

Soldier of the Legion – Principal Characters

Characters Introduced in Book 1, Soldier of the Legion



Beta Three: Warname Thinker

We see the world of a soldier of the Legion through Beta Three, a young immortal recruit on his first mission. He is escaping from a world he prefers to forget. All he wants is the stars, an adventurous life and a chance to see the future. He learns quickly that his mission is to die, under strange stars, for the Legion. He accepts it at first, without question. It is a small price to pay for the stars. He is a fatalist, a dreamer, a believer, walking Atom's Road with the assurance of a sleepwalker. Love and death are his two demons. As he travels further into the dark he finds plenty of both, and realizes that the Legion has always been his destiny. The events he is to experience will change him forever.

His lost love is Tara – alias Cintana Tamaling. Tara is a psyker and a Legion asset, operating in Systie vac as a slaver. Thinker only knows that he lost her, and when he unexpectedly recontacts her he knows they have no future. Thinker has found love with Valkyrie, a fiery blonde temptress whom he met on Planet Hell during Legion Advanced Combat Training. However he finds himself drawn strongly to Priestess, his squad's medic. She is a silent young girl with dark hair and smouldering dark eyes. Thinker is hopelessly heterosexual and will later complicate his life by taking a Taka sorceress, Moontouch, as his lover. Moontouch is trapped in the past, serving dead kings. Thinker is almost helpless in the grasp of these lovely angels. The events unfolding around him leave him little time for reflection.

The Legion is his life but he knows Atom's Road leads only to death. His entire existence becomes focused on his squad, Beta. Whatever faces them they will face together. Three puts total faith in Beta One, their coldly efficient squad leader.

Thinker knows he is nothing – just a hired gun. But One says they are going to change history. They are engaged in momentous events, events that will ultimately determine whether or not humanity survives. Thinker cares only about himself and his closest comrades, but he slowly begins to realize that the stakes are a lot higher than his immediate survival, and that Beta Three is not just along for the ride.



Beta Nine: Priestess

Squad Beta's medic is a quiet young girl with silky black hair and hypnotic dark eyes. She is the ultimate idealist, who joined the Legion simply to help. She believes, with innocent faith, in the Legion. She knows exactly what she wants. She is everything Thinker

is not, and she wants Thinker. He is promised to Valkyrie, but he cannot resist Priestess's childish love.

Priestess was raised on Korkush, a Legion world, and it was almost paradise. Even though she loved her home world, she could not resist the lure of the stars. The stars were lovely on Korkush – brilliant. When she walked through the Legion Gate she knew she was doing the right thing. Now she is hurled into the future, into infinity, with only her comrades to rely on. She has vowed to die for them, and they for her. She should be worried about lipstick and boyfriends, but instead she is focusing on casualties and trauma.

Priestess was terrified on Planet Hell. She was afraid that she was too weak to survive, she feared that she would freeze in combat and her wounded comrades would die. She forced herself on, against all reason, against all hope. She survived, with her comrades by her side. After that she closed her eyes to the future and vowed she would continue marching forever, against all odds.

Sometimes she wonders why she ever joined the Legion. No one had forced her. She knows that all she ever really wanted was a quiet life, a cozy little home, and someone to love for the rest of her life. Children – she wants to have children! How hopeless. Children are not permitted in the Legion.

She knows what she is doing is important – more important than any individual person. Billions will live in safety and comfort, because of the Legion. Because of her. She is quietly proud of that. All those children – growing up in peace and comfort, while she is out on the edge, doomed to an early death.

When she first met Thinker on Planet Hell she had secretly yearned for him. But he already had a girlfriend, Gamma Two. Valkyrie was stunningly lovely and had obviously captivated Thinker. How could she compete with Valkyrie? Later she was thrown together with Thinker, and decided she wanted him more than anything – and she did not care about Gamma Two. She knew it was trouble, but she was no longer afraid.

Priestess is a believer, lighting Atom's Road with the Cross of the Legion. She runs on pure faith.



Beta One: Snow Leopard

The ultimate squad leader, Beta One is only a few years older than the soldiers he commands. A pale shadow with white-blond hair and pink eyes, he leads from the front. Squad Beta is prepared to follow their One into Hell, and shoot Satan right between the eyes. Some of them fear he is no longer human, but Thinker has no doubts. He'll die for Snow Leopard, without question. He knows One will maximize their chances for survival while still accomplishing the mission.

Snow Leopard is from Magna 4, a giant iceworld best described as a hostile environment. Squad Beta doesn't know it, but his father was a Legion officer who died on Ulido, in the Cauldron, for his son and everyone else in ConFree. Snow Leopard had no choice. He was raised as a warrior and is determined to avenge his Father and die, if necessary, for the Legion, for ConFree, and for his race. But he's going to take a lot of Systies and O's with him before he goes out.

