

Official Game Adventure

# NEO in the 25th Century

by Troy Denning

# CHARACTER STATISTICS

## "Rock" 422-986-710-X

2nd level Warrior, male Terrine

Str 16	Hit -	Dmg +1	Wt 70	Lift 195	Feat 10
Dex 18	Reaction -2	Missile +2	Def -4		
Con 14	HP Bonus 0	Shock 88			
Int 8	Wis 13	Cha 11	Tech 15		

Hit Points 12      THACO 19      Current XP: 2,000  
 Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6)      Modified AC: 2

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 10; Electrical Shock 10; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 12; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 11; Suffocation 15; Radiation 11; Extremes of Heat 11; Extremes of Cold 11.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 20; Demolitions 20; Maneuver in Zero G 20; Use Rocket Belt 20.

**General Skills:** Drive Groundcar 15; Pilot Rocket 15; Notice 10.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Pistol	1d8	800	3/2	7	1	9" long
Rocket Rifle	2d8	2,000	1	10	6	24" long
Mono Sword	1d10	6*	1	na	4	32" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Messkit, carryall, aerosol mist grenade (1), laser pistol capacitor clips (2); "smart" ammo clips for rocket rifle (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** "Rock" is a typical Terrine: ferocious, dim-witted, and good in a fight. However, he has a stubborn streak and doesn't take orders well. He deserted RAM's forces after injuring a Martian superior during an argument over his duties.

## Sparky

Second level Engineer, male Tinker

Str 13	Hit -	Dmg -	Wt 55	Lift 155	Feat 5
Dex 18	Reaction -2	Missile +2	Def -4		
Con 16	HP Bonus +2	Shock 95			
Int 9	Wis 18	Cha 16	Tech 19		

Hit Points 9      THACO 20      Current XP: 1,250  
 Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6)      Modified AC: 2

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 17; Electrical Shock 15; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 15; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 15; Suffocation 16; Radiation 13; Extremes of Heat 13; Extremes of Cold 13.

**Career Skills:** Jury Rig 30; Repair Life Support 15; Repair Mechanical 10; Repair Nuclear Engine 15.

**General Skills:** Cook 10; Bypass Security 10; Repair Computer 10; Repair Weapon 10.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Pistol	1d8	800	3/2	7	1	9" long
Mono Knife	1d6	3*	1	na	1	10" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Protective goggles, personal radio, tech tools, rocket motor tools, laser pistol capacitor clips (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** Sparky is a young, especially gifted engineer. Like most Tinkers, he enjoys working with machinery. The only thing he hates more than being insulted because of his small size is being patronized because of it.

## Meilan Qway

Second level Scout, female Venusian

Str 17	Hit +1	Dmg +1	Wt 85	Lift 220	Feat 15
Dex 12	Reaction -	Missile -	Def -		
Con 15	HP Bonus +1	Shock 90			
Int 8	Wis 15	Cha 9	Tech 9		

Hit Points 10      THACO 19      Current XP: 2,250  
 Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6)      Modified AC: 6

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 12; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 14; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 11; Suffocation 18; Radiation 10; Extremes of Heat 10; Extremes of Cold 15.

**Career Skills:** Climb 15; Move Silently 25; Notice 30; Tracking 10.

**General Skills:** Read Lips 20; Shadowing 20.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Rocket Pistol	1d10	400	2	5	3	6" long
Venusian Kryptx	2d6/1d6	6/400	1	10	4	6' long

See *Technology Book* for further information on the Kryptx.

**Other Equipment:** Canteen, flashlight, messkit, carryall, rope, inertial compass, sleeping bag, pressure tent, "smart" ammo clips for rocket pistol (2), replacement power pack for Kryptx (1).

**Roleplaying Notes:** An ardent follower of the Faith, Meilan Qway has decided to combine her religious sentiment with her love of adventure. She now travels the solar system spreading the Faith's teachings to all who will listen.

## Vladimir Smith

Second level Medic, male Martian

Str 10	Hit -	Dmg -	Wt 40	Lift 115	Feat 2
Dex 7	Reaction -	Missile -	Def -		
Con 15	HP Bonus +1	Shock 90			
Int 14	Wis 14	Cha 13	Tech 16		

Hit Points 8      THACO 20      Current XP: 1,500  
 Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6)      Modified AC: 6

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 13; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 16; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 14; Suffocation 15; Radiation 12; Extremes of Heat 14; Extremes of Cold 12.

**Career Skills:** Treat Light Wounds 30; Treat Serious Wounds 40; Life Suspension Tech 10.

**General Skills:** First Aid 20; Repair Electrical 10; Sensor Operation 10.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Pistol	1d8	800	3/2	7	1	9" long
Mono Knife	1d6	3*	1	na	1	10" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Carryall, compdex, bioscanner (with Martian memory module), drug fabricator, autosurgery, laser pistol capacitor clip.

**Roleplaying Notes:** Vladimir received his training as a medic from RAM military. After needlessly treating his immediate superior with some medicine that turned the officer's skin a blotchy blue, Vladimir was discharged from his position. Shortly afterward, he was disowned by his wealthy father, who (perhaps correctly) considers him a spoiled, snivelling, lazy brat.

# CHARACTER STATISTICS

## Bruno Givanni

Second level Warrior, male Terran

Str 16 Hit - Dmg +1 Wt 70 Lift 195 Feat 10  
Dex 15 Reaction - Missile - Def -1  
Con 18 HP Bonus +4 Shock 99  
Int 14 Wis 14 Cha 17 Tech 9

Hit Points 24 THACO 19 Current XP: 2,000  
Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6) Modified AC: 5

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 13; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 14; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 14; Suffocation 16; Radiation 13; Extremes of Heat 13; Extremes of Cold 13.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 15; Demolitions 25; Leadership 15; Maneuver in Zero G 25.

**General Skills:** Act 10; Distract 10; Intimidate 20.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Heat Gun	2d6	60	1	7	2	6" long
Laser Rifle	1d12	3,000	1	14	5	36" long
Mono Sword	1d10	6*	1	na	1	32" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Carryall, messkit, sleeping bag, watchbox, plasma tank reload (2), laser rifle capacitor clips (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** Bruno and his twin sister, Sophi, were orphaned when a patrol of RAM Terrines mistook his parents for subversives. The twins grew up in the streets, which is where Bruno learned to fight. He is intelligent enough to blame RAM, and not all Terrines or Martians, for his parents' death. On the other hand, he's also intelligent enough not to trust Terrines or Martians too quickly. He is very protective of his sister, Sophi.

## Sophi Givanni

Second level Rogue, female Terran

Str 16 Hit - Dmg +1 Wt 70 Lift 195 Feat 10  
Dex 13 Reaction - Missile - Def -  
Con 14 HP Bonus - Shock 88  
Int 8 Wis 18 Cha 17 Tech 12

Hit Points 9 THACO 20 Current XP: 1,250  
Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6) Modified AC: 6

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 13; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 14; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 14; Suffocation 16; Radiation 13; Extremes of Heat 13; Extremes of Cold 13.

**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 25; Fast Talk/Convince 30; Pick Pocket 25.

**General Skills:** Act 20; Distract 20.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Pistol	1d8	800	3/2	7	1	9" long
Mono Knife	1d6	3*	1	na	1	10" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Carryall, personal radio, protective goggles, laser pistol capacitor clips (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** Sophi and her twin brother, Bruno, were orphaned when a patrol of RAM Terrines mistook her parents for subversives. She and Bruno grew up on the streets. While Bruno used his strength to defend them from harm, she used her attractiveness, wit, and guile to secure the necessities of life for them. She doesn't trust Martians or Terrines, but that doesn't mean she won't use her talents to charm them. Sophi is loyal only to herself and her brother, Bruno.

## Tabatha Greer

Second level Rocketjock, female Terran

Str 7 Hit -1 Dmg - Wt 25 Lift 70 Feat 0  
Dex 16 Reaction -1 Missile +1 Def -2  
Con 15 HP Bonus +1 Shock 90  
Int 13 Wis 15 Cha 15 Tech 10

Hit Points 10 THACO 20 Current XP: 1,250  
Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6) Modified AC: 4

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 13; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 14; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 14; Suffocation 16; Radiation 13; Extremes of Heat 13; Extremes of Cold 13.

**Career Skills:** Maneuver in Zero G 25; Pilot Rocket 30; Use Rocket Belt 25.

**General Skills:** Move Silently 20; Pick Pocket 20.

Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Pistol	1d8	800	3/2	7	1	9" long
Mono Knife	1d6	3*	1	na	1	10" long

\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Protective goggles, carryall, personal radio, inertial compass, macroglasses, pressure tent, laser pistol capacitor clips (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** Tabatha Greer was born on Green Station 14, an ancient L4 agricultural colony turned into a poverty-stricken wasteland. Desperate to get out of her destitute surroundings, Tabatha ran away with a freighter pilot at a young age. He died when a RAM cruiser caught him trying to smuggle duty-free gravitol to NEO. Tabatha escaped in a pressure tent.

## "Lonely" Jones

Second level Scout, male Terran

Str 14 Hit - Dmg - Wt 60 Lift 170 Feat 7  
Dex 11 Reaction - Missile - Def -  
Con 11 HP Bonus - Shock 75  
Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 13 Tech 11

Hit Points 7 THACO 19 Current XP: 2,250  
Armor: Spacesuit (AC 6) Modified AC: 6

**Saving Throws:** Explosion/Plasma 14; Electrical Shock 13; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 14; Toxic Atmosphere/Gas/Poison 14; Suffocation 16; Radiation 13; Extremes of Heat 13; Extremes of Cold 13.

**Career Skills:** Climb 25; Move Silently 25; Planetary Survival 30.

**General Skills:** Notice 30; Hypnosis 10.

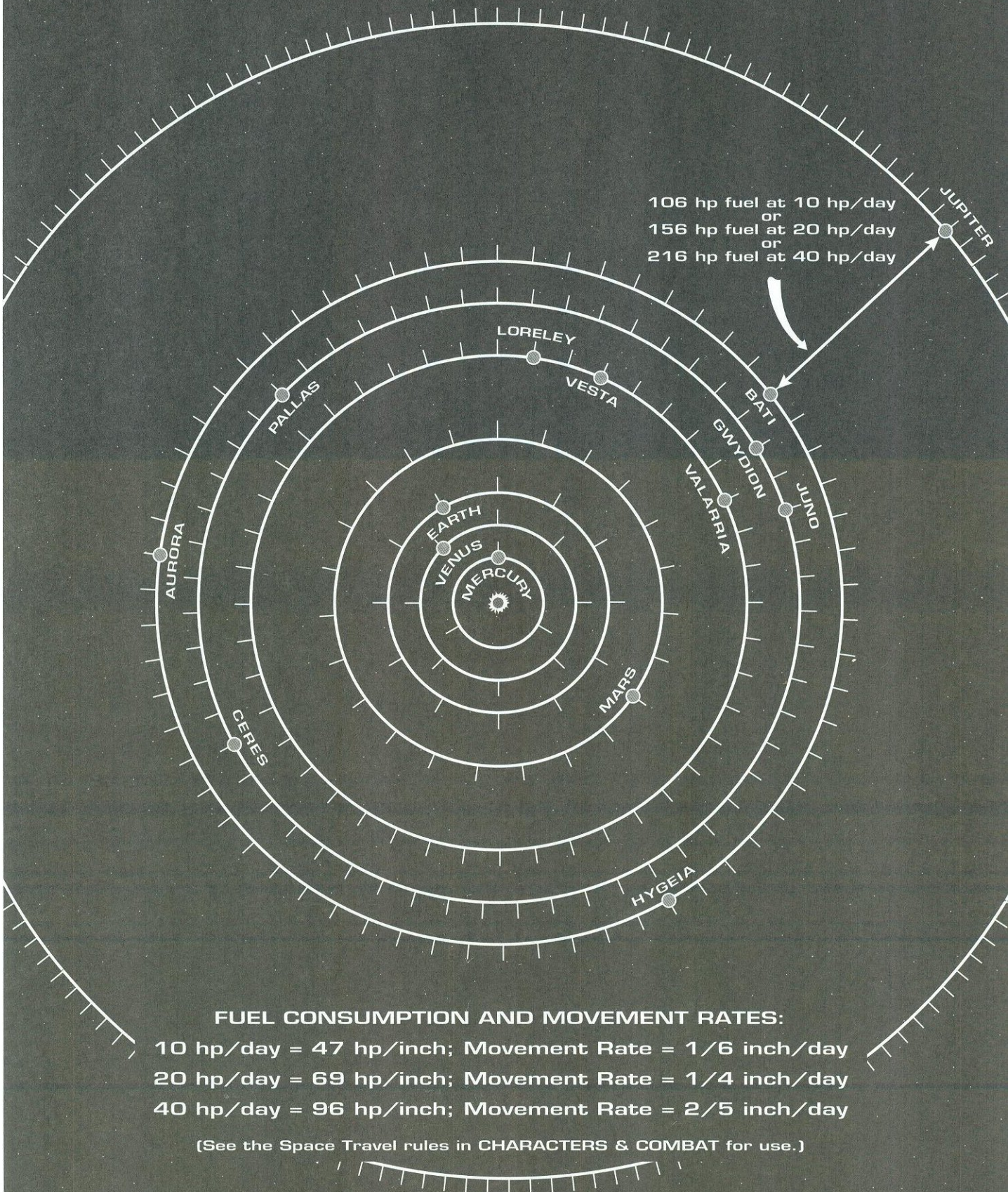
Weapons	Dmg	Range	ROF	Shots	Weight	Size
Laser Rifle	1d12	3,000	1	14	5	36" long
Sonic Stunner	**	40	1	14	2	18 cubic inches

Mono Knife 1d6 3\* 1 na 1 10" long  
\*melee only

**Other Equipment:** Canteen, flashlight, messkit, inertial compass, sleeping bag, laser rifle capacitor clips (2).

**Roleplaying Notes:** "Lonely" Jones is a surly, quiet sort of man who prefers to keep his own counsel. He makes his living by exploring rugged terrain for whoever's willing to pay: mineral companies, refugee groups looking for potential homes, pirates looking for secure bases. He avoids working for RAM, as he values his independence too much to sell it to a giant corporation.

# SOLAR SYSTEM TRAVEL MAP



106 hp fuel at 10 hp/day  
or  
156 hp fuel at 20 hp/day  
or  
216 hp fuel at 40 hp/day

## FUEL CONSUMPTION AND MOVEMENT RATES:

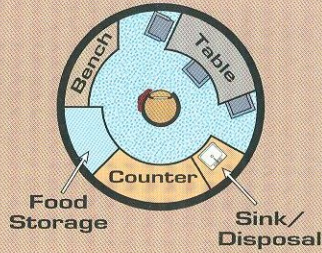
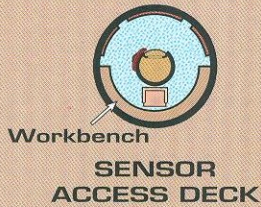
10 hp/day = 47 hp/inch; Movement Rate = 1/6 inch/day  
20 hp/day = 69 hp/inch; Movement Rate = 1/4 inch/day  
40 hp/day = 96 hp/inch; Movement Rate = 2/5 inch/day

(See the Space Travel rules in CHARACTERS & COMBAT for use.)

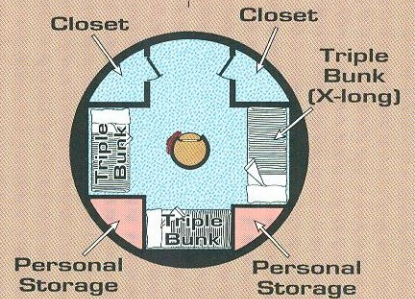
# THE INTREPID PEDAGOGUE

## 40-ton Scout Cruiser

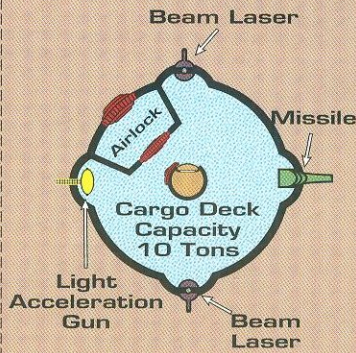
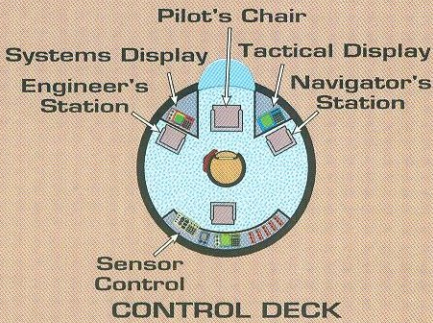
10 FEET



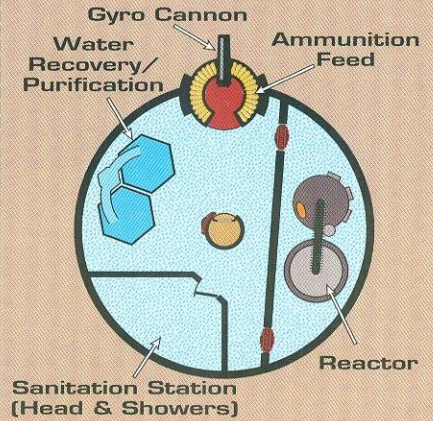
**GALLEY DECK**



**CREW QUARTERS DECK**

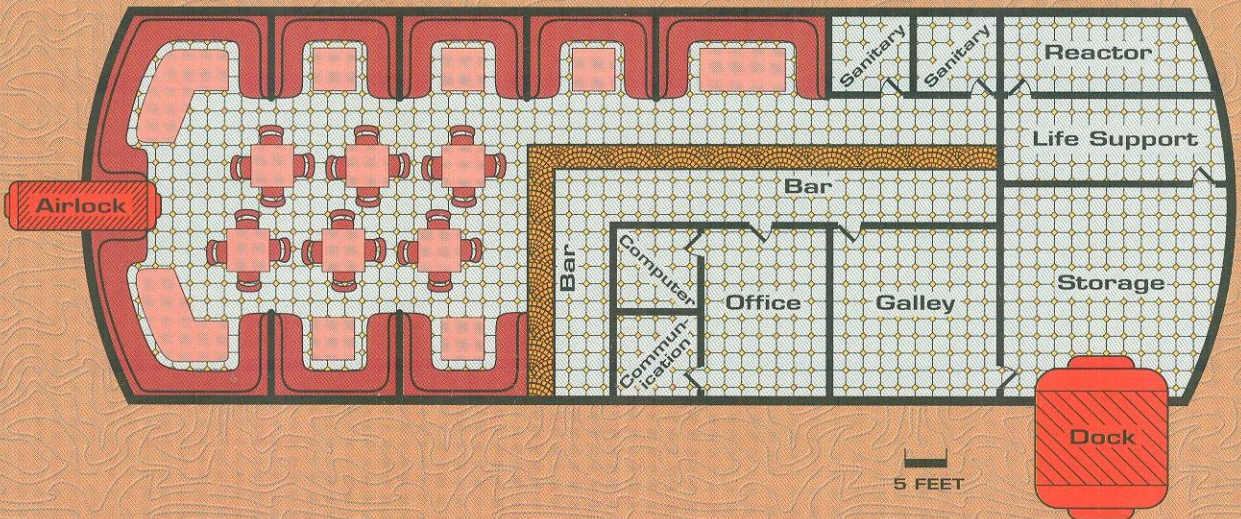


**CARGO DECK**



**ENGINEERING DECK**

## LAST CHANCE CANTINA



# NEO in the 25th Century

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TSR, Inc.  
POB 756  
Lake Geneva WI 53147  
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.  
120 Church End, Cherry Hinton  
Cambridge CB1 3LB  
United Kingdom

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# INTRODUCTION

Oppression thrives in the dark, and in the solar system's eternal seas of vast emptiness, the darkness is unending. Cloaked in the inky gloom of deep space, RAM commits heinous crimes of tyranny and unthinkable acts of greed. They corrupt statesmen of sovereign governments, then exercise their military might to keep their allies in power. They steal from those who cannot protect themselves, and silence the few who protest. Whole cities strain under the yoke of all powerful RAM.

Fortunately, no darkness is impenetrable, and RAM's tyranny has left a bitter taste in the mouths of free men. Those who have witnessed the outrage, those who have been victimized by RAM's evil ambition, are only now fighting back. They realize that if there is to be any hope for mankind, the sinister forces of tyranny and oppression must be opposed. It is when such hapless men and women finally place the interests of the species above their own, when they can no longer shirk the call of duty, that heroes are born.

Your player characters are about to become heroes.

## How to Use this Book

*NEO in the 25th Century* is an adventure for the XXVc™ role-playing game. Before playing this adventure, you should be familiar with the XXVc game rules.

*NEO in the 25th Century* contains a 64-page adventure book (you're reading it now), a large, full-color map, and a cover gatefold. The outside gatefold contains a map of *Intrepid Pedagogue*, a scout cruiser which will be entrusted to the PCs early in this adventure. On the opposite side of the gatefold is a partial map extending the Solar System Display provided with the boxed game out to Jupiter's orbit. Use this map in accordance with the Space Travel rules provided in *Characters & Combat* in the XXVc game. The starting positions of all planets are noted on the map, but feel free to alter them to fit your own campaign. It is important, however, that Graiae and Jupiter start in the same relative positions to each other. Otherwise, if the player characters decide to travel to Jupiter, the *Intrepid Pedagogue* might not have enough fuel to reach its destination. You may find it useful to remove the gatefold with a pair of scissors so that the players can refer to the *Intrepid Pedagogue* and Solar System Display map extension during play.

The large, full-color map contains seven different maps that will be used throughout this adventure.

The *Last Chance Cantina* will be used in Chapter 1, *Gateway Station* in Chapter 2, *Beta Nostrov* in Chapter 3, *Medium Cruiser* in both Chapters 4 and 5 (the same map serves as a reference to two similar ships), *Ardala's Orbital Base* in Chapter 6, *Hotel Apollo—Security Floor* in Chapter 9, and *Dead Man's Wharf* in Chapter 10.

At least initially, these maps are for your reference only. Don't show them to your players unless their characters do something that would warrant receiving the information on the map. For example, when the party first lands in Beta Nostrov, they should not receive a map of the city unless their characters take steps to acquire one. On the other hand, it would make sense to show the map of the Last Chance Cantina to the party almost as soon as they step out of the airlock. The building is a small one which they could take in at a single glance. When showing these maps to the party, you will find it useful to fold them or otherwise cover the portions of the map which are not being used.

After you have finished playing *NEO in the 25th Century*, these maps may be saved and used as generic references throughout your campaign.

The 64-page book is the heart of *NEO in the 25th Century*. Before beginning play, read this book to familiarize yourself with the plot of the adventure. Don't try to memorize the entire plot. Simply acquainting yourself with the story and organization of the book will insure an enjoyable adventure. If you don't have enough time to read the entire adventure, read at least this introduction and, before each session, the chapter you plan to use.

*NEO in the 25th Century* consists of ten chapters. The chapters are made up of a series of events. Each event is divided into three sections: setup, action, and statistics.

The information in the setup section tells when to use the event and describes its setting. Much of the descriptive information in the setup can be paraphrased or read directly to the players to help them envision the scene when the event begins.

Action details the progress of the encounter, describing such things as combat tactics, nonplayer character personalities, and clues to be found. Sometimes, to make information easier to find, the action section is divided into subsections by bold subtitles.

The statistics are located at the end of the event, where you can find them easily. If an NPC appears more than once, in order to save space you may be referred to another section or the event in which the NPC first appears.

## Referee's Synopsis

Read through this synopsis before playing *NEO in the 25th Century*. It provides a complete overview of the adventure.

As the adventure begins, the player characters have been asked to meet Professor Gregor Jarlshorf in the Last Chance Cantina, a run-down dive located on a tiny, out-of-the-way asteroid. Jarlshorf, a crackpot professor with family connections high up in RAM's credit bureau, wants the PCs to undertake a mission to Jupiter's moons in search of a long-lost base left by ancient alien visitors to the solar system. Jarlshorf's theories are, of course, erroneous. There are certainly no long-lost alien bases on the moons of Jupiter.

However, considering the importance of Jarlshorf's family connections, no one is about to contradict him. He has been given a substantial grant with which to pursue his theory. The good professor has selected your player characters to undertake this expedition for him—in part, no doubt, because no reputable firm will take him seriously. He is willing to provide the player characters with a small scout cruiser, the *Intrepid Pedagogue*, and a generous pay rate.

Professor Jarlshorf and his mission to Jupiter's moons are nothing more than red herrings, designed to hold the PCs' attention while the real adventure unfolds around them. In the Last Chance Cantina, they happen to bump into an attractive NEO spy codenamed Matahari. When opposing security forces from Hammerhead Inc. arrive at the Cantina as well, Matahari secretly injects one of the party members with a microchip containing the schematics of a new stealth fighter, the Krait.

That's when the real adventure begins. As the player characters prepare for their mission to Jupiter, a steady stream of cutthroats and miscreants tries to recover the schematics from them.

The hounding begins with Matahari herself. When the party stops at the last supply station before crossing the great void between the asteroid belt and Jupiter's orbit, she makes contact and tries to lure the PC bearing the microchip to her ship.

Before she can accomplish her goal, Hammerhead Inc.'s security chief, a digital personality named Rutgar.dos, arranges her death. Rutgar.dos allows the PCs to leave for Jupiter without interference—at this point he does not yet realize that they are carrying the Krait schematics. However, he does take the precaution of planting a tracking program aboard their ship.

A few days into the trip, the *Intrepid Pedagogue*

develops a severe mechanical problem, forcing it to return to Beta Nostrov, an asteroid city with a class A spaceport. Rutgar.dos is responsible for the trouble. He has deduced that Matahari planted the schematics on the player characters or their ship. While the PCs wait for their ship to be repaired, Rutgar.dos begins an increasingly drastic series of measures to recover the Krait schematics. Finally, he shows himself and makes them a generous offer for the "stolen information."

If the PCs are foolish enough to accept, they are taken aboard a RAM cruiser. When Rutgar.dos and his men cannot find the Krait plans, the PCs are thrown in the brig and the cruiser starts for Mars. The party must escape.

Whether the party escapes the RAM cruiser or was too clever to board it in the first place, they find themselves being pursued. Fortunately, they meet a band of pirates who are only too happy to chase the RAM cruiser away. All the pirates want in return is, you guessed it, the Krait schematics. At this point, the PCs learn for the first time exactly what it is that everybody wants from them—but they should have no idea where Matahari hid the information. When they cannot deliver the Krait schematics, the pirates threaten to make them "paint the airlock."

