

The Viritane

(aka the Swarm, Children of Taisek)

The Viritane are a species of insectoid beings, each connected in a great mental network to one another, that hail from their homeworld of Taisek.

An average Viritane stands at about six feet tall, standing on its four double-jointed legs, each tipped with a single, razor sharp talon. A long tail extends from the back of the Viritane body, which naturally ends in a poison-filled barb, but is usually instead tipped with some form of bioengineered weapon which has been grafted to them.

Near the base of the Viritane's neck are two small arms, each tipped with eight small digits for the finer manipulation of objects. At the end of the long Viritane neck lies the head, featuring four eyes and a lack of a bottom jaw, instead featuring six acid-tipped mandibles for the consumption of food. A Viritane is almost completely covered in brown chitinous armor, with the exception of the neck and around the eyes.

Viritane mental processes are unique, in that their minds are simultaneously singular, and a part of a collective. While a Viritane's personality and episodic memory (the part of memory containing the recollection of past events) are their's and their's alone, they have the ability to share semantic and procedural memories (memories of facts and skills, respectively) with Viritane around them in a shared pool of collective knowledge and skill.

This allows groups of Viritane, contained within a short distance, to share factual information and ability to perform skills with each other, making the individual intelligence and aptitude of a Viritane equal to the collective sum of the group's. This exchange of memory is accompanied by heightened nearby levels of nearly-untraceable Rho radiation, but the specifics of the process are still a mystery to all.

On the Viritane homeworld of Taisek is the evolutionary oddity known only as the Great One. Rumored to be as old as the Viritane race itself, the Great One is protected deep underground for its great value to the Viritane race as a whole. For one reason or another, despite the fact that it has been slumbering for as long as it has been known, the Great One's presence alone amplifies the range of all nearby Viritane's mental sharing capabilities by nearly incalculable percentages, allowing the entire planet of Taisek to become one massive mental network, boosting every single Viritane's intellectual capabilities to immense levels. This network is also accompanied by massive amounts of Rho radiation, to the point where it is on Taisek that Rho radiation was first discovered (as Rho radiation in usual quantities is near-undetectable).

The Viritane were once a peaceful society, a culture dedicated to the pursuit of science, as well as the spiritual, euphoric experience of the group mind, until the coming of the Alacast. These god-like beings, for reasons incomprehensible to the Viritane, declared war on the Viritane, destroying colony after colony and planet after planet in their tireless assault. Eventually, the Viritane found themselves on the brink of extinction, surrounded on Taisek. However, in a still-unexplained event that lives on in Viritane myth, the normally-slumbering Great One awoke.

While this awakening only lasted for a few seconds, during its span the entirety of the

living Viritane race received a single concept from the Great One's mind directly. Known typically as simply "the Thought", this idea triggered something primal in the Viritane, something untouched. Before the Thought, the Viritane were already a cohesive fighting force, capable of sharing tactical information and battlefield skill. After the Thought, though, they were able to share vigor, courage, and even will to live, turning each Viritane soldier into an indomitable fighting force.

When the Alacast made planetfall on Taisek, they were almost instantly slaughtered, the Viritane armies united not only in tactics, but in indomitable fighting spirit. Viritane soldiers on the brink of death remained in the fight as they bled out, others charged deep into enemy lines to deliver devastating strikes, and millions more performed other heroic feats of valor. The Viritane had become a race of fevered crusaders.

Ever since the Thought was first brought upon the Viritane race, several thousand years ago, it has slowly decreased in intensity, to modern day, where it remains a simple echo of what it once was as the small glimmer into the Great One's mind slowly fades. Even a few Taisek years after the defeat of the Alacast, the Thought's effects have severely weakened in strength.

However, another effect of the Thought's came to light after the end of the Alacast war, and remains prevalent even in its weak state: the Thought also allowed the Viritane to share their bloodlust, and desire to conquer, which is normally extremely minimal in the otherwise-peaceful Viritane. However, the unification of the entire species' fury incited a sort of rage into the entire species, causing them to begin a crusade of war and conquest across the galaxy.