

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO YOUR THRONE

So you want to be the Emperor? Good! You'll have an exciting time of it, I'm sure. Oh, who am I? I'm Crassum, your Grand Vizier. Think of me as your tutor through your emperordom. Is that even a word? Well, we'll go with it.

So you've probably ambled over to your astrographic display, wondering just what in the hell you're supposed to be doing. I don't blame you. As Emperor, you have a tremendous amount of power at your disposal. I'll go over some of your ruling concepts, then walk through you how to do certain things so that you feel a little less inept. Deal?

## MAJOR CONCEPTS OF AOTSS

### A: POWER

This represents essentially the aggregate of your perceived power towards your subjects, your ruling characters, and the quadrant generally. You want this number to be as high as possible, especially if you plan on running things like a tyrant. People respect power if they've been beaten down, but if it ever wanes... better watch out. You'll use this number to gauge more or less how likely people are to do things you want. For instance, if you ask a low-level viceroy to do something, and their power is much lower than yours, even if they hate your guts they'll probably do what you ask because your power is so much greater – you could smash them like a bug. BUT not always, especially if they are backed by a strong House who also hates your guts. But more on Houses later. All entities have Power, and they are all scaled the same way, so a House's Power will be scaled the same as every other House, Characters will be scaled as well (and you are a Character for this purpose).

So how do you get more Power? Easy. Do things. Pass Projects, Complete successful Actions. Expand your Empire. Build more military. Remember, Power is intangible as much as it is tangible, and you have to be seen doing powerful things. If you don't, your power slowly starts to wane. So if you sit up here in your bedroom doing nothing but watching holographic entertainment all day, people will start to forget that you rule, and your power will wane. Also, if you ask somebody to do something and they say NO! that will also reduce your Power. So be careful about what you ask.

### B. AP (Action Points)

This represents how much you can get done per month. Even though you are the Emperor, you are not a god, as much as we would like for the populace to believe such. You have to deal with administration and bureaucracy as much as anyone, especially for a quadrant-spanning Empire. Projects take time to get together, and even talking to someone takes a while to set up – you have to coordinate schedules, get the hyperrelay satellites in the right position, etc. The good news is that if you are on the same planet as the other character, it costs no Action Points (AP) to talk – one reason you might decide to leave your home planet! It costs 2 AP to initiate a Project and all your AP to move to another location. Your AP will be relatively low at the start of your reign, but as you start to understand the machinations of government, it will slowly increase. It also somewhat changes from month to month. You can not, however, store them up for a rainy day – use them or lose them, Your Majesty!

## C. PROJECTS

Projects, Your Majesty, is how you get things done in your reign. We'll talk more about Projects in detail later, but for now understand that if you want to colonize a world, terraform a planet, survey a system, or claim a quadrant, any planetary-level or greater actions that you take will be done by Projects. These are hugely expensive and resource-intensive endeavors that require the help of your Houses to complete and pay for. Essentially, you assign an Administrator to the Project who is responsible for ensuring that it is completed in a timely manner. You then assign additional Characters who will contribute either money, Admin, or both to the Project. That's basically it, but who you put in these roles will make a huge difference in how effective the Project is. For example, if you assign an Administrator from one House and Characters who are at war with the Administrator's House, they will contribute barely any ADM – or none at all! However, if the Characters are all from the same House, they will get a House affinity bonus – but that House will get all the Power from the Project, which may not sit well with other Houses! Think carefully when you assign your Project staffs, Your Majesty.

## D. ADM (Admin)

ADM is the lifeblood of your Empire. Every planet produces ADM. What it represents in the abstract is men, materials, construction tools, machinery, transport ships, crews, labor, food, water, and everything else needed to make Projects successful. Each planet can produce a certain amount of ADM, and the planet's Viceroy can be more or less efficient with how much ADM they can actually generate from the planet. It's about being efficient, and Viceroys with a higher Admin skill are better at utilizing planetary-level resources and can thus 'generate' more ADM.

## E. CHARACTERS

As Emperor, you do not deal (directly) with the common rabble. Your station is much too exalted for that. No, you deal with the great people in our Empire. These could be House leaders, stellar leaders, important people within our Empire, and your Celestial Council. Characters are how things get done, diplomacy gets done, Projects get done, and Actions go through. Virtually everything you do as Emperor will be done through another Character. Thus, it is vital to know as much as possible about the people who are doing your bidding. Intel is a must, and you must work to learn as much about these people as possible!

