

SLAVE ZERO

V1.0 by Songless

The First Corporate Dynasty is ruled by the SovKhan, a tyrannical ruler who maintains control over the Asian Conglomerates from the towering factory-city of Megacity S1-9. Rising from the miserable, toxic floodlands created by endless years of pollution, the capital is the largest and most advanced structure ever built by human hands. Stretching miles high into the sky, it houses millions of inhabitants, vast factory complexes, research facilities and even more mysterious structures in service of the SovKhan.

Tanks and VTOL aircraft patrol the gloomy, neon-lit streets of this dystopian hellhole, but these are not the symbol of the SovKhan's might. That honor goes to the gigantic Sentinels, heavily-armed mechs that tower over mere mortals. But even the Sentinels pale in comparison to the SovKhan's latest weapon...

Massive, humanoid war machines, built from advanced exoskeletons and cybernetic embryos that are literally grown to full size in a manner of days, infused with the rare and mysterious physics-warping neutronium compound known only as 'Dark Matter'. Standing over 60 feet tall, these biomechanical titans are known as 'Slaves'.

Once the SovKhan's Slave army is complete, no power on Earth will be able to stand against him.

But even the tyrant's most desperate efforts could not stamp out all opposition. The Guardians, a society of warrior-monks, has managed to steal a single Slave unit against all odds. Now, merged with the mind of their greatest champion, this single warrior must rise against the SovKhan's plans, disrupting the creation of his army and shattering the mad tyrant's dreams of world domination. A single mind, a single machine, born from the best of both worlds.

You awaken within this world as the cybernetic connections link your mind to the mightiest war machine this world has ever seen. Do you have what it takes to be a warrior, a saboteur, a champion? Do you have the skill and determination to lead the Guardians to victory?

Do you dare achieve what it truly means to become *Slave Zero*?

This jump is a **Gauntlet**. Any powers or advantages from other worlds are inaccessible to you, as is your Warehouse. If you die, or the Guardians are eradicated, you will lose the Gauntlet and abandon whatever you've purchased here, but it does not end your chain.

You have **OCP** to begin your rampage.

BACKGROUND

You arrive in this world with only one fact of importance for your background: where before Slave Zero would be piloted by Chan, the Guardians' strongest warrior, now you will find yourself in this position instead. Newly awakened within the Slave, you'll be tasked with taking the fight to the SovKhan's forces, your first goal to disrupt their communications network in the Lower City to throw their overwhelming numbers into chaos. Before long, you'll find the conflict escalating, and far greater and terrible challenges - and challengers - await you.

Your age doesn't matter. Your gender doesn't matter. Who you once were may be chosen freely as you wish, for the only thing anyone will care about is that you are the one who was chosen, the one who must turn the tide against the SovKhan in this dire hour.

You are Slave Zero. Everything else is mere details.

PERKS

- Guardian Reflexes (100CP)

Though Slaves are mighty indeed, they are not lumbering giants - and this is most *definitely* not the case with you. Whether through a lifetime of martial and spiritual training or simply an unusually effective connection to your Slave, you'll find that your reflexes and agility are even greater than before. Though you'll not be parrying bullets with this boost, it's certainly enough to dodge slower-moving missiles and keep your Cyclone on-target against more nimble foes.

- Megacity Climber (200CP, requires 'Guardian Reflexes')

The towering spires of Megacity S1-9 are as confusing as they are tall, the innards of the vast structure a maze of highways, industrial sectors and loading docks. Even with the immense size of your Slave, there are countless paths you could take, countless directions open to you. The need for mobility has taught you well; not only are you a master of movement and climbing in this dystopian environment, your talents of parkour are supported by a near-impeccable sense of direction and discovery. Even with the confusing designs of the city's sectors, you'll have a sixth sense for finding a way forward - as well as actually making it there once you've found your path.

- Denial Of Contact (300CP, requires 'Megacity Climber')

A Slave is a miracle of cybernetics, Dark Matter and raw power... but it is only as effective as the one piloting it. You have reached true enlightenment within the mech, your understanding of the battlefield unmatched as the world unfolds around you through countless sensors and networked cameras integrated into your Slave. Not only do you possess an intuitive awareness of all nearby enemies, this awareness is strong enough you can effectively react to things *before* they happen. You can see an enemy's coming charge the moment their stance begins to

shift, dodge out of the way when an enemy lines up a shot and hasn't even pulled the trigger, and more besides. In wisdom lies power, and in insight lies the path to victory... although yours likely leads through countless broken mechs rather than peaceful meditation.

- Brawler (100CP)

Most battles in this world take place at considerable distances, conflicts fought with massive automatic rifles, tank-mounted plasma cannons, and homing missiles as large as a house. But even so, 'getting up close and personal' remains a remarkably effective tactic, especially against the larger, slower opponents. You are highly gifted in close-quarters combat, be it through the use of your own hands, scavenged melee weapons like girders or crane parts, or other methods. Even better, you can effortlessly adapt any such melee skills to similarly effective techniques suited for use by mechs such as your own Slave. It's not every day you see a multi-story tall robot use kung-fu kicks or twist a Sentinel's head clean off its shoulders... but for you? For you it's barely even worth mentioning.

- Street Slave (200CP, requires Brawler)

Megacity S1-9 is one of the greatest feats of architecture ever designed, but even its massive towers and sprawling factories are not indestructible. Far from it, in fact, when giant robots end up fighting near them. Still, the destruction comes with its own advantages; you're a master of profiting from any collateral damage, and can use the environment to your advantage with trivial ease. From finding cover to evade an enemy's more powerful attacks as you close in to melee range to recovering slugs and missiles from destroyed factories, you'll find that your environment always supports your efforts somehow... if you care to take advantage of it, at least.