Snow Leopard is a fanatic, but he is totally in control. His first duty is always to his men and their survival. They know there are no guarantees, but they also know he is an outstanding, fearless combat leader who will lead them to victory – and survival. In return, they offer total loyalty.

Snow Leopard is to face gut-wrenching dilemmas in his Legion career, but leading a squad will remain his first love. He will take every casualty as a personal affront and a personal failure. Each death will make him stronger and more determined to succeed. As he leads his men further into chaos he withdraws into himself, determined to make no close human contacts so it will hurt less when they die. At first he talked with Beta Three, then with Beta Two, then with Beta Four. Ultimately he will talk with no-one. His men worship him like a God and their greatest fear is not their own death, but his.

Snow Leopard's only weakness is Boudicca, Gamma One, the fiery red-headed nymphomaniac fem who leads Squad Gamma. Boudicca is over the edge. She has the Legion Cross lasered onto her forehead. She has taken a fancy to Snow Leopard and offers herself with no strings, no commitments and no regrets. Snow Leopard has latched onto her as his last link to human emotions. He fears that the Legion is slowly turning him into a pitiless biogen with a cold cenite heart that will pump for a thousand years – the ultimate soldier.

Gamma One is his only hope.



Gamma Two: Valkyrie

Valkyrie is a stunning blonde with icy emerald eyes who emerges from Advanced Combat Training on Planet Hell as Thinker's lover. She has a cruel streak and a hair-trigger temper. When Priestess targets her man violence erupts. Valkyrie is later captured, broken and degraded by Millina the Mocain on Coldmark. When she emerges from the ordeal, shaken but triumphant, Valkyrie is a cold and vicious psychotic, hungry for Mocain blood.

Valkyrie fled her home world for the Legion Gate with her family slaughtered by merciless enemies and a price on her head. She entered the Legion full of hate and determined to never again be helpless, or unarmed. She was everything the Legion was looking for, and the Legion was exactly what she needed. She kept her secrets to herself, but accepted all that the Legion offered.

When she met Beta Three the attraction was instant and mutual. They mated like wild animals under cold stars on Planet Hell and pledged eternal love. When she lost Thinker to Priestess, Valkyrie turned to Gamma One, Boudicca, her fem squad leader. Boudicca helped her forget Thinker, at least for the short term.

When the Legion drops onto Andrion 3 she is seeking death as if in a trance, determined to snuff herself out in a suicidal attack on the O's. Instead squad Gamma is almost annihilated and Valkyrie again survives, cursed by the Gods. When she returns to Andrion 2 she has the Legion Cross lasered onto her forehead and joins Gamma One in her holy, doomed crusade. Three knows that the girl he had loved and longed for is gone at last, way out on the edge with Boudicca.

Valkyrie is barely under control. After Andrion 3 she takes another female lover, Scrapper, Gamma Five, the last survivor from their doomed squad. She has convinced herself that she lives only to kill Systies and O's, and she may as well forget any human emotions she may have possessed in the past. The galaxy is a cruel, hard place where only the strong survive. Valkyrie is not even certain she wants to survive any more, but she does want vengeance on her enemies. As the Legion body count rises, Valkyrie's blood lust rises as well.

She will not even admit to herself that what she really wants is love and peace and a quiet life. It is a fevered dream, so far away that it clearly has nothing to do with her.



Beta Two: Cool Hand

A tall, slim Outworlder from some hopeless ratworld, Beta's number two is relaxed, calm and confident. He is Thinker's first friend in the Legion. Cool Hand is secretly admired by Beta's troopies for his unflappable demeanor, easygoing personality and common sense.

Beta Two has accepted his role as a soldier of the Legion with no second thoughts and no worries. He knows exactly what the Legion is about and he wants to be a part of it. He sees the Legion as the only entity that is holding off the forces of chaos and savagery so that ConFree can survive. He is fatalistic about his own participation. Let the chips fall where they may, he will fight the good fight and hopefully survive.

He is very conscious of the importance of his own role as the squad's number two. As Snow Leopard withdraws from the world, Cool Hand tries to add a touch of humanity, calming down and reassuring the troopies even in the darkest nights. Cool Hand has no ambition but he is highly intelligent. He feels for the troops and considers himself very much one of them. In his more serious moments he vows he will never fail them, and will sacrifice even his own life to save the squad.

Cool Hand has a Legion lover who is one of the most beautiful girls Thinker has ever seen. She awaits him on Atom's Road. Cool Hand has a lot to live for. He is a musician and whenever possible he strums his ionic Lektra, producing faraway melodies of magical, haunting beauty.

Cool Hand's easy smile and infectious good humor is exactly what the squad needs to take the edge off Snow Leopard's icy efficiency. Thinker is glad Cool Hand is there. Cool Hand always seems to know how to calm down the nervous and point out the humor in nearly impossible situations.