Fortunately for the PCs, Ardala Valmar tracks them down at about this time. She offers the PCs a deal: she will help them escape the pirates in return for helping *her* recover the Krait schematics. Assuming the party accepts, Ardala uses her background as a trader in black market information to guess that Matahari injected a microchip into one of the party members. If the party is to avoid subjecting one of its number to a deadly operation, they must escape Ardala's clutches.

A short time after escaping Ardala, the party is contacted by a woman claiming to be Matahari's sister. She insinuates that she is from NEO, and that she can recover the schematics without risk if the party will go with her to a secret NEO base. As it turns out, the secret NEO base is orbiting Mercury. Clever PCs will realize that something is wrong and avoid this clever trap, which was set up by a Sun King eager to possess the secrets of the Krait for himself.

As the PCs flee from the Sun King, they are hard-pressed by a fleet of light Mercurian cruisers. Fortunately, Venus's Ishtar Confederation also has an interest in the schematics. A large Venusian cruiser offers the player characters refuge. Once aboard, the Ishtarian representative offers the PCs refuge on Venus. Of course, he would also like them to turn over the Krait schematics, but this is not a condition

of his hospitality.

While the party is on Venus, Rutgar.dos finally tracks down and attacks the PCs. When several bystanders die, the PCs are reluctantly given a choice: risk surgery to remove the microchip, or leave Venus. If the PCs choose to leave, Luna is recommended as a place likely to have facilities secure enough to protect them from RAM. It is also suggested that, on Luna, the party might be able to contact agents of the real NEO.

Like everybody else, the Lunarians are interested in the Krait schematics and make an offer for them—though they clearly intend to drive a hard bargain. The Lunarians deport the NEO agent also bidding for the schematics. Just before the agent leaves, he will tell the PCs to search for NEO on Dead Man's Wharf, an ancient space station located in L4.

Assuming the PCs go to Dead Man's Wharf, they are received rather suspiciously. Nobody seems to know anything about NEO, and investigation will reveal that Dead Man's Wharf is anything but a hotbed of NEO activity. Unknown to the player characters, after his repeated failures to stop the PCs, Rutgar.dos planted a rumor that the PCs are RAM agents trying to use the Krait schematics to infiltrate NEO. A Martian claiming to be a RAM agent approaches them with a bizarre message: their cover has been blown, he claims, and they are to return to base immediately. The Martian is actually a NEO operative, and his message is a test; if the PCs do as instructed, NEO assumes the rumor is true. Otherwise, NEO is prepared to play a waiting game and wait for proof one way or the other.

Through careful observation, the PCs can discover the nature of NEO's trap. It will then be up to them to prove their true identities. If they are successful, they will be offered positions in NEO and the microchip will be removed safely. If they fail, they'll have to take their chances dealing with Luna or Venus.

Of course, the PCs may, on learning they have the valuable schematics, try to sell them to the highest bidder immediately. The referee will have to make it clear in this case that anyone other than NEO may very well hurt or even kill the PCs after the transaction is made.

## Beginning the Adventure

*NEO in the 25th Century* assumes that your player characters are not members of NEO when the adventure begins. It leads them through a series of encounters designed to acquaint them with many different power factions operating within the

solar system, then concludes by offering them a chance to join NEO.

Assuming your player characters are not already members of NEO, to begin the adventure all you need do is have them receive a message to meet Professor Jarlshorf in the Last Chance Cantina on 1,000,001 Valaaria to discuss a lucrative offer. In case the PCs don't have a means of traveling to Valaaria on their own, the message will include passage to the out-of-the-way asteroid aboard a battered supply transport.

Should the PCs already be members of NEO, the initial chapter will have to be adjusted to reflect this fact. In this case the most effective way of introducing them to the adventure would be to have their commander assign them to meet Professor Jarlshorf under the pretext of being adventurers-for-hire to investigate his claim. If there really was a lost alien base on Jupiter's moons, NEO would certainly be interested in any technology remaining intact at the site.

In the event that the PCs are NEO agents, a few of the later events may need adjustment. If they allow themselves to fall under RAM's control, RAM will, of course, have a complete file on their criminal activities and treat them accordingly. Once the party realizes what they have (sometime after escaping the pirates or Ardala), they will presumably try to return to NEO with the valuable Krait schematics. Of course, all of the other interested parties will do everything in their power to stop this. Cleopatra's approach in Chapter 7 will follow much more closely on the heels of escaping Ardala (perhaps Cleopatra even supplied some covert aid), and she will claim from the start to be a NEO agent sent to shuttle the schematics back to base.

Chapters 9 and 10, too, will require some adjustment. Instead of suggesting that the PCs are RAM infiltrators, Rutgar.dos will plant rumors to the effect that the PCs are double agents. The rumor will suggest that the PCs killed Matahari when she discovered their secret, and that the schematics are defective. The NEO agent on Luna will treat the PCs with contempt, and the agent who tests them on Dead Man's Wharf will be more inclined to shoot if he discovers them engaging in any suspicious activity. Once the party proves its innocence, however, they will receive a series of heartfelt apologies from senior NEO members, and will no doubt be entrusted with more responsibility in the future.

# CHAPTER 1: THE LAST CHANCE

Of all the lousy joints clinging to all the infinitesimal hunks of rock in the solar system, the player characters have been asked to meet their new employer in the Last Chance Cantina on the asteroid 1,000,001 Valaaria. Why 1,000,001? Because it was the one-million and first slab of frozen stone to be catalogued in the Asteroid Belt.

Lost amidst the jumble of planetoids populating the orbit between Mars and Jupiter, Valaaria is an insignificant hunk of rock about the size of a starliner. It is completely barren of valuable minerals or water, follows such an eccentric orbit that it is listed on most charts only as an navigation hazard, and has no gravitational field to speak of. In fact, Valaaria's only claim to fame is that its discoverer, a middle-aged matron named Valaar, had the misfortune to crash land on it when she decided to risk her life-savings establishing a restaurant in the Asteroid Belt. The result is the Last Chance Cantina, a broken-down, out-of-the-way diner frequented by pirates, rebels, spies, and other miscreants—those with good reason to conduct their business as far as possible from RAM's prying eyes.

The party has been invited to meet a certain Professor Jarlshorf, who wishes to discuss the possibility of lucrative employment, at the Last Chance Cantina.

## The Last Chance Cantina

**Setup.** A few rockets stand scattered over Valaaria's surface, tethered securely to moorings to keep them from drifting off of the asteroid's surface. The Last Chance Cantina is a small, bunker-like building located roughly in the middle of the frozen rock. There are no people immediately visible outside the cantina. If the PCs watch it long enough they will eventually see an assortment of unsavory characters wandering in and out of the airlock.

Inside, the Last Chance Cantina is a dive, pure and simple (consult the Last Chance Cantina diagram on the large map). A motley assortment of Terrans, Martians, and gennies sit at the booths lining the cantina walls, secured into their seats by quick-release belts. A stout woman, Valaar, stands behind the bar, serving drinks and swapping lies with the customers. The chairs in the center of the room are empty, save for a lone, timid-looking Martian wearing a very expensive, brand new spacesuit sitting at the table closest to the bar. He's fidgeting with a shiny new rocket pistol in plain view in his lap, ludicrously warding off trouble. It's plain that if any of

the thugs here wanted to mess with him, a shaky rocket pistol wouldn't slow them down.

**Action.** As the PCs drift out of the airlock, the cantina's occupants take a moment from their conversations to study the newcomers, sizing them up as potential victims or adversaries. The timid Martian is Professor Jarlshorf. He waves the PCs over to his table, obviously relieved to have some tough-looking company in this hostile environment.

As the PCs join the Professor, make a secret Wisdom check for the character with the highest Wisdom score. A successful check indicates that the PC notices another nervous Martian sitting in the booth at the back of the cantina. Like Jarlshorf, this Martian is wearing a fairly new spacesuit. Unlike Jarlshorf, he is not displaying any weapon. If the other timid Martian is pointed out to Jarlshorf, the professor curses angrily, then claims that the man must be a spy sent by one of his rivals. The professor is wrong in this, for the man has nothing to do with Jarlshorf or the PCs, but the professor will insist upon taking elaborate precautions to make sure the man doesn't overhear them.

The PCs can pull up chairs and secure them to floor clamps around the Professor's table. The Martian introduces himself as Gregor Jarlshorf, Professor in Tenure at the Martian University. He offers to buy the PCs whatever they want in the way of food or drink, then, without preamble, launches into his proposal. Whispering in a hushed, excited tone, he makes the following points:

1. He asked the PCs to meet him here to discuss a lucrative employment opportunity.
2. Having heard that the PCs are tough, reliable, and honest, he would like them to undertake an expedition to the moons of Jupiter on his behalf.
3. His anthropological research in the development of ancient civilizations has led him to conclude that tens of thousands of years ago, the Solar System was visited by an alien race. This race, Jarlshorf believes, trained the earliest humans in the art of agriculture, thus opening the way for the technological development that eventually led to the colonization of the Solar System.

At this point, Valaar and several ruffians seated at nearby booths cannot keep from laughing. PCs clever enough to realize that their conversation is being overheard may elect to move to an empty booth where it will be more difficult to eavesdrop on the discussion. The only empty booth happens to be the next to the other nervous-looking Martian.

Whether or not the PCs move to this booth, Jarlshorf continues:

4. The professor believes that when his "alien race" visited the Solar System, they established a base on one of the outer moons of Jupiter. He would like the PCs find this base. (If the PCs have not moved to a booth, the room erupts into cackles and laughter again.)

5. Though he suspects the base might be located on Leda, Himalia, Lysithea, Elara, Ananke, Carme, Pasiphae, or Sinope, Jarlshorf doesn't have any proof to back up his suspicion, or any clues as to which moon it would be best to search.

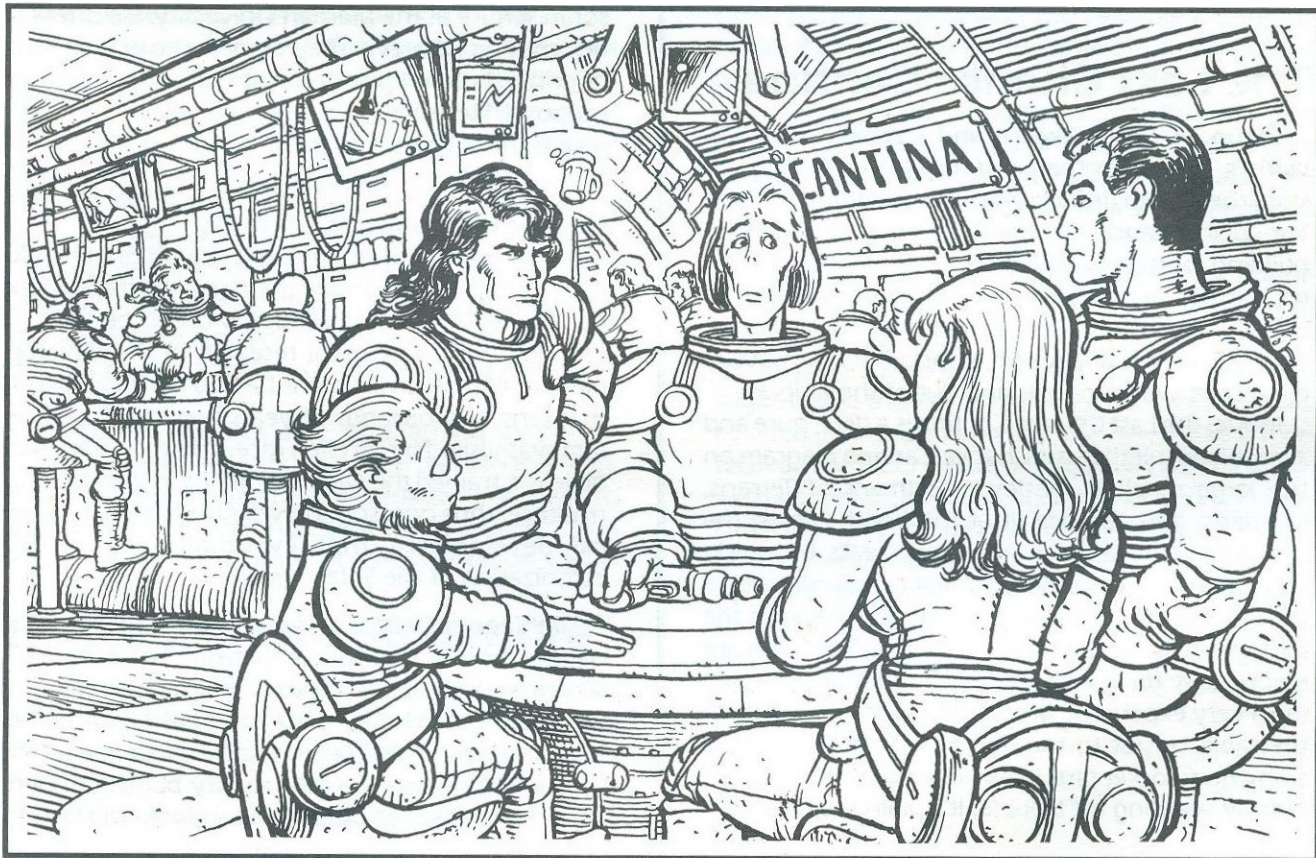
6. What Jarlshorf does have, however, is a research grant that will allow him to pay the PCs 30 credits a day (each). He can also provide the party with the use of *The Intrepid Pedagogue*, a 40-ton scout cruiser (described on the gatefold).

Assuming the PCs agree to undertake Jarlshorf's mission, the professor can be negotiated into providing them with a debit chip which they can use at any RAM controlled or affiliated facility. The PCs will be disappointed to learn that Jarlshorf must personally authorize any purchase made with the debit chip, and that, in any event, it cannot be used

to make a single purchase larger than 1,000cr. In addition, the chip automatically becomes non-functional after a total expenditure of 5,000cr.

At first, Jarlshorf will insist upon depositing the PCs' pay into a trust account at the Coprates Bank, Ltd. However, he can be convinced to deposit the pay into a numbered account in the *Firste Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle*, GB on Luna. Under no circumstances will he pay the PCs more than a 100 credits apiece in advance. He will pay the advance money in hard currency: newrubes, of course.

The PCs may wish to negotiate other details. Generally, Jarlshorf will agree to requests that seem likely to increase the PCs' chances of finding the "alien base" provided they don't cost him more than an additional 5,000 credits total. He will not agree to any request that does not seem directly linked to performing the mission he has outlined, and will never agree to pay the PCs more than 40 credits per day. Should the PCs attempt to force the issue by threatening to decline the job, several unsavory types immediately approach Jarlshorf to offer their services.



## Professor Gregor Jarlshorf

Gregor Jarlshorf is a crackpot anthropology professor who suffers from a neurotic need to make "the great discovery." However, fortune has never smiled on his investigations and he has failed to produce any startling revelations. To compensate for this failure, he has subconsciously convinced himself that he is on the verge of the greatest of all discoveries—that mysterious alien visitors to the solar system are responsible for the initial advances of human civilization.

Although a rational and intelligent man in most other regards, Professor Jarlshorf clings to his delusion madly. He will interpret the most insignificant and esoteric bits of information as evidence supporting his theory, and reacts quite negatively to any skepticism expressed concerning his discovery.

Because Jarlshorf's family is well connected in the RAM executive class, the professor's colleagues have elected to deal with his imbalance by arranging a rather generous grant, hoping that his "investigations" will keep him too busy to bother them. Needless to say, there is no substance to Jarlshorf's theory.

**Hp** 6; **AC** 6 (space suit); **THACO** 20; **Str** 9, **Dex** 11, **Con** 11, **Int** 15, **Wis** 5, **Cha** 12, **Tech** 13.

**Weapon:** Rocket pistol: **Dmg** 1d10, **ROF** 2, **Shots** 5, **Max Range** 400.

**Skills:** Economics 10, General Knowledge 10, History 50, Library Search 25.

## Dangerous Lady

**Setup.** While the PCs are negotiating with Professor Jarlshorf, the airlock opens and a woman steps into the cantina. When she removes her helmet, a cascade of silky brown hair spills out over her shoulders. The strong-featured woman is a pure human of striking beauty, with black eyes as deep as space itself, a straight proud nose, and full red lips. At her curvaceous hip hangs a holstered heat gun.

The woman casts an appraising eye over the crowd of ruffians gathered inside, pausing every now and then to flash a flirtatious smile at some lucky fellow who catches her eye. She slips up to the counter and orders a drink. Finally, when she remains the center of attention in the tiny cantina, she gives her audience a harsh scowl and allows her hand to brush the handle of her heat gun meaningfully. Most onlookers take the hint and redirect their attention to their own affairs.

**Action.** The woman is Matahari, a NEO operative (though the PCs have no way of discovering this). After her subtle warning, she stays at the bar

long enough to observe anybody exhibiting an unusual interest in her. Satisfied that she has made a sufficiently grand entrance, she then joins the second nervous Martian at the back of the cantina.

If the PCs earlier moved to a booth to avoid being overheard, they will be sitting in the booth next to the beautiful woman and the nervous Martian. Any PC trying to overhear their conversation may attempt a Wisdom check. If successful, they hear the following conversation:

**Woman:** (*flowery and exaggerated*) "Darling, it's good to see you well. I've been so lonely since our last little rendezvous."

**Martian:** (*sternly*) "Spare me the flattery, Amandi. I'm not naive—any more."

**Woman:** "Don't be nasty, tiger. You know I'm truly fond of you. If things were different—"

**Martian:** (*earnestly*) "They can be, Amandi. Nobody knows who you are. I can set you up in a nice apartment in Coprates—"

**Woman:** "Now you are being naive. Did you bring it?"

**Martian:** (*again sternly*) "No. I changed my mind. I just came to bring you back with—"

**Woman:** "Too bad, tiger. I wonder what your father-in-law the director will think of our little holo."

**Martian:** (*sighs timidly*) "Okay. Here they are. But this is the last time. I don't want to see you again."

**Woman:** "Don't break my heart, darling. I couldn't bear to go on living without you."

**Martian:** (*almost pleading*) "You've got what you want. Now leave me alone."

Unless the PCs are looking over the top or around the side of the booth (in which case Matahari will threaten them with her heat gun), they cannot see what happens next. Nevertheless, the referee should know what the woman is doing as she speaks: Matahari is using a special spy's camera to scan some papers that she has blackmailed the man into giving her. The victim is a design engineer from Hammerhead, Inc. Though the PCs have no way of discovering this yet, the engineer has just delivered to her a microchip containing the schematics of the new Krait stealth fighter.

Matahari quickly records the schematics on her camera's microchip, then slips the microscopic diskette into an *airinject* (air-powered syringe). Next she programs a security code into the airinject. After the microchip is injected into someone's bloodstream, it cannot be extracted without causing it to explode (killing the host), unless the security code is first used to disarm the microchip. Matahari's intention is

to inject the microchip into herself, but she is interrupted before she can do so. Continue immediately with the next event.

#### Statistics.

**Nervous Design Engineer:** hp 8; AC 6 (space suit); THACO 20; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 7, Cha 10, Tech 16.

*Weapon:* none.

*Skills:* Repair Computer 50, Repair Electrical 40, Repair Life Support 45, Repair Mechanical 35, Repair Rocket Hull 25, Repair Weapon 40, Sensor Operation 30.

## Matahari

Matahari is a clandestine NEO field operative. Because her parents died at the hands of a RAM Terrine, she is fanatically dedicated to overthrowing RAM. Matahari feels justified in committing any act of treachery or betrayal in order to achieve NEO's goals, which makes her a valuable resource if an untrustworthy friend.

Matahari is well-practiced in using her beauty to further NEO's ends, and rather enjoys manipulating men foolish enough to be swayed by it. She flirts constantly with those she despises, but insists upon being treated with strict decorum and respect by those close to her.

**Matahari** (6th level Terran rogue): hp 30; AC 6 (space suit); THACO 18; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 18, Tech 14.

*Weapon:* Heat gun: Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Shots 7, Max Range 60.

*Career Skills:* Bypass Security 45, Climb 30, Fast Talk/Convince 45, Hide in Shadows 10, Move Silently 10, Notice 10, Open Lock 10, Pick Pocket 80.

*General Skills:* Pilot Rocket 45, Maneuver in Zero G 25, Jury Rig 30, Use Rocket Belt 20.

## Unwelcome Company

**Setup.** The airlock opens and 12 gennies step into the cantina. Standing six-and-a-half feet tall, and possessed of large cupped ears and fang-filled mouths, the gennies are similar common Terrines. However, their silvery skin and black, lens-covered eyes suggest that these gennies have been especially designed for combat in space. Each gennie has a rocket belt strapped to its back and carries a laser or rocket rifle in his hands. They all wear RAM military uniforms instead of space suits. The powerful gennies pause a step inside the airlock, and are momentarily blinded until their photosensitive eye

lenses adjust to the light inside the cantina. They immediately gain the attention and respect of the other patrons.

**Action.** As soon as the modified Terrines step out of the airlock, the entire cantina begins buzzing with alarm. Weapons are unholstered, people move to better fighting positions, and Professor Jarlshorf warns the PCs not to tell the soldiers anything.

Matahari slips over to the PCs' table and seats herself next to one of the males. "Mind if I join your party, big boy?" she asks. She then proceeds to flirt outrageously with the male PCs, ignoring any female PCs present. As she does so, she uses her Pick Pockets skill to secretly use her airinject on one of the PCs—in effect hiding the microchip she made in the unlucky fellow's bloodstream. Treat this action as an easy skill check, unless the PC has previously stated that he is watching Matahari for suspicious actions (in this case, the check becomes an average one).

Assuming Matahari makes a successful skill check, the PC does not even realize what she has done.

If she fails her check, the PC notices the airinject in her hand. Upon being confronted about the airinject, Matahari will warn the PC that unless he wants to tangle with the Terrines, he would be wise to keep quiet. She claims she will explain everything after the Terrines leave. Under no circumstances will she reveal that she has injected a microchip into the PC.

After their photosensitive lenses adjust, the gennies move from table to table in a group, peering into each individual's face. This is not something that the majority of the Last Chance's patrons enjoy, and they make no secret of the fact that their weapons are ready for use. The modified Terrines seem indifferent to these subtle threats.

Finally, the gennies stop at the party's table and study each PC's face for several seconds. Allow the PCs a chance to react. If they are foolish enough to start a fight, Matahari will aid the PCs, but everybody else in the room, including Jarlshorf, simply dives for cover. Should the PCs somehow survive, Matahari chastises them severely, then warns them to get away from Valaaria as soon as possible. She leaves immediately.

Assuming the PCs don't start a fight with the gennies, they move on to the next table—and the last one in the cantina. Matahari immediately rises and heads for the airlock, thanking the PCs for the warm hospitality. She refuses to tell the PCs where she is going, why she is leaving, or allow them to accompany her. She does, however, warn them not

to interfere if the Terrines follow her.

**Statistics.** Matahari is described earlier.

**Modified Terrines** (3rd Level warriors): hp 18; AC 7 (natural armor); THAC0 18; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8, Tech 11.

**Weapons:** Laser rifles (6): Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Shots 14, Max Range 3000; Rocket rifles (6): Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Shots 10, Max Range 2000.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 20, Demolitions 30, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Repair Weapon 20, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Move Silently 30, Planetary Survival 30.

## Dramatic Exit

**Setup.** Matahari goes to the airlock alone. If the PCs insist upon accompanying her, she smiles at a couple of table-fulls of ruffians and sweetly asks if they would mind making sure that the PCs don't follow her out of cantina. A dozen of the rough customers will be happy to oblige, even to the point of starting a fight if necessary.

**Action.** As Matahari reaches the airlock, the gennies grab the Martian to whom she was speaking previously. After persuading him to cooperate with a couple of savage punches to the solar plexus, the gennies ask the engineer to identify his contact. Without the slightest hesitation, he points out Matahari.

As she steps into the airlock, Matahari fires her heat gun at one of the gennies. The gennies return fire immediately, but Matahari has already sealed the airlock.

Allow the PCs a chance to respond. If they attack, the gennies will defend themselves for the two rounds it takes them to reach the airlock and step inside. The Terrines will not linger to fight—they're interested in Matahari, not the PCs. Should the party don their space suits and follow the gennies outside, they arrive just in time to see a 20-ton scout cruiser blasting off the asteroid. The gennies are piling into a 150-ton medium cruiser to pursue. Both ships will be long-gone by the time the PCs can reach their own ship—if they have one.

**Statistics.** The Terrines' statistics are listed in the event Unwelcome Company.

**Ruffians** (12 2nd level rogues): hp 8; AC 10; THAC0 20; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 9, Tech 13.

**Weapons:** Laser pistols: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 400.

**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 15, Hide in Shadows 15, Move Silently 15, Notice 15, Open Lock 15, Pick Pocket 15.

**General Skills:** Pilot Rocket 30, Jury Rig 10.

## Last Goodbyes

**Setup.** After things calm down, Professor Jarlshorf insists upon finalizing their business. He is utterly unconcerned with Matahari or the strange events surrounding her, saying that one should expect "that sort of thing in this sort of place."

**Action.** If the PCs don't have their own ship, Professor Jarlshorf shows them to the *Intrepid Pedagogue*. He assures them that the ship is a top-notch scout cruiser bought from a reputable dealer, and that it should serve them well on their mission. Next, he tells them to go to Gateway Station on 567,980 Bati, a small asteroid on the outer edge of the belt. Bati is a common jump-off point for trips to Jupiter, and at the moment it happens to be in ideal position.

On Bati, Jarlshorf explains, the PCs will find that he has arranged a credit for the supplies they will need. They can refuel at Honest Jocha's Used Ships, secure their provisions at Beltway Order and Trading Company, and enjoy a fine meal at the End of the Belt Cantina. They won't need to pay for any of these supplies, as he has deposited funds with Gateway Services to cover these expenses.

The PCs should also go the Six Finger Tool company to pick up a small item that should prove useful in searching for the lost alien base: a galactic neutrino tracker. Jarlshorf explains that he designed this ingenious device himself. It is capable of analyzing neutrinos and determining whether they are intersystem or extrasystem in origin. (It doesn't work, but never mind that for the moment.)

