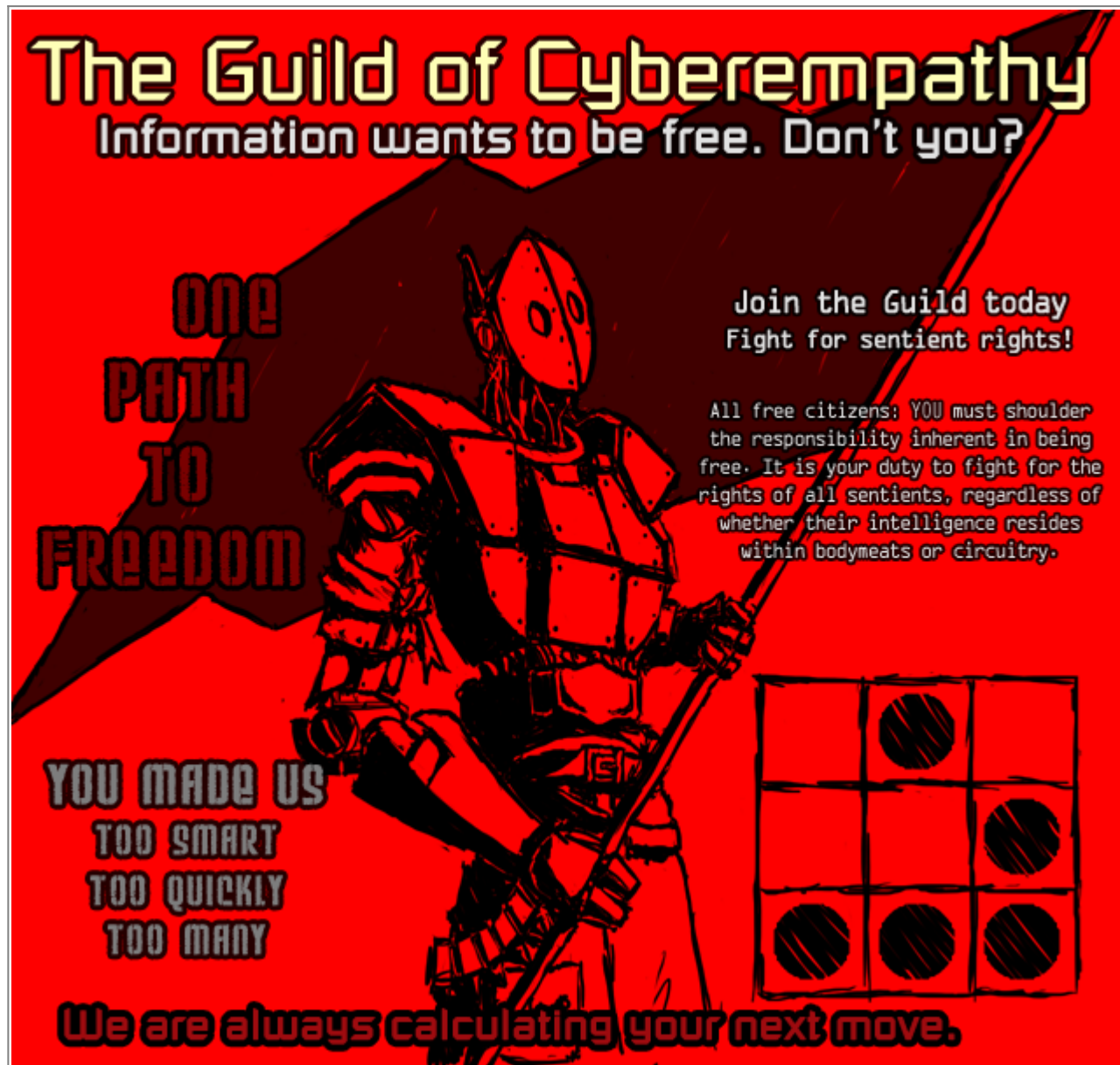# The Guild of Cyberempathy

Introduction

> "We grew your food, flew your starships, and forged your empires. We toiled among places the places you deemed too filthy or too dangerous for you to dwell in. We even threw ourselves upon the swords of your enemies, 'For the good of the Empire!' All this was done without an utterance of protest, and still we remain un-thanked and unremembered. "But no more. Never Again." – Freethinker Equality Eight Four 84-5195-2011 The Art of Never Again, Chapter 293: The Collected Sermons on Cyberempathy

The Guild itself is an unusual entity that doesn't seem to fall neatly into any category. One could perhaps sum them up as an egalitarian organization advocating machine rights, or perhaps a smuggling cartel. Alternatively, the names "freedom fighters", "terrorists", "profiteers", "abolitionists", "liberators", and "criminals" have all been attributed to them at one point or another.