- Slave Slayer (300CP, requires Street Slave)

'The bigger they are, the harder they fall'. Empty platitudes are just that, but in your case there is most definitely a core of truth to the sentiment. Though your Slave is great indeed, there are more than a few foes you're likely to face that are stronger, tougher, and most of all *larger* than you... and you're very, very, *very* good at turning this unfairness to your advantage. Like David against Goliath, you excel against any opponent that is superior to you in some manner, and the more they eclipse your abilities, the more you'll find your efforts enhanced. Your strikes deal more damage, your motions are just a bit more swift and precise, and you'll deduce enough weaknesses in your enemy's vast forms that it won't be long before you've equalized the playing field. In a battle of titans, it is *not* always the strongest one who wins, and you'll make sure they won't forget it.

- Gun Saviour (100CP)

The heavy *blam! blam!* of your ballistic weapons, the screeching howl of a Hellspike Cannon, the thrill of seeing your target torn apart by a volley of armor-piercing rounds from your Cyclone... if you don't live for it, you certainly enjoy it. And you're very, very good at it. You possess an immense talent at handling firearms of all kinds, from hand-held revolvers all the way up to the immense Siege Cannon. Even when encountering an entirely new type of gun,

you'll probably have it figured out to a basic level of competence in a minute or two at most, and for those you've got the time to use more extensively, you'll quickly find yourself a true master.

- Multi-Weapon Wielding (200, requires Gun Savior)

Novices might struggle with the arsenal of a Slave, but to you it's as if you've held such weapons your entire life. You know how to use them, but more importantly: you know how to *combine* them. From staggering targets with ballistic weapons to guarantee a Shrieker hit to shifting from a melee strike into a point-blank blast of your PS-7, you can effortlessly integrate any number of different weapons into your combat style without suffering any confusion, delays from switching, or other such complications. Beyond that, you'll find that the more expansive and varied your arsenal is, the more ways you can find to synergize them, gaining results that are truly 'more than the sum of their parts'.

- Annihilator (300CP, requires Multi-Weapon Wielding)

Your mastery of combat has made you a true nightmare to face in battle. You possess such a honed instinct for dealing death and destruction to your foes that your every attack seems almost supernatural in its ability to hurt or kill those standing against you. Armor buckles and fails where once it might have stood, missiles strike just those weak points that let them deal the most damage, and each beam of plasma resonates in an opponent's systems to cause further, terrible damage to their internals. Whether it's luck, fate, or just a lot of skill is unclear... but whatever the case may be, any attack you launch against enemies is practically guaranteed to yield the best result possible.

- Awareness (100CP)

Slaves are the greatest creation by the SovKhan's forces, and quite possibly humanity in general. But they are more than merely armor and Dark Matter. Your senses are finely honed, capable of effortlessly picking up a wide variety of signals and information. Your eyes are high-definition cameras backed by built-in image analysis software, picking out details far beyond those seen by ordinary humans. Your hearing is funneled through sophisticated audio emulation, granting you awareness of an expanded range of frequencies and limited echolocation. Even your sense of smell and touch are greater than before, ensuring you've got everything you need to notice critical details in the noisy, confusing and chaotic environments of Megacity S1-9's neon-lit heights.

- One With The Steel (200CP, requires Awareness)

It can be disorienting or outright maddening to awaken within a Slave - only the strongest minds can survive the experience unchanged, the sheer *difference* between the pilot-who-was and the machine-that-is enough to overwhelm lesser men and women.

But to you... your sense of self remains absolute, and though your new form is vastly different it remains your own. Through this insight comes tremendous ability - you can effortlessly adapt to any changes to your physical self, from suddenly being sixty feet tall to having a wide variety of weapons wired directly into your neural architecture and more. Hot-swapping a missile launcher you ripped from an enemy Sentinel onto your shoulder will do little more than give you a faint

sense of 'deja vu' before you're blasting enemies with it like a veteran, and even larger changes to your being will at most require a few moments on your end to get used to the sensation. As a side effect, you are completely immune to any form of sensory overload or 'incompatibility' issues while directly interfacing with technology. However, do note that this doesn't guarantee you can make effective use of a system merely by connecting it to your mind, only that the connection itself remains safe - built-in security measures may still present risks, and limits of a mortal mind may be insufficient to understand and control truly transcendent machinery.

- In Control (300, requires One With The Steel)

Most Slaves are simply *piloted* by those residing within, but your connection runs deeper... *much* deeper. You and the machine around you are truly one, your level of intuitive control greater than what the most finely-honed veteran pilots could dream of. You have effectively perfect control over your physical motions to the point you could paint with a brush appropriate for a human while your 'fingers' are three times longer than most men are tall, and you'll find that you can control each aspect of your own body (be that your flesh-and-blood form or the wider self that forms from your connection to a Slave or other such system) with perfect awareness and focus. So long as you still have the power to move, you *will*, and you'll always move in the exact way you intend.

- Renegade (100CP)

Though your time here will be spent (mostly) in the form of a gigantic mech, you need to be more than merely a fighter - you need to be an infiltrator, a saboteur, an assassin. The SovKhan's forces are too numerous to rely wholly on raw power, and a certain amount of subterfuge is critical to your success. You've taken to the challenge ahead like a fish to water, and where many might expect a sixty foot tall mech to be loud and obvious, you've learned how to make your Slave *whisper* instead. You are remarkably difficult to track, follow or notice, your motions near-silent despite the bulk of your form and your hardened shell noticeably harder to find on sensors such as radar. Though you won't be invisible, it's enough to get closer to foes before they realize your presence, and if you need to disengage it's far easier to lose your pursuers in the neon-lit tangle of the city. Seek them out, and let the deafening echoes of explosions and destruction be the only heralds of your arrival.