The PCs will have no trouble leaving Valaaria. There are no other RAM Terrines to contend with.

## CHAPTER 2: GATEWAY STATION

Presumably, the PCs have agreed to visit Jupiter's satellites in search of Professor Jarlshorf's nonexistent alien bases. Their first stop is Gateway Station, a small class B spaceport on 567,980 Bati, where Jarlshorf has arranged for them to stock up on supplies and pick up a vital piece of equipment—the worthless galactic neutrino tracker.

Of course, the possibility always exists that the PCs have either turned the good professor down, or have no intention of going anywhere near Jupiter after picking up their supplies. If so, this chapter can still be run in much the same manner as presented, although some minor adjustments will be required to fit the particular situation. Nevertheless, Matahari will still track the PCs down and attempt to recover the microchip, RAM's ruthless assassin, Rutgar.dos, will still track her down and kill her, and the PCs will still have the microchip (most likely without knowing it) at the end of the chapter.

### Chance Encounter

**Setup.** The PCs have landed on Bati (or they have arrived at their first stop after leaving the Last Chance Cantina in Chapter 1). Gateway station is a tiny handful of bunker-like buildings on Bati's surface. Like 1,000,001 Valaaria, this asteroid is a small hunk of rock lacking the potential for profitable mining. In the parlance of the Belt such asteroids are sometimes referred to as "cold rocks." Bati's sole commercial asset is its location on the outside edge of the asteroid belt, where it serves as a jump-off point to Jupiter and Saturn. It also serves as a jump-off point for voyages to the Trojan asteroids, clumps of cold rocks located in the LaGrange points between Jupiter and the Sun. Unlike Valaaria, however, there is enough gravity on Bati to keep items more or less anchored to the asteroid. Bati is a rather large cold rock.

Gateway Station has all the ambience of a frontier truckstop. Each building is individually presurized, so that space suits must be worn to move from one to the other. Most of the residents are gruff and uninterested in outsiders, though they're happy enough to take the visitors' money. Although Gateway is ostensibly an independent station, RAM maintains a low-key administrative office in Gateway Station, and RAM is the major creditor on the tiny asteroid. While the residents don't bear any great love for RAM, they aren't about to risk their own livelihoods to aid those who are in trouble with the parent corporation.

There won't be a great deal of activity on Bati when the PCs arrive. They will have ample time on their hands to take a look around. Consult the following list for an indication of what the PCs find and/or can procure on Gateway Station:

**Gateway Housing Authority.** Most of the residents maintain apartments in this complex. There is a small block of dingy rooms set aside for visitors (5cr per night per room), but Professor Jarlshorf assumed the PCs would be staying aboard their ship and made no arrangements to pay for lodging here.

**Honest Jocha's Used Ships.** The PCs can refuel their ship here at Professor Jarlshorf's expense. Honest Jocha, a transplanted Lunarian, will readily agree to trade the PCs' ship for one of those on his lot. Assuming the PCs are flying the *Intrepid Pedagogue*, Jocha will offer them 40,000cr for it (about 10% of its true value), since he knows that they have no legal right to sell it. He will also agree to take the ship in trade on one of his, for the same allowance. On his lot, he has a 60-ton medium cruiser, an 80-ton medium cruiser, an 80-ton heavy freighter, a 120-ton light transport, and a 160-ton light transport. All of these ships are in poor condition, but Jocha will not sell them for less than good condition prices (10,000cr per ton; see *Buying a Ship* in *Characters & Combat*). Jocha's terms are strictly hard currency or electronic transfer from the Firste Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle, GB.

**Beltway Order and Trading Company.** For a frontier establishment, this shop is incredibly neat and orderly. Here, the PCs can charge up to 10,000cr worth of equipment to Professor Jarlshorf's account. The trading company doesn't stock ship weapons, but it does carry all kinds of supplies and any piece of equipment, including personal weapons, listed in the technology book costing 1,000cr or less. Beltway Order and Trading will order absolutely any piece of equipment, providing the PCs put down a 50% deposit. It will take one to three months for the order to arrive.

**Reliable Ship Repair and Salvage.** Grease and fuel residue have stained the cement floor, and the stripped down parts from a half dozen ships lie scattered about the work area. This shop repairs all different ship systems. It carries a small stock of standard parts and weapons, but any weapon or item costing more than 4,000cr must be ordered. For orders they expect payment in advance, and the shipping time will be one to six months. Professor Jarlshorf has made no arrangements with Reliable

Ship Repair and Salvage, so the PCs must pay for anything they purchase out of their own funds.

**Six Finger Tool and Manufacturing.** The PCs must come here to recover Jarlshorf's galactic neutrino tracker. If asked about the instrument, the proprietor, a Tinker named Mo, will candidly claim that it's a useless piece of junk. Any PC with a Tech score of 15 or more will also reach the same conclusion. At Jarlshorf's request, Mo will supply the PCs with a complete set of charts, tools, and other items needed to maintain their space ship. He cannot supply them with any single item that would cost more than 500cr, or that can be obtained at the Beltway Order and Trading Company.

**End of the Belt Cantina.** This is a small cantina similar to the Last Chance Cantina in Chapter 1 (use the same map, if necessary). The PCs can eat here at Jarlshorf's expense—once.

**Gateway Services.** This is RAM's thinly masked administrative office on Bati. The PCs will be directed here if they request credit, information, or anything unusual. See the event Dead Ends if the PCs attempt to utilize Gateway Services.

**Action.** Using certain NEO resources, Matahari has tracked the PCs to Gateway Station. As the PCs attend to their business around the station, she will subtly attempt to arrange a "chance encounter" with them. At first, she will merely patronize the same establishments as the PCs, waiting for them to notice her. However, if this doesn't work, she will set up a situation where she can accidentally bump into one of them.

Once her presence is known, Matahari will act surprised to see the PCs, questioning them about why they followed her. After they explain to her that they didn't follow her, she will appear visibly relieved. She is hoping that the PCs will ask her to explain what happened back at the Last Chance Cantina, in which case she will suggest meeting at the End of the Belt Cantina for dinner, where she will explain everything. If the PCs do not react as she planned, she still suggests the dinner meeting.

Once the date is set, Matahari will disappear to continue her shopping. Actually, she returns to her 20-ton scout cruiser and waits until the appointed hour.

**Statistics.** Matahari's statistics are listed in Chapter 1.

## Dinner

**Setup.** Although arranged in a similar fashion to the Last Chance Cantina, the End of the Belt Cantina is a much nicer restaurant—which is not saying

a great deal. It resembles a 20th century truckstop—relatively clean, well-lit, and efficient, but the food is not particularly good nor the atmosphere very enticing. The other patrons are various spacefarers, mostly dining quietly alone—the rigors of deep space force many people to work in isolation, and they often lose their appreciation for company and conversation.

**Action.** Matahari arrives a few moments after the PCs. So far, she has not introduced herself to the PCs, and will purposely neglect to do so. Should the PCs notice this oversight and attempt to correct it, she will introduce herself as Amandi, the same name she used with the engineer in the Last Chance Cantina. Under no circumstances will she reveal her NEO code name, "Matahari."

Matahari will ask the PCs about their business and what brings them to Gateway Station. Her attitude toward Professor Jarlshorf's project will depend upon how the PCs view it. If they seem to think it has some validity, she will earnestly profess her interest in the subject. If they act as though they think the professor is a crackpot, she makes joke after joke at the man's expense.

When and if the PCs turn the subject to Matahari, her work, and what happened at the Last Chance Cantina, she replies that women in her line of work don't get along well with RAM. She won't say exactly what her line of work is, but implies that it involves piracy. According to her cover story, she makes a living by learning the times and dates of lucrative shipments and selling this information to pirates. Of course, even her cover story is not as intriguing as the life that Matahari truly leads.

As the conversation progresses, Matahari flirts with the PC whom she injected with the microchip. You may wish to tell the PC this by passing him a note, and only allow other PCs who pass a Wisdom check to notice her playful advances.

## An Unfortunate Accident

**Setup.** As the dinner draws to a close, Matahari suggests that the PC with the microchip accompany her to her ship to look at a small wiring problem. In case the other PCs aren't clever enough to figure this out on their own, Matahari will make it perfectly clear that she has selected this particular PC to look at her wiring, and no other electricians need apply. Though there is no way for the PCs to discover this, Matahari intends to kidnap this individual and take him to a secret NEO base to extract the microchip. Suspicious PCs may wish to take precautions.

**Action.** Whether or not the PC with the microchip agrees to go with Matahari, she leaves at the same time as the party. If the PC won't come with her willingly, she intends to step through the airlock with him, then blast the door shut from the outside, separating the rest of the party from her victim and allowing her to kidnap him.

Before Matahari can put her plan into action, however, the airlock slams shut as she attempts to step into the chamber. She is pinned securely between the jamb and the door. Her space suit begins smoking and several holes appear in the fabric as the electronics short-circuit.

A moment later, a holograph of a thin, blond-haired Martian with pink eyes appears in the airlock facing Matahari. The holograph is a projection of Rutgar.dos, the digital personality in charge of security at Hammerhead, Inc. Its eerie image is nearly three feet across with squinting, menacing eyes. Though many of the patrons take no notice of it, those who do move slowly away in terror.

"We finally meet, Matahari," the DP says, its electronically reproduced voice enhanced to be even more threatening—its every syllable vibrates the steel floor of the cantina. "I've been looking forward to this for a long time."

Although Matahari denies her identity, Rutgar.dos clearly doesn't believe her. He enlarges his holographic image even further as if to squeeze her against the bulkhead where she is trapped. He laughs as she struggles, then offers to spare her life if she returns his employer's property. She continues to claim that she doesn't know what he's talking about.

Should the PCs attempt to interfere, Rutgar.dos orders them in a booming voice to mind their own business, telling them that they have no idea who they're dealing with. To emphasize his point, he gives every PC in a space suit a mild electric shock. He continues to torture Matahari, demanding the return of the "information" she stole.

The PCs may attempt to force the lock open. In this case, Rutgar.dos, who has seized control of the cantina's airlock mechanism, sends a 1d10 electric shock through the door. Matahari screams in pain, then begs the PCs not to antagonize her attacker.

When the PCs come up with a way to free Matahari, Rutgar.dos callously opens the outer hatch of the airlock, causing the cantina to decompress. The PCs have one round in which to seal their space suits or begin making saving throws against suffocation and extreme cold every round. A single failure indicates unconsciousness and then death unless saved that round.

Because she is trapped so close to the point of decompression, Matahari must begin making saving throws immediately, and must also save vs. explosion (explosive decompression) on the first round. Due to her previous injuries, she suffers a -3 modifier to all her saving throws. Finally, Matahari's space suit is no longer functional. She must be rescued before failing a single save or she will die. Note that saving her means getting her into a sealed and pressurized environment.

If, by some miracle, Matahari should survive all this, she still will not tell the PCs who she or the DP is. She will, however, be in severe need of immediate medical treatment. As soon as she is taken to an appropriate facility, RAM Terrines will quarantine her and the PCs will never be allowed to see her again.

Rutgar.dos's hologram disappears as soon as Matahari dies or is rescued. The PCs will have approximately two rounds to search Matahari's body before six modified RAM Terrines arrive to take it away. They will find no identification of any type on her, and the only thing of any use will be her heat gun.

**Statistics.** See the event Unwelcome Company in Chapter 1 for the statistics of modified Terrines.

## Rutgar.dos

Rutgar.dos is the fanatic security program of Hammerhead, Inc. He was created specifically to safeguard Hammerhead's secrets, with no other consideration allowed to override his primary programming. Rutgar.dos utterly lacks the capacity to show mercy—and revels in this shortcoming.

**Rutgar.dos** (7th level digital personality): hp 35; AC 3; THAC0 14; Str na; Dex na; Int 17; Wis 16; Con na; Cha 12; Tech 14.

**Weapon:** indirect manipulation of physical world only. Like all DPs, Rutgar.dos can only be attacked via computer program. He can utilize two programs per round (see "Programs" in *Characters & Combat*).

## Dead Ends

**Setup.** Use this event if the PCs try to learn something about Matahari or Rutgar.dos.

**Action.** PCs going to investigate Matahari's ship discover that it has been impounded by twelve modified RAM Terrines. Should the PCs request permission to board it, the Terrines respond negatively, then demand that the PCs identify themselves. In the event that the PCs somehow sneak aboard or overpower the Terrines, they find nothing aboard

the ship contrary to Matahari's cover story. In fact, they find quite a bit of evidence that seems to corroborate her story.

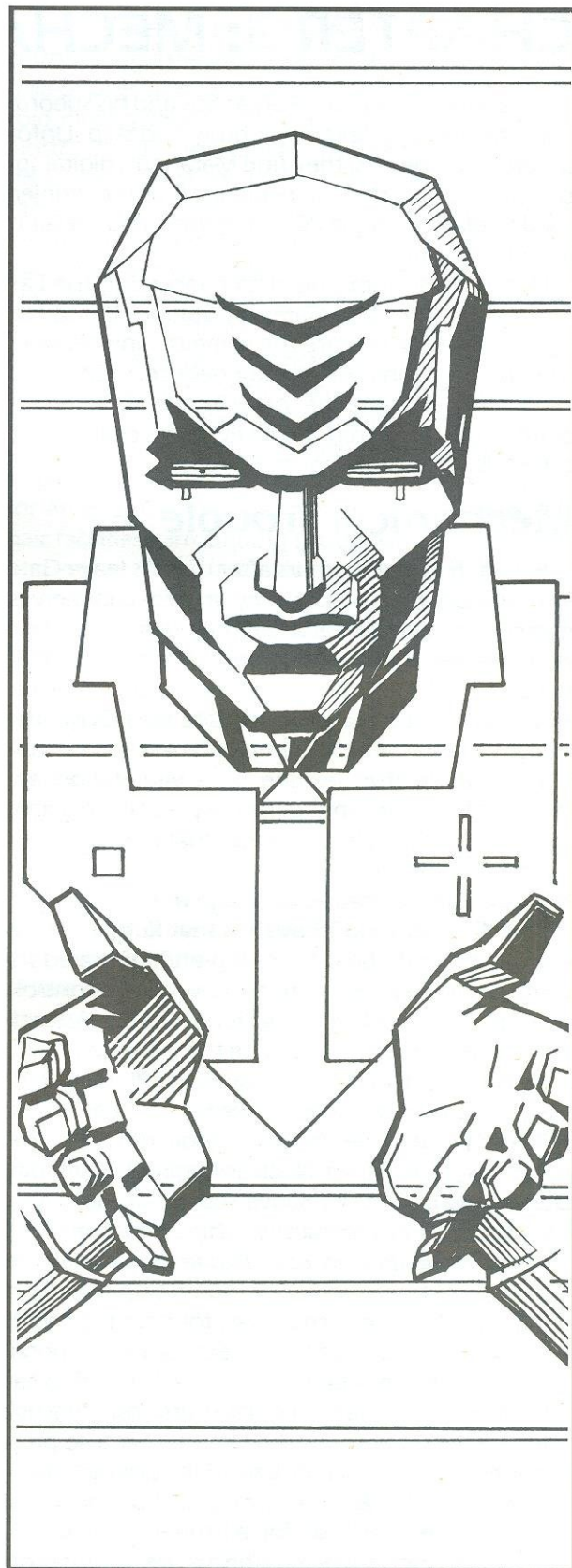
PC's asking around Gateway Station for information on Matahari discover that she was not a frequent visitor. They are referred to Gateway Services, which does a quick check on her identity, then informs the PCs that according to their records, the woman they described was an information smuggler for several ruthless pirates.

Inquiries about Rutgar.dos meet with a blank-faced, "We have no record of such a digital personality."

Should the PCs apply for credit at this location, the administrator will politely take down their information, send it through the computer, then frown and deny them credit. Professor Jarlshorf has used his family's influence to make sure that he is the only access the PCs have to RAM funds. Other unusual requests will be handled in a similar manner.

**Statistics.** See the event Unwelcome Company in Chapter 1 for the Terrine statistics.

When the PCs leave Gateway Station, continue with Chapter 3.



## CHAPTER 3: MECHANICAL TROUBLE

After killing Matahari, Rutgar.dos and his subordinates thoroughly search her body and ship. Unfortunately for the PCs, they find Matahari's digital spy camera, but not the microchip itself or the airinject used to plant it on the PCs—she discarded the airinject on Valaaria.

Upon reexamining his data concerning the Last Chance Cantina and Gateway Station, Rutgar.dos realizes that the PCs are the common link between the two locations. He quickly deduces that, either with their knowledge or without it, Matahari planted the microchip on the PCs. This chapter concerns his efforts to recover it subtly.

### Mechanical Trouble

**Setup.** This event occurs after the PCs leave Gateway Station. Presumably, they are crossing the vast gap of empty space between the outer edge of the Asteroid Belt and Jupiter's orbit. If, however, they have elected not to pursue Professor Jarlshorf's mission, this event can occur any place the PCs happen to be two days after leaving Matahari.

Three days after leaving Gateway Station, the PCs' ship's engines shut down. A preliminary examination of the problem indicates that all three of the main fuel feed regulators have burned out simultaneously. The true cause, although the PCs probably won't discover it right away, is that Rutgar.dos has radioed himself aboard the ship and infiltrated the computer system. By tampering with the controls, he hopes to force the PCs to return to the Asteroid Belt, where he can investigate them further.

**Action.** At this point, most PCs will investigate the problem, and a series of Repair Nuclear Engine skill checks will be required. Individual PCs can make only one Repair Nuclear Engine roll per day. Depending upon the relative success of those rolls, the PCs will learn about their ship's problems.

*If the PC makes an Easy Repair Nuclear Engine Check:* The PC realizes that it would be pure folly to bypass the fuel feed regulators, for doing so would overload the engines and cause the ship to vaporize (100% likelihood within five rounds). The ship carries an extra fuel feed regulator and can function with it alone, but if installed before the true problem is corrected, this regulator will burn out too.

*If the PC makes an Average Repair Nuclear Engine Check:* He realizes that for all three regulators to burn out at once, there must be a more serious problem somewhere else in the fuel system. He will be able to establish that the fuel is being superheated

before it reaches the regulators.

*If the PC makes a Difficult Repair Nuclear Engine Check:* The PC determines that, for some reason, the pre-process heater is malfunctioning and overheating the fuel. This is almost certainly caused by a malfunction in the computer.

**The Computer Malfunction.** Repairing the computer malfunction will be even more difficult than figuring out what is causing the fuel feed regulators to burn out. At first, the PCs may not realize just what the computer malfunction is. An individual making a Difficult Repair Computer Check will realize that the problem lies in the computer's programming, not in the hardware, and that Programming skill is required to fix it. In this situation, Repair Computer skill cannot substitute for Programming skill.

*Analyzing the Problem.* Even utilizing the Programming skill, an individual must realize the nature of the problem before he can repair it. Unless the person specifically states that he is looking for an infiltrating program (or some equivalent phrase), it will require an Impossible Programming Skill Check to determine the true nature of the computer malfunction (i.e., that a hostile program has penetrated the system). Characters stating that they are looking for hostile infiltrator programs do not need to make any skill rolls to identify the problem; they will find their suspicions confirmed.

*Dealing with Rutgar.dos.* Once the problem is identified, it must be eliminated. Unfortunately, since only DPs can attack other DPs, this is easier said than done. The player characters simply cannot destroy Rutgar.dos (unless they happen to have access to a friendly DP which is willing to undergo mortal combat on their behalf—not likely!).

However, it might be possible for the PCs to neutralize Rutgar.dos. The PC with the highest Programming skill may attempt to stun or entrap Rutgar.dos—once. PCs attempting to stun Rutgar.dos must make a Difficult Programming Skill Check. Success indicates that the PC has scrambled the Rutgar.dos version resident in the ship's computers, and it will be 1d4 days before he recovers. PCs attempting to entrap Rutgar.dos must make an Impossible Programming Skill Check. Success indicates that they have trapped him inside a sealed circuit. Once trapped, Rutgar.dos will have a 10% chance per day of jumping the circuit and escaping back into the ship computer.

*Results.* Should the PCs permanently neutralize Rutgar.dos, however, they may repair their ship and continue on to Jupiter's orbit—provided they did

not burn up the extra fuel-feed regulator. In this unlikely event, see Appendix I for instructions on running the Jupiter portion of the adventure.

Of course, if Rutgar.dos was only temporarily stunned, or escapes from his entrapment, he will counterattack—this time focusing on the life support systems. The PCs will have only 1d6 rounds to put Rutgar.dos out of action before he adjusts the air mix and knocks them unconscious. When they awaken, they will find themselves being towed back to Beta Nostrov. The only explanation they will ever receive is that a distress signal was received from their ship and a rescue tug was dispatched to recover them.

**Return to the Asteroid Belt.** Most likely, the PCs will be unable to completely ascertain what is wrong with their ship, will burn out their extra fuel-feed regulator in an attempt to repair it, or will simply be unable to overcome the digital personality Rutgar.dos. In this case, their best course of action is to send out a call for help. If the PCs don't think of this themselves, a passing freighter will contact them and offer to relay a message, noting that they're sitting ducks for pirates in their present condition. If necessary, the freighter will also point out that their navigational coordinates were originally based on proceeding to Jupiter under full power. If the PCs attempt to drift to the giant planet, Jupiter will be tens of millions of miles past them by the time they reach its orbit.

A rescue ship from Beta Nostrov will respond to any request for aid. It will tow the PCs to 5,032 Gwydion. Proceed with the next event, Beta Nostrov, when they arrive.

**Statistics.** Rutgar.dos's statistics are listed in the Chapter 2.

## Beta Nostrov

**Setup.** Beta Nostrov sits inside 5,032 Gwydion. Approximately 20 kilometers in diameter, Gwydion's interior has been hollowed out in the course of mining its rich nickel and iron deposits. A large Class A spaceport, one of the finest on the outer belt, is nestled away amid a great tangle of girders, fuel tanks, and landing pads in the largest part of Gwydion's mining cavity.

The rescue ship will guide the PCs' ship to one of the small pads in the docking area. An officious voice will request the reason for the PCs' visit to Beta Nostrov, assign them a berthing number (for invoicing purposes), and give them permission to leave their ship.

Beta Nostrov, as the PCs will discover, is a thriving

port dedicated to servicing the mines that dot the surrounding asteroids. Individual miners, with sun-baked faces and tattered equipment, to large asteroid mining cooperatives bring their wares to Beta Nostrov for transshipment. Though heavily dependent upon RAM for commerce, Gwydion still retains the rough-and-tumble air of a mining community. It also has many of the amenities that make it an attractive place for RAM executives. They can utilize Gwydion as a base of operations while tending their business in the region. Beta Nostrov is also large enough to conceal a small underworld with connections to the lucrative piracy trade, as the PCs will discover if they wander into its slums.

**Action.** Upon arrival, the PCs will most likely see to getting their ship fixed. They can easily arrange for an engineer from any one of the reputable repair facilities surrounding the docking area to come and look at their trouble. No matter where the engineer comes from, he will scratch his head and pronounce grimly "This looks like a complicated problem—it might take a few days to fix."

The engineer then recommends that the PCs take a room in one of Beta Nostrov's many hotels, as staying on the ship is out of the question. The ground trembles constantly as ships blast in and out of the docking area, making it impossible to sleep. In addition, fixing the fuel-feeds is going to be a noisy, all-day job—and it's sure to cost plenty.

While role-playing their stay on Gwydion, make certain that whenever the PCs return to check on the progress of their ship's repairs, they find several technicians working on their ship, but the head engineer is never around. If the players do not pick up on this, allow the characters to make Easy Notice Skill Checks instead. If the PCs ask for a progress report, they will be told to see the engineer. Unfortunately, he is always unavailable. Should the PCs make a sufficient fuss, they can arrange to see the engineer, and he will give them a lengthy, over detailed explanation that basically transfers to "we know there's a problem, but we can't seem to figure out exactly what it is." When and if the PCs get tired of waiting for the engineer to repair their ship, go to the event Leaving Beta Nostrov.

The PCs may want to contact Professor Jarlshorf. He sounds quite dismayed to hear about their trouble, but arranges lodging for them at the finest hotel in Beta Nostrov (The Beta House). He also sends a credit guarantee to the Beta Nostrov (through the Coprates Bank, Ltd.) to pay for ship repairs.

While they wait for their ship to be repaired, the PCs are free to explore Beta Nostrov. Consult the key below for an explanation of the buildings.

**Atmosphere.** Buildings 1-7 are located in the "Vacuum Quarter." Anyone moving between them must wear a spacesuit. The buildings numbered 8 and above are located in the pressurized section of Beta Nostrov, and people can move between them freely without environmental protection.

**1. Docking Berths.** Because of limited space, Beta Nostrov has adopted an unusual docking arrangement. Its docking berths are located within a steel-walled cylinder 1,200 feet in diameter. The cylinder remains open to the vacuum at all times, and the individual berths consist of little more than level landing pads. To make maximum use of the space available, the pads range in size from 100 feet to over 400 feet in diameter, allowing ships of up to 800 tons to utilize its facilities. Because of Gwydion's very low gravity, each ship is secured to a set of eye-bolts surrounding its pad. These three cables must be released before a ship takes off. Passengers must debark their ships in space suits, then walk across the floor of the docking cylinder and exit through an airlock in the steel wall. Of course, this somewhat primitive arrangement has been the cause of several accidents in the past, so VIPs are usually driven to and from their ships in heavily armored jet cars.

**2. Fuel Tanks.** Fuel is stored in four massive tanks located inside an immense rock dome. To minimize the effects of any mishaps, this area, as with most of the ship servicing facility, is not pressurized. Access to the area is denied to all but legitimate personnel.

**3. Repair Berths.** Three repair facilities are located next to the docking berths. The smallest, Smiley's Reliable Ship Repair, is located in the hexagonal building and is the most honest and discreet. Smiley's works only for hard currency. The service located in the large circular building next to Smiley's is Lupo's, an independent service financed by piracy profits. The third repair service is Mr. Spacetool, part of a chain of repair stations operating in many Class A ports. If asked, Mr. Spacetool is where Professor Jarlshorf would prefer to have the ship fixed.

**4. Rocket Dealers.** These two rocket lots are owned by a pair of expatriate Lunarian brothers. Their prices are uniformly 25% higher than normal. They will not buy any rocket from the PCs unless the party can prove its ownership. They have all types of rockets from 20-ton Asteroverters up to 200-ton medium cruisers and light transports. They have no fighters, nor any ship over 200 tons.