## F. ACTIONS

As stated above, you do not rule by fiat. While you can order Projects to be initiated, you can not order governors and Viceroys to do whatever your bidding is. You can, however, ask that they do certain things. They are not robots (well, most aren't) and they are generally free to say no to your demands – but that carries its own risk. Before asking a Character to do something, make sure they are likely to say yes – do they have a positive relationship with you? More importantly, does their House have a positive relationship with you? These are very important considerations when trying to determine what they will say or do.

## G. POPS

Your Empire is vast, your Excellence, and while I said that you do not deal directly with the common rabble, we do track the common rabble. Each million or so people are roughly classified into what we

call a Population Unit, or Pop for short. We group these Pops by culture type and profession, and when we track immigration and emigration, production, or any other type of economic activity, the base unit that generates items is the pop.

#### H. HOUSES

All Characters belong to a House. There are 3 types of Houses: Great, Minor, and Common. Houses have a common Culture that all Characters of that House share. As Emperor, you belong to the ruling House, the Greatest of all the Great Houses. That said, you need good relations with at least some Houses in order to rule effectively. Poor relations will cause that House to pull their members from service from your government, meaning that you may not have access to strong Viceroys or Governors. Relations that are TOO low may lead to civil war – Houses can ally with each other, and if your power grows too low or you anger Houses enough – they may actively fight you, which you will then have to decide whether to let them go or to take them back by force:

#### I. HOLDINGS

The idea of ownership in AotSS is a little – complicated, Your Majesty. Your Empire is made up of your House's Holdings, plus those of any House that has sworn fealty to your Empire. A Holding, at the smallest level, is a planet. A System or Province can also be a Holding, but to be a Holding all entities within must also belong to the same House that Holds that entity. In other words, if a Great House holds a system, you can not claim a planet within unless you revoke the Holding from the House. Naturally, they would be pretty upset about this. So while you can pacify an angry House by giving away parts of your Empire through Holdings, be wary as they will no longer be under your direct control and your tax revenue will be much lower (and the House that Holds them will earn the majority of their wealth).

#### J. POPULAR SUPPORT (PoSUP)

Your Pops individually have little power, Your Majesty, but collectively they may be a force to be reckoned with. That is why you must rule with a mandate of Popular Support, or PoSup. There are two different types of PoSup: Love, and Fear. The higher value determines the type of rule you maintain over your Empire. If you rule benevolently, fill the needs of your Pops, manage employment, and develop your planets well, your Pops will generally Love you, and they will be much less likely to rebel. Treating cultures roughly, taking Holdings by force, opening up prison camps, and ruling by fiat will cause Fear to rise throughout your Empire, and while this is much cheaper to maintain (usually a strong, loyal military will do the trick) any erosion of your power will be seen by both your Pops and suppressed House leaders as a possible chance to right former wrongs... so if you go down that path, better stay strong, Your Majesty....

## **YOUR ROLE IN THE AOTSS GAME**

You are a live character in the game, unlike other '4X' games you may have played. You represent a living, breathing entity that can move around the map, have events happen, be killed, learn new skills, and improve over time, like a RPG of sorts. Therefore, you must be careful not to put yourself into positions where you may be vulnerable. You can move to any planet you (or your Empire's Houses) own, but you should consider the benefits vs. any potential risks. You are safest in the capital, but you can

spread your positive (Love PoSup) rule throughout your Empire if you are willing to take risks, plus there are some Actions that you can only take if you are on the same planet as another Character.

So remember! Unlike most 4X games, where you are a sort of 'grey eminence', you have heft and action in the universe. Your Actions matter in this game, so think carefully before spending AP. Each turn matters!

## **WINNING THE GAME AND YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVES (OR: WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO AROUND HERE?)**

To 'win', Your Majesty, you have to win the hearts and minds (or scare them enough) so that you will have the public's blessing to undergo the Lazarus Protocol. This will effectively make you an immortal emperor, and as close to a god as we can provide them. But the only way the Great Houses will stand for it is if you have overwhelming support from your people. In practical terms, you need 90% or greater Love or Fear PoSup for at least 3 months (turns) for the Houses to agree to allow you to complete the protocol, once it is allowed to be researched. There also may be other threats that manifest themselves as things evolve that give you additional ways to 'win' your people and rule forever...