Beta Two is nothing if not rational. He has convinced himself that he has the skills to lead the squad, with One. His fears center on what will happen to him when the squad begins taking casualties. He is close to all the troopies in Beta – too close. They are his family. He cannot imagine holding one of them in his arms to watch him die. But he knows that moment will come.



Gamma One: Boudicca

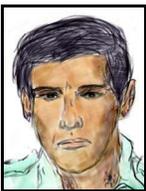
A fiery girl with bright red hair and a black Legion cross lasered onto her forehead, Boudicca is totally fearless and instinctively aggressive. To Thinker she appears dangerously unstable as well, but apparently the Legion thinks otherwise. She is Valkyrie's squad leader and seems to be her lover as well, after Valkyrie loses Thinker to Priestess. She is also Snow Leopard's lover. Thinker cannot imagine what One sees in her.

Gamma One is a fighter and a rebel. She never fit into society on her native world and faced a future that promised only a long imprisonment and a pointless death. Legion justice was harsh and Boudicca was on the wrong side of the law. She was also seething with wild sexual energy and released it in a series of sordid affairs with both sexes. Expelled from several reform schools as an incorrigible, she entered the Legion Gate only one step ahead of the local authorities.

The Legion was exactly what she needed – and she was exactly what the Legion needed. Borderline psychotics were in high demand as long as they were totally loyal. When they gave her a squad she had the cross burnt onto her forehead. It was the ultimate faith. Boudicca is going to die for the Legion, but she is going to run up a damned high body count before that happens. Her squadies admire her. They know her commitment is total, and they know she is as good as they get. She is a mad dog in combat. Anyone who faces Gamma is surely going to die. Her squadies don't care a whit about her sexual preferences. Boudicca scares Thinker. He thinks she is insane, and maybe she is.

Boudicca meets Snow Leopard on Planet Hell and falls for him, hard. She never reveals her true feelings, thinking it a sign of weakness, but disguises her passion as a mindless sexual fling. She thinks of Snow Leopard as her exact opposite. He is icy cold, totally rational, and consumed by the mission and the Legion's place in history. Boudicca is just charging forward blindly to her death. She doesn't dare think there is any hope for a truly lasting relationship with Beta One, or anyone else.

When Priestess takes Thinker from Valkyrie, Boudicca is waiting for Valkyrie. Valkyrie is an ice angel, her secret obsession, and now she becomes her lover as well. When the Systies capture Valkyrie on Andrion 2 her recovery becomes an obsession too. When the rescue is successful Boudicca feels her life is complete. The mission to Andrion 3 changes all that. Five of Boudicca's squadies are killed. From that moment on Gamma One is truly doomed, and she knows it. She has failed the squad, no matter how anyone tries to package it. Her only escape is death. Now she is totally fearless, totally aggressive. There are only four of them left in Gamma, and the others are on the other side. Boudicca decides the four of them are MIA's – and her mission is to reunite the squad, to fight Heaven's wars.



Beta Eight: Dragon

Dark and brooding, Beta Eight is as young as the others but has had an interesting childhood. His flesh is already covered with dark tattoos from lost worlds, lost causes and vanished soldiers. Dragon is a contact master and a professional killer, fighting a formidable curse. Death follows him like a shadow, and all his friends will die. He has decided Beta will be his last stand. Thinker likes him instinctively.

Dragon doesn't talk about his past. He was raised in a violent, troubled world and spent his youth in a guerilla militia fighting a local totalitarian regime. Recreation consisted of the contact ring. As Dragon grew up his contact skills became formidable and he concentrated on perfecting his brutal, effective techniques. His education in the martial arts was interrupted by a civil war.

Dragon's youth became a holocaust of war. He lost his family, his closest comrades, his country and finally his world. When the resistance reorganized on a neighboring system Dragon was there to join them. His sole motivation was to avenge himself upon his enemies. The nasty inter-system war that followed gave him ample opportunity to slaughter his enemies but after awhile Dragon began to wonder if he was not just as evil as those he was fighting.

"Death will be your shadow! You will bring death with you like a plague, and everyone you love will die!" It was a curse and a promise. He had shot the old crone in the face, but it had all come true.

The Legion is his last chance, and he had taken to Legion life like a shark to water. Dragon has no illusions. He knows they are all going to die – Beta, Gamma, all of them. But he is going to do all he can to postpone it. His enemies are still out there – only the names have changed. His knuckles are covered with the miniature faces of dead comrades from lost worlds, and now Beta and Gamma are to join them. Fine – let it happen. He's ready. All that is important is to kill Systies and O's – and Dragon is a first class killer.