**5. Control Tower.** This small building is where the control tower is housed. Before landing or taking off from Beta Nostrov, PCs must radio for per-

mission, which is not granted unless a computer check of the ship owner's credit reveals that all outstanding invoices on Beta Nostrov have been paid.

**6. Abroha's Salvage Yard.** This yard is filled with junked rockets of every sort and size. Parts for any ship between 20 and 200 tons can be obtained here, the price ranging from 5d10 credits to 5d10 x 100 credits. Use your own judgement to determine prices, taking into consideration the PCs' ability to pay, the complexity and importance of the part, and the rarity of the PCs' ship type—the *Intrepid Pedagogue* is a fairly common design.

**7. Energy Facility.** Beta Nostrov buys its energy from the Sun Kings. This building is connected to a collector on Gwydion's surface. Its interior is a maze of batteries and junction mechanisms where the energy is stored until needed. Power distribution is strictly controlled from this location, but, considering the size of the asteroid's facilities, there is ample power to go around.

**8. The Beta House.** This is the finest hotel on Beta Nostrov—which is to say it has adequate services. Room rates start at 35cr per day; fortunately, the PCs can stay here at Professor Jarlshorf's expense.

**9. The Miner's Delight.** This restaurant serves basic but well-prepared food. Meals range up to 10cr.

**10. The Golden Comet.** This restaurant serves exotic cuisine, though its preparation leaves much to be desired. Prices range from 5cr to 35cr per meal.

**11. The Wayfarer's Rest.** This saloon is a popular hangout for rocketjocks and ship crews. Conversation is dominated by talk of pirate raids, counter-measures, and fast ships.

**12. The Silver Moon.** This tavern is frequented by RAM personnel visiting Beta Nostrov. Conversation is dominated by financial speculation, bragging about villa's back in Coprates, and complaints about how boring Beta Nostrov is.

**13. The Beltway Lodge.** This is a moderately priced lodge. It provides clean private rooms and baths, but few other amenities. Rates are 25cr per day. If the PCs wish to stay here, they must pay for their own lodging.

**14. The Outer Inn.** This is a moderately priced lodge. Its rooms aren't so clean, but the personnel are extremely friendly and will advise guests on life in Beta Nostrov. Rates are 20cr per day.

**15. The Nostrov Hostel.** This hotel provides dormitory-style accommodations. If the PCs leave anything of value unattended here, there is a 50% chance that it will be stolen by another guest. Rates are 10cr per day.

**16. The Sign Post.** This small building houses a commercial message center. For a one credit fee, PCs

may send or receive messages here—anonymously, if they wish. Although the center guarantees complete confidentiality, the owner screens all messages for information of interest to pirates and/or RAM, and turns a tidy profit by selling select data to the appropriate parties. One of his best customers is Ardala Valmar herself.

**17. The Star Center.** This is a commercial library-data bank. For a 10cr/day fee, PCs can use its facilities to look up information on practically any subject. Those wishing to access confidential information must pass a Programming Skill Check of Average, Difficult, or Impossible level (use your own judgement to determine the level appropriate to the information to be gained). Of course, some information, such as Simon Holzerhein's bank account numbers, is simply not available.

**18. The Beta Nostrov Bank.** Through this bank, Professor Jarlshorf will arrange to guarantee the PCs' expenses (if he is contacted). Any purchase over 500cr must be personally approved by him, however, and he will not approve the purchase of anything that does not have an immediate and obvious application to the mission upon which he has sent the PCs. Of course, PCs eager to purchase some marginally applicable equipment could attempt a Fast Talk/Convince Skill Check to get his approval.

**19. Police Authorities.** Beta Nostrov maintains its own police force, officers and men recruited from throughout the Belt and beyond. All have considerable experience as law enforcement authorities, and they have a reputation for unwavering fairness and dedication. Their station house contains a small armory equipped with a selection of all the personal weapons listed in the Technology Book (securely locked in an underground vault). Able to muster up to 200 men at short notice, the Beta Nostrov Police take a dim view of disturbances. Unless an offender owes money to or has committed a seriously violent crime against a citizen of Beta Nostrov, the most common punishment is to send the criminal out of town and forbid his return. More serious crimes, however, are transferred to Thule, the Belt's prison, where the Belt Judiciary Council can dole out appropriate justice.

**20. The Beta Nostrov Recovery Center (Hospital).** Most forms of basic medical care are available here. The BNRC has a fine burn and vacuum exposure unit—one of the finest in the Belt. Physicians, surgeons, and support personnel are on hand for emergencies, though especially delicate procedures are often sent to the core worlds for treatment. Being on the frontier, patients must present proof of ability to pay before admittance.

**21. The Beta Nostrov Chart Shop.** All of the latest navigational charts and data upgrades are available here, usually on chips or disks for download onto a ship's computer navigational systems.

**22. The Tech Shack.** With a brightly lit glass front and plush climate controlled appointments, this is an outlet for a chain of Tech Shack stores. This store specializes in ship subsystems, especially in sensors, computers, navigational aids, security systems, communications, and control systems.

**23. The Labor Pool.** This employment agency deals mostly with miners and ship crews, but they can find some kind of work for almost anybody. The would-be employee must first pay a fee of 200cr.

**24. Shoot 'em on Down.** This establishment is licensed to sell ships' weapon systems, and can supply any weapon system listed in the "Rocket Ships" section of *Characters & Combat*. However, before installation, PCs must present proof of legal ownership for their ship. Prices are 10% above normal. RAM gets a complete data readout of all transactions, from credit to ship's manifests.

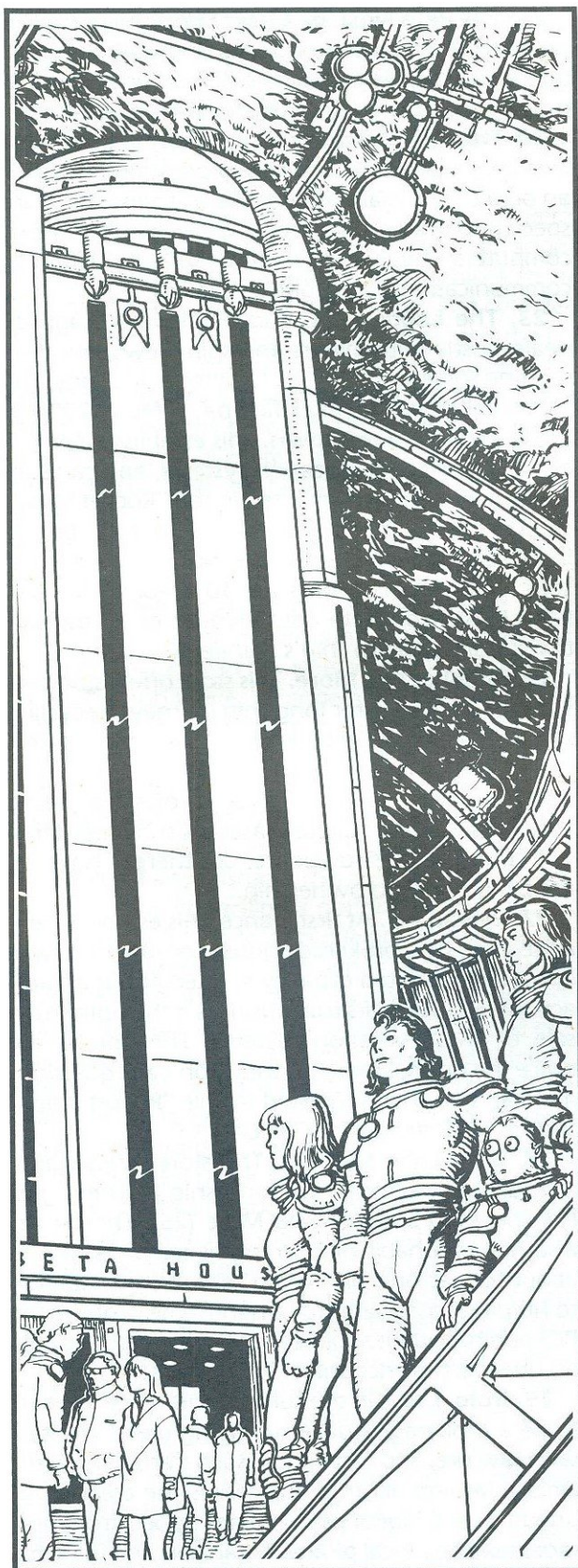
**25. Supplies and More.** This store offers standard supplies necessary for long ship journeys: recycling system filters, food in bulk, air purifier units, ammunition reloads, etc.

**26. Up Your Sleeve.** This store offers personal weapons for sale. All purchases must be registered with the Beta Nostrov police, but there is no waiting period prior to ownership.

**27. Rymar, Inc.** At first glance, this establishment appears to be a brokerage house for raw ores, and does have a limited capacity to execute such transactions. However, its true business is the unlicensed sale of ship's weapon systems. Their prices are twice the normal rate, but they don't ask questions and can get anything listed in the "Rocket Ships" section of *Characters & Combat*.

**28. More than Supplies.** This store offers standard supplies necessary for long ship journeys, just like the shop Supplies and More (25). The owner also makes a habit of learning as much as he can about his patrons, and often sells this information to his pirate associates for a handsome profit. If the PCs purchase their supplies here, they might just get an unexpected encounter with pirates.

**29. Trolo, Ltd.** On the surface, this office appears to be a brokerage house supplying metal smelters with raw ore, and can handle such transactions in a limited fashion. Its true business is the creation of unauthorized digital personalities ripped from hostages taken by local pirates. Vital skills and information from those personalities are sold to cybernetics companies, but their identities, memories, and emo-



tions are mercilessly stripped away before sale.

**30. Destinations.** In addition to selling data upgrades and charts for various parts of the solar system, this chart shop also buys and sells confidential information on commercial shipments.

**31. Dietrich Smith, Inc.** On the surface an equipment leasing and used equipment sales firm, Smith Inc. is actually a fencing operation for stolen cargo and equipment. They do not take kindly to strangers.

**32. Masters & Jones, Inc.** A legitimate jeweller and broker of precious stones. He will report to the police anybody who attempts to buy or sell stolen goods from him.

**33. Jacob Davis, Inc.** Mr. Davis buys and sells used personal armor (from space suits to full battle armor). He is also willing to buy any type of contraband material.

**34. The Nostrov Gardens.** These hydroponic food gardens supply the wealthy of Beta Nostrov with fresh fruits and vegetables of all kinds. Tours can be arranged for a 2cr per person fee.

**35. The Helmsby Arms.** The moderately wealthy of Beta Nostrov live in these luxury apartments. They feature a zero-G and gravity-sim sports facility, private vehicle storage and maintenance, and extremely pleasant accommodations.

**36. The Nostrov Mansion.** The truly wealthy live in these spacious, well-guarded mansions. Each has spacious living quarters, gravity-sim throughout, and complete staffs of human and DP servants.

**37. The Projects.** Most of Beta Nostrov's scantily-paid citizens live in these one and two room apartments. Of fairly recent construction, they are beginning to show signs of neglect.

**38. The Blue Parrot.** This large cantina is a favorite haunt of pirates and other sinister figures of Beta Nostrov. Strangers had better be willing to fight to secure their table. Characters who earn the regular patrons' respect (through an exhibition of fighting prowess) can expect to receive several offers to join a pirate crew.

**39. Compu-Broker.** This used computer store has a large selection of personal and ship computers. They buy computers with no questions asked, but assure patrons that those purchased here are completely legitimate.

**40. Gennie Tech.** This genetics laboratory specializes in low-g and vacuum-proof gennies. All orders are taken on a to-grow basis. They will pay up to 1,000cr for gene samples from any character with any ability score of 18.

**41. RAM Offices.** This building houses the permanent offices which RAM maintains on Beta Nos-

trov to watch over its interests. The offices also serve as a base for information gathering and certain espionage activities. Rutgar.dos and his subordinates are secretly using these offices as their base of operations on Beta Nostrov.

**42. The Fun House.** Seekers of illicit pleasures can find them in this building. Nobody ever leaves this building without parting with at least 500cr in hard currency. Those who cannot pay their bills are often found floating in the vacuum without the benefit of a space suit.

**43. The Monorail.** Beta Nostrov maintains a vigilantly patrolled monorail for the use of visitors and citizens. It costs nothing to use and stops every 300 feet along its route.

**44. Airlock.** This airlock leads from the docking area to the rest of Beta Nostrov.

**Statistics.** Beta Nostrov is populated by a wide variety humans, Martians, Lunarians, and gennies. Use the statistics below for the average citizen of Beta Nostrov, adjusting them as you see fit based on social position and experience, and by the modifications indicated on Table 4, Racial Modifiers in *Characters & Combat* and on the *Reference Screen*.

**Average Citizen:** Hp 4; AC 10; THACO 20; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Tech 10.

**Weapon:** Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

**Skills:** As appropriate, 15-35.

## Ransacked

**Setup.** After the PCs have been in Beta Nostrov one or two days, they will return to find their rooms ransacked. All of their possessions will be heaped in the center of the chamber, and every conceivable hiding place in the room is open. Linings are ripped out of clothes, toolkits and briefcases are torn apart, and expensive electronics are smashed. If the PCs left anything of value in the room, at least one or two of the most expensive items are missing.

Rutgar.dos' thugs have ransacked the rooms, searching for the Krait schematics which Rutgar.dos now believes the PCs to possess. The thugs stole a few items to make the search look like a theft.

**Action.** When and if the PCs report the ransacking and thefts, the hotel management summons the police. The police officer fills out a report, attributing the ransacking to a simple theft. Should the PCs insist that there is more to the ransacking than the theft, the officer appears to grow suspicious of them, asking them what they're involved in that

gives them reason to believe this is more than a standard burglary.

Assuming the PCs are staying at the Beta House, the concierge seems remarkably unconcerned, although he quickly arranges to replace any stolen items at hotel expense. If pressed, he reluctantly agrees to allow the PCs to question hotel personnel working on the floor at that time, but the personnel seem to have all been elsewhere when the PCs' rooms were robbed. None of them saw anything.

Should the PCs be staying at the Beltway Lodge or the Outer Inn, the proprietors seem quite concerned. They will quickly establish, by interviewing their staffs, that the rooms were broken into by a half-dozen Terrine gennies with silvery skin and black eyes (modified Terrines). The proprietors at these hotels will not replace any lost property, immediately citing their posted policy of not being responsible for articles left unattended in the rooms.

Nobody in Beta Nostrov will recognize the gennies as being local. If they think of it, the PCs might check in with Gennie Tech, where a bribe of 100cr will gain them some information: these gennies match a prototype sometimes used as security personnel in space based operations requiring a certain amount of confidentiality.

PCs staying at the Nostrov Hostel meet only with an unconcerned shrug. Such occurrences are commonplace at the hostel.

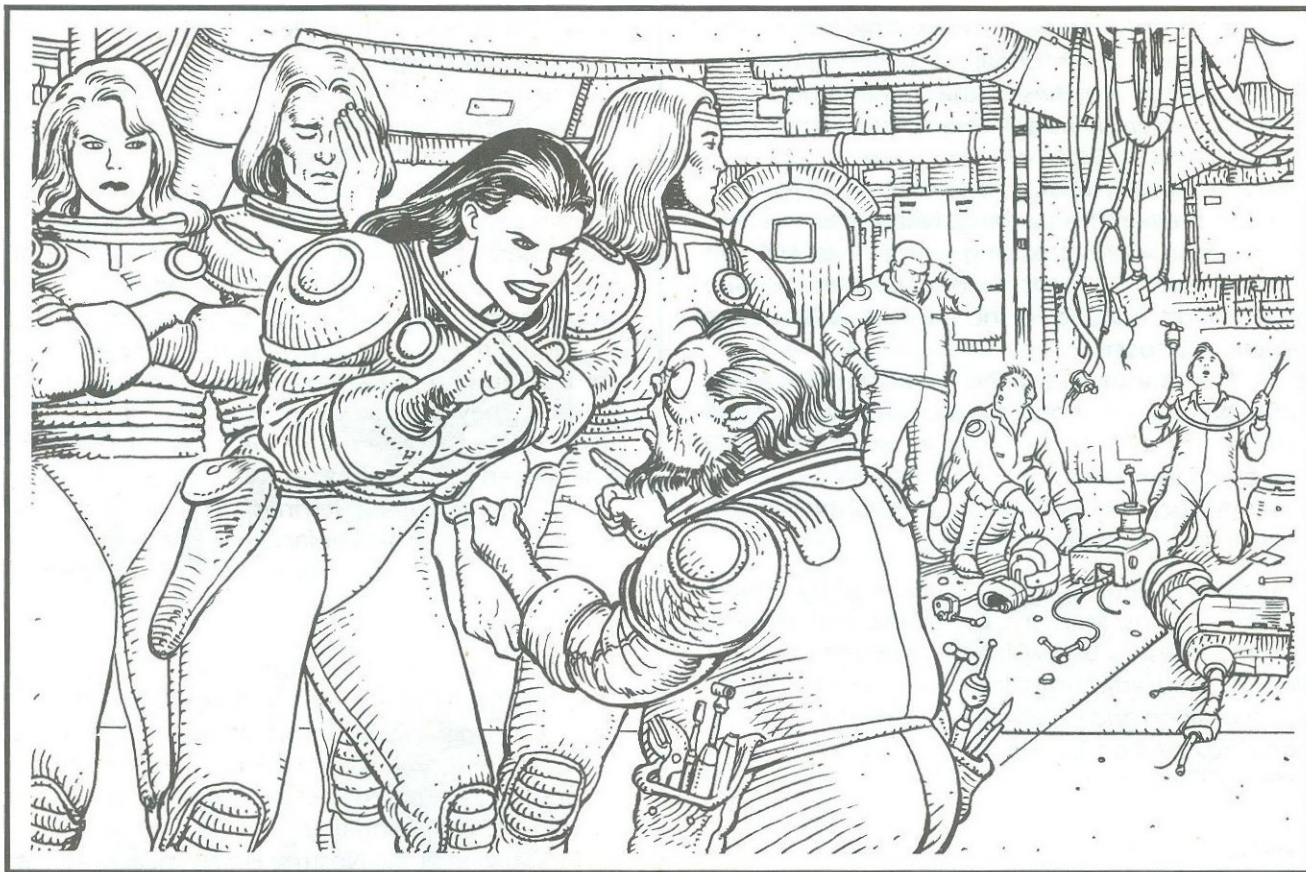
**Statistics.** Use the statistics in the event Beta Nostrov for common citizens.

## Dark Alley

**Setup.** About twelve hours after the PCs' rooms are ransacked, they meet a group of Asteminer (Asteroid-Miner) gennies—preferably in a dark alley. After his search failed to turn up the schematics, Rutgar.dos hired the gennies to mug the party. Unfortunately, Rutgar.dos still does not know what form his company's stolen property is in, so he instructed the Asteminers to intimidate the PCs, hoping to frighten them into turning over whatever it was that Matahari gave them.

The Asteminers are earless, noseless masses with eyes that glow in the dark, long gangly arms, broad powerful chests, and bow-legged stances. Their three-toed feet have long, powerful talons designed to grip the very rock of an asteroid and fasten the creature securely to its surface. The skin over their entire body is made of leathery scales. There is one gennie for each PC, armed with steel, three-foot pipes (clubs).

**Action.** The gennies advance menacingly on the



player characters, ignoring any threats made against them. Finally, they stop a few feet away from the PCs and, in a gravelly voice, one of them says, "The boss wants his property back. Give it to us, and there won't be no more trouble."

If the PCs give the gennies anything at all, the leader examines it for a moment and says, "This better be it." He then leads his fellows away and the PCs never hear from them again.

On the other hand, if the PCs do not present something to them immediately, the gennies attack. Should they prevail, they take all of the PCs' personal items, save the clothes on their backs.

If the PCs prevail, surviving gennies can tell the PCs little about their employer. They were sitting in the Labor Pool looking for a job when a well-dressed Martian asked them if they were interested in making 300cr each. The Martian instructed them to track the PCs down and recover his property, neglecting to tell them exactly what his property was.

The fact that the employer was a well-dressed Martian might lead the PCs to the RAM offices in Beta Nostrov. They will meet nothing here except arrogant denials of any involvement in hiring thugs.

## Leaving Beta Nostrov

**Setup.** By now, the PCs have been in Beta Nostrov for some time and are getting anxious to leave. However, the engineer claims that their ship still is not ready to leave. This is because Rutgar.dos still has not recovered the Krait schematics and is paying the engineer very well to keep the PCs' ship in a state of disrepair.

Eventually, the PCs should grow tired of this treatment and take the matter of their ship repair into their own hands. Fortunately, Rutgar.dos has exited their ship's computer, so he will no longer interfere with repairs. Getting underway will prove to be a fairly simple procedure.

Note that this event can occur before the event Dark Alley (or possibly the event Ransacked) if the PCs are especially impatient with the engineer.

**Action.** When the PCs decide that they're tired of waiting for the engineer to repair their ship, he will act insulted and quite upset. The engineer will threaten to have the PCs' ship impounded unless he is paid in full for his services—a whopping 12,435cr! Fortunately, if the PCs have contacted Jarlshorf, the professor will arrange payment. Otherwise, the engineer makes good on his threat. A dozen police-

men are posted in the PCs' ship and they will be stranded for several weeks while the issue is resolved in Beta Nostrov's ponderous court system. Their ship will eventually be released without charge, but not before many boring days of red tape have passed.

After the party has fired the engineer, it will require an Average Repair Nuclear Engine Skill Check to fix the ship. Clever PCs should realize that there was never anything seriously wrong with their ship. If the PCs question the engineer, his response depends upon their attitude. If the PCs did not treat him badly when they fired him, and agree to let him keep anything they have already paid him, the engineer admits that a DP paid him handsomely to keep their ship stranded at his dock. He has no idea who the DP was or why he was interested in the PCs. The authorities will prove quite uninterested if the PCs report the engineer's corruption.

However, if the PCs treated the engineer poorly, or prove unwilling to let him keep what he has already been paid, the man is much less cooperative. He claims that the only reason they could fix the ship was that he and his assistants had already repaired most of the damage caused by the party's "neglect." Under no circumstances will he admit that he was paid to keep the ship in dock.

The party will be free to leave Beta Nostrov after paying their bills. Should the party leave Beta Nostrov without paying their debts, word of their transgression will be circulated throughout the Belt and they will be denied services, including emergency services, at any reputable port. The Beta Nostrov police will not bother to pursue them over a financial matter.

#### Statistics.

**Engineer** (6th level engineer): hp 20 AC 10; THACO 14; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10, Tech 13.

*Weapon:* Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

*Career Skills:* Jury Rig 35, Maneuver in Zero G 55, Notice 40, Repair Electrical 45, Repair Life Support 60, Repair Mechanical 35, Repair Nuclear Engine 50, Repair Rocket Hull 50.

*General Skills:* Drive Jetcar 25, Pilot Rocket 25, Use Rocket Belt 25, Repair Weapon 50, Bypass Security 25, Open Lock 25, Commo Operation 25.

**Police Officers** (12 3rd level warriors): hp 15 each; AC 6 (space suits); THACO 18; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 11.

*Weapon:* Laser pistol (6): Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800. Rocket pistol (6): Dmg 1d10, ROF 1, Shots 5, Range 400.

*Career Skills:* Maneuver in Zero G 25, Move Silently 25, Notice 35, Repair Weapon 15, Use Rocket Belt 20.

*General Skills:* Drive Jetcar 20, Pilot Rocket 20, Bypass Security 20.

## Proposition

**Setup.** When the PCs leave Beta Nostrov, Rutgar.dos assumes that they are leaving because they are aware that Matahari has given them something valuable. He also assumes that the PCs are aware of his efforts to recover it. Deciding to abandon subtlety in favor of the direct approach, he activates the PCs' radio and contacts them personally.

**Action.** Rutgar.dos uses the same appearance that he used earlier, though with a softer voice. He congratulates the PCs on their cunning in eluding his agents in Beta Nostrov, then asks them if they are interested in a business arrangement that will prove beneficial to all parties concerned.

Assuming the PCs agree to hear Rutgar.dos out, he offers to pay the party 50,000cr for the "item entrusted to them by Matahari." Under no circumstances will he reveal either his own identity or the nature of the item he is seeking, insisting that the PCs must know what Matahari gave to them. If the PCs attempt to bargain price with him, Rutgar.dos will agree to pay as much as 100,000cr for what he wants, transferring up to half that amount to an account on Firste Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle, GB in advance of delivery.

At this point, the PCs probably don't know what Matahari gave them. If they explain this to Rutgar.dos repeatedly, he will finally suggest that perhaps Matahari hid it on them without them realizing it. He will suggest that he can find what he is looking for by carefully examining the PCs' property.

Should the PCs agree to this request, Rutgar.dos informs them that a RAM cruiser is coming toward them at that moment. They should dock with the cruiser and allow its personnel to examine their belongings. If the PCs agree to these terms, continue with the next chapter.

If the PCs do not agree to Rutgar.dos's terms, or refuse to hear him out, he threatens them with everything from bad credit reports to assassination. A few minutes later, a RAM medium cruiser appears and begins chasing the PCs. Continue with the event Dogfight in the next chapter.

**Statistics.** Rutgar.dos is presented earlier.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Asteroids, planetoids, orbital
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Work pools
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Varies
DIET:	Omnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Low-average (8-11)
NO. APPEARING:	1d20
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	120
HIT DICE:	5
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4 (club)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

**Genotype:** Asteminers are human-based gennies designed to work the cold, barren surfaces of asteroids. Based on an amphibian genotype, they have several adaptations that allow them to function in the vacuum, low-g conditions of the Belt.

## Physical/Cultural:

*Physical Size:* 7 feet tall, 250 pounds.

*External Covering:* Asteminers have leathery scales over the majority of their bodies.

*Eyes:* Like a human's, though lens covered and bioluminous.

