet rash, impulsive, intense, ultrasensitive, and quick to anger - the contemporary Yazirian is at the same time an enigma, and also clear for all to see.

And yet you will never have a more loyal and generous friend if you can get a Yazirian to shake your hand - and share their soul (and Clan) with you.

For a list of **Yazirian Clans** see #8-pg8. The planet of origin table has been duplicated here.

d100	Planet of origin
01-16	Hentz Lineage, Araks system
17-31	Hargut Lineage, Gruna Garu
32-43	Athor Lineage, Yast
44-51	Hakosoar Lineage, Scree Fron
52-55	Histran Lineage, Scree Fron
56-70	Non-Yazirian World of Origin
71-00	Completely Untraceable

VRUSHK

The Vrusk are most complicated race of them all. They have gone through so many changes over so many years. A society transformed, re-born, so to speak, by science and technology.

Centuries ago, Vrusk society was similar to a Hivemind mentality. Their homeworld was divided bitterly and territorially through these Hives, which engaged in brutal wars for dominance. A tiny elite ruled over vast numbers of industrious, loyal Vrusk citizens and warriors.

In the chaos and darkness of that time, no one really knows how it happened. But rapidly, the huge wars that the Hive system had created began to consume itself. Vrusk began to equate their virtual voluntary slavery to the Hive and to their Masters with oppression. The endless cycles of brutal wars also shook the whole system to its foundation, attacking the vital logic so crucial to this Race. What were the good of the Hives if it only led to endless war?

Finally, like an old pottery jar smashed against a concrete floor, the whole ancient Vrusk system fell to pieces.

But since war finally broke the Hive system, the Vrusk did not want to emerge from it with some re-named form of violence. They wanted it gone forever.

Something had to be found to replace the Hive... To give the Vrusk much more of a level playing field while also providing the safety net.

What evolved over the last 200 years or so has been a Vrusk society where the Hives have been turned into benevolent (or so it seems) versions known as the Vrusk Companies. GVMPI (Greater Vrusk Mutual Prosperity Institution) being the largest, wealthiest and most prestigious.

Corporate membership is determined early in life, but a Vrusk is free to change, though culturally they rarely do. These organizations began to focus the Vrusk on

other activities than the Hive violence. Vrusk society began to build deep and complex trade systems. Resources that used to be targets of endless warfare were now available to all. It became obvious to all that it was easier to exchange these resources and develop them under peaceful conditions. Slowly but surely, the Hives faded from memory and much organized bloodshed among Vrusk society disappeared.

Contemporary Vrusk society reflects the maturity of these companies. Vrusk are the consummate experts on business, having transformed their society as they did. Positions within the corporations are based on a vast array of factors, which in turn vary from company to company.

Many Vrusk are pacifists by nature at this point. Complete renunciation of violence is commonplace among Vrusk - the nightmare of the Hives is still fresh in their minds. They do not want to go back to that. So they focus on business.

The Corporate system gives the Vrusk a sense of worth and identity. From a young age, just out of larval stage, Vrusk children are assigned to various Corporations. These organizations set about raising up the young Vrusk to eventually serve the entity. Upon reaching maturity, the Vrusk usually has a job waiting, and the career continues.

Many of the other Races see this system as cold and cruel. There is no "village confederacy" of the Dralasite stoa. There is no insular Yazirian Clan - with its rites, rituals, and communal protection. There is no Human family, with its intimacy and love.

Instead, the Vrusk give themselves to profit entities. They grow up in structured barracks-like accommodations which are similar to corporate boarding schools. However, it is not as bad as it seems. Love, to Vrusk, is largely derived from work identity. Additionally, Vrusk culture serves as a check against most corporate greed and abuse. There is a genuine responsibility felt by the corporate system. Some Vrusk believe that it is a near-perfect system, and do not understand why the other Three Races do not adopt it as well. The corporation's best interests are to develop the Vrusk assigned to it, the Vrusk reciprocate by working for the corporation after full maturity - usually around 20 years old. This concept is known as the Vrusk "life debt."