Moontouch

A Taka Dark Cloud sorceress from Andrion 2, Moontouch presides over the Kingdom of the Dead in the shattered ruins of the vanished empire of Southmark. Her heavenly beauty shames the stars, and when she looks upon Thinker she only has to blink once to make him hers. He has rescued her from a sacrificial ceremony and she tells him she is his slave. Thinker knows it is a lie. He is the slave. His life is bound with hers thereafter.

Moontouch is the Delegate from the Past, guarding the Tomb of the Kings in the bowels of Southmark, placing fresh flowers on the brows of skeleton kings in the secret dark. Sometimes the dead seem to her more real than the living. She thinks of herself as inhabiting an in-between place, not quite here, not quite there. It is her destiny. She is the Guardian, a slave of the past. Finally she decides it is all hers, her own vanished kingdom. Now it is only dust and bones, but it matters not – she is a servant in the House of the Dead.

The Book is there too, the Book of the Men of the Book, the Taka's holy writ, forbidden to unbelievers. It is everything they believe, and there is only one, but it has become a book of dust. Just dust, after all those years. Not a single word has been

preserved. There are many books there, wonderful books, all that Southmark had ever been, but it has all dissolved to dust.

When Thinker comes into her life and takes her from the grasp of the Gortron, Moontouch surrenders herself to her new fate. He is Slayer, a mighty warrior from the stars, a delegate from the Future, and Moontouch soon realizes she is destined to walk by his side and bear his child. Their son will be a mighty King, and will raise Southmark from the ashes with his sword. Moontouch knows it. She can read the future as clearly as the past.

To Thinker, Moontouch is irresistible. At first he thinks of her as an exotic affair who will probably disappear into the past as a haunting memory. Later he begins to realize that his actions have long-term consequences, and that Moontouch has become as much a part of his life as Priestess or Valkyrie.



Deadeye

Deadeye Flowers is a young Taka warrior who attaches himself to Beta Three when the Taka ally themselves with the Legion against the exosegs and the Priests of the Cult of the Dead. He lives only to kill exos and priests. He becomes Thinker's eyes and ears in the Taka world.

The Taka are perfect auxiliaries. Their simple code is similar to the Legion's – kill the enemy, and live for today. Deadeye is a product of Taka history. There are no compromises in the Taka world. You are ally or enemy, blood brother or mortal foe. Beta Three made the transition from foe to friend when he demonstrated his power over the exosegs.

Deadeye Flowers tells Thinker about Taka history and walks the road of death for his new friend. To Deadeye, the Legion are the Men of the Past, the Golden Sword, sent by the Gods to avenge the Taka. Thinker tells him they are not from the past, but from the future. Deadeye does not believe it. He knows the Gods.

When they first encounter Moontouch, Deadeye advises Thinker against further involvement. Moontouch is the Food of the Gods, a Princess of the House of the Past, a web-spinner who will ensnare Thinker in her evil schemes. Thinker ignores him – an immortal does not fear the future. When it is done Deadeye accepts it, and is eventually to become Moontouch's most loyal servant.

There is more in Deadeye's mind than killing exos and priests. He feels he is in the grip of Fate and will do whatever Fate decrees. He has a vision of a greater Taka nation, rising from the ashes of Southmark and Stonehall. He awakens in the night from fevered dreams of unbelievable intensity. Taka females, working looms of treesilk, night after night, the looms whirling and clacking busily in his mind, weaving bright patterns – what are they weaving? He cannot see it clearly. For weeks they labor and when he finally realizes what it is they are weaving he is struck awake as if shot through the heart. They are weaving patterns from the ancient battle flags of Southmark - bright new silken flags. The battle flags! He knows it is a glimpse of the future, a wonderful future, and he knows he will be a part of it.

From that moment, Deadeye is content. He only wants to live to see that day, when the ancient battle standards of his people are again unfurled, bright and bold and unafraid.



Beta Four: Merlin

Merlin is a scientific genius who has inexplicably chosen to wear an A-suit and march in the mud with the troopies, despite a demonstrated lack of aptitude to do so. No one can stop a volunteer, and Merlin is admired by everyone in the squad for his foolish idealism, courage and intelligence.

Merlin comes from a pleasant Legion world. His reputation as a young genius and his early research on exploiting alternate spacetime dimensions, advanced laser holography and improved antigrav systems brought him to the attention of the Legion. He was made an offer he could not refuse – his own lab and the freedom to pursue pure science. When Merlin walked through the Legion Gate he was pursuing his own best destiny as a research scientist.

But he was not working in isolation. He knew the work he was doing was important – very important. He loved the work, he loved his new life, but the visions kept coming at him. All those soldiers – millions of them, out on the edge, fighting for the Legion, for ConFree – and he was comfortably encamped in his cozy little lab.