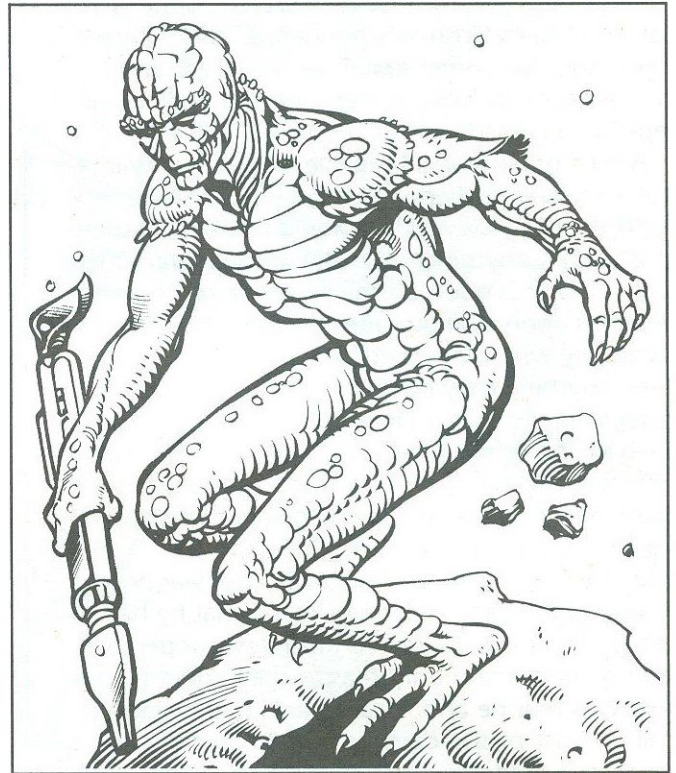
*Ears:* Small slits.

*Mouth:* Normal.

*Nose:* None.

*Cultural:* Created to mine asteroids, asteminers generally consider themselves to be a superior breed of human being. They adopt most human cultural conveniences, depending upon their employment and location. Asteminers are rarely found outside of the work environment, and they are virtually never found deep in a gravity well such as on Earth or Mars.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Although they need oxygen to survive, they are able to absorb it in liquid form through their skin and store it in their cell tissues for later use. They can seal their ears and mouth, have hard lenses over their eyes, and lack any form of nose. Their long, three-toed feet are especially designed for securing themselves to rocky surfaces in low-g environments, and their eyes constantly emit a bioluminous glow. Unlike amphibians, they are not cold-blooded, and metabo-



lize huge amounts of protein paste to keep warm when working in the frigid conditions common to asteroid mining. They can work while exposed to the vacuum for up to ten hours at a time. Although very tough, Asteminers are rather dull-witted and can be easily fooled.

**Combat:** Not designed for combat, they have no special advantage over humans in battle.

**Habitat/Terrain:** The Asteminer's habitat is the worksite. They are usually forced to work in excess of sixteen hours at a time, but their stamina and mindset are used to these brutal conditions. When off work, they either sleep or frequent the rough mining town drinking establishments, most often in groups.

*Attribute Modifiers:* Str +3; Dex +3; Int -3; Wis -3; Con +3; Cha -3; Tech 0.

*Saving Throw Modifiers:* Explosion/Plasma +2; Electrical Shock 0; Paralysis/Stun/Fall 0; Toxic/Gas/Poison +5; Suffocation n/a (except when suffered for a period of ten hours or more, and then +3); Radiation: 0; Heat 0; Cold +3.

## CHAPTER 4: RAM CRUISER

One way or another, the PCs are going to become closely acquainted with a RAM medium cruiser shortly after leaving Beta Nostrov. If they have agreed to turn over whatever it is that Rutgar.dos is seeking, they will be taken aboard a RAM medium cruiser in the event Welcome Aboard. If not, they will be chased by that same cruiser in the event Dogfight.

As before, the possibility always exists that the PCs are not pursuing Professor Jarlshorf's mission and may be in a completely different part of the solar system from where they are expected to be in this chapter. If so, there is no cause for concern. As long as Rutgar.dos contacted them in the previous chapter, this chapter may proceed without alteration. The RAM medium cruiser appears shortly after the PCs leave their last port of call and events proceed as outlined below.

### Welcome Aboard

**Setup.** The PCs have agreed to give Rutgar.dos the mysterious item that Matahari hid on them. They probably don't know what this item is, and they may or may not have revealed this to the DP. In either case, they have been invited aboard the *RMS Julius Raurus*, a RAM medium cruiser similar to the *RMS Maximus Argyre* included in the XXVc™ game. Use the map of the medium cruiser provided on this adventure's large map as a reference for this event and those that follow.

As the *Julius Raurus* approaches the PCs' ship, it dwarfs the scout cruiser—both in size and gunnery. It slowly pulls up alongside the PCs' ship, a behemoth in the darkness, all of its formidable weaponry prominently displayed, though not obviously trained on the party's ship. The heavy acceleration gun and K-cannon protrude from their mounts menacingly, and the gyrojet and beam laser turrets are extended and slowly revolving. Although this is presumably a friendly docking, it is clear that the *Julius Raurus* is fully prepared to make it an involuntary docking, if necessary.

**Action.** If the PCs change their minds and decide not to dock with the *Julius Raurus*, Captain Yasuv doesn't hesitate to open fire. He tries to avoid destroying the PCs' ship and attempts a boarding action as soon as possible. In this case, proceed with the event Dogfight.

Assuming the PCs are not foolish enough to attempt an escape while under the guns of such a powerful warship, as soon as docking is complete

and the party's ship secured to the RAM cruiser, the captain himself meets the PCs at the airlock. If the PCs are openly attempting to bring weapons aboard, he asks them to leave their weapons aboard their own ship. If necessary, he enforces this demand with a security detail of ten men. After meeting the party, Captain Yasuv welcomes them aboard and requests the item they were given by Matahari. Under no circumstances will he reveal that he and Rutgar.dos are looking for stolen Krait fighter plans.

Should the PCs try to bluff Captain Yasuv by giving him some unusual item, he thanks them, then has a contingent of ten security guards show them to the galley. A short time later, after finding that the Krait plans were not there, he orders the guards to throw them into the brig. In this case, proceed with the event The Brig.

If the PCs have previously explained to Rutgar.dos that they don't know what Matahari gave them, or take this opportunity to explain the situation to the captain, he provides them with jumpsuits, then asks them to turn over everything they were wearing or had on them when they met her. Yasuv gladly explains that she probably hid what he and Rutgar.dos are looking for somewhere on their persons. Several hours later, Captain Yasuv tells the PCs that he is going to search their ship. When he does not find what he is looking for, the captain impounds their ship and heads for Mars. Any objections are dealt with by a security detail of ten men. Proceed with the event The Brig.

In the unlikely event that the PCs reveal that the information Rutgar.dos and the captain seek has been injected into one of their number in the form of a microchip, the captain says the entire party will have to return with him to Mars for a surgical examination. Again, objections are dealt with by summoning the ten-man security detail. Proceed with the event The Brig.

As should be obvious by now, both Captain Yasuv and Rutgar.dos care much more about recovering the Krait schematics than they do about honoring their agreement with the PCs. They do not hesitate in the slightest to doublecross the party when it suits their purposes.

#### Statistics.

**Captain Yasuv** (10th level rocketjock): hp 40; AC 6 (space suit); THAC0 16; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14, Tech 12.

**Career Skills:** Drive Jetcar 35, Drive Groundcar 35, Maneuver in Zero G 50, Notice 50, Pilot Fixed Wing 50, Pilot Rocket 80, Pilot Rotorwing Craft 50, Use Rocket Belt 50.

**General Skills:** Battle Tactics 25, Leadership 50, Repair Weapon 25, Jury Rig 25, Repair Electrical 10, Repair Life Support 10, Repair Mechanical 10, Repair Nuclear Engine 10, Repair Rocket Hull 10, Fast Talk/Convince 25.

**Security Guards** (10 2nd level warriors): hp 10 each; AC 2 (heavy body armor); THACO 19; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10, Tech 10.

**Weapons:** Laser rifle (5): Dmg 1d12; ROF 1, Shots 14, Max Range 3000. Rocket rifle (5): Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Shots 10, Max Range 2000.

**Career Skills:** Maneuver in Zero G 30, Repair Weapon 20, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Drive Jetcar 20, Move Silently 20.

## The Brig

**Setup.** After the PCs have failed to produce the Krait schematics, Captain Yasuv has ordered their incarceration. His full security detail of ten men is now escorting the PCs to the security deck. As they descend the central stairs, two guards go before the PCs, one between each PC, and the remainder follow behind. Their weapons are drawn.

**Action.** The security guards do not feel they need more than two guards per PC. If there are less than five PCs in the party, the excess security guards will return to their normal duty stations.

Presumably, the party will eventually attempt to escape. If the PCs attempt to do so before being incarcerated in the brig, they must first overcome their escorts. After they overcome the guards successfully, turn to the event Escape and proceed with the rest of the breakout. Any witnesses to the escape will first attempt to sound the alarm, then try to help the guards.

If the party does not attempt to escape before being incarcerated, they are taken to the security deck and searched. All personal items, especially concealed weapons or items that could be used as weapons, will be confiscated and placed in a locker in the security office. The PCs will then be locked down apiece into the holding cells.

When the party attempts to get out, proceed

with the event Escape. If they never successfully escape, refer to Appendix 2 for future developments.

**Statistics.** The statistics of the security guards are listed in the event Welcome Aboard.

## Escape

**Setup.** Use this encounter when the PCs decide to escape the *Julius Raurus*. If they allow themselves to be jailed in the brig, they will find their cells uncomfortably hot, dark, and noisy. Sleeping will prove difficult, as loud clangs and bangs regularly echo up through the floor from the engineering deck. Two security officers are always standing, fully armed and armored, in the security station outside the PCs' cells. Once a day, a security officer brings them a meal of protein paste and two quarts of water. PCs in different cells are free to communicate with each other, but the security officers can overhear everything they say to each other. They will take action appropriate to any escape plan they overhear.

**Action.** If the PCs attempted to escape before being locked into the holding cells, they should already have defeated their escorts. In this case, consult the *Decks of Julius Raurus* table to see what the PCs encounter as they flee. Start with the deck upon which the PCs defeated their guards, then consult the appropriate entry as the party moves up or down in the ship.

If the PCs did not attempt to escape before being incarcerated, their first task will be to get out of the holding cells somehow. Any PC attempting to shortcircuit the magnetic lock must have Open Lock skill. If the PC has no tools whatsoever, picking the lock will require an Impossible Open Lock Skill Check. If he has makeshift tools (such as a fork or knife stolen from his dinner plate), picking the lock will require a Difficult Open Lock Skill Check. If, somehow, the PC managed to acquire or smuggle a set of proper lockpicking tools into his cell, opening the lock requires only an Average Open Lock Skill Check. Each PC with an Open Locks skill may attempt to open his lock once per day.

In the event that the PCs cannot open the locks, several other alternatives are available to them. One of them may fake an illness. To convince the guards to open the cell, the symptoms must be dramatic and visible, and the sentries will summon an extra guard before opening the cell. Even then, they will be very careful and cannot to be taken by surprise. If more than one PC fakes an illness, roll an Intelligence check for the guards. Success indicates that they see through the ruse and don't open any

cells. Under no circumstances will they open more than one cell at a time.

Faking a fight will have much the same effect as faking an illness, save that if the two PCs involved actually attack each other (i.e., inflict damage on one another), the guards must make an Intelligence check or be completely fooled by the act. Even if they pass the check, however, the guards are not completely certain that the fight is staged. They will follow the same procedures outlined for a faked illness (above). Should fights simultaneously break out in more than one cell, the guards automatically realize that this is a ruse. They will allow the fight to continue as long as the PCs keep up the charade.

Sentries failing the Intelligence check will open the cell without summoning a third guard. They suffer a +4 modifier to their initiative roll.

No matter how they escape, PCs freeing themselves must work quickly to liberate their companions. If they immediately open the other cells, they can free their companions before help arrives. Should the PCs hesitate even a moment, however, help arrives as outlined in the *Decks of Julius Raurus* table below.

After the PCs escape their cell(s), they must work their way back to the airlocks on the Computer Deck, recover their ship, and flee. Consult the *Decks of Julius Raurus* table to see what the PCs encounter on each deck.

## Decks of Julius Raurus

As the PCs move from deck to deck, consult the corresponding entry below to determine what they find. Do not tell them the names of the decks as they pass. Instead, describe what they find when they explore the deck. Note that this means the PCs cannot simply say they are "returning to the deck with the airlock." They must tell you whether or not they are taking the time to explore each deck as they pass it.

Note that the PCs may encounter different reactions on many decks, depending upon whether or not the alarm has been sounded. For all crewmen except Captain Yasuv and the security guards, use the statistics for standard crewmen provided at the end of this event. (Statistics for Yasuv and the security guards are provided in the event *Welcome Aboard*.)

**1. Engineering Deck.** *Alarm Sounded:* The engineer is standing by the stairs with a drawn laser pistol. He orders the PCs to give up, then opens fire if they do not respond immediately. One round later, his two assistants, clad in radiation suits (AC 7) rush

out of the twin reactor rooms and join the fight. Both carry laser pistols.

*No Alarm Sounded:* The engineer is sitting at the workbench poring over a neutron flow report. His assistants are in the reactor rooms. Unless the PCs give the engineer a chance to reach the computer interface or bridge communications consoles, he cannot sound an alarm. The engineer and his assistants can be locked in either of the reactor rooms indefinitely and cannot sound an alarm from there. If locked in either the K-cannon or Acceleration gun decks, however, they can contact the bridge and sound the alarm.

PCs can cause up to 450 points of damage to the *Julius Raurus's* engines from this location (using weapons and skills), but doing so causes the alarm sound immediately.

**2. Security Deck.** If the PCs allowed themselves to be incarcerated in the first place, this is the deck upon which they emerge. They have probably already overcome the two security guards stationed outside their cells. If not, these two guards yell a warning to their companions in the security office and try to force the PCs back into their cells.

There are two more guards in the security office (one if the two guards summoned a third when they opened the cell; see above). Thirty seconds after the PCs escape, these guards poke their heads out of the security office to see what all the noise was about. If the escapees did not immediately open their friends' cells, those friends are still in their cells when this occurs.

When he sees what has happened, the guard(s) tries to close the door (but he doesn't have time to lock it) and sound an alarm. If the PCs are all free at this time, they have a -4 modifier to their initiative roll. If possible, the guard goes to the computer security interface in the office. When he can act on the following round, he will sound the alarm. The second guard, if he is here, will use a laser rifle to keep the PCs out of the office.

Surviving guards can be locked into the holding cells without fear that they will sound the alarm. Survivors can also be locked in the air or water reclamation rooms, but they can quickly draw attention to their plight by causing a malfunction in either system. PCs can cause up to 200 points of damage to the Life Support system from this location (using weapons and/or skills), but doing so causes the alarm to only sound immediately.

**3. Crew's Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* There are 12 sleeping crewmen in this room.

*Alarm Sounded:* There are 12 crewmen here with laser pistols in their hands. RAM prisoners can be

locked into either the showers or sanitary facilities without fear that they will sound the alarm.

**4. Officers' Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* Two security guards (one with a rocket rifle and one with a laser rifle) are stationed here. They are taken by surprise and suffer a +2 modifier to their initiative roll.

*Alarm Sounded:* The same, but the guards suffer no initiative modifier. The cabins are empty.

**5. Navigation Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* Two security guards are stationed in the area near the stairway (one armed with a rocket rifle and the other with a laser rifle). They are surprised and suffer a +2 modifier to their initiative roll. The navigator, his assistant, the mathematician, the physicist, and the planet officer are all at their stations.

*Alarm Sounded:* The same, but they wear laser pistols at their sides. They will not leave their stations under any circumstance.

The PCs can cause 50 points of damage to the sensors and 50 points of damage to the controls from this location (using weapons and/or skills). There is no place on this deck to lock prisoners.

**6. Computer Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* A single security guard stands outside the airlocks (armed with a rocket rifle). The four programmers are at their stations at the computer.

*Alarm Sounded:* Four security guards (two with laser rifles and two with rocket rifles) stand outside the airlocks on this deck. They wear laser pistols.

The PCs can cause 50 points of damage each to the sensors and to the controls from this deck (using weapons and/or Programming skill).

The PCs' ship is docked at the "B" airlock.

**7. Cargo Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* This deck is empty.

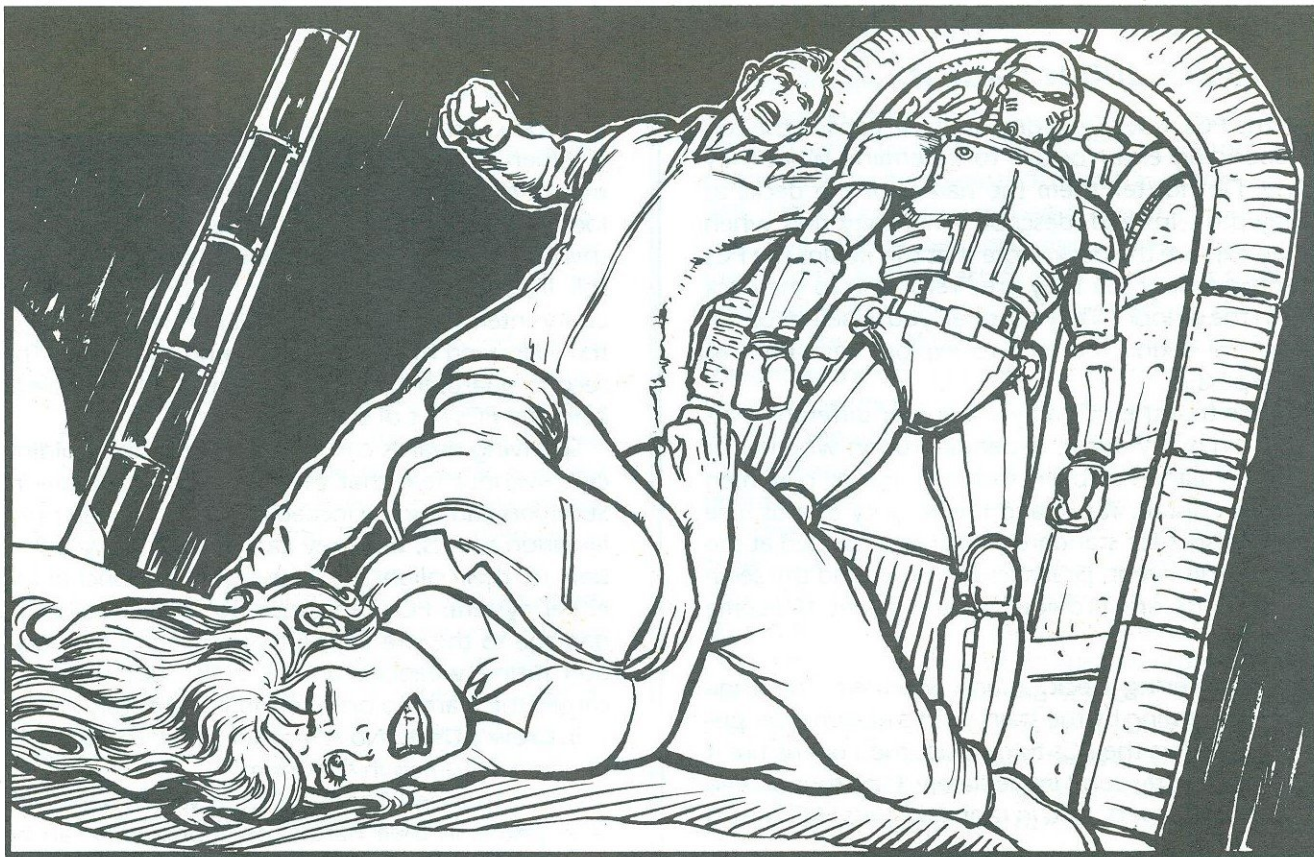
*Alarm Sounded:* One gunner sits inside each gyrojet turret, a laser pistol at his hip. There is no place to lock prisoners on this level.

By firing into the gyrojet ammunition, the PCs can cause 6d100 damage to the hull, but must save vs. explosion or suffer 10d10 damage themselves. If they cause more than 350 points of hull damage from here, any PC on this deck automatically dies.

**8. Galley.** *No Alarm Sounded:* The cook and eight others are lounging here.

*Alarm Sounded:* The galley is empty, but the acceleration and K-cannon gunners and their assistants are at their posts, laser pistols strapped to their hips. There is no place to lock prisoners on this level.

**9. Medical Bay.** Whether or not the alarm has been sounded, the doctor is at his station. He has no weapons, but will sound the alarm if allowed to



stay at his desk for more than a few seconds. He can be detained by strapping him into an infirmary bed. The medical bay has an autosurgery and a drug fabricator.

**10. Command Bridge.** *No Alarm Sounded:* Captain Yasuv is at his station, as are all the other officers and the single security guard. Only the security guard is armed (with a laser rifle).

*Alarm Sounded:* All the officers wear laser pistols. There is no place to lock prisoners on this deck.

The PCs can cause 50 points of damage to the controls from this deck (using weapons only).

**11. Technical Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* The three officers here are unarmed.

*Alarm Sounded:* The three officers on this deck are wearing laser pistols at their hips.

The PCs can cause 25 points of damage to the sensors from this deck (using weapons or skills).

**12. Sensor Array Deck.** *No Alarm Sounded:* The four officers here are unarmed.

*Alarm Sounded:* The four officers on this deck are wearing laser pistols at their hips.

The PCs can cause 25 points of damage to the sensors from this deck (using weapons or skills).

**Bargains and Threats.** Should the PCs manage to seize control of a vital area of the ship, such as life support or the engines, and attempt to coerce Captain Yasuv into freeing them, he readily agrees. However, unless the PCs take precautions to prevent it, he will go back on his word at the first opportunity. Should the PCs appear likely to take over the ship, Yasuv (or another crewmember) activates the irreversible self-destruct sequence and a pleasant female voice begins a sixty-second countdown to vaporization.

**Escape.** After the PCs reach their own ship and leave the *Julius Raurus*, Yasuv orders his men to pursue and open fire on the escapees. Proceed with the next event, Dogfight. However, if any single system aboard the *Julius Raurus* has taken more than 150 points of damage, the crew is unable to respond and the PCs escape with no pursuit. Continue with the events in the next chapter.

## Dogfight

**Setup.** Use this event when the PCs flee the *Julius Raurus* in their own space ship, either right after being contacted by Rutgar.dos or after escaping from the *Julius Raurus's* brig. In either case, the PCs will be starting in close proximity to the medium cruiser. If the PCs were never aboard the *Julius Raurus*, it suddenly moves out from behind the Gwydion asteroid and comes streaking toward the

PCs at full speed. If they escaped from the cruiser, or decided at the last minute to flee from it, they were already in close proximity. Either way, the *Julius Raurus* is within one hex when it opens fire.

**Action.** Assume that both the *Julius Raurus* and the PCs' ship are traveling at a speed of 2 when they begin combat. The PCs' ship can accelerate at one speed factor per round, but the *Julius Raurus* is already traveling at maximum speed. Therefore, assuming the PCs move away from their attackers as fast as possible, the RAM cruiser can fire on the PCs for a total of 4 rounds, at the following ranges:

### The Julius Raurus's Ranges

Round	Range (in hexes)
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	5

The *Julius Raurus* will fire on the PCs' ship with everything it has until the PCs surrender. Note that the PCs should quickly escape the range of some of the RAM cruiser's more destructive weapons, but perhaps not before taking some crippling damage. If they do not, and their ship's hull is reduced to zero, each PC will have to be wearing a space suit or other gear, or reach a pressure tent to survive.

**Pirates to the Rescue.** Just before the PCs' ship is disabled, or just before it is about to escape, a wild rebel yell crackles across the radio. "If you need help, little body, come this way!"

A moment later, three unmarked medium cruisers swoop into sensor range from the port side. Assuming the PCs turn toward the cruisers, they begin firing on the *Julius Raurus* one round later (otherwise, it takes two rounds). The RAM cruiser concentrates its fire on the PCs for one more round. Nevertheless, the *Julius Raurus* is quickly reduced to a heap of slag under the combined firepower of the three unmarked cruisers.

If the PCs' ship is still intact, a cheerful voice crackles over the radio, "Whew-ee! That was closer than having your viewports dusted by Halley's Comet." Proceed with the next chapter.

**Statistics.** RMS *Julius Raurus* (150-ton medium cruiser): Hull points 600; Sensors/commo 150; Controls 150; Life Support 300; Fuel 450; Engine 450.

AC 6; Speed 2; Reaction Bonus 0; AC Defense Bonus: +1.

**Weapons:** 5 beam lasers, 3 gyro cannons, 1 heavy acceleration gun, 1 K-cannon.

## CHAPTER 5: PIRATES

By now the PCs have escaped the *Julius Raurus*, most likely with a little help from a small group of pirates. It is entirely possible that the PCs are presently drifting through space in the disabled hulk of their wrecked ship, their space suits, or even in emergency pressure tents. If so, they have no need to worry. The three unmarked cruisers that came to their aid against the RAM cruiser are more than prepared to come to their rescue again. Unfortunately, as the PCs are about to discover, nothing is free—especially help from pirates.

### Invitation

**Setup.** As the crippled *Julius Raurus* floats powerless through space, two of the unmarked cruisers cautiously approach and secure tow-lines to it. The third unmarked cruiser turns toward the PCs, approaching with its guns pointed politely away. Like the *Julius Raurus*, the unmarked ship is a heavily armed medium cruiser.

**Action.** If the PCs are in need of rescue, the unmarked cruiser dispatches a few rough-looking men in rocket belts to retrieve them, then attaches a tow-line to what remains of their ship. If the PCs' ship is still able to move, the unmarked cruiser stops one hex away (unless the PCs indicate that they aren't allowing it to get that close) and asks the party if they need assistance of any sort.

A positive response will bring a suggestion that the two ships dock so that the aid can be rendered. A negative response brings a conversational invitation to join the captain of the unmarked cruiser for dinner. Any suspicion voiced is met by the response that if the PCs' rescuers wished them harm, why would they have bothered to risk their lives against the RAM cruiser in the first place? Requests for identification meet with a wary "all in good time," although the speaker will imply that he is united with the PCs against RAM's cause.

Should the PCs' ship be in position to refuse their rescuer's generous invitation and do so, the other two unmarked cruisers abandon their salvage operations and slowly move toward the party's ship. These two ships start from a distance of eight hexes and close at a rate of one hex per round. All three ships are medium cruisers. At the first sign that the PCs are intending to leave, the unmarked cruiser opens fire on the party's ship, joined by its two sister ships if they are within range. The unmarked cruisers will all give chase for as long as they are able. If the PCs' ship is disabled before they escape,

their "rescuer" repeats his invitation for them to come aboard his ship—with a markedly more forceful tone this time.