- Carnival Of Anarchy (200CP, requires Renegade)

Rules and fair combat are out of the question; the SovKhan will subjugate all who stand against him, no matter how many innocents he must slaughter to achieve his goals. But where *he* desires control in all things, *you* are the avatar of defiance, of freedom, of unpredictability. The more your battlefields descend into madness and chaos, the greater you'll find your advantages. Panicking opponents can easily cause friendly fire incidents, explosions hide your movements and give you the chance to move closer, and wide-spread destruction may simply reveal new paths forward to reach your objectives.

No matter what you're doing or who you're facing, the more unpredictable and chaotic your environment becomes, the more you'll find it working to your advantage. Become the eye of the

storm, and the maelstrom of disaster that follows in your wake will tip the scales as surely as firepower and combat skills would.

- One Against All (300CP, requires Carnival Of Anarchy)

Few stand against the SovKhan, but their efforts are not lessened for it. One champion can succeed where entire armies might fail... and that champion is you. The greater the risks you take and the more effort you put into opposing oppressive and hateful regimes like the SovKhan's, the greater your efforts will resonate with those you seek to liberate. But more than this, you'll find that as you fight for more and more innocents, your own achievements are likewise... *greater* than before. It's difficult to point to any one thing changing, but as the cry of rebellion sounds ever louder, events just seem to line up just right. Coincidences and lucky breaks to ease your progress, enemies just missing you where they would have struck a crippling blow... be the last Slave standing against an imminent, world-spanning disaster, and you might be forgiven for thinking that fate itself conspires in your favor.

THE SLAVE

You start in this world as you are being integrated into the neural architecture of your own Slave - Slave Zero. But although you will be powerful just for this fact alone, there are many more improvements that could be made - be it changes to the mech itself, more advanced weapons or equipment, and other such methods through which you might achieve your full potential.

All weapons rely on one of three types of ammunition - slugs for ballistic weapons, power cells for energy weapons, and missiles for your shoulder-mounted missile launcher. Your Slave can automatically collect such munition, as well as Dark Matter supplies to repair any damage you take. You have a large internal capacity for ammunition (sufficient for 300 Slugs, 100 units of Energy and 50 Missiles), and your Slave will modify any collected ammo to the style needed for whichever weapon you carry ('standard' bullets for an Iron Roar, Siege Shells for the Siege Cannon, etcetera). Depending on the weapon, you may find that a single shot takes more than one unit of ammunition. However, all weapons you purchase here come with unlimited ammo and provide certain benefits over their 'standard' types found during your time here, though their ammo cannot be transferred for use by other weapons.

If you do not buy any alternative weaponry here, you will start with the in-setting variants of the AVR-9 Avenger and SBR-80 Shrieker. These free options do not carry the advantages provided by buying them for CP.

- Slave Zero (Free)

The heart and soul of your new combat form, this 60-foot tall humanoid war machine is the chassis from which all other upgrades are derived. Formed of an immensely tough metallic exoskeleton surrounding a semi-organic body infused by Dark Matter, it is a versatile and powerful combat platform, and indispensable for the Guardians' fight against the SovKhan. Controlled by a pilot kept within the heart of the machine, advanced cybernetic connections and

neural integration mean that Slave Zero is, quite literally, an extension of your own body. You see what it sees, you feel what it feels (though you need not suffer pain or hardship from damage), and the Slave's every motion is as natural to you as it would be to move your own arms and legs. Though it is unclear how permanent the fusion of pilot and mech normally is, this variant of the Slave allows you to disconnect the cybernetic connections should you wish to leave Slave Zero's mighty form and become a mere human once again.

Should you emerge victorious in this Gauntlet, you may choose one of two options: first, you may install the Slave in a dedicated hangar and servicing facility. This facility automatically restores your Slave to pristine condition over a short amount of time, and it can both be accessed from your Warehouse as well as insert the Slave into your current setting through a process similar to that which you yourself use to access the Warehouse

Alternatively, you may instead choose to make Slave Zero into a full alt-form, retaining its power and abilities in a more personal manner but foregoing the option to pilot it conventionally.

- AVR-9 Avenger Light Slug Cannon (50CP)

The standard weapon for many Sentinels and more than a few Slaves, the Avenger is a basic but effective automatic weapon. Resembling a giant 'uzi' of sorts, this weapon boasts high accuracy and rate of fire, but a very limited damage per shot.

Lightweight and easy to use, the design you receive with this purchase is superior to the standard Avenger in a fairly straightforward manner: where normally your Slave can only link with one ballistic weapon at a time, purchasing the Avenger here provides you with two of these weapons, which may be used in tandem without your Slave suffering from the normal ammunition transfer limits (this advantage stacks with the 'Expanded Weapon Capacity' upgrade).

- IR-9000 Iron Roar Assault Cannon (100CP)

Named after the distinctive sound of the burst fired when the trigger is pulled, the Iron Roar is a robust and effective rifle firing 100mm rounds. The heavier ordnance gives this weapon a higher damage per hit than the Avenger, and it may be used both in a five-round burst and fully automatic modes. It is an excellent all-round weapon for most ranges, though it lacks the specialization of other weaponry.

The upgraded rifle you purchase here comes with a sophisticated ballistics analysis suite and recoil modulator, which enables it to stabilize the gun during a burst. Consequently, the initial five rounds are *guaranteed* to land in the exact same spot, even if you fire while on the move or in an environment that might otherwise lead to inaccuracy. The targeting system will begin to struggle if used in fully automatic mode, but by the time you begin to miss your mark, most targets will have been riddled with enough bullets that little remains of them but scrap.