This life debt is a personal decision by most Vrusk as to how much they have to work and give back to the corporation for the expenses they incurred growing up. Payments are made gradually, and these monies are used to support the youth programs of the corporation, continuing the cycle. Most life debts are paid off over about 20-40 years.

Mergers between Vrusk corporations are rare, because it is believed that they disrupt the social system. When they do occur, they result in minimal layoffs, which are always the top criteria for a good "fit". Vrusk

corporations will acquire and merge with non-Vrusk companies more readily than with a Vrusk one.

Some Vrusk eschew the Corporate system completely. These Vrusk are somewhat similar to the Clan-less Yazirian's, but it is a less stressful situation for a Vrusk to be outside of their corporation than for a Yazirian to be outside of their Clan. Some walk out completely on the life debt, which is viewed by most Vrusk as a terrible sin. Most Vrusk criminals' first illegal act is refusing to pay the life debt.

Some Vrusk flee the system at their first opportunity. These non-Corporate Vrusk will often commit to the life debt but refuse to work because they are curious about seeing the galaxy or have felt they have been wronged in some way by the corporation. This kind of disappointment is often connected to the Vrusk's career choices, which are limited or expanded based on their performance on a battery of tests after their schooling. If the Vrusk does not test well, or has some bad luck, they could be assigned to a job for a long time with no alternative. Most Vrusk get a job similar to what they want to do, but a minority do not make the cut.

Non-Corporate Vrusk are more curious and tolerant of other races. They also have a great cultural understanding about racial quirks and tendencies. The reaction of most Yazirian's to a non-Clan Yazirian is sadness and horror ("What did you do to deserve separation? What happened?"). The reaction of a Vrusk to a non-Corporate Vrusk is a simple "Why?"

Unfortunately, Vrusk business acumen has led to some friction with the other races. The Vrusk are known to be rather ruthless businessmen. Their expressionless faces very effectively hide their intentions. Their Comprehension Skill has also made their ability to sift through a business proposal with almost psychic-like ability.

To the great consternation of the other Three Races, the Vrusk have a highly protectionist society - in most cases. Vrusk worlds are infamous for their trade barriers. Vrusk politicians give many excuses for this (culture, protecting jobs, etc.) but many in the Federation

Assembly see this as simple racism.

Of course, other nations and planets among the other Frontier races have protectionist laws as well, but not as bad as the Vrusk do. And in some countries, the discrimination towards non-Vrusk companies is blatant. These policies generate much resentment towards the Vrusk as they and their Corporations penetrate many sectors of the Frontier markets while, quite often, keeping their own closed.

Vrusk can seem quite unemotional. They simply view excessive emotion as immature. Emotion is viewed as weakness. Vrusk businessmen will exploit emotion during business activities. Vrusk prefer to "bottle things up". They appear "stiff".