On the other hand, if the PCs escape the pirates, they have successfully avoided a major threat to their safety. Shortly after their wise decision, they are contacted by another person with a dangerous invitation for them. In this case, proceed with the event *Evading The Fatal Mistake* at the end of this chapter.

Should the PCs be unable to decline their rescuers' invitation to come aboard his ship, or unwitting enough to accept, the unmarked cruiser docks with their ship, and the PCs are brought aboard the unmarked cruiser. Proceed with the event *The Fatal Mistake*.

**Statistics.** Three unmarked cruisers (150-ton medium cruisers): Hull points 600 each; Sensors/commo 150; Controls 150; Life support 300; Fuel 450; Engine 450.

AC 6; Speed 3; Reaction Bonus 0; AC Defense Bonus +1.

**Weapons:** 5 beam lasers, 3 gyrocannons, 1 heavy acceleration gun, 1 K-cannon.

### The Fatal Mistake

**Setup.** For one reason or another, the PCs are boarding the pirate cruiser *The Fatal Mistake*. Outwardly, its appearance is similar to that of the *Julius Raurus*, save that it has a dull black finish instead of RAM's flashy red markings. Internally, it is spotlessly shined and maintained, a harsh contrast to the unkempt ruffians who man it. Use the same Medium Cruiser map on the large map for *The Fatal Mistake* that was used for the *Julius Raurus*.

**Action.** A huge gennie meets the PCs. Although he has the leathery skin, cupped ears, and slit-like nose of a Terrine, he wears a black leather vest and cutoff knee-length pants instead of RAM's customary uniform. As the PCs board his ship, he smiles a fang-toothed smile and says, "Welcome aboard *The Fatal Mistake*. I'm One-O-O-Two-Seven-Nine-Four-Six-Three, but you can call me Cap—everyone else does."

As soon as the PCs are safely aboard *The Fatal Mistake* and surrounded by his pirates, Cap grins his ugly smile and says, "It's a good thing we came along when we did, wouldn't you say?"

Cap escorts the party up to the galley, attended by six rough-looking pirates. Once there, he has one of his subordinates get the PCs something to

drink, then gets right to the point. "Now, about our payment. We were thinking that we'd let you off light. You give us the schematics to the Krait fighter, and we'll call it even. Deal?"

Cap gladly explains that his spies have told him that the PCs were the last ones to see Matahari alive, and that she had blackmailed a copy of the schematics to the new Krait fighter out of a design engineer at Hammerhead, Inc. Reasoning that the Krait's cloaking abilities would come in handy to a pirate, he and a couple of other captains threw in together to recover them—and discovered that she had given the plans to the PCs.

Should the PCs ask, Cap denies that Matahari worked for him—though he wishes that she had. From what he has heard, wherever she went, leaks started to spring in RAM's security. Cap doesn't know who she worked for, but doubts that it was any pirate—"If she'd have been working for a pirate," Cap boasts, "it would have been me!"

Cap quickly grows tired of talking about anything other than the Krait schematics. Once again, he demands that the PCs produce the Krait plans. Denying that Matahari gave them the plans will do no good, as Cap merely thinks they are stalling and trying to keep the plans for themselves. If they continue along this line for more than a few minutes, the renegade Terrine has them thrown into the brig, declaring that they've got twelve hours to pay their debt—or they'll paint the airlock (the 25th Century equivalent of walking the plank). In this case, proceed with the event Trial.

On the other hand, if the PCs claim that they don't recall Matahari giving them any Krait schematics, Cap will concede the possibility that she hid them on the PCs. If the PCs will allow him to search their persons and their equipment, he'll consider them guests aboard his ship—instead of prisoners. Proceed with event 5.3.

#### Statistics.

**Average Pirate** (2nd level warrior): Hp 10; AC 10; THACO 19; Str 12; Dex 12; Con 11; Int 10; Wis 9; Cha 9; Tech 10.

**Weapon:** Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

**Career Skills:** Demolitions 10, Maneuver in zero g 40, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Hide in Shadows 20, Open Lock 20.

## 100279463 "Cap"

Cap is rare thing among Terrine gennies: he is ex-

ceptionally intelligent. His extraordinary brainpower did not serve RAM well, however. Realizing that he had been made by a corrupt power in order to exploit a subjugated people for the sole purpose of making a profit, Cap came to consider himself a monster. Hateful of his makers, yet unable to overcome his war-like genetic programming, he turned to a life of piracy, where he could make the most of his natural talents. He is a ruthless, cunning individual with only his own best interests at heart, though he can often be tempted into taking a foolhardy risk for the sole purpose of damaging RAM. He rarely tolerates the sight of Martians, either killing them or having them incarcerated where he won't have to look at them.

**Cap** (6th level Terrine warrior): Hp 36; AC 7; THACO 13; Str 18; Dex 18; Con 14; Int 15; Wis 12; Cha 9; Tech 10.

**Weapon:** Rocket pistol: Dmg 1d10, ROF 3/2, Shots 5, Max Range 400. Melee: two attacks per round with claws, Dmg 1d6 + 5. Initiative Modifier -3.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 40, Leadership 40, Maneuver in zero g 30, Move Silently 40, Notice 30, Repair Weapon 30, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Pilot Rocket 60, Bypass Security 30, Pick Pocket 30.

## Freedom of the Ship

**Setup.** The PCs have agreed to allow Cap and his men to search their ship and possessions. In return, Cap has given them the freedom of his ship—so long as they do not abuse the privilege. Use the map of the Medium Cruiser on the large map for *The Fatal Mistake*.

Generally speaking, *The Fatal Mistake* is kept in immaculate repair. As a Terrine, Cap has a certain amount of inbred military discipline which he exhibits in keeping his ship in the highest state of battle preparedness. On the other hand, as a rebel himself, he is sympathetic to the unruliness of the pirate nature. He allows his crewmembers to express the defiant side of their personalities in their personal habits—so long as this expression doesn't inhibit the functioning of the ship. Consequently, there is an amazing amount of personal liberty aboard the *The Fatal Mistake*. Crewmembers dress in a wide variety of outlandish styles, speak with or without deference to common courtesy as they please, make whatever concessions to personal hygiene that they wish, and so forth.

*Prestige.* Aboard *The Fatal Mistake*, all races and sexes are treated as absolute equals—which is to say that if an individual can earn respect through his fighting prowess, it is shown to him. Otherwise, the individual is treated as a lackey by everybody and anybody—they bully and intimidate them relentlessly. The party members will be treated as equals by the crew, but they will be treated as despised lackeys until they demonstrate their prowess through fighting.

There are only a few rules when fighting for respect aboard *The Fatal Mistake*. First, only melee weapons are allowed, as missile weapons tend to cause too much serious damage to the ship. Second, only one-on-one fighting is allowed. Third, when someone yields voluntarily, it is not permitted to kill him, but the yielder is never allowed to start a fight with the person to whom he yielded. Finally, the loser of the fight is expected to repair any damage that the conflict inflicted on the ship (if the loser is dead, then the winner is responsible for seeing the damage repaired).

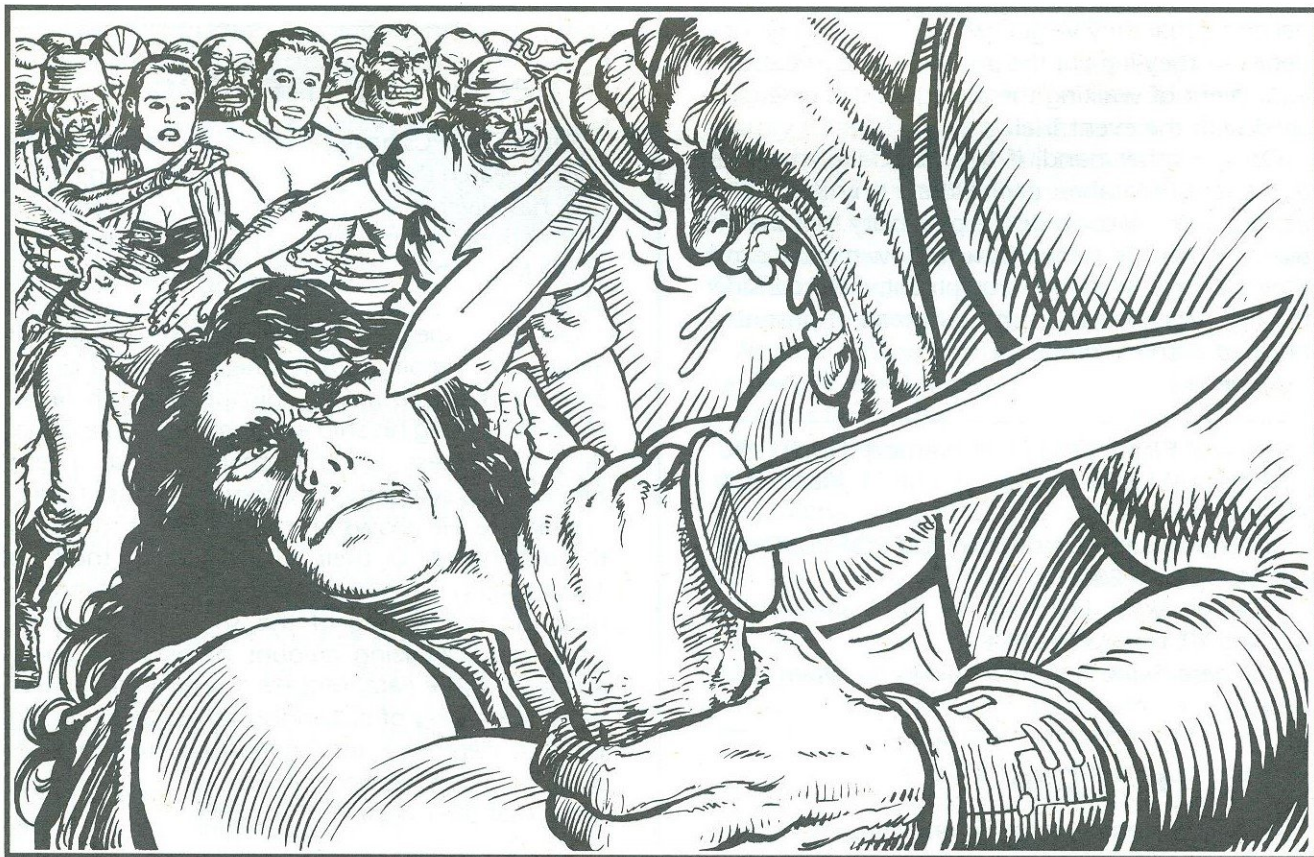
Although no one explains these rules to the party directly, PCs will be told about a rule in no uncertain terms if it appears they are going to violate it. Intentional violation of any rule will land the PC in the

brig, but they are still free to jostle for respect and position among the crew. Injured survivors are taken to the sick bay, where a somewhat muddled and cranky doctor tends to their wounds.

**Action.** While the pirates search their belongings, the PCs may wish to see what they can learn aboard the pirate ship. Consult the list below to see what the PCs find.

## The Decks of *The Fatal Mistake*

**1. Engineering Deck.** Any PC poking his head onto the engineering deck will be told to don a radiation suit and scrub down the reactors. If the PCs don't obey, the chief engineer attacks the smallest one with a monkey wrench. The engineer will submit if reduced to four or fewer hit points. His two assistants will summon help if the other PCs try to interfere with the fight (only one-on-one combat is allowed). If subdued and questioned, the engineer can explain to PCs that the Krait fighter supposedly has the ability to mask its presence for enemy sensors. He also knows that Hammerhead, Inc. is a RAM subsidiary that makes fighter spacecraft.



**Chief Engineer** (4th level engineer): Hp 16; AC 7 (radiation suit); THACO 17; Str 17; Dex 13; Con 15; Int 12; Wis 14; Cha 9; Tech 14.

*Weapon:* Wrench (club); Dmg 1d4 +1.

**2. Security Deck.** Two pirates armed with laser rifles stand guard on this deck. The PCs are not allowed access to it, and the sentries will summon help if the need arises. If the PCs overpower the guards, they can find any type of personal weapon listed in the Technology Book in the armory. However, Cap will have them thrown into the brig unless they escape *The Fatal Mistake* first.

**3. Crew Deck.** Crewmembers of all races and sexes share these quarters. There is a constant game of poker going on at the room's small table. The PCs can find empty bunks next to the sanitary facilities.

**4. Officers' Deck.** Two pirates armed with rocket rifles stand guard on this deck. The PCs are not allowed access to any of the cabins. If they overpower the guards, however, they can find a note in the Captain's Cabin (Cap's cabin) from Valaar (owner of the Last Chance Cantina in Chapter 1) describing the meeting between Matahari and the design engineer from Hammerhead, Inc. They can also find a report from Ardala Valmar suggesting that Hammerhead, Inc. is building a fighter with stealth capabilities, the Krait. Cap will have PCs searching this deck incarcerated in the brig unless they manage to escape *The Fatal Mistake*.

**5. Navigation Deck.** There is nobody at the security station on this deck. The navigator sits at his post, but his assistants sit around the near-space hologram, using the display as a card table. The PCs can join the game, but the Planet Officer is obviously cheating and they will lose every bet until one of them defeats her in personal combat. She will submit if her breathing mask is knocked off her face (intention must be declared and attacker suffers a -4 THACO penalty) or her hit points are reduced to 25%. If one of the PCs defeats the Planet Officer in personal combat, they can learn three things from general conversation:

1) The schematics Cap wants are for a new fighter called the Krait.

2) The Krait is incredibly versatile since it has stealth capabilities.

3) The Krait is manufactured by a RAM subsidiary, Hammerhead, Inc.

**Planet Officer** (5th level Desert Runner rogue): Hp 20; AC 4 (leather armor); THACO 18; Str 14; Dex 18; Con 12; Int 11; Wis 11; Cha 10; Tech 11.

*Weapon:* claws; Dmg 1d6 +1; Initiative Modifier -3.

**6. Computer Deck.** A dozen pirates armed with rocket and laser pistols (6 each) are searching the party's ship, which is attached to Airlock A on this deck. They will not allow the PCs to take the ship without combat. The computer officer does not allow the PCs access to his computer unless defeated in personal combat. He submits when reduced to 25% of his normal hit points. If the PCs gain access to the computer, Cap uses the ship's intercom to warn them against harming *The Fatal Mistake*, but will allow them to use the ship's computer (and he is noticeably unconcerned that the PCs have just beaten up his computer officer). Any PC contacting a RAM computer through the ship's computer and passing a Difficult Programming Skill Check can discover several things, depending upon his inquiry:

1) The Krait is a prototype of a stealth fighter currently under development at Hammerhead, Inc., a weapons manufacturing subsidiary of RAM.

2) Hammerhead, Inc.'s director of security is a DP named Rutgar.dos.

3) A woman calling herself by several aliases, Amandi and Matahari among them, has been trying to penetrate Hammerhead's security since it began work on the Krait.

4) There are several theories as to Amandi/Matahari's affiliation. She could be a corporate spy, NEO operative, Mercurian or Venusian spy, independent information broker, or pirate informant.

**Computer Officer** (4th level Tinker rogue): Hp 16; AC 0 (smart clothes + Dex bonus); THACO 19; Str 9; Dex 18; Con 18; Int 14; Wis 13; Cha 12; Tech 15.

*Weapon:* Mono knife; Dmg 1d6; Initiative Modifier -3.

**7. Cargo Hold.** This deck contains all sorts of valuable cargo stolen from RAM ships: rare metal ores (some of them radioactive), gravitol supplies, expensive clothing, computer parts, etc.

**8. Galley.** A dozen pirates lounge here, playing cards, reading, and talking. Any PC who has not won three or more fights while aboard *The Fatal Mistake* is treated as a lackey, being ordered to fetch drinks, clean tables, etc. Individual PCs will continue

to be treated as such until they individually defeat three of the pirates here in melee combat. Bets will be taken on the winners of such contests. Use average pirate statistics for these fights.

**9. Medical Bay.** Except for the doctor, the only pirates here will be those injured by the PCs in fights while aboard ship. The medical bay is equipped with a full autosurgery and drug fabricator. The somewhat-muddled doctor treats anybody who is brought to him. His medical skills include: Treat Critical Wounds 25, Treat Serious Wounds 50, Treat Light Wounds 50, Diagnose 25, Treat Disease 25, Treat Poisoning 25, Treat Stun/Paralysis 25. The good doctor is not interested in fighting to earn respect—the threat of not dispensing medical treatment to those who have crossed him earns him respect enough.

**10. Command Bridge.** Most of the time, Cap is here with a full complement of support officers. If any PC is foolish enough to challenge him in personal combat, Cap is more than happy to oblige. He will never submit, and rarely allows his opponent to escape with his life. Under no circumstances will Cap say more about the schematics except that he wants them.

**11. Technical Deck.** The three officers on this deck are on duty and tell the PCs to go back below. If the party does not, they summon help.

**12. Sensor Access Deck.** This deck is empty.

Any PC defeating the Chief Engineer on the Engineering Deck, the Planet Officer on the Navigation Deck, and the Tinker rogue on the Computer Deck is invited to join the Black Brotherhood. Membership in this select group entitles him to sit on *The Fatal Mistake's* council, an advisory board with a certain amount of influence over Cap. See the event Trial to learn more about the council.

**Statistics.** Statistics for average pirates and Cap have been presented in earlier events.

## Spies?

**Setup.** Use this event only if the party has been given free run of *The Fatal Mistake*. While searching the PCs' ship for the Krait schematics, the pirates discover a program implanted in the computer to keep track of the party's whereabouts. The skittish pirates immediately suspect that the possibility of stealing the Krait schematics is nothing more than a clever subterfuge designed to lure them into a trap. They figure that the PCs are RAM spies sent to reveal their location at an inopportune moment. Cap has designed an elaborate trap to put this theory to the test.

**Action.** A worried-looking messenger tracks

down the PCs and asks if any of them are skilled in communications and jammer operations. A RAM fleet has suddenly appeared in the vicinity, he explains, and the ship is short handed. Unfortunately, the communications and jammer officers got into a fight and both are now too injured to take their posts. Cap was hoping the PCs would fill in for the missing men.

Assuming the PCs agree, two of them are escorted to the Technical Deck, and the others are assigned to man laser turrets on the computer and officer's deck. Over the ship's intercom, the copilot starts announcing periodic reports of the fleet's proximity, and it seems apparent that the fleet is coming straight for the pirate cruiser.

A few moments later, the PC acting as communications officer intercepts a radio message from a RAM scout cruiser reporting that he has sighted the *The Fatal Mistake*. At this point, the jamming officer must make an instantaneous decision: he can jam the scout cruiser's transmission, but doing so will reveal the pirates' position. Or he can simply wait for the order to jam, which has not come yet. Make this choice clear to the player, since what he does is being closely watched by Cap.

No matter what the PC does, Cap orders the K-cannon to fire, then the copilot reports that the scout has been destroyed. Cap has the pilot duck behind a nearby asteroid, and a few minutes later the PC acting as communications officer begins intercepting messages from the RAM cruiser requesting another report from the destroyed scout cruiser.

**The Test.** There is no RAM fleet. This whole scenario is actually just an elaborate simulation being conducted by the computer officers to see if the PCs would betray *The Fatal Mistake* if given the chance. The PC acting as communications officer can sneak a report to the RAM fleet if he wishes, and the PC acting as jamming officer has already had an opportunity to "accidentally" reveal the pirate cruiser's position. Should either PC take the bait, the pirates will be convinced that the entire party is nothing but RAM infiltrators. A dozen pirates armed with rocket rifles appear near each group of player characters and escort them to the brig, calling them filthy RAM drudges. In this case, continue with the event The Brig.

On the other hand, if the PCs do not fall into the trap, Cap calls off the exercise and congratulates them for their good judgement. He explains about finding the tracking program in the PCs' ship and how that led them to believe they might be spies. Cap apologizes for doubting them, but, he explains, paranoia pays in the pirate business.

With a little help from Cap's computer officer, the PCs can establish that the tracking program was probably slipped into their computer back on Gateway Station.

**Statistics.** Average pirate statistics are given earlier in this chapter.

## Trial

**Setup.** Eventually, Cap grows weary of looking for the Krait schematics. Whether the PCs are his guests or his prisoners, he has them brought to the galley. There, the motley advisory council of *The Fatal Mistake* is sitting in session.

The tables and chairs have been arranged as if the room is a courtroom, and the galley is crowded with rowdy spectators. Behind the "bench" sits Cap. To his right sit the Chief Engineer and the Computer Officer, and to his left sits the Planet Officer.

**Action.** The PCs are led to the center of the room. "The council of *The Last Mistake* has been called to consider the matter of your continued failure to pay for your rescue from the RAM medium cruiser *Julius Raurus*," Cap announces.

It is possible that in the event Freedom of the Ship, one of the PCs was offered membership in the Black Brotherhood and earned a place on the council. If so, a demand to be on the council will be honored and he will be seated with the Planet Officer.

In a legalistic fashion, Cap proceeds to read the charges against the players, specifically that they "accepted aid from the Black Brotherhood and have failed to pay the price." At this point, the PCs have an opportunity to speak in their own defense. Unless one of them is seated on the council, however, nothing they say will make any difference—even pointing out that it is not their fault they can't find the schematics. After hearing them out, Cap makes a big show of consulting with the three pirates seated around him, then announces his findings. Unless the party reveals the location of the Krait schematics within four hours, they will "paint the airlock." Cap then orders them to be incarcerated, and twelve pirates armed with rocket rifles escort the PCs to the security deck and lock them in the brig. Continue with the event The Brig.

Should one of the PCs be a member of the council, however, he may attempt to use a Fast Talk/Convince Skill Check on the council members to convince them that PCs are not to blame. If the PCs failed the test of loyalty in the event Spies, this will be an Impossible Fast Talk/Convince Skill Check. If the party was not tested, this will be a Difficult Fast Talk/Convince Skill Check. Finally, if the party

passed the test, this is an Average Fast Talk/Convince Skill Check.

A failed check lands the entire party in the brig, the same as if none of them were sitting on the council. In this case, continue with the event The Brig. A passed check indicates that the PC convinces the councilmen that since the matter was beyond the party's control, they should not be held accountable. The council recommends to Cap that the party be released, and the infuriated Terrine reluctantly agrees to do so. The PCs are free to take their ship and leave—and Cap's angry attitude suggests that they would be wise to do so. Now continue with the event Evading *The Fatal Mistake*.

**Statistics.** All of the pirates likely to be encountered during this event, such as Cap, the Chief Engineer, Computer Officer, and Planet Officer, as well as those for average pirates have been presented earlier in this chapter.

## The Brig

**Setup.** The PCs have been shut into *The Fatal Mistake's* brig. It is a foul-smelling, sweltering place with poor ventilation. The entire party is crammed into one cell with no chairs or beds. The walls and floor are stained with the filth of hundreds of previous occupants. There are no guards posted outside the cell, but pirates travel to and from the security office every few minutes. One thing that the PCs should realize is that, in their haste, the pirate guards did not take anything but their weapons away from them—other concealable items went unnoticed and the PCs still have them.

**Action.** As the party members await their fate, or prepare to escape, a lone pirate approaches their cell. Without saying a word, he tosses a small cube through the bars, then turns and leaves.

Instantly, the hologram of a statuesque Martian beauty appears. She looks the PCs over with a smirk, then says, "I see that I discovered your whereabouts just in time. Cap's not a merciful gennie."

The woman is the lovely but sinister Ardala Valmar. Not bothering to introduce herself, and avoiding the question if she is asked, Ardala then proceeds with her proposition. It has recently come to her attention that the PCs are in possession of certain information relating to Hammerhead, Inc.'s new stealth fighter. If the PCs will agree to turn that information over to her, she will arrange their escape from *The Fatal Mistake*. Should the PCs demand a price in currency as well, she will agree to immediately transfer up to 50,000cr to a numbered account in the Firste Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle, GB,

with another 50,000cr to follow upon delivery.

Should the PCs suggest that they don't have the schematics, Ardala merely laughs, replying that her information is beyond doubt. She suggests that the PCs simply don't know where to look. As an artful, experienced professional, she assures the PCs that she can find what everybody else has missed.

Ardala gives the PCs five minutes to discuss her proposition. At the end of that time, her representative aboard *The Fatal Mistake*, a common pirate, will return and ask their answer. If it is positive, the representative will take them back to their ship, arranging to keep Cap and his crew occupied while they make good their escape. If the answer is negative, Ardala wishes them a happy everafter. Her hologram fades, and a puff of smoke comes from the cube as it self-destructs.

The pirate who threw the cube into the cell returns five minutes later. If the PCs don't agree to Ardala's proposition, continue with the event Turn Down. If they do agree to her proposition, proceed with the event Escape from *The Fatal Mistake*.