He throws himself into his work – he becomes lost in his work. But the reminders are everywhere. All he has to do is walk down the corridor to the cafeteria, and there it is, a massive dead-black A-suit with a ruby red faceplate, propped up right in the corridor with an E cradled in its arms. There is a huge sign above it that reads: 'THEY COME IN ALL SIZES. It is terrifying.

Merlin knows all you have to do is raise your hand and you'd be at the front. Nobody can stop you.

She cries when he tells her. He knows it is insane. He loves her, she is everything to him. How can he leave her behind? Despite it all, he knows he has to do it. He knows it is insane, but he has to do it – if only for himself.

Merlin is still not sure he's done the right thing, but he is living with his decision. Thinker says it's a waste, but they all have accepted him. Now he's in the mud, with the troops. All those years of study, and he's a hired gun. It doesn't matter – it's what he's doing. He was a good scientist and now he's going to do his best to be a good trooper. It's not easy. It's hard, and scary. And yet, strangely, he feels closer to these kids than to anyone else.

He doesn't think he'll ever go back.



Beta Five: Psycho

Psycho is a short, aggressive trooper with short blond hair and vacant blue eyes that reveal the chaos within. He is Beta's Manlink Master, a little man with a great big gun. In combat he is magnificent but when it is peaceful he is a giant pain. His only desire is to annihilate the enemy. He lives for the moment and says whatever he thinks. Thinker can't stand him. He is amazed that Psycho is still alive.

After a misspent youth Psycho joined the Legion eagerly. He realized quickly that all the stories he had heard were true – the Legion was his destiny. All he wanted from life after that was to be a Legion trooper, blasting everything that moved, kicking in doors and terrifying widows and orphans. Advanced Combat Training was so much fun Psycho couldn't stop laughing. And to think they were paying him to do this! What a kick! He should have paid them, for having so much fun. Psycho loved it all – dropping wildly onto new worlds, marching in the mud, spraying tacstars all over the neighborhood. If he had tried any of that at home they'd have put him in jail. But here it was perfectly all right!

Psycho's one true love is his Manlink. She is lovely and deadly and wicked. He calls his tacstar goddess the Mother of Destruction and he worships her and sleeps with her and never leaves her side. He knows she'll be faithful to him, no matter what.

Psycho believes in experiencing life. He'll try almost anything once and never hesitates to do anything because of possible negative consequences. He loves wild S&S in Legion ports and his escapades often end in violence. He comes up with bizarre but occasionally effective schemes to meet underaged and off-limits lovelies on Legion worlds and sometimes ends up fleeing Shore Patrol.

Priestess is his obsession but Priestess will not play. She prefers Thinker. Psycho will not give up; he'll keep trying.

Psycho hates to admit it even to himself, but he's growing quite fond of the gang in Beta squad. Even Dragon and Thinker have their occasional good points. He doesn't mind taking on the world with these guys – he feels right at home.



Beta Six: War Hound

Slow but determined, Beta Six has found a home in Beta. His harsh angular features, short haircut and stubborn persistence earned him the warname 'War Hound,' despite his gentle personality. Everyone in Beta knows they can depend on Six, even though he may not be too bright. Thinker hates it when people make fun of War Hound.

War Hound had a difficult time in midschool, and knew he was not destined for higher education. When he looked into the future he could see nothing – only a featureless, meaningless life as a service clerk. War Hound wasn't sure why he found everything so difficult. Maybe it had something to do with the headaches. The doctors never explained them. Even romance seemed impossible to achieve. He could not kindle any interest from the opposite sex. War Hound thought he was probably a hopeless fool. He liked people, but most people either avoided him or ignored him. It seemed he was just not important, in that world.

War Hound read a great deal about the Legion before he walked through the gate. Everything he read indicated that the Legion welcomed everyone, and had honest work for

everyone. They thought everyone was important. War Hound's mother had stressed the importance of work and War Hound wanted to make a contribution to society. Mom said it didn't matter what you did as long as you were helping somehow. She cried when he left – she said she was proud of him, and she knew he'd make a good soldier. War Hound cried too.

The Legion did make a man of him. He was certainly a different person by the time he became Beta Six. People didn't laugh at him anymore – at least not like they had before. War Hound likes it in squad Beta. He feels he has at last found an important role to play, and he loves his squadies. They are wonderful people – open and trusting. They seem to accept him for what he is. Sometimes they tease him when he doesn't understand things at first, but it is always in good humor. He knows they depend on him to stay alive, just as he depends on them. He vows to himself that he will never fail them. Those Systies will have to kill him first. He has absorbed Legion training like a sponge.

One day just after ACT it slowly dawned on him that he had graduated Planet Hell and he was just as good as the others – he was a soldier of the Legion! He cried again that day, but he made sure nobody saw him. Then he wrote home to his Mom to tell her the news.