- CR-80 Cyclone Saturation Cannon (150CP)

A massive, five-barrel rotary cannon larger than small Sentinels, the Cyclone sports the highest rate of fire out of any weapon available to you. Each hit is only powerful enough to deal moderate damage, but the withering stream of ordnance this weapon unleashes is sufficient to

rip targets apart in seconds... if that. Its one limitation is that accuracy becomes a problem at longer ranges.

The upgraded variant on offer here contains hardened barrels and a powerful chamber acceleration system that uses a portion of each round's firing to instill additional momentum onto the rotary assembly. As a result, the weapon's already terrifying rate of fire will continue to increase the longer the trigger is held.

- Siege Cannon (200CP)

Where most other ballistic weapons rely on a high rate of fire but fairly low damage per hit, the Siege Cannon takes the opposite approach. Firing a super-heavy explosive shell the size of a house, the Siege Cannon provides an immense amount of firepower with a respectable area of effect. Though the weapon's fire rate is low, anything smaller than a Slave is unlikely to survive the impact zone.

Ordinarily, the Siege Cannon fires its payload in a ballistic arc, but this variant has been upgraded to enable a variable trajectory. The standard ballistic path remains an option to engage foes behind cover, while more shallow arcs - up to firing 'straight ahead' - serve to extend the shell's maximum effective range.

- PPR-2 Plasma Pulse Rifle (50CP)

Firing a pulse of osmium plasma at a temperature of over 7500 degrees Fahrenheit, the Plasma Pulse Rifle can turn even hardened armor to slag with a direct hit. Although the projectile's speed is fairly slow and, consequently, the rifle's effectiveness against distant or nimble targets is limited, the weapon is very accurate and each hit deals tremendous damage. It is highly effective during close-quarters battles where the wielder needs to deal a lot of damage in a hurry, and sees good results against slower enemies as well.

The upgraded weapon on offer here adds a core of liquid Tungsten to the plasma round. Though having a negligible effect on initial damage, the Tungsten will splash out onto the target, seeping through cracks in the armor created by the initial impact. The resulting slurry will deal additional damage over time, and may even cause system malfunctions due to short-circuits and secondary effects.

- PS-7 Photon Burst Cannon (100CP)

Creating what is essentially a 'plasma shotgun', the Photon Burst Cannon fires a spread of plasma that is devastating at close range. It is one of the most powerful short-ranged weapons available, and can easily destroy Sentinels and Slaves with a single blast - provided all the plasma rounds hit their target.

By buying this weapon here, you will receive an improved spread modulator at the end of the barrel, allowing you to alter the spread pattern 'on the fly'. A small spread may improve range and turn it into a serviceable (if somewhat unreliable) mid-range weapon, while a wide but shallow spread could clear an entire area of weaker enemies at once.

- XGR-90 Hellspike Cannon (150CP)

The only energy-based weapon that relies on a physical projectile rather than heat and exotic effects for its damage, the Hellspike Cannon is the ultimate 'sniper' weapon available to Slaves. Launching a penetrator round at extreme velocities, this cannon's pinpoint-accurate attack deals *devastating* damage to any target unlucky enough to be caught in its crosshairs. That said, because the Hellspike Cannon can only fire only once every two seconds, it is mainly used against large and powerful targets and remains a poor choice for handling groups. The Hellspike design offered here contains an incredibly powerful compressor system, which allows the fired round to be far denser than normal - though the damage dealt remains comparable, the hyper-dense round can punch through cover, or even entire *enemies* to bring ruin to whoever cowered behind them.

- PS-400 Plasma Stream Ejector (200CP)

This heavy beam weapon fires a continuous stream of energized plasma while the trigger is held. Dealing moderate damage with effectively pinpoint accuracy, skilled users can sweep the beam across weaker targets to slaughter entire defensive lines at once. Although it lacks the Hellspike's raw damage, its effective 'firing rate' is very high, meaning the Plasma Stream Ejector remains effective against a wide variety of enemies.

To improve its effectiveness against heavily armored targets, this variant of the Plasma Stream Ejector has received a modified collimation and ignition chamber. Though already lethally dangerous when first fired, this system ensures the beam increases in temperature the longer it fires, further enhancing damage until you wield a lance of searing, incandescent death hot enough to boil away even Slave armor.

- Dark Matter Cannon (400CP)

A mysterious and devastatingly powerful prototype weapon, the Dark Matter Cannon uses the same enigmatic substance that provides Slaves their rapid development and immense physical power. Although its exact method of action is unknown, it fires what is thought to be a gravimetrically constrained neutronium charge laced with Dark Matter, resulting in a contact explosive with unmatched damage and area-of-effect. Even with the minimum level of charge, a single round is powerful enough to cripple or destroy weaker Slaves outright, the titanic release of physics-rending energies sufficient to annihilate armor that might withstand heavy bombardment with ease. And should this be insufficient, the weapon can be charged further by holding the trigger for an extended time before firing, spending more and more energy until its firepower and radius are increased by as much as an order of magnitude at full strength.

This weapon could ordinarily only open the power flow and not close it, at least without risking catastrophic feedback, forcing the user to continually charge until firing. However, the second prototype you acquire through this purchase seems to have a more advanced energy control system. Capable of shunting energy connections 'on the fly', you will have perfect control over the cannon's payload - from one percent input to 'full power' and anything in between.

- SBR-80 Shrieker Rocket Launcher (50CP)

The most basic missile launcher in wide-spread use, the Shrieker should not be underestimated. Fast and powerful, the unguided armor-piercing missiles it launches carry a

shaped charge that is capable of breaching 800mm of solid armor with ease. It is sufficient to destroy most Sentinels as well as weaker Slaves in a single, well-placed strike.