## Turn Down

**Setup.** For some reason, the PCs have decided

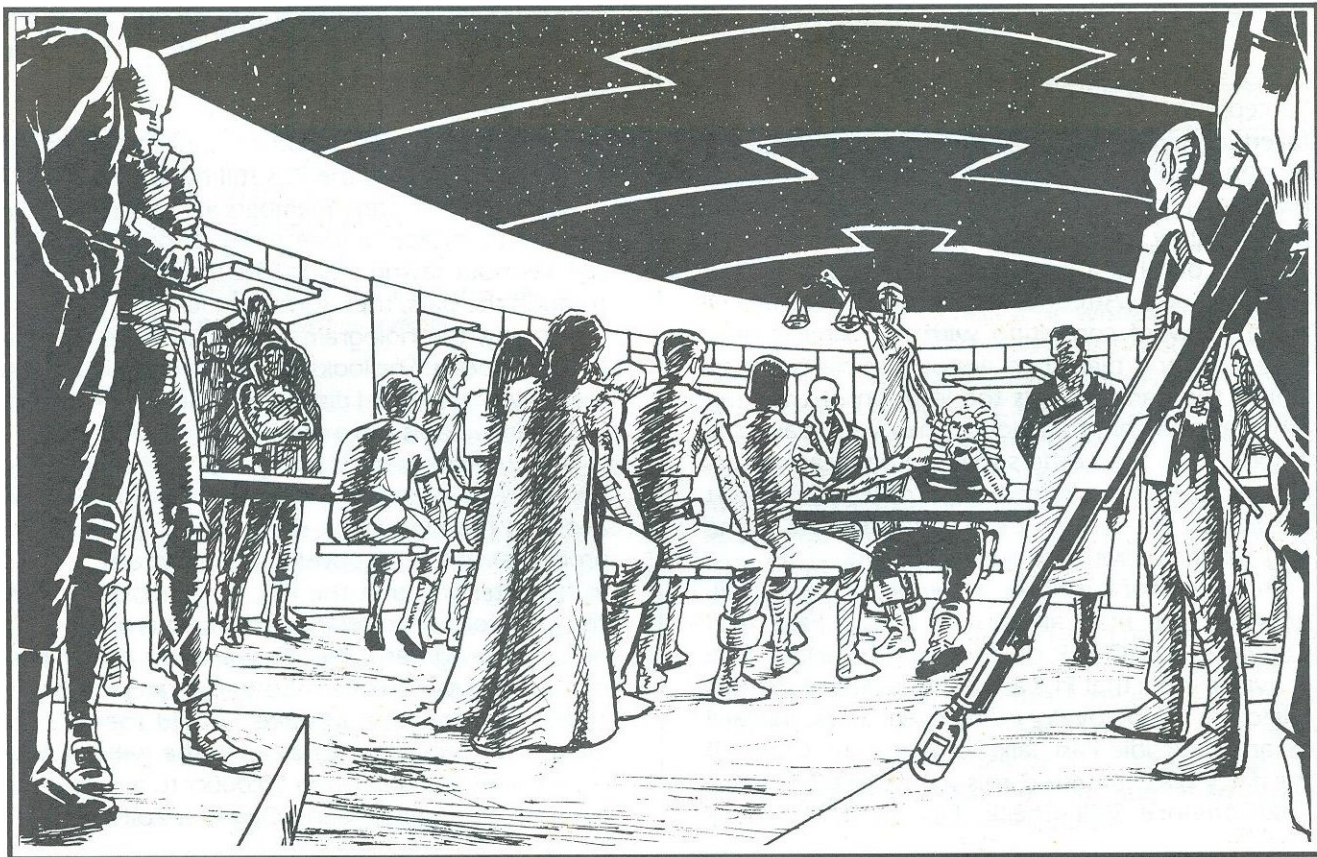
not to accept Ardala's offer.

**Action.** The pirate who dropped the holo-cube into the PCs' cell returns and asks their response. When they party tells him they're not interested in Ardala's offer, he raises an eyebrow and asks, "You're sure?"

Should the PCs change their minds, continue with the event Escape from *The Fatal Mistake*. However, assuming the answer remains negative, the pirate simply shrugs and walks away. The PCs never hear from him again.

If the PCs are to escape, they must do it on their own. Their options are simple: pick the magnetic lock or make their break when the pirates get them to "paint the airlock." The PCs can fake all the illnesses and fights they want inside their cell; the pirates won't open it up. It matters little to them if the PCs die before they are executed in the airlock. Fortunately for the PCs, as they have already noticed, when the pirates put them into the brig, they didn't bother to take away anything but the party's weapons (concealed or otherwise). If one of them happened to be in possession of a lock-picking kit, he still has it. In this case, it requires only an Average Open Locks Skill Check to pick the lock.

In this case, refer to The Decks of The Fatal Mis-



take presented in the event Freedom of the Ship to improvise what the PCs find on each deck. Note that anybody they meet will draw a laser or rocket pistol and try to kill them.

On the Computer Deck, there will be only one average pirate guarding their ship. After overpowering him, the PCs may take their ship and leave. Because the pirates were preparing to convert the PCs' ship to a pirate scout vessel, any damage it has previously taken is now fully repaired. Unfortunately, two rounds after the PCs leave, *The Fatal Mistake* opens fire with everything it has. If the party's ship is disabled, this time the pirates abandon the PCs to a slow and agonizing death.

Aside from picking the locks, the party's only other ready means of escape is to attack when the pirates fetch them to "paint the airlock." Unfortunately, this will prove to be a difficult task. Cap himself leads an escort of six average pirates to collect the PCs. They will not hesitate to open fire if the party tries to fight or flee. The party takes the PCs straight to an airlock, where the rest of the pirate crew has gathered to watch, and shuts them inside without the benefit of space suit or smart suit. The last thing the PCs hear is the slow hiss of air escaping into the cold vacuum of space, their last sight the satisfied revelry of a dozen savage pirates and Cap's fanged grin.

If the PCs escape the unpleasant fate the pirates had planned for them, proceed with the event Evading The Fatal Mistake.

**Statistics.** Statistics for Cap and for average pirates have been presented earlier in this chapter.

## Escape from The Fatal Mistake

**Setup.** The PCs have agreed to Ardala's proposition. Her man aboard *The Fatal Mistake* has programmed a little diversion into the ship's computer/sensor interface, so the PCs will have an easy time of leaving.

**Action.** The pirate who dropped the holo-cube into the PCs' cell returns and asks them their decision. When they respond positively, he nods and says, "I thought as much. Wait just a minute."

He stands outside the cell for several seconds, then a klaxon horn begins blaring throughout the ship. Over the intercom, Cap's voice calls, "Battle Stations!" Ardala's pirate opens the cell from the outside, then gives the PCs back their personal items. "You'll find your ship unguarded. By the time you reach it, you won't have to worry about being fired upon from *The Fatal Mistake*."

He has them wait another 20 seconds, then turns and disappears down toward the Engineering Deck. Assuming the PCs go directly to their ship, they meet nobody on the way (everybody has gone to battle stations). At their ship, they find that the pirate was as good as his word. The corridor on the Computer Deck leading to the airlock is completely unguarded, as is their ship. Any damage previously suffered by their ship has been completely repaired, as the pirates were preparing to convert it into one of their own scouting ships.

As they prepare to launch, *The Fatal Mistake* loses all power and goes completely dark—again, thanks to Ardala's spy. They have seven rounds in which to make their getaway. After that, *The Fatal Mistake* opens fire on them. Once the PCs have escaped the pirates, proceed with the next chapter.

**Statistics.** Ardala's man is an average pirate, as listed in the event The Fatal Mistake.

## Evading The Fatal Mistake

**Setup.** Use this event if the PCs escape the pirates without Ardala's help or her spy's disruption of the pirate ship. They are in their ship, out of range of pirate attack, and presumably preparing to resume their journey to Jupiter's moons on Professor Jarlshorf's behalf. It does not matter if they are not pursuing Jarlshorf's mission, as long as they have just avoided or escaped the pirates and are not out of immediate danger.

**Action.** Princess Ardala contacts the PCs via video-radio and congratulates them on avoiding an entanglement with the "untrustworthy" pirates. Whether or not she has contacted the PCs before, she offers them 100,000cr for the Krait schematics.

Should the PCs still not realize the situation they have been placed in, Ardala explains that it is common knowledge in the Solar System espionage networks that Matahari, who might or might not be an independent information broker, NEO spy, or pirate agent, planted the schematics of Hammerhead, Inc.'s new stealth fighter on them. Probably, she hid the information in a place and form that nobody else would think of looking. Ardala would simply like to recover that information, paying the PCs well for the troubles they have had to endure, and simultaneously removing the source of all their troubles.

If the PCs don't agree to sell the plans, Ardala huffily tells them that they are fools, then ends the communication. Continue with Chapter 7. On the other hand, if the PCs express an interest in Ardala's offer, she tells them that she will contact them in a few hours with meeting details. Continue with Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6: THE CHARMS OF ARDALA VALMAR

In one way or another, the PCs have extricated themselves from the clutches of 100279463 and his pirates. Unbeknownst to them, however, they have made an agreement with a much more dangerous and cunning force—Princess Ardala.

### Docking Coordinates

**Setup.** A few hours after they have parted ways with the pirates, the PCs are contacted via video-radio by someone who appears to be Ardala. The image on the video screen has the dark hair and statuesque features of Ardala Valmar, and speaks with the beautiful Martian's voice. At first glance, there is no way for the PCs to tell the difference between the image and the true Ardala. Rutgar.dos intercepted the transmission in which Ardala and the PCs made their arrangement, and he is now electronically impersonating her in an attempt to lure the PCs back into his clutches.

**Action.** "Ardala" congratulates the PCs on escaping the pirates, then says that she will meet them in the *Princess of Mars*, her luxury yacht, just off 165 Loreley. She openly flirts with the most charismatic male PC, promising him a good time if he cares to stop by her "Pleasure Palace."

Clever PCs may notice that this "Ardala" is willing to reveal a lot more information about herself than she was during the first meeting. If asked, Rutgar.dos's impersonation will even state her name to be Ardala Valmar and explain to the PCs that she is a trader in black-market information. Any PC who notes the discrepancy between "Ardala's" openness during this communication and her caution during the first contact is entitled to an Average Notice Skill Check. A successful check indicates the character realizes he is talking to an imposter. A failed check results in noticing that she is wearing the same dress as the first time she contacted them.

Even if the PCs do not note the difference in behavior, there are still several things that might tip them off that "Ardala" is not who she appears to be. A computer inquiry into the ownership of the *Princess of Mars* reveals that it is a modified scout cruiser owned by Ardala Valmar of Coprates. This information may prove useful in helping the PCs to avoid Rutgar.dos's planned ambush. If the PCs attempt to renegotiate the terms of their contract, they may find "Ardala" a little *too* willing to increase the price. A computer or radio inquiry re-

garding Loreley or its facilities will alert them to the fact that it is a RAM base—rather an odd place to conduct a shady business transaction. Finally, an Average Programming Skill Check will reveal that Ardala's image is being digitally generated.

If the PCs go to Loreley to meet "Ardala," proceed with the event Ambush. If they decide that they are speaking to an imposter, or decide not to go to the rendezvous for some other reason, continue with the event The Real Ardala.

### Ambush

**Setup.** Rutgar.dos has lured the party into an ambush. As the party approaches the coordinates they were given, they enter a clump of moonlets held in the area by Loreley's weak gravitational field. This is a field of boulders between 100 and 500 yards in diameter. A lone pleasure yacht with the words "Princess of Mars" painted on the bow awaits the party in the field.

**Action.** As the party approaches, Rutgar.dos contacts them via vid-radio. Again, he has assumed the image of Ardala. "Ardala" welcomes the PCs to the Loreley Moonlet Field, then tells them to dock with the *Princess*. If any PC brings up the fact that the *Princess of Mars* is registered as a scout cruiser and not a pleasure yacht, Rutgar.dos tries to cover by having Ardala's image say that she just traded her "clunky old scout" for a sleek pleasure yacht.

If the PCs turn and run now, they escape the ambush—Rutgar.dos and his ships cannot catch them. Should the party go forward into the Loreley Moonlet Field, the pilot must make an Average Pilot Rocket Skill Check in order to avoid all the crazily-moving boulders. Failure indicates a collision inflicting 1d10 x 5 points of hull damage.

**Dogfight.** Should the PCs decide to flee any time after the Pilot makes his Pilot Rocket Skill Check, four scout cruisers that have been hiding behind boulders ambush them as they leave the field. The scout cruisers are just as fast as the PCs' ship (assuming they are flying the *Intrepid Pedagogue*), so they have only two choices: fight, or run back into the Loreley Moonlet Field. The number of rounds it takes to run the field depends on the speed the pilot chooses, as does the difficulty of his Pilot Rocket Skill Check.

## Running the Loreley Moonlet Field

Ship	Rounds	Difficulty of
Speed	to cross	Skill Check
5	1	Collision automatic
4	2	Impossible
3	3	Difficult
2	4	Average
1	5	Easy

The pilot must make the appropriate skill check each round he is in the asteroid field. A failed check indicates a collision with one of Loreley's moonlets. Collisions cause 1d10 x 5 points of damage each (and knock the boulder out of the vicinity). Rutgar.dos's ships run the field at speed two, successfully avoiding any collisions. If the party runs the field at speed two or slower, they suffer attacks from all four of the enemy scout cruisers, and must still battle them when they emerge on the far side of the moonlet field. Assuming they survive the run and emerge on the other side at a speed of three or greater, the party evades Rutgar.dos's ambush. Continue with the event The Real Ardala.

**Surprise.** Assuming the party docks with the pleasure yacht, as soon as the airlock opens, a man's voice calls, "Ardala Valmar bids you welcome. Please come aboard." The speaker is nowhere in sight.

Like that of the *Intrepid Pedagogue*, the pleasure yacht's airlock is located on the cargo deck. Use the map of the *Pedagogue's* cargo deck for the coming conflict. Several modified Terrines (one for each PC) are hiding out of sight behind large boxes. As soon as the last PC steps out of the airlock, they show themselves and order the PCs to stand still and raise their hands. If the PCs do not comply, the Terrines open fire with their laser pistols. PCs may retreat back to their own ship at the rate of one per round.

Should cautious PCs refuse to come through the airlock, the first Terrine attacks upon stepping into the PCs' ship, attempting to seize control of the airlock and hold it until help arrives. More Terrines arrive at the rate of one per round, until a number equal to the PCs has arrived. They attempt to capture (or kill, if necessary) the PCs.

Captured PCs will be taken back to Mars for further interrogation and examination. See Appendix 2 for suggestions on how to handle events in this case. PCs eluding capture will be attacked by the four scout cruisers lurking at the edge of the moonlet field. Run the resulting combat as outlined under "Dogfight" earlier in this event.

## Statistics.

**Modified Terrines** (3rd level warriors): hp 18; AC 7 (natural armor); THACO 18; Str 13; Dex 13; Con 13; Int 9; Wis 10; Cha 8; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Laser pistols, Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 20, Demolitions 30, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Repair Weapon 20, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Move Silently 30, Planetary Survival 30.

**Pleasure Yacht** (30 ton yacht): Hull 120; Sensors/commo 30; Controls 30; Life Support 60; Fuel 90; Engine 90; AC 8; Speed 4; Reaction Bonus -1; AC Defense Bonus -2.

**Weapons:** 2 missile mounts, 1 beam laser.

**Scout Cruisers** (four 40 ton scout cruisers): Hull 160; Sensors/commo 40; Controls 40; Life Support 80; Fuel 120; Engine 120; AC 6; Speed 4; Reaction Bonus -1; AC Defense Bonus -2.

**Weapons:** Heavy acceleration gun, gyrocanon, beam laser.

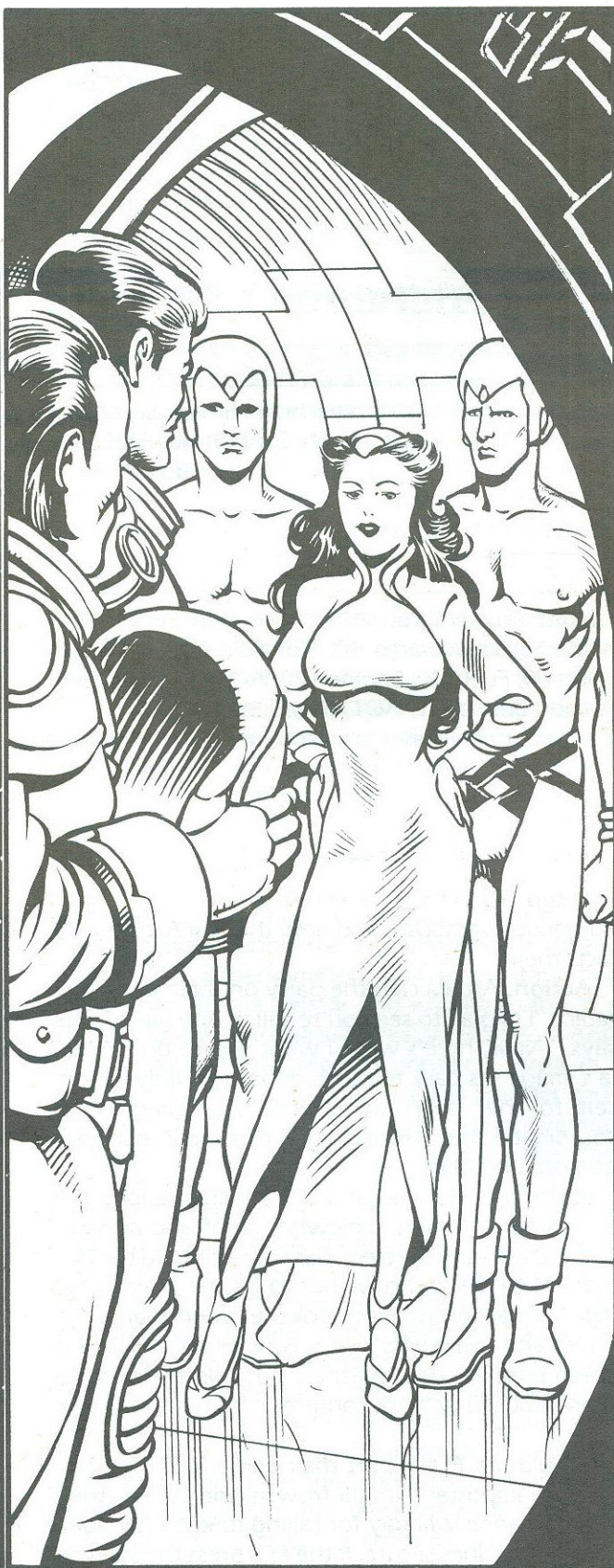
## The Real Ardala

**Setup.** The PCs have either avoided or escaped Rutgar.dos's ambush, and now the real Ardala contacts them.

**Action.** Ardala calls the party on their ship's vid-radio. "I'm glad to see you're still in one piece," she says. "Now, here's what I want you to do." Ardala's image sits back to relax, grinning mildly to herself for her own cleverness. She gives them coordinates that will take them to a small space station orbiting Mars.

In contrast to Rutgar.dos's impersonation, the true Ardala remains somewhat aloof and mysterious, still refusing to reveal her name. Should the PCs indicate that they know her to be the famous Ardala Valmar, information broker extraordinaire, she smiles and comments that it is nice to know she is doing business with partners who do their homework, but still will not confirm or deny their speculations.

Should the PCs report their earlier conversation with an imposter, Ardala frowns and curses, then says someone will pay for failing to keep her communication lines secure. If the PCs press the subject,



she speculates that the imposter was that "slimy DP Rutgar.dos." Ardala can tell the PCs that Rutgar.dos is the security chief at Hammerhead, Inc. She has had dealings with him before and knows him to be a treacherous entity.

If the PCs complain about her choice of meeting locations, Ardala smiles and says that she chose it precisely because nobody will think to look for the PCs in RAM's shadow. She assures them that they will be quite safe in her protection. If the PCs refuse to go to the base, she shrugs and notes that she hasn't transferred the first part of their payment to Firste Luna. If they wish to cancel the deal—and spend the rest of their lives running from every espionage network in the system—that is their business. Should they ignore her warnings and refuse to go to the Mars station, proceed with the next chapter.

Any PC making an Easy Programming Skill Check can use the computer to confirm that this Ardala is genuine.

## Ardala in Person

**Setup.** Ardala wants to keep her meeting with the PCs secret and would rather not reveal her identity to them. Therefore, she has arranged to meet the party in a small genetics laboratory orbiting Mars that she sometimes leases for special projects. The station is presented on the large map as Ardala's Orbital Base.

One of the old, spinning wheel-type stations, the orbital laboratory is a stark contrast to Ardala's normally flashy style. The metal is tarnished with age and blotched with scorch marks from rocket-exhaust. Hanging high above the red soils of Mars and spinning at an almost torpid pace, the station appears a lonely and foreboding place.

**Action.** After the PCs dock, Ardala welcomes them to her station warmly, dressed in an alluring diaphanous gown. If the PCs are obviously carrying weapons and/or space or smart suit helmets, she asks them to leave their "tools" aboard their own ship (she won't press the issue), then instructs one of her handsome gennie servants to show the party to the guest quarters. Ardala then invites them to meet her in the galley for some refreshments. As the PCs are led through the cramped station, they can observe that it is immaculately clean—almost as if it has been freshly scrubbed down from top to bottom (it has—Ardala's gennies spent the entire day cleaning).

When the PCs go to the galley, Ardala is waiting for them, a crystal goblet filled with a blushing pale liquid in her hand. After the PCs sit, a meagerly-clad male gennie offers to pour them a goblet of the same liquid (Coprates Blush, an expensive and refreshing libation favored by elite RAM executives), then places a tray of delicacies on the table. There are raw, pickled worms the size of man's finger (sand squirmers), a foul-smelling, black paste (rock urchin patê), and yellow, mucous-coated blobs of gray meat sitting in rocky, half-opened shells (dust mollusks). Ardala picks up a sand squirmer, tilts her head back, and drops the thing into her throat. After gulping it down, she smiles wickedly, then invites the PCs to help themselves to whatever they like.

If the PCs describe the mission Professor Jarlshor has asked them to perform, Ardala begins giggling and insists that the PCs tell her all about it. Any character with Fast Talk/Convince skill or an Intelligence score over 14 realizes that Ardala is discreetly pumping the party for information on a wide variety of subjects.

So far, Ardala has tried to avoid revealing her identity. Should the PCs ask her name, she tells them to call her Valerie. If the party has previously demonstrated that they know her identity, however, Ardala will still insist they call her Valerie.

After pumping all the information she can out of the PCs, Ardala turns the conversation to the Krait schematics. If the PCs have not yet told her that they don't know where the fighter plans are, she simply asks them to fulfill their part of the bargain and give them to her.

**Truth or Consequences.** Should the PCs bluff and give her something else as a substitute, Ardala thanks them warmly and asks them to wait in the galley while she fetches the rest of their payment. As soon as she and her gennie servant leave the room, the doors slam shut and lock from the outside. A foul-smelling gas begins to ooze from the ventilation ducts. PCs must immediately save vs. gas or fall unconscious, and must do so every round they remain locked in the galley (unless they happen to be wearing smart or space suits and have their helmets handy).

If all the PCs fall unconscious, they awaken strapped to an examining table in the genetics laboratory. In this case, continue with the event Surgery. Should the PCs manage to retain consciousness long enough to attempt an escape, picking the lock requires a Difficult Open Locks Skill Check. Opening the door by force requires a total of 20 points of damage from any non-melee weapon (such as a laser pistol or heat gun). Outside the galley, Ardala's

gennies are waiting, laser pistols in hand. There will be one gennie for each PC. They attempt to capture the PCs, then take them to the genetics laboratory and strap them onto an examining table. If they succeed, continue with the event Surgery. If they fail and the PCs escape, continue with the event Departure from the Space Station.

**Ardala's Guess.** If the PCs are honest with Ardala and tell her that they don't know the precise location of the Krait schematics, her eyes light up. This sounds to her like an interesting challenge and she attacks the problem with relish. Ardala questions the PCs about every detail of their encounters with Matahari and what has befallen them since. Finally, a self-satisfied smile crosses her lips and she concludes that Matahari must have injected a microchip into one of these charming if dull-witted PCs.

She asks the PCs to come down to the laboratory with her so that she can retrieve the microchip. Should the PCs question her about the process, Ardala admits that there is a small chance that the data will be destroyed in the process of finding and removing the chip from the PC's body. If questioned further about how the data might be destroyed, she reluctantly says that the microchip might be encoded with a security program that will cause it to explode if extracted without the proper password.

Under no circumstances does Ardala directly admit that the extraction could pose any danger to the PCs. If questioned about this aspect of the operation, she smiles confidently (perhaps overconfidently) and assures the PCs that they have nothing to worry about.

If the PCs go to the laboratory and allow Ardala to strap them onto an examining table, proceed with the event Surgery. If the PCs decide to escape, proceed with the event Departure from the Space Station.

### Statistics.

**Ardala's Gennies** (3rd level warriors): hp 21 each; AC 6; THACO 16; Str 18; Dex 18; Con 18; Int 12; Wis 10; Cha 17; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Laser pistol; Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800, Initiative Modifier -3.

**Career Skills:** Maneuver in Zero-G 45, Move Silently 45, Use Rocket Belt 30.

**General Skills:** Drive Jetcar 20, Bypass Security 20, Open Lock 20.

Ardala creates her gennies herself, as one of her hobbies is genetic engineering. She designs them

for maximum physical appeal and capacity, paying much less attention to attributes she considers unnecessary in men—intelligence, wisdom, and technical aptitude.

## Ardala Valmar

A statuesque Martian beauty, Ardala is a cunning and dangerous information broker. She is a ruthless and cold-blooded businesswoman, but is also flamboyant and passionate. Although well-connected with the RAM executive ranks, she is never likely to put the interests of RAM or Mars ahead of her own. She responds warmly to flattery, the more outrageous the better. However, she never lets such cajolery influence her business decisions.

**Ardala Valmar** (8th level rogue): hp 32; AC 7; THAC0 17; Str 13; Dex 12; Con 9; Int 16; Wis 14; Cha 18; Tech 10.

*Weapon:* Mono knife (Dmg 1d6) or laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

*Career Skills:* Bypass Security 35, Climb 20, Fast Talk/Convince 65, Hide in Shadows 30, Move Silently 35, Notice 75, Open Lock 30, Pick Pocket 30.

*General Skills:* Biology 30, Chemistry 40, Physics 30, Distract 20, Etiquette 20, Intimidate 20.

## Surgery

**Setup.** The PCs find themselves in Ardala's laboratory, whether involuntarily or through conscious choice. In contrast to the rest of the station, the laboratory is modern and well-equipped—though with the tools of a genetic engineer instead of a physician. The room is filled with sharp, sparkling knives, glittering pneumatic drills, and twinkling lights and dials. When Ardala enters the room, a fiendish smile crosses her lips and she dons a fashionable white lab coat.

**Action.** If the PCs were brought here unconscious or against their will, they are already lying on an examining table, automatic restraints in place. Otherwise, Ardala asks them to lie on the tables (there are just enough to hold all the PCs). As soon as all the PCs comply, she flips a switch on the wall and a set of automatic restraints snaps into place on each table.

Characters not wishing to be restrained may make a Dexterity check with a -2 penalty. Success indicates that they have leapt off the table just in time to avoid being restrained. Otherwise, they are clamped into place by a set of rigid steel straps. The

straps are too strong for anybody with a strength of less than 20 to break (and even then, a successful ability check with a -12 penalty must be made). Anybody with Acrobatics skill may attempt to slip out of the restraints. Such a feat requires a Difficult Acrobatics Skill Check. The straps may be cut, however, by a mono knife or any type of energy weapon. If a PC happens to have such a weapon on his person, reaching it will require a Dexterity check.

Note that if violence breaks out, Ardala immediately leaves the station and escapes back to Mars. Under no circumstances will she allow herself to be put into any danger at all.