War Hound still gets headaches, bad headaches that he can barely stand. But it's all right – he has found his place in the world.



Beta Seven: Ironman

Beta's youngest trooper, Ironman is just a kid but he is a lifter with a tremendous physique, a handsome boy with extra long straight brown hair. He is the first in the squad to find a girlfriend on Andrion 2. Ironman is so good natured, shy and innocent that nobody hesitates to tease him. Thinker feels protective of Ironman. He views him as a representative of some mythical world, the ConFree that the Legion is fighting to defend.

Ironman has everything to live for. He is bright, handsome, strong – he even had a girlfriend on his home world. Nobody ever asks why people walk through the Legion Gate but Thinker wonders about Ironman. He was the minimum age for Legion recruitment, just out of midschool. He had his whole life ahead of him, and he was living on a ConFree world. He could have been anything he wanted. Why the Legion?

Ironman never tells, but the truth is simple. Like Priestess, he just wants to help. He knew he could live a life of comfort and ease in ConFree, and certainly find meaningful work. But he also knew the Legion was out there, watching over them all – and it was only because of the Legion that ConFree prospered.

Ironman wants something more than a good life. He wants the stars. He wants high adventure and a chance to make a real difference. He wants to be able to tell his grandchildren that he had been a Soldier of the Legion, undergone perilous adventures, and had returned as a citizen.

Ironman is to get all the adventure he wants. On Andrion 2 he finds romance with a lovely Taka girl called Morning Light. He is the envy of the squad, but accepts his good fortune with a shy smile.

Everybody likes Ironman. He is a likable guy. Thinker worries about him. What will he do if something happens to Ironman? He's just a kid, why did they let people that young into the Legion? With another year to think about it, he may not have made such a foolish decision. The Legion isn't for folks like Ironman. It's for the dreamers, the drifters, the doomed and the lost. Ironman doesn't belong there – but he is now part of Beta, and is just as much a soldier of the Legion as any of them. He is going to be right by Thinker's side, marching into the future. Thinker prays to Deadman for his soul. Thinker prays for everyone in Beta.



Beta Ten: Redhawk

Ten is Beta's aircar driver, a genius in the pilot's seat. He is a scruffy long-haired oaf with a scraggly red beard and splotchy face, but Beta's enemies had best beware when the squad's aircar lifts off.

Redhawk is a free spirit. He laughs at Legion discipline but he is totally dependable where his aircar is concerned. He is a wild man in the air, truly fearless, and the troops know he'll always be there for pickup.

He's sweaty, smelly and frequently splattered with slick, but the girls love him. Thinker can't figure out why. He thinks Ten must exude some hormone that shuts off the thinking portion of the female brain while activating the mating instinct. When not working on the aircar Redhawk will be collapsed in a stupor in a dirty shirt, sipping ale or just staring glassy-eyed at the overhead. At such times he appears to be developing laziness as a serious art form, but at other times he can work on the car for days on end without sleep or sustenance.

Thinker wonders where the Legion finds people like Beta Ten. Redhawk is wonderful – almost miraculous. Where the hell do they find them? Redhawk is a mechanical genius who can probably construct an aircar out of flattened ale cans and discarded power packs. All of Beta is convinced that he is the best pilot in the Legion.

Rumor has it that Redhawk had signed up for the Legion when his civilian life as a test pilot had begun to bore him. Thinker knows the real story. Redhawk told him once, deep in drink, that he had dropped out of midschool to fly batwings over the high mountains of his home world. Batwings were unpowered gliders that mounted on your back and became airborne when you jumped off a cliff. When Redhawk described the beauty of that cold aerial world the hairs on the back of Thinker's neck stood up. Redhawk gave himself to that world completely, often forgetting to drink or eat, just soaring magnificently over majestic granite mountains on the currents for hours on end, high above the mists, as silent as the wind, floating with the birds just like a God. Tears came to Redhawk's eyes when he talked of it – he could see it still.

Redhawk had quit when he realized that he was headed for certain death. All of his friends in that strange, secret batwing fraternity had eventually plummeted to their deaths. But Redhawk couldn't go back to a normal life. He wanted to see more, to do more. The Legion seemed the obvious choice.

Redhawk is perhaps the only person Thinker knows who joined the Legion looking for a safer lifestyle.



Gravelight

Gravelight is a psyker, a lonely desperate girl with pale skin and limp blonde hair, trapped in the prison of her own talents. She is assigned to track down Gamma Two during the Coldmark negotiations. Although psychers and deadheads don't mix, Thinker notices one of the officers falling under her spell.

