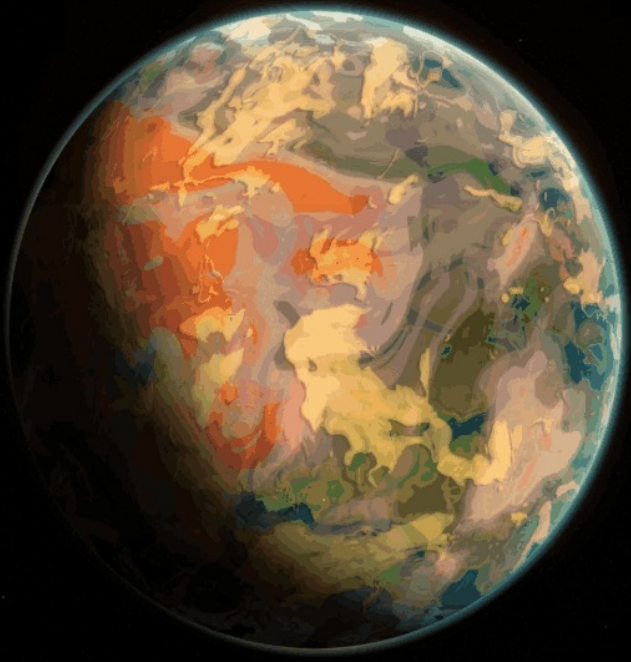

SEED LORE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

#2

SEED.GAME

ENTRY № 2

From Web Fungus to Siro Sirocco

The Mycelial Network, Siro Spores and Flora

If Verdantis is the stage upon which Seedling history has repeatedly been set and reset, then the mycelial network beneath its soils is the script that was already there long before the first footfall. To understand life on Avesta — both its abundance and its fragility — we must look downward, into the living lattice that binds together soil, stone, water, and air. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Verdantis continent and the adjacent Eilo Archipelago, where the planet's most studied biological systems are most densely interwoven.

THE SUBTERRANEAN WEB

The Avestan mycelial network is not merely analogous to Earth fungi: it is foundational, and what distinguishes this world from our old home planet. Threadlike hyphae permeate nearly every stratum of Verdantis soil, from the temperate loams of the western lowlands to the colder, mineral-rich substrates nearer the Session Range. On the Eilo Archipelago, where topsoil and stony soils dominate, the network is denser still, forming braided mats that stabilize land and regulate nutrient flow between islands.

The most notable part of this botanical landscape is the siro spore: for Seedlings, whose genetic makeup is accustomed to the relative biological compartmentalization of Earth, it is their greatest foe. At first there isn't a problem with exposure, but then quite suddenly: instant death. Seed Industries' terraforming efforts have largely been directed against it and its shapeshifting life cycle.

PLATE I *An ancient Pioneers-era rendering of siro-infested vertebrates morphing with siro growth.*
COURTESY: MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, METAHAVEN

PLATE II *Historical rendering and artist's impression of siro fruiting.* COURTESY: MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, METAHAVEN

EXPLORATION REWARDS IN THE FOUNDERS ERA

It should be pointed out, however, that in the current era we are now entering, there is a much more benign example of Avestan shrooms: the Web Fungus and the Fragile Fungus — so called because its rare, delicate nature makes it truly special in the more robust tapestry of flora. To find these, some exploration is required. The Eilo Archipelago is home to these wonders of nutritious shrooms, almost supernatural in benefits as they are.

PLATE III *Early explorers of the Founders Era have reported back on the presence, scattered in remote areas, of these special items.* COURTESY: UNIHAVEN NEWS NETWORK

The benefits of these scarce items? They can be turned into useful chemicals — nitric acid, to be precise — which is considered an advantage in early society formation. They can also potentially have some healing properties. More research is needed.

PLATE IV *Spot the difference. Siro spore growths on an Eilo island, possibly Corvo.* COURTESY: MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, METAHAVEN

SIRO SPORES: THE LETHAL BLOOM

But back to the siro spores. These microscopic reproductive bodies are released by several dominant fungal clades native to Verdantis and Eilo alike. In their dormant state, siro spores move in storm clouds, carried through air, often taking on red and pink hues when coming into contact with water — leading to red clouds and magenta rain. It is only upon exposure to the specific biochemical signatures of living biological entities that they activate.

Once inhaled or absorbed, siro spores germinate rapidly within organic tissue. Their hyphae do not merely consume — they rewrite: cellular structures are repurposed, metabolic pathways hijacked, and within days the host organism is rendered unviable. Early Pioneer records speak of "internal blooms," a poetic but horrifying description of this process, when one lifeform is replaced by another. For Seedlings, siro exposure is almost universally fatal.

It is this lethality that necessitated, in the first place, the Era of MX Terraforming and the valiant efforts of generations of Pioneers. Large-scale spore suppression, soil vitrification, and atmospheric filtration have been required before sustained surface life could even be attempted. But these efforts only went so far, and even when areas were able to be accessed by Pioneers, the periodic resurgence of spores was one of the principal forces behind the cyclical rise and collapse of Seedling cultures. And still is.

> *"Their hyphae do not merely consume — they rewrite."*

PLATE V *A Hurley artist's depiction of Pioneer scientists making first contact with siro growth.*
COURTESY: MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, METAHAVEN

THE SIRO LIFE CYCLE

The life cycle of Avestan fungi follows a pattern that is, in outline, familiar to Terran mycology, but radically expanded in scale and integration.

