Vihacs

Vihac Business Leader—You are a risk-taker who’s made a fortune in wood products and silver mining ever since the government took over those industries from the Olans and opened them up to entrepreneurs like yourself. Now you want to develop the oil resources in the West (Olan territory), and have the international corporate connections to make it happen. You are a pragmatist, not much concerned with political matters except as they impact your business interests. In your view, a growing economy helps everyone on the island.

Vihac Political Official—You are active in the opposition Vihacan political party, with very high ambitions for political office at the national level and ultimately internationally (you’d like to be an Ambassador eventually, to the UN or the EU for instance). You frankly think the Olans are a backward group incapable of managing the responsibilities of citizenship in a modern nation, but your party distinguishes itself from the ruling party by having a somewhat more peace-oriented platform.

Vihac Computer Specialist—As a recent college graduate, you’re mad as hell because your future is being destroyed through these insane, endless rounds of hatred and violence. You blame both sides: your own government because it’s being too repressive and all its resources are going into the war rather than into things like better health care and education; and the Olans because you can clearly see that every suicide bombing or act of sabotage on state utilities only hardens the Vihacs further against them, and why are they so stupid they can’t see that? You’re an active member of the Peace Center, a small but determined group of citizens advocating for the end of this war. You’d like to use your computer skills to help that happen.

Vihac University Provost—Your great-grandfather was harassed and ultimately arrested, tortured and killed during a period of crackdown on Vihac intellectuals by Olans in the early part of the last century, before the Colonial Power came. Your grandfather raised you with vivid stories from his childhood in that period, and this family history is very alive for you. On the other hand, you manage the state university, where you see a handful of very bright Olan students, and also see how they are often harassed and belittled by the Vihacs. You respect their courage and desire to better themselves.
Ex-Colonel in the Vihac Military—You were a soldier for 20 years, fighting the Olan guerillas in the jungles and villages, and later as part of an elite intelligence team. Retired now, you are re-married (your first wife died of cancer) to a woman who’s first husband was killed in the infamous Marketplace suicide bombing. You have a little greenhouse business where you’re happy to lose yourself in new growth and beauty after all those years in the midst of violence and death. You are no friend of the Olans – far from it – but you also realize a military solution is not possible and so another way must be found.

Vihac Lawyer—you are a defense lawyer who has often defended unjustly-arrested Olans. You have come to respect them and their cause deeply, and think your own government is being overly repressive. Many Vihacs consider you a traitor or turncoat, but for you the issue is one of human rights. You have actually never won a case for your clients, and have seen too many Olans languish in your prisons, where at best they build solidarity for their cause with their fellow Olans and at worst suffer inhumane treatment and even torture. You’re worn out and worn down by all this.

Olans

Olans Clan Mother—you are an honored healer (herbalist) in your village and sit on the All-Olan Elders Council. You helped start the cultural and spiritual revival now sweeping through Olan society, and you’re a carrier of the traditional way, especially teaching the young ones their heritage. You’ve seen the effects of the Vihacan violence and oppression on your people, and believe that only by re-claiming their true dignity through remembering their sacred traditions can Olans hope to triumph in the face of adversity. You are especially connected to the land, the living earth, Ola Nia (Mother of All), and are considered a Keeper of the Holy Mountain, the volcano that guards the Western Gate of the island (and the suspected oil fields there ). Your son was killed before your eyes in the Kailip Massacre at the age of 13, and you’ve never gotten over it.

Olans Hotel Owner—you grew up in an Olan village but left to make your way in the Vihac world when the woman you loved spurned you as a suitor, and have been back only rarely since. You made your fortune by opening a chain of high-class tourist hotels along the coast, which has also given you access to the elite of Vihac society, who come to your hotels to dine, drink, and gamble (in the back room). The Olans look at you with both admiration, for your accomplishment, and distrust, for ‘going over to the other side.’ You don’t think of yourself as an Olan or a Vihac; you think of yourself as a citizen of Olania who can improve your people’s lot (and of course your own) through economic development, especially of the oil fields behind the Holy Mountain. You were specifically invited by the U.S. Embassy in Olania to attend this event at the last minute, when another Olan participant had to drop out.
Olan Newspaper Publisher—You are a fearless advocate for human rights, and have used your paper to chronicle all the injustices of the Vihac regime. For this you’ve had your paper closed down and equipment smashed, and you’ve been arrested twice. You have a permanent limp because of the conditions (including torture) you’ve faced in Vihac jails. However, you have a strong international following, with Amnesty International working on your behalf, so you have been released and have toned down your rhetoric somewhat. You would like to run for political office when the war ends. The Vihac government almost didn’t let you come to this event, and harassed you severely at the airport, but the U.S. government intervened on your behalf.

Olan Women’s Committee Member—The Olans have a powerful system of Women’s Committees throughout their society, and you are an influential member. Through these committees you provide emergency medical treatment to the wounded; care for the raped women and girls, including support for raising the children of those encounters; help organize relocations when villages are burned; and other needed services. You have personally lost a son, a brother, and your mother to this bloody conflict, as well as all the suffering you’ve witnessed, and you’ve had enough!

Olan Mine Worker—Your family used to own vast tracts of land, including the silver mine where you now work in the pits. Though you are poor now, your family’s former prominence in the community has provided you with a strong network of influential Olans. Your family has suffered bitterly since the coming of the Colonial Power, and especially since the Kailip Massacre. Your grandfather filled you with tales of Olan glories in the old days, and you still think of the Vihacs as “the little ones” who stole what is yours. However, you believe that continuing the violence is counter-productive.

Olan Elementary School Teacher—You work in the urban school system in the capital city, and commute back to your village in the West on weekends, braving the many military checkpoints where you are regularly humiliated and often threatened, and sometimes needing to avoid them by crossing mined fields. The curriculum you are required to teach ignores the Olan culture, history, language and religion totally, and portrays the history of Olania in a way that demeans your glorious past and presents the Vihacs and their administration in an overly rosy light. You hate to be a vehicle for perpetuating this shame on your people, but you continue in this job in order to earn money for your family. You are a poet at heart, and wish you could quit your job and instead create a school for Olan children built on the foundation of Olan culture, especially the traditional music, poetry, and dance.
**Facilitators**
A third-party team of two facilitators will manage the simulated dialogue sessions. Facilitators will ideally have some on-the-ground experience as peacebuilders or are engaged in some Peace and Conflict Studies program, so will have some idea of how to facilitate a group. The individuals playing these roles will invent their own identities/back story beyond this simple framework.

**Researchers**
Researchers will be themselves (no role-playing). They will identify their research agenda based on class material and instructions, and will observe and report on all simulation sessions through that lens.