Gravelight doesn't think she will survive. As her powers grow, patiently nurtured by the Legion, her suffering also grows. Even in school she had been tormented by the babble of voices in her head. Now it is worse than ever, splitting, throbbing headaches that drive her to distraction. Her own powers terrify her. She is becoming stronger by the day, but at what price? Psychers don't mix with psychers either. Gravelight knows that several have chosen suicide.

Nobody had forced her to be a psyker, nobody had forced her to join the Legion – but she had the talent, and the Legion had come and got her. Who could resist those charming officers? They talked a lot about what she could do for humanity. They knew her well. Humanity! Deadheads, they meant. She is beginning to hate them. Are we really any more human than the Systies? They're slaves, they say – but so am I!

Love is denied to Gravelight, forever. Love is the narcotic that will weaken her powers and end her career – but love is impossible for a psyker. Yearn for it, dream about it, but don't get too close – you may not like his thoughts.

Love – it is forbidden to us all. Gravelight is stunned by her fate. She is too young to die, but how can she go on like this? Chasing helpless primitives through the forest. This isn't her idea of helping humanity. Maybe she should just quit – just refuse to do it. What could they do to her? Make her stop? Let her find a lover?

Exhausted, Gravelight tries to hang on. Even sleep is difficult, now. Does no one care about my sufferings? If I am such a great resource why is there no support? But no – stop it! The others don't complain, why should I? You're a soldier of the Legion, girl – a soldier of the Legion!

She doesn't feel like a soldier of the Legion. She feels like a very tired little girl.



Tara

Antara Tarantos-Hanna alias Cintana Tamaling is Thinker's lost love from his own secret past. She had burned with the light of the stars, fighting evil in her dreams. Now she is a wanted slaver and a Legion asset, playing a dangerous game with stakes of life or death.

She is also a powerful psycher. Thinker is stunned to see her again but knows he had best forget her. Tara is his evil twin. She is to have a profound effect on his future.

Tara has hot smoky eyes with slanted Assidic lids – luxuriant waves of dark auburn hair frame her narrow face. She is hauntingly beautiful. Even now, almost a thousand years later, the genes of the Conqueror are still present, a chill reminder of the bloody past.

She is one of the most powerful psychers in the galaxy but her Legion affiliation is a dangerous secret. Tara cruises Systie vac in the slaver P.S. Maiden, and thousands of hopeless slaves bear her mark. Her exec Whit, a pale blonde, worships her but fears her. Her security chief Pandaros, a fierce Cyrillian merc, guards their cargo carefully. They are all under a Legion death sentence.

Tara is a fanatic. All she ever wanted was justice, but God should have mercy on people who get what they want. When they told her what she had to do she cried, for herself. She knew an angel once, the man who made her – a psycher, a genius. He was tortured, obsessed, brilliant, insane, divine. He pulled the scales right off her eyes and carved the cross of the Legion into her heart. It almost killed her.

Now she is doomed – committed until the end, compiling a list of those who are to die when the Legion opens the Book of Death.

As Tara's powers grow she finds it increasingly difficult to deal with people. A huge, hairy retarded ape of a man pads silently behind her wherever she goes. Gildron is her bodyguard and the only soul she can stand to have by her side. He is not quite human and he is mentally retarded but his thoughts are warm and simple and full of love for her. How cruel, for him and for her. He will never see his race again, and Tara knows she can never take a lover from her own kind. She sometimes fantasizes about taking Gildron as a lover and fears that he might actually make her happy. But what kind of a life would that be – girl finds happiness with ape? Well why not? Is happiness forbidden to us all? Isn't she entitled to a little love, after all the hate and sacrifice?



Millina

Millina is a Systie Mocain who is Valkyrie's captor on Coldmark. She is a violent, fanatic female warrior from the System's dominant slave-owning race and a survivor of the System's obscene alliance with the O's on Andrion 3.

Millina has pale greenish skin, cold reptilian eyes with no eyebrows and a tight, fierce mouth. Her black hair is cut short except for the front where a single lock hangs over one eye. Millina thinks of herself as the Hand of the Mocain, walking point for her race in a hostile universe. The Mocain are the backbone of the System, and the Legion is their nemesis. Millina had broken and degraded Gamma Two quickly on Coldmark, transforming her into an obedient slave. But it had not quite worked out the way Millina planned. Her Legion, Valkyrie, had icy emerald eyes and hair like golden flax and a slim, supple, perfect body. Who was the slave?

Millina had raped her, then had saved her from rape – but in the end it was Millina who was the captive. Kill it, the System had said. It knows too much, Millina, and the Legion is nearing – kill it!