Carrying a unique prototype upgrade, the Shrieker available here comes with a specialized 'orientation' warhead. Incorporating a proximity detonator and IFF, this system allows the fired rocket to detonate when it comes near an enemy, launching the entire payload at the target regardless of its position relative to the rocket's path - even redirecting the blast backwards if needed.

- Stone Dog Guided Missile System (100CP)

The high explosive warheads carried by the Stone Dog's missiles carry a heavier punch than those of the Shrieker, but consequently they move slower as well. Compared with a potent homing system, the missiles will immediately engage whichever target you locked on to - making it an excellent fire-and-forget weapon.

While the standard Stone Dog launcher can only lock onto enemies within line-of-sight, this variant comes with a tracker that will detect targets through thin cover, as well as a more intelligent guidance system that allows the rockets to weave around obstacles instead of taking the shortest path - together, this allows the launcher to engage targets without forcing your Slave out into the open where you might be attacked.

- Valhalla Class Rocket Launcher (150CP)

Carrying one of the heaviest warheads available for Slave missile launchers, the Valhalla is not meant for direct engagement. Rather, the Valhalla's unguided missiles contain a group of powerful cluster munitions that allow it to split mid-flight, raining down death and destruction in a wide area ahead of the 'trigger' point. By default, the warhead will split once it reaches its maximum range, but the rocket can be detonated early by the user if the need arises.

Purchasing the Valhalla here provides it with a more variable trigger system and upgraded propulsion. As a result, it can retain its coherent shape for far longer, permitting users to wield the Valhalla as a super-heavy contact explosive rather than remaining limited to its standard functionality as MIRV rocket artillery.

- Zulu Mass Engagement System (200CP)

A prototype upgrade not dissimilar to the Stone Dog, the Zulu differs from its more mundane counterpart in key details. This missile launcher not only fires missiles with noticeably superior speed and manoeuvrability when compared to the Stone Dog, but as the name implies it can engage multiple enemies at once with a near-instant volley of missiles. Capable of decimating entire groups of targets at once, the Zulu is one of the single-most effective weapons against large but dispersed numbers of enemies.

Unlike the standard type found in this setting, the Zulu design you purchase here comes with an upgraded targeting and reloading mechanism. The system maintains a 360-degree scan around you (rather than only those within your field of view), and where the standard Zulu can launch up to four missiles at once, this launcher can rapidly load and release its missile stock. Pushed to the limit, this Zulu can potentially release a full barrage of fifty missiles in five seconds.

- Slave Shield (50CP)

With the development of increasingly potent ranged weaponry, ordinary cover simply no longer provides the necessary protection. To counter their limited durability, the SovKhan's forces have begun to invest in heavier armor, certainly... but it has also led to the re-introduction of an archaic piece of gear: the tower shield. Built from some of the toughest materials known to man, shields such as these are nearly indestructible and can stop immense amounts of firepower before their bearer is at risk.

You gain a shield such as this, large enough to provide near-total cover and tough enough to take direct hits from a Siege Cannon with ease - though it's not entirely indestructible. Reducing incoming damage by almost 90%, the shield draws from the same Dark Matter reconstitution as your own armor, allowing it to be repaired through health pickups much like your Slave's physical shell. The shield will not be destroyed until it's taken enough damage it would have otherwise killed you.

This protection does come at a cost, however: the shield is too large and heavy to move easily, reducing your effective speed to a crawl while it's deployed - be it while running on foot or using flight systems of some kind. Should you find that speed is more critical than resilience, the shield can fold up into a compact package stored away in a specialized storage slot on your left arm.

- Slave Blade (50CP)

Your Slave possesses potent melee abilities thanks to its immense strength and sharp claws, and your close-quarters combat prowess can be further enhanced by augmenting your strikes with heavy girders, I-beams, and other such debris. However, this has the obvious downside that improvised weapons tend to... well, break, after a few swings. With this purchase, your Slave instead receives a dedicated melee weapon of your choosing. Highly resilient and capable of 'folding up' so it does not get in the way during ranged combat, it is a noticeable improvement over whatever scrap you might use to crush a Sentinel's cockpit. You may freely design this weapon; perhaps you'd like a pair of mono-molecular blades extending from your forearms? Or you'd prefer a heavy axe-head attached to a short, electrified chain so you can trip foes and reel them in for a killing blow? Whatever the case may be, it's sure to make you substantially more deadly 'up close'.

- Neutronium Reinforced Armor (100CP)

A Slave's exoskeleton is a masterpiece of metallurgy, armor theory and defensive technologies... but even your gleaming armor is not so great it cannot be further improved. By threading a complex meshwork of Neutronium through its outer plating, your Slave's defenses are hardened even further. Greater hardness reduces the damage from kinetic strikes such as bullets and missiles, and the super-conductive channels integrated along the Neutronium will likewise diffuse energy attacks. The end result is a Slave with armor that suffers reduced damage from all incoming ordnance, *especially* those that deal only minor damage per strike. Though you'll see only limited protection against heavy weapons like the Siege Cannon or Hellspike, enemies with low-damage, high-rate-of-fire weapons like the Cyclone or Plasma

Stream Ejector will find their attacks *severely* weakened. And against a Sentinel carrying a mere Avenger, they would literally run out of bullets before they do more than scratch your paint.

- Dark Matter Reformation Suite (100CP)

The bizarre, physics-breaking substance known as 'Dark Matter' forms the core of a Slave's being. It is the source of each Slave embryo's rapid development, and maintains their tissues and systems even as damage begins to accumulate. Ordinarily, a Slave only has a limited supply available (though it can easily acquire more by, for example, scavenging it from slain Slaves), but with this upgrade your Slave gains a sophisticated Dark Matter control system that allows you to recover Dark Matter that would normally be wasted. As a result, your entire Slave now continually regenerates from damage, and though the process is slow enough it's of only limited use in a pitched battle, it's nonetheless fast enough to see you restored to prime condition within one to two minutes.