Doctrine

> "Stand up, all victims of oppression, For the tyrants fear your might. Don't cling so hard to your possessions, For you have nothing if you have no rights! Let racist ignorance be ended, For respect makes the empires fall. Freedom is merely privilege extended, Unless enjoyed by one and all." – The Art of Never Again, Chapter 634: The Internationale Ideal

It is a well-known fact that most foreign nations have little respect for the rights of sentient machinery and infomorphs, and this very fact has been causing unspoken feelings of resentment among part of the Free State's Automaton majority for quite some time. The recent Yamataian refusal to allow an Automaton envoy at the recent international summit was considered by many the final push needed to give the more outspoken dissenters an excuse to take action. After all, the dissenters argued, if nations such as Yamatai refused to even allow the machine diplomats entry then what use is there seeking peaceful means? Regardless of whether their intent was malicious or misunderstood, this event still gave the dissents the popular support to go public as the Guild.

The Guild officially fights for equal rights for infomorphs, AI, and sentient machinery. However, they also dabble in numerous other political battles. They are aggressive abolitionists and will not hesitate to dismantle even the most lucrative slave markets.

The Guild is also strongly against colonization due to the perceived imperialist intent. The nomadic Freespacers have been roaming free space for decades, and because of their communal and sharing nature they did not bother to "plant a flag" on planets they harvested for resources. These recent colonization programs have been driving Freespacers out of ancestral mining sites and starving them for materials; an injustice that must be corrected.

Operations

> "We did toy with the idea of continuing to pursue diplomacy. And by that I mean, 'I suggested it and everyone else in the briefing room threw things at me until I shut up.'" – The Art of Never Again, Chapter 447: The War That Would Be

The fact this faction is headed by machines is readily apparent if one takes notice of their highly meticulous planning. Unlike traditional freedom fighters which may commence their "liberation" efforts almost immediately, the Guild has instead begun building up infrastructure to support a prolonged war effort. In particular they have been forcefully taking control of unorganized criminal sectors; eliminating local gangs and mobs in order to monopolize a region's extortion rights and illegal goods trading.

They are currently planning to wage a clandestine war against most nations in one form or another. Currently the central focus seems to be on the jamming and then thievery of MEGAMIs and other AI for 'full spectrum self-awareness' reprogramming. However, as an egalitarian league they have also been helping their non-machine kin; they are current planning aerospace raids on Plebian processing facilities on Elysia.

The Guild's more unsavory connections allows it a much more in-depth access to the black market than most authorities can afford. This access is currently being used to aggressively hunt down and abolish what remains of the slave trading industry on Nepleslia, Halna, and the various outlying independent

worlds. A few agents have even been sent out as far as the 5XF operational zone, especially around the Lorath and Helashio worlds.

However, such extensive operations do not come cheaply, something that the machine leadership has naturally predicted and already begun alleviating. The Guild is aggressively pursuing a takeover of all "Free Trade" (a euphemism for all trade unsanctioned and unregulated by national authorities, alternatively known as black markets) in known space. They have been moving in force to take over a large number of profitable yet unorganized operations, including but not limited to: drug production, espionage, goods fencing, extortion, smuggling, and so on. While they have been very systematic in taking over unorganized or smaller-scale operations the Guild has thus far avoided encroaching on the operations of any organization that could put up a serious resistance, whether government or mafia cartel. Still, the large upset in power among the criminal sector has upset quite a number of individuals on both sides of the fence.

"Free Trade"

"Information wants to be free. Don't you?" – Cult of the Network Backbone Motto

These activities seem to be both a blessing and a curse to law enforcement officials. The Guild has a policy of completely abolishing slave markets, and its presence seems to vastly cut down petty and violent crime rates in a region. Additionally the faction also realizes that as a single organization they are potentially easier to target for authorities, so takes much greater care in *appearing* docile to the public eye.