In the meantime, you have several practical objectives. At the most basic level, you must keep your Empire running smoothly. That means that you need to have ample resources of materials and energy to create Projects to sustain and grow the Empire. To get these resources, you'll either have to trade with other House Holdings, other civilizations that you may discover, or simply colonize and use the resources from those new Holdings. If you have a poor Empire with few Crowns, growing your own might be the best way to go, but other Houses will grow more resentful as your Holdings grow, so be careful!

Beyond that, you must make sure your people are happy. That means that they are well-fed, they live in nice, progressive Planets, that they are generally happy with their rulers (Viceroys and Governors), they have a nice Culture mix that isn't volatile, and that they have jobs so that they can make a living. Happy Pops make for Loving Pops. Unfortunately, to provide all this is very expensive. There's always the option of ruling by fear. You can choose to enslave people to work, put them to work in jobs that they may not be best suited for, but it will fill your factories and high-tech centers. You can also forcibly expel cultures that you may not find 'suitable' for your planet(s) and forcibly immigrate other cultures, but again this is highly Tyrannical. You can threaten your Characters and intimidate them to do your bidding, or you can shower them with love and flattery. Or some combination; it's up to you, Your Majesty.

Then, you have to keep your finger on the pulse of your Great and Minor Houses. They are the primary sources of your Empire's most talented people, and you will need to keep at least some of them in your good graces. Each House has a specialty, and if you have poor relations with that House, they won't allow their people to work for you, meaning that if you have planets that need Viceroys with good Mining Tradition, and the only House that fits the bill in your Empire is House Illioia, then you're out of luck. Plus, having all the Great Houses upset with you is begging for civil war if you show the slightest weakness. You will need allies, Your Majesty! Consider, if your relations with the Great Houses are poor, perhaps lifting up the fortunes of a Minor House. They can eventually become a Great House if their Power is high enough and supplant a Great House (there can only be 5 at a time, not including your House).

Next, you must consider your growth! As an Emperor, you should always be learning and growing, with new skills and talents. Putting some resources into improving yourself should be a priority. This will help you with administering your Empire, improving your Charisma, and many other skills that will help you reach your ultimate goals.

Finally, you may wish to rebuild your shattered Empire. The Celestial Empire once stretched 30,000 light-years in every direction, but after the Second Xyl War, the Terran Alliance gradually started to crumble, and the remnants became the Celestial Empire. After centuries of poor or indifferent rule, however, the outer Systems broke away and became their own civilizations. Perhaps you can convince them to return to the ways of the Celestial – and who knows, they may have new skills that may come in handy after centuries on the periphery!

## **HOW SHOULD I LEARN THIS DAUNTING JOB, CRASSUS?**

Good question, Your Majesty. I would recommend reaching through the next few chapters to familiarize yourself with the user interface of your holocron. You can literally rule the Empire through it, but you must know its limits and capabilities. Then, I would start a simulated reign – I'll show you how to set that up in your holochamber when you're ready – with a much smaller Empire and quadrant than you now rule. This will give you a chance to oversee fewer planets and systems, and perhaps only a Province or two. Also, you'll have fewer Characters to oversee and worry about. Focus on building up your House's Holdings. Put good people in charge at the viceroy and governor level. Try to match up capabilities to what planets need – for example, if a planet has high unrest, consider putting in a viceroy who has superior empathy and 'people skills', even if they don't have a good Admin rating. There is no perfect Character, and you will have imperfect Characters in important roles. New Characters come along every year, and you never know who you will find one day!

Also, try to build an alliance with at least 2 Great Houses. Even if 3 hate you, that should be enough to stave them off from thoughts of civil war, allying with each other, or breaking away from the Empire altogether. Plus, you will need more Characters to run your Empire than can come from your ruling House.

At any rate, I will be here to help you, so don't fear. Just ask... and listen to your people and Characters always. They are always talking to you, as long as you hear what they are saying.

Good luck, Your Majesty.