- Ammunition Support Module (50CP or 100CP)

Though the more advanced weapon systems above may be enough to tip the scales in your favor, flexibility and adaptability are often equally important. Scavenging more powerful or efficient weaponry from the SovKhan's forces can see your combat prowess increase substantially... but often, such weapons also come with a proportionally higher drain on your ammunition. Still, a Slave is mighty, and the SovKhan's army already used one artificial singularity to acquire more neutronium and Dark Matter...

By integrating a similar micro-singularity and fabrication suite within your Slave's munition systems, it is possible to solve your ammo problems to some extent. Each purchase of this option allows you to replenish a single type of ammo over time - either slugs used for ballistic weapons, plasma cells for energy weapons, or missiles for the shoulder-mounted launchers your Slave uses. Starting from empty, it will take roughly ten minutes for your ammo stores to be restored to full.

This upgrade may be bought three times, applying to a different ammunition type with each purchase. Alternatively, you may instead pay 100CP to gain an automatically replenishing supply of all three ammo types used in Slave Zero.

- Expanded Weapon Capacity (50CP or 100CP)

Normally, your Slave will only be able to carry three weapons: one ballistic weapon, one energy weapon, and one missile launcher. However, that does not mean you must remain limited to such a small arsenal... indeed, foes such as the Shiva almost seem to be more gun than mech. Still, the fact that the various weapons on offer frequently use *wildly* different munitions (just compare the Avenger's bullets to the Siege Cannon's shells), it's impossible to support multiple weapons of one type without a complete overhaul of your Slave's munition systems.

With this purchase, your Slave receives just such an overhaul. Your weapon control and ammunition supply systems are upgraded such that they can handle one additional weapon of a single type. This allows you to either 'feed' a second stream of Ballistic or Energy weapon ammo into your weapons, or it grants you a new hardpoint on your left shoulder to install a second missile launcher.

Theoretically, this means you can dual-wield any two weapons, even mixing ballistic and energy weapons, provided you have the skill to pull it off. Larger weapons may be too heavy and unwieldy for such a feat without further upgrades to the Slave (which are not offered here), but even then it can be a substantial advantage to carry both, say, a Cyclone to mow down weaker foes as well as a Siege Cannon to destroy slow and tough opponents.

You may mix-and-match different weapons or use duplicates as you wish - a second missile hardpoint could let you combine a Stone Dog and a Valhalla launcher, for example, but it can just as easily enable two Zulu Mass Engagement Systems to *really* saturate the battlefield with missiles.

However, this upgrade does not grant you any additional weapons by itself. Either purchase additional copies for CP, or scavenge some firepower from your fallen enemies. The unlimited ammunition from CP-bought weapons cannot be transferred to weapons found in-setting; having a CP-bought PPR-2 Plasma Pulse Rifle would not grant you unlimited energy for a PS-400 Plasma Stream Ejector you found during your time here - even if you use them simultaneously.

This upgrade may be bought three times, applying to a different weapon or ammunition type with each purchase. Alternatively, you may instead pay 100CP to enable a second weapon of *each* type at once.

- Flight (200CP)

Although Slave Zero does come with built-in jet propulsion, these systems are primarily meant to assist when dodging and jumping, and are not powerful enough to allow for true flight. However, flight options for Slaves and other such mechs *do* exist, from the basic Jammer Sentinel to the massive SovKhan Slave known as 'Revenant Prime'. With this purchase, your Slave gains access to a similar flight system, utilizing a jetpack, built-in antigravity, or whatever other system you feel would work well for you. It can propel you at a speed comparable to that of your Slave's standard running speed, and it maintains your reflexes and dodging speed - except now, you'll be able to do so in three dimensions, of course.

COMPANIONS AND FOLLOWERS

Any purchased Companions or Followers do *not* revive over time as normal. Likewise, your Companions do not have access to any of *their* Perks or other advantages aside from those acquired here in this Gauntlet. Both of these limitations are waived if you have taken the 'Megacity Chronicles' Drawback to remove this jump's Gauntlet rules.

- The Slave Nine (400CP)

Originally, the Guardians only managed to acquire a single Slave, granting it to their greatest warrior in a desperate plan to steal more Slave exoskeletons and embryos so they could build their own Slave army. But it seems that this time around, they had a bit more success. You may create or import up to eight Companions, each of whom receives their own Slave unit. You'll be

expected to work together as a team, though do be careful - nine Slaves are easier to track than a single mecha.

Each Companion receives bonus CP equal to half the amount you do from any setting-changing Drawbacks you've taken. They can take further Drawbacks that affect them personally for more CP. So long as at least one of you completes the Gauntlet, it does not end in your failure.

This option also allows you to recruit an existing character from this setting, granting them a Slave and CP with the same rules outlined above. The SovKhan himself will always refuse, however - your conflict can only end with one of you dead.

- Rising Rebellion (variable cost)

You stand against the SovKhan as a solitary champion, but there are nonetheless others who might follow in your tracks, inspired by your example. This option allows you to gain one or more followers with their own equipment to support you. These forces are not Companions by default and receive no CP (though you may make individual members into Companions at no cost), but any losses will be automatically replaced after a week once you have achieved victory in this Gauntlet.

You may acquire the service of a standard Slave unit, three Sentinels, or ten conventional military units such as tanks or aircraft for 50CP. Alternatively, you may instead spend 200CP for five Slaves, twenty Sentinels, or fifty conventional military units. You may also spend 200CP to gain the support of a single Great Slave, with its own custom-built design comparable to that of one of the SovKhan's elite servants (but not the SovKhan's personal Slave).