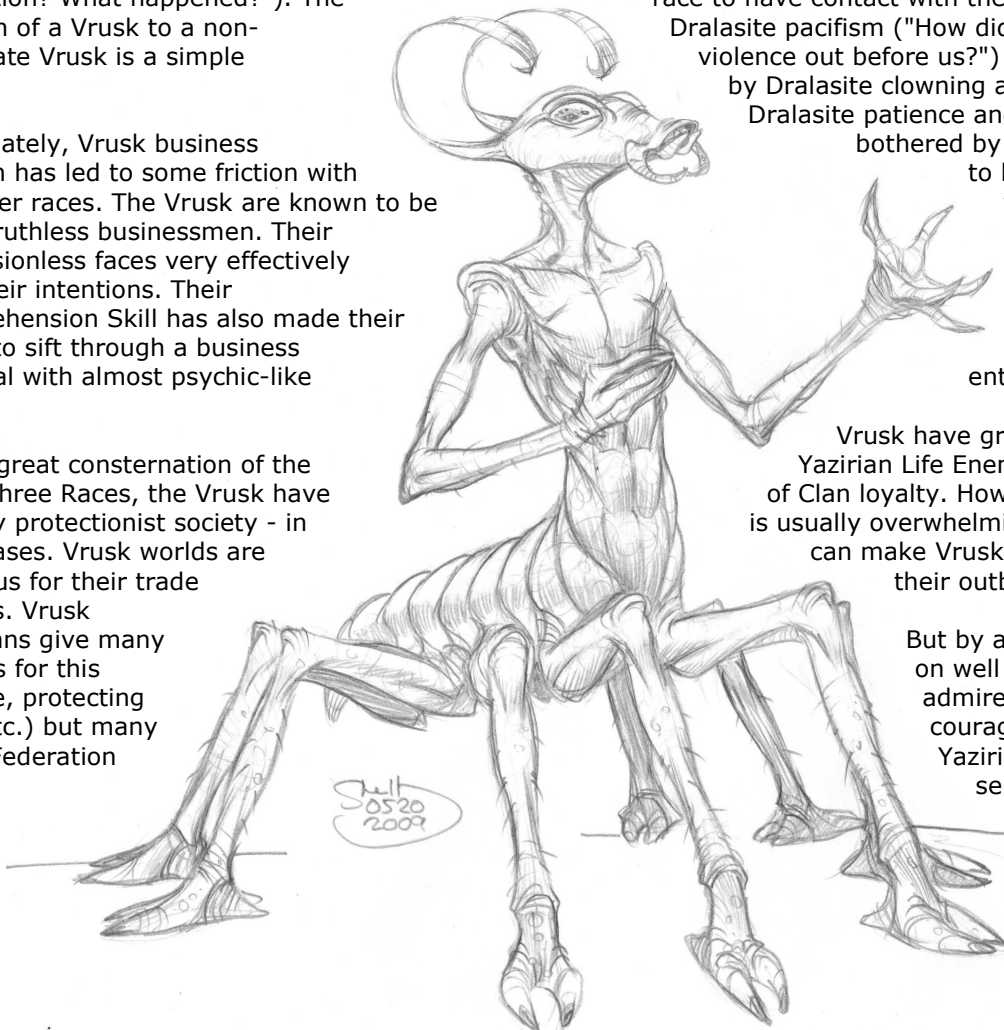
The Vrusk are, and always have had, total sexual equality. Females and males are completely equal. Some Vrusk settle down with single mates, some do not - this is largely a regional, ethnic, or religious issue. There are many divisions among Vrusk on this issue, but they respect each other's personal choices. For example, in some Vrusk communities there is marriage, and in some, the institution never developed.

In terms of racial relations, the Vrusk view the other Races with ambiguity, but also admiration:

Vrusk have strong ties to Dralasites, being the first race to have contact with them. They greatly admire Dralasite pacifism ("How did they figure non-violence out before us?") but are equally annoyed by Dralasite clowning around. They enjoy Dralasite patience and planning, but are also bothered by the Dralasite tendency to harp on what the Vrusk view as "useless" intangibles, especially in business. Of course, these intangibles often prove to be a Vrusk enterprise's undoing...

Vrusk have great admiration for Yazirian Life Enemy and (some) practices of Clan loyalty. However, Yazirian emotion is usually overwhelming to a Vrusk. Yazirian's can make Vrusk uncomfortable with their outbursts.

But by and large, the Vrusk get on well with Yazirian's. They admire their intellect and courage. They also enjoy Yazirian gravitas, or seriousness, especially after dealing with a bunch of Dralasite jokers. Vrusk are somewhat puzzled by some of the intricacies of Yazirian "honor" -



which seems to have about a dozen different definitions to each different Yazirian Clan. (This confuses everyone else, too, of course - often even other Yazirian's!)

A Vrusk getting invited to join a Yazirian Clan is a mixed blessing, since that involves so much emotion with them. But they understand what a great honor it is, and they manage the situation well, and appreciate their membership in the Clan, if so offered.