01 SPORE PHASE

Siro and related spores are produced in vast quantities by mature fruiting bodies — often on continents on the opposite side of the planet. Carried by wind currents across the Sea of Verdantis from Athora, or lofted by thermal updrafts from the southern hemisphere, they can ensure planetary exposure.

02 GERMINATION

In suitable substrates — mineral soil, decaying biomass, or living hosts — the spores germinate, sending out primary hyphae. Photosylium is often present in large numbers at this stage, and allows for detection before they become dangerous.

03 MYCELIAL EXPANSION

Hyphae interlink with the existing network, exchanging genetic and chemical information. At this stage, mushrooms and other structures grow and are present on the surface. Some are even edible, as they don't yet carry spores.

04 FRUITING

Under specific environmental triggers — seasonal shifts, nutrient surpluses, or mass die-offs — the network produces fruiting bodies, from small shelf-like growths to towering, coral-structured mushrooms unique to Verdantis. Many can be enjoyed and eaten by Seedlings; the mycelial network is pluralistic and non-hierarchical.

05 RELEASE & RENEWAL

Spores are dispersed, the cycle recommences, and the network subtly recalibrates itself based on the success or failure of the previous generation.

FLORA: NATIVE & IMPORTED

Most plant life on Verdantis is Avestan native, co-evolved with the mycelial network. These species often lack deep root systems, relying instead on fungal partnerships for anchoring and nutrition. Many exhibit seasonal color shifts, or rapid regenerative growth after dieback.

Earth-derived species, introduced cautiously during early Pioneer deployment phases, tell a different story. Grasses, grains, and certain tree analogues can survive only in heavily managed zones, where siro activity is suppressed and soil chemistry has been artificially terraformed. Even then, these plants gradually hybridized or failed, unable to fully integrate into the mycelial exchange. Their presence is a reminder of origin, and as such shouldn't be seen as a sign of belonging.

On the Eilo Archipelago this contrast is stark. Native flora thrive in and around copses and forests of ballheaded eran trees, enjoying the shade of canopies, while Terran species exist only in hybrids — thick greens and browns reminiscent of Earth.

PLATE VI *The full range of Mycorrhizal plants, from the Eilo toadstool to the Verdantis red-ringed finger.* COURTESY: MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, METAHAVEN

A LIVING CONSTRAINT THE PIONEERS OVERCAME

Siro storms — and the resulting siro sirocco — are beautiful and even sublime, even if they are advents of impending doom. Their presence is impossible to ignore. After the interventions of Seed Industries and the guiding hands of Cultivators, no other force has shaped Seedling life so completely, or so ruthlessly, as these storms of spores that periodically sweep across Verdantis and the Eilo Archipelago.

The Pioneers were those Seedling generations first sent in as boots on the ground, after the initial MX machines did the heavy lifting. In Metahaven society they are revered for ensuring a civilisation could be free of siro intrusion long enough that they could not only settle, but that Metahaven's population could grow and become permanent.

Eschatology on Avesta is rarely abstract: it is seasonal, cyclical, expected. The end of a town, a culture, even an era is imagined not as fire or flood, but as a reddening sky and the soft, relentless fall of spores. Survival doctrines, resurrectionary myths, and Cultivator ethics alike orbit around the question of spore recurrence. Seed Industries remains impartial, it seems.

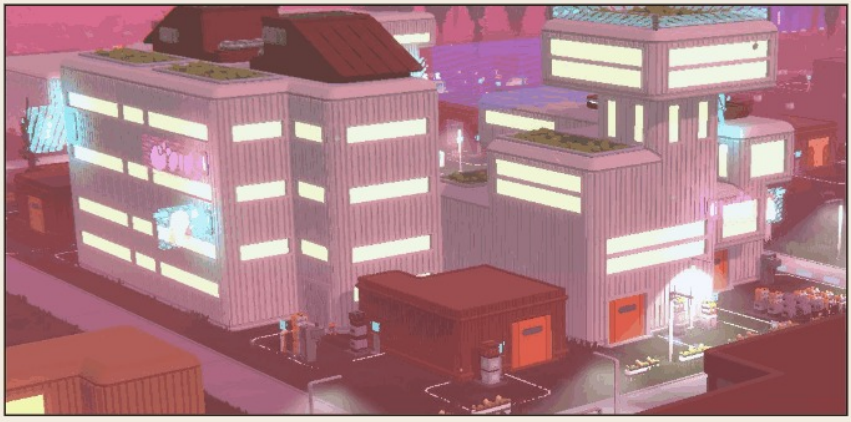

PLATE VII *A recent siro sirocco hits the society of Eridian, marking the impending dawn of the Founders Era.* COURTESY: SIRIS_SIN

Culture, like agriculture, must always be provisional — built with the knowledge that it stands on borrowed ground. This is evident in verse and art, summed up in the lines of Metahaven's Henry Henry, the poet laureate:

When the siro comes, it comes like bruised memory:
soft, leaking, so often impossible to ignore
or fence in. And when it goes, the ground remembers
longer than Providence remembers our acts.

Pink harmattan of slow apocalypse —
the beauty of a siro sirocco is a dream turned nightmare,
unsmiling and evermore regretted.
Sparks and coals spitting from an angry heaven.

— HENRY HENRY, METAHAVEN

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ENTRY № 2 · FLORA & FUNGI

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