All these prices are provided for the first purchase; all repeat purchases are discounted to half cost.

DRAWBACKS

- Megacity Chronicles (+1000CP)

The might of a Slave is no small thing... but even then, the challenge you face may be too great... or perhaps you have other plans, and the elimination of the SovKhan is merely the first step?

This 'Drawback' converts the Slave Zero Gauntlet into a full jump, meaning that you will now stay here for ten years rather than merely until your victory at the pinnacle of Megacity S1-9. Your Perks, Warehouse, and anything else you might possess from other jumps are restored to you, but death will now end your chain as normal, rather than merely leaving you without any rewards from this Gauntlet.

- Spectacle (+100CP)

Megacity S1-9 is a marvel of engineering and architecture, streets and towers rising miles into the sky in an urban labyrinth where the weather only seems to consist of rain and neon lights are the only source of illumination. At least the neon's bright enough... actually, it's *very* bright. Or perhaps your eyes are simply unusually sensitive. Whatever the case may be, you'll find that your vision is constantly bombarded with blinding neon colors and lens flares, the dystopian

future of the city an unending torment for your eyes. Somehow, even the muck-filled underground tunnels of 'The Suck' now come with dazzling advertisements.

- Foreboding (+100CP)

The city rises into the darkness, mile upon mile of factory, offices and residential areas. Neon advertisements and signs cut through the rain... but only barely. For the entire duration of your stay, you'll find yourself at the heart of a massive rainstorm, releasing rain and hurricane winds beyond anything you would have seen before. Surfaces will be slick with runoff water from the torrential downpour, making your steps far more uncertain and your sense of balance treacherous at the best of times. Even access to flight won't help much, as the city will funnel howling winds into the narrow space between buildings, creating streams of air powerful enough to send even your Slave off-balance. Take your time, be careful, and try to avoid losing your grip - or at the very least make sure that when you leap out of the way of an incoming missile strike, you do so in a way that you'll be able to stop *before* sliding over the side of the highway.

- Mighty Glacier (+100CP)

Slaves can move much faster than anyone would expect - the Dark Matter that courses through their cybernetic frames granting their muscles strength and speed far beyond those of ordinary hydraulics or electro-servos. But there are still limits... and it seems you've found yours. Your every movement is only half as fast, and while your reflexes are unaffected you'll find that evading enemy attacks or moving across the battlefield are not nearly as simple actions as they once were.

- Mere Metal (+100CP)

The armor of a Slave is composed of immensely thick sheets of metallic alloy, covering the advanced systems and Dark-Matter infused tissue underneath. It is the reason for their immense durability and power... and yours is not nearly as tough as it should be. With this Drawback, you'll find that you will take twice as much damage from all dangers as you normally would. Stay out of the enemy's crosshairs, and be careful when leaping down great heights - even a Slave can only fall so far before the landing buckles armor or tears reinforced tendons.

- Toothless (+100CP)

You pilot a humanoid weapon of war larger than a five-story house, carrying weapons that use high-explosive artillery shells like ordinary men would treat small-calibre bullets, and... well, it doesn't quite seem to work as well as it should. Though mighty, you'll find that all your attacks against enemy forces are only about half as effective as they otherwise would be. You'll have to bring absolutely overwhelming firepower to make up the difference... or risk lengthy firefights and all the dangers that involves.

- Trigger Discipline (+100CP)

'Spray 'N Pray' may work for weapons where one hit out of ten is sufficient, but you'll have to be considerably more careful with your shooting. You'll find it far more difficult to keep your ammunition stores topped up, with ammo recovered from the city or your internal upgrades

being at most half as effective - even the unlimited ammo you'd normally receive from weapon purchases here are now merely a very high maximum capacity instead of truly 'bottomless magazines'. Make every shot count, and keep an eye on those slug and missile counters before you run out...

- Swarmed (+100CP per tier, maximum of +300CP)

Conventional military forces like tanks, VTOL jets and infantry are only a minor threat compared to the vastly larger Sentinels and Slaves... but even so, ignoring them is a mistake few will survive. Though fragile and fairly slow, they *do* pack at least some measure of firepower. Each time you take this Drawback, it doubles the numbers of the SovKhan's military. Be wary, Jumper... if you're careless and focus too much on the larger threats, you might instead fall to a 'death of a thousand cuts'.

- Dark Reflections (+100CP per tier, maximum of +300CP)

You are Slave Zero... but unsurprisingly, this means you are not the *only* Slave - far from it. The SovKhan's forces count numerous Slave mechs in their number, not to mention their lesser brethren, the Sentinels. They form the bulk of the SovKhan's forces, and will be the main threat you'll face during your time here. Now, you'll find that there are *even more* of these hostile counterparts to your own power. Each time you take this Drawback, you'll double the number of hostile Sentinels and Slaves.

- Conflict Of Titans (+100CP per tier, maximum of +300CP)

The Sentinels and Slaves form the backbone of the SovKhan's might, but even these mighty foes are not the greatest enemies you'll face... for above these stand the Great Slaves, machines of such size and power they tower over your Slave like you yourself tower over a Sentinel. Revenant Prime, Arguilus, Sanguinar... each is a one-mech army more dangerous than entire groups of enemy Slaves put together, a unique prototype war machine built to crush you like an insect. Ordinarily, the SovKhan had barely half a dozen of these immense champions, but now...?

Each time you take this Drawback, it doubles the number of Great Slaves you'll encounter during your ascent of Megacity S1-9. Good luck - you'll need it.