"Kill it?" Millina laughs hysterically. "Kill our little Legion? Kill our little girl? Better to kill ourself, System! Better to kill the System!" Millina holds Valkyrie's head in her hands, and looks deep into her eyes. The Mocain's face is twitching, and her hooded eyes are wet. "You have destroyed us, Legion. You have ruined us. We don't know what to do now – we just don't know. We only know that we want you close beside us forever, and only that. Hold us, Legion! Hold us tight! You've unearthed our darkest secret, you've stabbed our black heart with your pale eyes, you've tied our hands behind us with your golden hair, you've brought us to our knees with those tender lips, you've imprisoned us for a thousand years, you've made us your slave! Millina, the slave! Millina, slave of the Legion! How did you do it, Legion? How did you do it? Kill it? Kill it yourself, you cowards! Come and get it, and kill it yourself! What are you afraid of? One used Mocain? Come, cowards - death awaits you! Take our Legion? Yes, come and try! They won't get you, Legion - we promise!" Millina, the Bitch, is trembling.



Whit

Maralee Whitney is Tara's XO, a young blonde who admires and fears her Captain whom she knows as the slaver Cintana Tamaling. Whit's life is consumed with the desire to accumulate as much money as she can, as quickly as possible. It is her major weakness. She views the slave business as distasteful, but her conscience is salved by the obscene profits she makes with each successful run. Her deepest fear is being intercepted by the Legion. She knows the result will be an instant death.

Whit secretly worships 'Cinta' who is probably the most successful slaver in the galaxy. She admires her for her brazen resolve, icy determination, ruthless efficiency and personal courage. Whit aspires to be as successful as Cinta.

At first Whit has no reason to suspect that Cinta is not exactly what she appears to be. When Whit finally begins to see the hidden Legion hand she is stunned and awestruck and vows to never leave Cinta's side. What a woman, she thinks – she's even got the Legion in her pocket!

Despite her admiration for Cinta, Whit is primarily concerned with Whit. When Thinker gets to know her better he realizes that he will need a scorecard to keep track of Whit's social life. She sees no reason why she cannot have any number of boyfriends as long as she can keep them separated from each other.

Cinta and Whit have been through a number of harrowing adventures together. Whit admits to herself that she cares for Cinta – maybe even too much. Whit has noticed that Cinta does have a soft side. Perhaps Whit is getting soft as well. Well that's fine. All Whit needs is enough to live a life of luxury, and then she will retire. How difficult can it be?

**Pandaros**

Pandaros is Tara's security chief, a moody, efficient Cyrillian with fierce slit eyes and filed teeth. He guards the Maiden's human cargo and supervises the Cyrillian crew. He is very well paid and his objective is to collect enough cash to ensure a well-financed hideaway in some obscure system where the Legion will not find him. He has no choice but to remain loyal to Cinta. He is on the Legion death list, and the Maiden will only survive if they all stick together.

Pandaros feels no pity for their captives – he's just glad he's on his end of the shockrod. Cyrillians lost their entire world to the System in a particularly nasty civil war. Pandaros is a mercenary and appreciates his cushy position on the Maiden. He will do nothing to endanger it. It would give him the greatest of pleasure to shoot Gildron through the forehead, then seize Cinta and strip her, raping her slowly and leaving her bound and naked on the deck of her own cabin. He thinks it often, but he never does it. The pay is too good.

He is proud of his abilities. He is a survivor. Nobody is going to put one over on him. He believes he's fast enough and smart enough to stay one step ahead of the Legion until the day he disappears permanently into the cosmos, somewhere in Systie vac. All he needs is a little more cash.

**Gildron**

Gildron is a great hairy giant dressed in Tara's colors, a half-human beast who watches tenderly and jealously over his lovely "Zin-da." He loves her without qualification. She is the only alien who has ever reacted to him without fear or hostility. He is completely happy in her presence. Her thoughts are warm and pleasant and full of affection for him, although she is quite retarded. Her kind cannot even communicate, except by chattering like monkeys. Although they are only primitives, Gildron doesn't mind. He is content, for the first time since the aliens came to his village.

He still has vivid memories of his world. It was a beautiful, simple place and his family clan lived in peace and happiness until the aliens came, with storm and fire, blasting his world apart and snatching him up as a slave. He showed them it was wrong and they punished him for it. It did not bother him. His life was over, his clan was gone, his whole world was gone. He had no idea where his world was – such things had never concerned them. He knew he could never return. The slavers would not reveal the location of his world, and the other aliens believed he was the only one of his kind.

When Zin-da appears, looking down at him in his pit of icy mud, he is immediately struck by the difference between her and the others. It is – almost like mindlove, but it is certainly a simple warmth. She feels it too. She pays the slavers and since then he has been by her side.

Gildron is very fond of Zin-da. He thinks of her as a loyal pet, who cares for him and looks after his simple needs. If anyone ever tries to harm her he will rip their arms right out of their sockets. He knows how evil these aliens can be, and he responds appropriately to both kindness and hostility.

He thinks of his family often. When the love overwhelms him he cries bitter tears, and sleeps.