In terms of Humans, there is the "Indestructible Junk Show" that is mentioned in the Alpha Dawn book. Humans have a lazy stereotype to Vrusk and they are viewed as complainers. They do not have the pacifism and patience of Dralasites, and they don't have the gravitas and intelligence of Yazirian's... (What good are they?) They are also insulted by the revulsion that Humans display towards their insect forms - how rude!

The dislike of Humans and Vrusk is probably the greatest between any two races in the Frontier. Of course, since the Vrusk are mostly pacifists, this does not have the potential to create actual violent conflict. Humans can earn the respect of Vrusk of course, but it is an uphill battle.

Vrusk love building. They make extensions on their houses, decorate their cars with shapes and designs, and spend their spare time hammering, welding, bending and carving. They love to work with their hands as hobbyists, constructing all manner of models, carvings, statues, etc. Vrusk neighbors can be rather noisy as they hammer away at their hobbies. Vrusk sculptors are the most talented in the Galaxy. Some crystal sculptures by the greatest Vrusk artists are viewed as the most beautiful objects in the entire Frontier.

Vrusk, due to their building tendencies, love architecture. Big, beautiful, glorious buildings are the ultimate expression of culture, intelligence, civilization, and mathematical precision. In multi-racial environments, Vrusk prefer urban settings.

Vrusk love to talk shop. They can drone on for hours about statistics, data, analysis, mathematical and business theory. If someone wants to get on well with a Vrusk, they should strike up a conversation about these kinds of topics. If someone wants to do business with a Vrusk on any level, they must be prepared with reams of data. There is nothing a Vrusk believes in more than properly analyzed data.

Business books and seminars are popular with Vrusk - ironically the most popular seminar leaders are Human. These Humans are held in very high esteem by most Vrusk, even though some Human businessmen look at them as wackos or charlatans. The few Humans that live with the Vrusk conduct these seminars and write these books - always with the "business theory flavor of the month" in mind. Sales theories, business techniques, legal seminars, the Vrusk eat it all up - and fortunes are made in the process. Even non-Corporate Vrusk will attend these seminars, just to make sure they are "keeping up."

Vrusk get most of their protein from insects and mash their vegetables and grains into pastes. This, of course, is revolting to Humans. Yazirian's can eat insects, but prefer freshly killed or live meat. Dralasites can do the "paste" thing even better than the Vrusk themselves (Dralasites do not eat insects), and Dralasite paste exports dominate this food market, even in the most protected Vrusk national markets. Many Dralasite pastes and puddings are expensive delicacies to the Vrusk. Cooking food, as Humans do, is revolting to most Vrusk, and seems a waste of energy - further increasing the stereotype of the "wasteful human".

Corporate life is important to a Vrusk, but not nearly to the same level as a Yazirian Clan. Most Vrusk on the mixed worlds such as soldiers, adventurers and spacers have no corporate affiliation at all. Some Vrusk leave their Corporations and then come back, having "seen the galaxy". At first, this was frowned upon, but now is viewed as acceptable.

Vrusk are large, bulky beings. Imagine a Vrusk trying to navigate your house! As a result, mixed race cities and facilities have to make a great deal of adjustments to be "Vrusk accessible" - sometimes with some odd results. Dralasites have caught on to this, and will frequently clutter their homes deliberately if they expect a Vrusk guest - just so their bulky bodies can knock things over and the Dralasite host can have a good laugh! Vrusk do not like this at all and the Dralasites know this, but most cannot resist.

Fortunately, the more outgoing non-Corporate Vrusk is the most common Vrusk encountered in the Frontier community. Most such Vrusk are well-prepared for contact with other races, unless such contact is unexpected. This fact, combined with their pacifist tendencies, make non-Corporate Vrusk fit in quite well in multi-racial situations. Vrusk avoid conflict and fights and will rarely start one. While Vrusk may not like certain aspects of different races (especially Humans) their lack of emotion enables them to hide it quite well, and get down to business. They excel at keeping their opinions to themselves.

They can seem distant and cold, but deep within the Vrusk the Hive still stirs, and Vrusk feel, just as deeply, all of the emotions that the other races do. They are just the best at hiding their feelings.