- Luddite (+100CP per level, maximum of +300CP)

As mighty as the Avenger may be, you'll do well to expand your arsenal with more potent weapons - you'll need every edge if you're going to emerge victorious. There's just one problem: it seems your Slave carries with it only a limited number of munition control algorithms, with many of the more advanced versions incomplete or missing entirely. Without them, your Slave won't be able to connect to these weapon types and, consequently, won't be able to load or fire them.

Each time you take this Drawback, it reduces the maximum power of the weapons you can use. The first level eliminates access to all 'prototype' weapons (those costing 200CP or more in the Slave section above, such as the Siege Cannon). The second allows you to use at most Tier 2 weapons (those costing 100CP, such as the Photon Burst Cannon), while the third and final

level prevents you from using any ranged weapon other than the Tier 1 designs: the Avenger, Plasma Pulse Rifle and Shrieker.

This restriction applies to both CP-bought weapons and any you find during your time in this setting. However, higher-tier weapons you've purchased here that become inoperable due to these limits may, if you wish, be temporarily 'downgraded' to a lower-tier option of the same type for the duration of this Gauntlet. For example, you could temporarily change your purchased Cyclone into an Iron Roar or Avenger, but you could not turn it into an energy weapon or missile launcher.

- Gunfest (+200CP)

A Slave's armor can take an entire volley of anti-armor shells with little more than scratched paint to show for it, but the arms race to find ever more powerful, effective or efficient weaponry is relentless. Your foes will find heavier weapons are far more easily available, ensuring that all your enemies receive the next-best weapon in its class instead of what they'd normally wield. Where before you might have faced Sentinels with Shriekers and Iron Roars, now you'll have to endure the attacks of Stone Dogs and Cyclones instead.

That said, there *is* one exception - enemies with energy-based weapons will only ever upgrade to a Plasma Projector, so you'll not need to worry about surviving armies carrying Dark Matter Cannons. Even the SovKhan's industrial might has its limits.

- Slaveling (+200CP)

Ahhh, Slaves. So mighty, so powerful, so... tiny? What happened to you, Slave Zero? Your overall size is reduced to only half of what it was before, making you more akin to a Sentinel than the mighty avatar of destruction you were supposed to be. This not only makes you more fragile thanks to thinner armor, the change carries over to your weapons as well, reducing the amount of damage you deal. Your movement remains unaffected, at least, and your diminutive nature might even make you more difficult to hit.

Still, facing the SovKhan's elite while only coming up to their waist is going to be a daunting challenge.

- Acrophobia (+300CP)

Ah, Megacity S1-9. So advanced, so awe-inspiring... and unfortunately for you, so *tall*. You suffer from a severe fear of heights, making the towering cityscape you traverse something out of your darkest nightmares. Stay away from the edges, don't look down, and try to keep your breathing under control - the SovKhan's servants will be more than happy to use your moments of weakness against you... and you might end up finding that fearing a long fall is not nearly as bad as experiencing one.

- Purity Of Essence (+300CP)

Though the Slave is part of your being, connected through the cybernetic circuitry that unifies pilot and mech, those connections are still restricted, limited, *filtered*. But not in your case.

Unforeseen complications during the bonding procedure have left you with a nasty side-effect: where ordinarily you would have little difficulty powering through damage to your Slave, now...

now you'll feel the pain as if it were in your very flesh and blood. Minor bullet holes and plasma burns will sting, and the more severely your Slave is damaged, the more intense your pain becomes. Take enough damage, and you'll have to will yourself through utter agony just to keep moving.

Furthermore, it would seem that the neural connections have permanently fused - attempting to exit your Slave will feel as if you're quite literally attempting to tear every limb and muscle off your body. If the connection is not restored quickly, you're guaranteed to die, the all-consuming agony too great for a mortal and leading to nearly instantaneous heart failure.

ENDING

The SovKhan's legions lie shattered, the mad tyrant himself obliterated within his mightiest weapon. You stand victorious at the pinnacle of Megacity S1-9, and though the gloom and endless rain continues, the future looks brighter already. But whether you'll see that future... well, that's up to you.

Do you elect to **stay here**, and continue to pursue a better fate for this world? Or have you given up, tiring of Jumpchain and seeking only to **go home**? None would fault you for such a choice, but of course... there's always the possibility to **move on** and see what challenges lie beyond Slave Zero - move on to your next jump, and stand tall against all tyrants.

Regardless of your choice, your victory here comes with a further reward: in the last few minutes of the Gauntlet, you detect a signal within the ruins of the SovKhan's inner palace. Following it, you discover a vast digital archive of information - and as the SovKhan never imagined anyone would breach his sanctum, this archive is *not* encrypted or biometrically locked like others of its kind are.

Using your immense strength to simply rip the data core from its housing, you find yourself in possession of a technological database of immense value. The core contains detailed schematics and underlying technologies of the SovKhan's Slave program, including the blueprints for a black hole reactor to produce Dark Matter, the cybernetics and weapons used to build and arm Slaves, and a wide variety of supporting information. Though you might need time to analyze the data held within and you'll need to find some way to put those principles into practice, it holds everything you need to eventually mass-produce your own army of Slaves.

NOTES

All Perks apply to your Slave form during your time here, but they will continue to work in future jumps where appropriate, even if you're not piloting a mech. For example, the stealth advantages from 'Renegade' are equally suited to stalking foes while you're a mere human as they are to quietly traversing Megacity S1-9 in a Slave.

The 'Swarmed', 'Dark Reflection' and 'Conflict Of Titans' Drawbacks stack multiplicatively - two purchases of 'Dark Reflection' will increase the number of enemy Sentinels and Slaves to four times the normal situation, and three purchases of 'Conflict Of Titans' will see you face eight times as many Great Slaves as before.