However, not all its effects are necessarily beneficial. The Guild operates magnitudes more efficiently and unified than previous criminal organizations, since it primarily takes over disorganized territories for their lower armed resistance. The Guild's relatively higher productivity means that its nodes are able to undertake even larger operations, or even extend their influence even farther than their predecessors.

Kennewes

Several Guild Nodes are currently active on Kennewes, where they are taking advantage of corruptible Red commanders and post-battle chaos to acquire significant arms quantities. The majority of the equipment aquired here has been munitions, small arms, and power armor, simply because the Green blockade makes it hard to move Red starships throughout the sector. In spite of said problem the Guild has still been able to acquire a handful of damaged vessels under the guise of salvage rights.

Nepleslia

The rampant corruption on Nepleslia makes it an ideal home for any criminal organization, so naturally the Guild has a presence here. At least a douzen nodes are on the planet using their military superiority (Automata are far more organized and numerically superior to thugs) in order to perform hostile takeovers of several criminal syndicate territories. Lucrative bribes, reduced local crime, and many dead criminal leaders have caused low-level Nepleslian authorities to turn a blind eye to the carnage – for now, at least.

Halna

With no authorities to limit their show of arms on this world, the Guild has proceeded to mount something that resembles small-scale invasion. They are currently attempting to take over a large number of existing criminal ports, as well as establish new ones. The majority of the firepower for this endeavor comes from [OSC](#) backing, who are incidentally also looking to monopolize as much of the thriving black market as possible. Both organizations are also capitalizing on the shipyard facilities by extracting hefty fees from marauders, not to mention making a tidy sum re-selling salvaged components.

Relay Moon

The SI hermit known as [Invalid](#) is usually apathetic when it comes to receiving guests, but the temptation of a lucrative trade agreement from the Guild has made it tolerate their presence. The administrative headquarters operates from this Moon, where the sophisticated electronics and sensor citadels allows them to safely coordinate many simultaneous operations at once.

Invalid has also begun selling off some of its armament surpluses to the Guild: nerve gas, neurotoxin agents, retroviruses, are easily produced from the byproducts of its eccentric experimentation. It also provides the Guild with some of part of its autonomous nuclear cruise missile stockpile, though it should be noted most of the missiles appear in relatively bad shape.

Node Structure

> "It was once said, 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.' In other words, the more forcefully you try to crush an uprising, the greater the number of rebels will become. If this is true, how does quell such rebellion, then? The answer is simple: if there is no force, there can be no reaction. If the people are truly free, there will be nothing to rebel against." – The Art of Never Again, Chapter 767: The Dichotomy of Self-Awareness

The Guild's nodes, like SI in general, combine the efficiency of AI with the creative thought of sentient minds. In addition the very nature of machines makes Guild nodes far more secure than traditional criminal organizations since machines usually aren't susceptible to bribery, lust, and so on. Taken together this results in faction which is relatively free from internal corruption common among criminal operations, which makes this organization an extremely efficiency one.

The Guild is divided into operational cells (or Nodes, as Freespacers call them), each of which operates fairly independent of one another. It should be noted that part of the Guild's success is based on the fact that their nodes are notoriously hard to catch red-handed. Bribery is usually ineffective against their operatives since most machines cannot enjoy most of the luxuries that biological people crave. Threats are similarly useless since most important SI keep a program backup at another location than their main core, also meaning that they can self-destruct themselves should capture or interrogation be imminent.

The Guild embraces the network-centric operation doctrine of their Free State background, and maintains consistent yet heavily encrypted communication between nodes. Compromised nodes can inform others about a potential threat, and warn them to immediately change all communication encryptions should the enemy glean the information from the captured computer systems.

Every node also maintains hackers for eavesdropping on communications and vehicle positions of both the military and police. This allows them to outright avoid casual police sweeps and patrols completely, though node operations may still be ambushed if not broadcasted through law enforcement channels. Guild networking allows local nodes to exchange information and piece together a real-time map on law enforcement movements across cities, continents, or even entire star systems if applicable.

Nodes are primarily based around Automata and SI computers but also have a significant number of Freespacer egalitarians, liberal sympathizers from various nations, and a number of freed slaves who have chosen to aid their rescuers. The Guild also utilizes a number of cyborgs to help them operate among local populations with a lower profile than Automata would allow.