If the party does not escape, Ardala starts operating on the PCs, proceeding from the one with the highest Charisma to the one with the lowest. Without going into all the gruesome details of what she does, any PC subjected to the operation must make a Constitution check or fall unconscious. The PC will stay unconscious until awakened or the event ends.

When Ardala reaches the PC carrying the microchip, she must make a successful Difficult Bypass Security Skill Check. If she fails, the microchip explodes, inflicting 1d12 x 2 points of damage on the unlucky PC. A successful check indicates that she extracts the microchip without triggering its security mechanism. She leaves the room, then orders two of gennies to complete a memory scan on every party member, then to set them free. She then goes to her ship and leaves the station. By the time the gennies enter the laboratory, Ardala is gone. Her plan is to use the information she obtains from the memory scans to blackmail the PCs should such an opportunity arise.

The fact that Ardala has removed the microchip (with or without causing it to explode) does not change the rest of the adventure. Nobody will believe that the PCs have lost the Krait schematics, even if the party reveals what Ardala did to them. Throughout the remainder of the adventure, NPCs operate under the assumption that the PCs are lying about not having the schematics.

Assuming the PCs somehow survive Ardala's laboratory, proceed with event Departure from the Space Station as they make their escape.

**Statistics.** Statistics for Ardala and her gennies have already been presented in the previous event.

## Departure from the Space Station

**Setup.** The PCs have finally come to their senses

and realized that doing business with Ardala is nothing but trouble. As they try to depart, with or without the Krait schematics still in their possession, they discover that it is easier to visit Ardala than to leave her.

**Action.** As soon as trouble breaks out, Ardala disappears and escapes back to Mars. Under no circumstances will she allow herself to be placed in danger.

However, Ardala does not value her gennies so much. They remain behind, trying to kill the player characters in order to prevent them from leaving. The chamber descriptions below will let you to determine what the PCs find as they try to depart the orbiting base.

## Space Station Chambers

**1. Genetics Laboratory.** This room is filled with complicated surgical equipment, much of it for use in working with microscopic subjects. If the PCs are in this room when they initiate their escape, there are two gennie surgical assistants here. They attack with mono-scalpels (treat as mono knives, Dmg 1d6). Otherwise, the room is empty.

**2. Incubation Chamber.** Six partially completed gennies hang suspended in this stifling chamber. They are in various stages of development, none of them complete enough to cause problems for the PCs.

**3. Crew Sanitary Facilities.** A single gennie is just rushing out of the shower. He attacks the PCs with his bare hands.

**4. Crew Dorm.** Four gennies armed with laser pistols are just rushing out of this room when the PCs reach it. They attack immediately. In various lockers, the PCs can find two mono knives, two rocket pistols (5 shots), and a heat gun, (7 shots).

**5. Galley.** The galley and storage area are empty of personnel, although there is plenty of food here.

**6. Exercise Room.** Two gennies are just rushing out of this room when the PCs reach it. They attack, using weight-lifting bars like clubs (Dmg 1d4).

**7. Ardala's Office.** There is nobody in this room, but the computer interface on the desk is activated. From the interface, any character with Programming skill can access Ardala's files for five rounds before she closes them via remote control. During that time, the PC can learn the following items of interest by making an Easy Programming Skill Check (for each one):

1) The name of their hostess was Ardala Valmar, a black-market information broker with family ties to the ruling family of Mars.

2) The schematics that Ardala and everyone else want from the PCs are of a new stealth fighter, the Krait, currently under development by Hammerhead, Inc.

3) Hammerhead, Inc. is a weapons manufacturing subsidiary of RAM.

4) The chief of security at Hammerhead, Inc. is a ruthless DP named Rutgar.dos.

5) The woman who planted the schematics on the PCs, Matahari, was most likely a NEO operative who had blackmailed a weak-willed design engineer into giving her a copy of the plans.

6) Gregor Jarlshorf is a paranoid crackpot university professor with no connection to NEO, Hammerhead, Inc., Matahari, or Ardala. His only unusual connection to RAM is that his first cousin is a powerful executive in charge of the credit approval division.

**8. Ardala's Bedchamber.** Hidden in a safe beneath the bed is 10,000cr in miscellaneous hard currency.

**9. Airlock A.** This airlock opens onto an empty docking portal where Ardala's tiny shuttle was docked. As soon as the PCs step inside, two gennies armed with heat guns step out of the sensor control room, override the safety lock on the airlock door, and attack the party.

**10. Brig.** These cells are empty.

**11. Reactor.** There is nobody in this room. A successful Average Repair Nuclear Engine Skill Check enables a character to cause the space station to self-destruct in 1d10 rounds.

**12. Life Support.** There is nobody in this room. A successful Average Repair Life Support Skill Check enables a character to shut down the station's life support functions.

**13. Engineering.** Two gennies armed with heat guns (Dmg 2d6) are hiding in this cluttered chamber, waiting to ambush the party when they enter Airlock B. If the PCs have already entered Airlock B, they are no longer here.

**14. Communications Room.** This room is cluttered with holographic, video, and radio transmission and receiving equipment. From here, the PCs can contact practically any point in the solar system.

**15. Computer Room.** This room contains a computer with a link to the RAM mainframe.

**16. Sensor Control Room.** Just in case the PCs attempt to escape through Airlock A, two gennies armed with heat guns (Dmg 2d6) are hiding in this equipment-filled room. If the PCs have already entered Airlock A, the gennies are no longer here.

As soon as the PCs return to their own ship, they may seal the airlocks and leave without further

trouble. Proceed with the next event.

**Statistics.** The statistics of Ardala's gennies are listed earlier. Note that some of them may be using different weapons when the PCs meet them in this encounter.

## Parting Shot

**Setup.** The PCs have had the rare privilege of meeting Ardala Valmar in person—and enjoyed the even rarer privilege of emerging from such an encounter with both their honor and lives more or less intact. As they leave the space station, they notice a small shuttle docking with a distant scout cruiser (Ardala returning to her ship, the *Princess of Mars*).

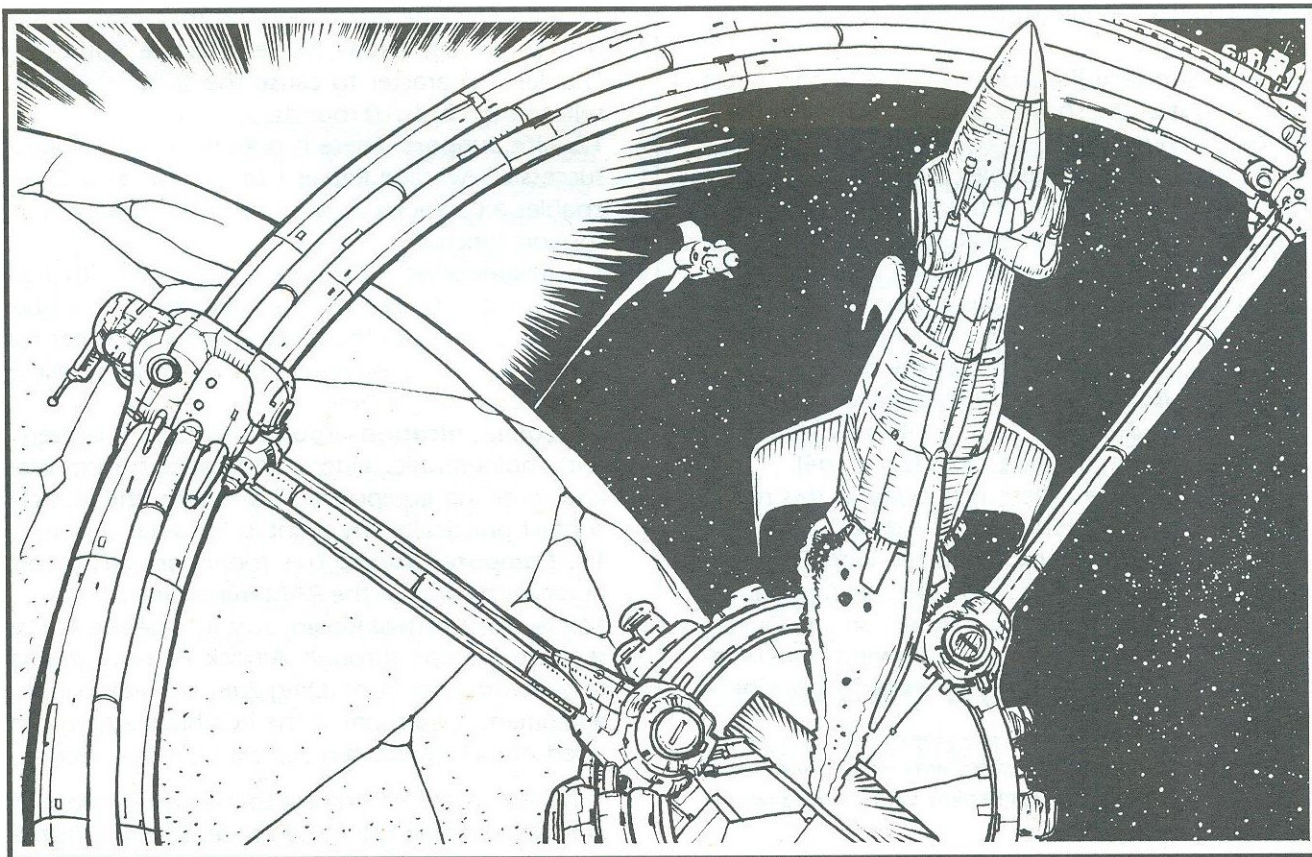
**Action.** Should the party turn to pursue the *Princess of Mars*, Ardala flees. Within moments, a RAM heavy cruiser appears on sensors and she moves quickly to take shelter beneath its wing. In the event the PCs are foolish enough to confront Ardala, show no mercy—they deserve what the RAM ship does to them. Under no circumstances will the PCs be able to convince the captain of the RAM cruiser that Ardala did anything contrary to RAM interests. (Put yourself in the RAM captain's place. If you were

him, would you believe a bunch of ragtag adventurers or the niece of one of the most powerful executives in RAM?)

As the party leaves the vicinity of Mars, their radio crackles to life. "Fools!" Ardala's voice hisses. "Nobody welches on me, so don't think that you've escaped. Wherever you go, I'll be there watching. When I'm ready, I'll collect the debt you owe me. Just remember to keep looking over your shoulder."

Ardala has piggybacked onto her transmission a tracking program that she is attempting to sneak onto the PCs ship. Any character thinking to check for such a devious maneuver may make an East Programming Skill Check. Success indicates that he finds the program and neutralizes it. Failure indicates that Ardala will succeed.

Continue with the next chapter, unless the PCs have lost the Krait schematics to Ardala and are determined to recover them. In this case, see Appendix 3.



## CHAPTER 7: FALSE FLAG

In this chapter, another of the many groups interested in the Krait schematics contacts the PCs. By now, the PCs should understand that Matahari planted a microchip containing the Krait schematics on them, that it's incredibly valuable because the Krait's stealth capabilities promise to revolutionize space combat, and that the microchip has been hidden in the bloodstream of one of the party members. They should also realize that RAM and certain private interests, such as the Black Brotherhood and Ardala Valmar, are extremely interested in recovering the information from them.

It is possible that Ardala has extracted the microchip from a PC's bloodstream in Chapter 6. She may even have inadvertently destroyed during the procedure. If the PCs don't have the microchip, events in this chapter should proceed more or less as outlined below. Should the party deny having the chip, the individuals trying to recover the Krait schematics proceed as if the PCs are lying. It isn't that they think the party is dishonest—it's just that they can't afford to take that chance.

### Word from an Old Acquaintance

**Setup.** Shortly after avoiding the clutches of Ardala Valmar, the PCs are contacted by their employer, Professor Jarlshorf. As his face appears on the vid-radio, it becomes apparent that he is not at all happy. His eyes are bulging with anger, his skin has darkened to a stormy red color, and the scowl on his face could wither a cactus.

**Action.** The professor immediately demands to know why the PCs have not yet left the inner planets. No matter how the party responds, he huffs angrily and tells them "that's no excuse." He then demands that they proceed with their mission immediately. Otherwise, he'll report them to the appropriate regulatory authorities. If questioned about exactly which authorities he intends to consult, the professor bursts forth with the Russo-American Mercantile Board of Contract Guarantees, the Interplanetary Guild of Soldiers of Fortune, the Solar Bureau of Better Business, the NPDL, the CDR, and the PQREP. None of these organizations really exist, for it would be all but impossible to regulate such agreements on a system-wide basis. The good professor is bluffing, since he has no true leverage over the PCs.

Assuming the PCs don't respond too negatively,

Jarlshorf goes on to say that it's just as well that they haven't left yet. He's shipped an extra-system hydro-carbon micro-spectrometer to Six Finger Tool and Manufacturing on Gateway Station. On their way out to Jupiter, he suggests that they should stop by and pick up this revolutionary piece of equipment. By feeding dust samples into this machine, the professor explains, the PCs will be able to detect minuscule traces of extra-solar carbon. A large concentration of such material may indicate proximity to the aliens' ancient landing sight.

Should the PCs actually pick up and try to use this piece of worthless junk, they will detect immense amounts of carbon on any solid surface. Contrary to the professor's claim, the machine cannot tell the difference between intra- and extra-system carbon, since no difference exists.

After the PCs finish speaking to Professor Jarlshorf, continue with the next event.

### Cleopatra

**Setup.** As soon as the party reaches their next destination, a beautiful woman tracks them down. Dressed in a tight-fitting black smart suit (beneath a black space suit), she has silky sable hair, eyes as dark as the interplanetary void, and a deep, sultry voice.

**Action.** The dark, mysterious woman approaches the PCs in a quiet, and preferably dimly lit, place. She introduces herself as Cleopatra, Matahari's sister (there is little family resemblance between the two, but it is possible). Cleopatra explains that she has been sent to recover the item her sister gave to the PCs. Should the PCs show the slightest hesitation about giving it to her, she offers them 50,000cr for the item, which she will arrange to be paid into a numbered account at First Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle, GB. Assuming the PCs bargain, she will go up to 200,000cr, even offering half in advance of delivery, if necessary.

Assuming the PCs question Cleopatra about her identity, she "reluctantly reveals" that, like her sister Matahari, she represents a certain underground organization working to throw off the greedy yoke of RAM. She carefully guides the conversation to leave no doubt in the PCs' minds that she is referring to NEO, though she is careful to maintain a secretive air and never directly mentions that notorious organization.

Assuming that the PCs explain the trouble they will have in delivering the microchip, Cleopatra

frowns, then says, "My, my—Matahari was being careful. You'll have to come to one of our secret bases. No doubt, Dr. Icor has the codeword and can retrieve the microchip without risking anyone's life."

Cleopatra is lying. She is not a representative of NEO, nor is she Matahari's sister. NEO has no Doctor Icor, and the only way she can recover the microchip involves a significant risk to the carrier's life. Unfortunately, the PCs don't have any way of determining this.

It is possible that Ardala extracted the microchip in Chapter 6 (successfully or unsuccessfully). In either case, Cleopatra still asks the PCs to go to the NEO base with her. If they have already given her the microchip, she wants to confirm its contents before transferring the balance of the party's payment to Firste Luna. If not, she wants to have them examined to make sure the right chip was extracted, and to see if it caused any harmful side effects.

If the PCs agree to go with Cleopatra, proceed with the event To Mercury. If the PCs decline Cleopatra's offer, proceed with the event Jumped. If they tell Cleopatra they'd like to think about it, proceed with the event Investigations.

#### Statistics.

### Cleopatra

Cleopatra's true name is Jonni Daz Sikes, and she is hardly a NEO agent. Jonni is a ruthless killer, thief, and con-artist who makes an excellent living selling her services to the highest bidder—which hardly ever includes NEO. A business associate of Killer Kane's, she is sometimes seen in his company at social functions. However, it is doubtful that there is anything romantic between the two. Although they undoubtedly respect each other's skills, Jonni would not trust someone who could kill her so easily.

**Jonni Daz Sikes** (6th level rogue): Hp 30; AC 4 (smart suit); THACO 18; Str 12; Dex 18; Con 15; Int 14; Wis 9; Cha 17; Tech 13; Initiative Bonus -3.

**Weapon:** Heat gun; Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Shots 7, Max Range 60.

**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 40, Climb 15, Fast Talk/Convince 55, Hide in Shadows 40, Move Silently 5, Notice 15, Open Lock 30, Pick Pocket 40.

**General Skills:** Demolitions 40, Pilot Rocket 20, Maneuver in Zero G 40, Memorize 20.

Jonni always wears a smart suit with a space suit backup, an ECM package, a stealth unit, and a security pack.

## Investigations

**Setup.** The PCs have asked Cleopatra for time to consider her offer. Although she appears disappointed, she reluctantly agrees to allow them some time. Cleopatra is careful not to pressure the PCs, but neither does she allow them out of her sight for long. She maintains a constant watch on their ship, their accommodations, and discreetly follows them wherever they go.

It is quite possible the PCs may wish to take this opportunity to investigate Cleopatra's background, or possibly even that of Professor Jarlshorf. What they find is outlined below.

**Action.** As the PCs attend to their business, allow each character with Notice skill to make an Average Notice Skill Check. Success indicates that they notice Cleopatra is keeping a careful eye on them. If confronted, Cleopatra explains that their lives are in constant danger until the Krait plans are turned over to NEO. By keeping a watchful eye on them, she is only protecting NEO's interests and their lives. She will reluctantly agree to stop following the party if the PCs demand it. In this event, she redoubles her efforts, and it requires a Difficult Notice Skill Check to catch her next time.

The best way to investigate Cleopatra's background is to acquire access to a mainframe computer interface. Assuming the PCs are in Gateway Station, Beta Nostrov, or any other legitimate port facility in the asteroid belt, the easiest computer to access is the RAM mainframe, probably from a civic services or information broker's office.

Once access to the RAM mainframe is gained, any PC making an Average Programming Skill Check can learn that RAM has no records on a Cleopatra, although the name fits the general pattern of aliases adopted by female NEO operatives. PCs clever enough to have a video, holograph, or standard picture of Cleopatra scanned into the computer will meet a security block. Any attempt to bypass the block brings an inquiry from the computer as to the PCs' identities and their reason for inquiring about the subject. PCs making a Difficult Programming Skill Check can bypass this security block and learn Cleopatra's true identity. Failure to reply, or an unsuccessful attempt to bypass the security block, results in the computer access being terminated.

Should the PCs somehow manage to penetrate a NEO computer, a Difficult Programming Skill Check reveals that 16 different NEO operatives have used the Cleopatra alias on 136 separate missions. An Impossible Programming Skill Check provides a list of these missions. None of them match the description

of the operation in which the PCs are involved. Any failed skill check, or an attempt to inquire into operations or areas not relevant to Cleopatra, brings an immediate termination of contact.

Asking around Gateway Station, Beta Nostrov, or any other asteroid station yields no new information about Cleopatra. Cleopatra spends most of her time in areas closer to the system's cores of power, and is not a frequent sight among the rough and tumble mining communities of the asteroids.

The RAM mainframe is the only computer on which the PCs can learn about Dr. Jarlshorf. An Easy Programming Skill Check reveals that Gregor Jarlshorf is a paranoid crackpot university professor with no connection to NEO, Hammerhead, Inc., Matahari, Ardala, or Cleopatra. His only unusual connection to RAM is that his first cousin is a powerful executive in charge of credit approval.

If the PCs are on Gateway Station and inquire about Jarlshorf at Six Finger Tool and Manufacturing, the Tinker Mo candidly tells them that the professor is a crackpot with a decaying orbit. Mo helps the professor build his worthless inventions in return for an unlimited supply of credit from Jarlshorf's cousin. He laughs at any suggestion that the professor is involved in anything more nefarious than wasting millions of credits of RAM money on a worthless search for mankind's non-existent alien forebears.

## Jumped

**Setup.** The PCs have decided not to accompany Cleopatra to the NEO base. She will not let them get out of her reach easily, and will have them jumped by her associates as soon as possible.

**Action.** When it becomes completely apparent to Cleopatra that the PCs have no intention of turning the microchip over to her, she leads a group of Mercurian thugs in an ambush on the party. If the PCs did not notice her following them in the event Investigations, or did not ask her to leave them alone when they did, this attack occurs as they start toward their ship (use the Gateway Station or Beta Nostrov maps). In addition to Cleopatra, there are two Mercurian thugs for every player character.

If the PCs did ask Cleopatra to stop following them in the event Investigations, she cannot marshal her forces quite as quickly as normal. She and her thugs will attack in her modified medium cruiser after the PCs have taken off in their ship.

Whether Cleopatra attacks on the ground or in space, the PCs are likely to find themselves hard-pressed. Fortunately for them, a would-be ally ap-

pears after two rounds of battle. Rutgar.dos manifests himself in a holographic image from the nearest projector. If in space, he will appear on a viewscreen. If still on the ground, he will take over an enormous holographic billboard. He offers the PCs a simple deal. If they will agree to give him the microchip with the Krait schematics, he will tip the balance of combat in their favor. Otherwise, he will simply wait and recover it from "the Mercurians."

The PCs may be surprised to hear Rutgar.dos refer to their attackers as Mercurians. If they question him on this point, he explains that the woman they have been referring to as Cleopatra is in fact a mercenary adventurer named Jonni Daz Sikes. According to his records, she is currently in the employ of the Mercurian Sun King Al'ak Bar.

If the PCs agree to Rutgar.dos's terms, he does what he can to use RAM's mainframe to aid the PCs. The type of aid he renders depends upon the particular circumstances of the attack. If the PCs are being attacked before they reach their ship, Rutgar.dos arranges to have its hatches open automatically, to have doors close between the PCs and the Mercurians, to project holographic images of the PCs, or to have a robot-controlled ship buzz over the enemy's heads. At the least, such help will result in a +4 initiative modifier, and at the most it will reduce the enemy's firepower to half its current level. (Use your own judgement to decide what is appropriate in your group's current circumstances).

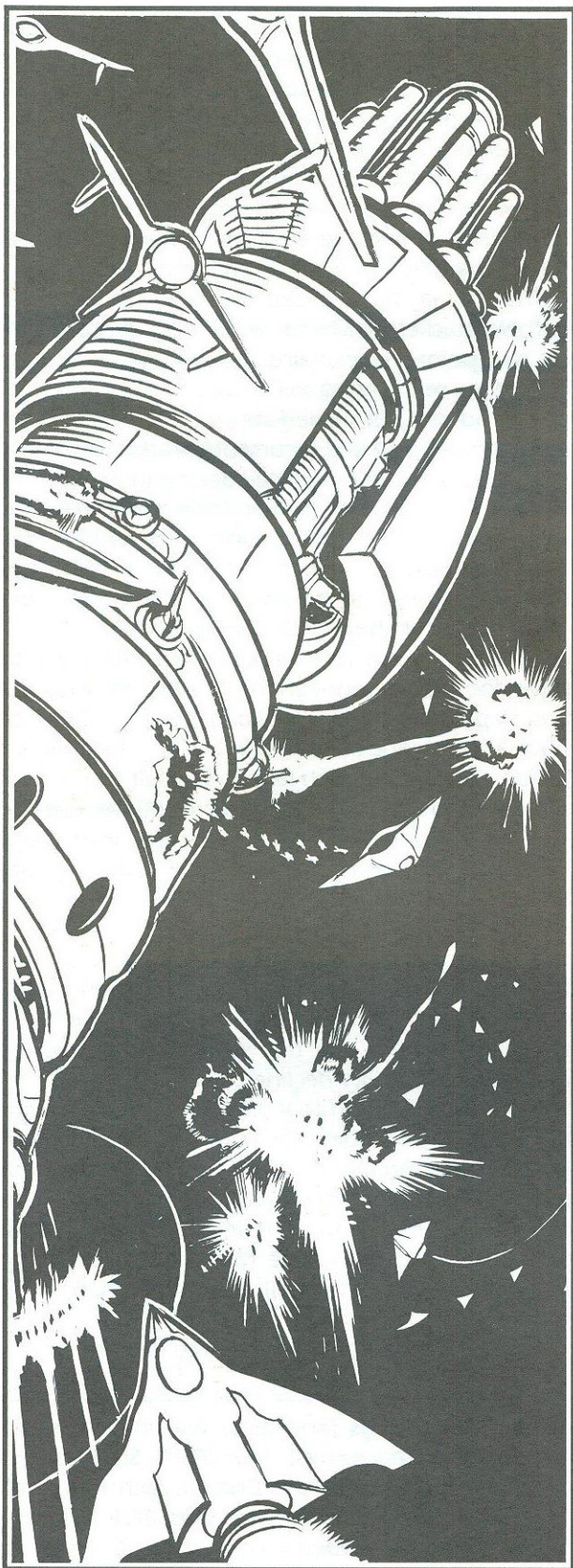
If, on the other hand, the PCs are being attacked ship-to-ship, Rutgar.dos sends a program aboard the enemy ship to confuse its targeting and guidance computers. The PCs automatically have initiative every round, and the enemy cruiser's speed and maneuverability decline by one.

If the PCs accept Rutgar.dos' help, proceed with the event RAM Surgeon as soon as they escape or defeat the Mercurians. If the PCs don't accept Rutgar.dos' help, proceed with the event Chase as soon as they escape from or defeat the Mercurians. Should Cleopatra and the Mercurians defeat the PCs without killing them all, proceed with event To Mercury.

**Statistics.** Cleopatra is presented earlier.

**Mercurian Thugs** (2nd level warriors): Hp 12 each; AC 6 (space suits); THACO 19; Str 12; Dex 14; Con 15; Int 10; Wis 9; Cha 10; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Rocket rifles; Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Shots 10, Max Range 2000.



*Career Skills:* Battle Tactics 20, Demolitions 20, Maneuver in Zero G 30, Repair Weapon 10.

*General Skills:* Drive Jetcar 20, Use Rocket Belt 20.

**Cleopatra's Kiss of the Falcon** (70-ton medium cruiser): Hull points 210; Sensors/commo 70; Controls 70; Life Support 140; Fuel 210; Engine 210; AC 6; Speed 4; Reaction Bonus 0; AC Bonus 0; Weapons: two beam lasers, one pumped laser, two gyrocannons, one light missile mount, one light acceleration gun. Note: In order to increase its speed, the *Kiss of the Falcon* has a lighter hull than most ships of its class.

## RAM Surgeon

**Setup.** The PCs have agreed to give the Krait schematics to Rutgar.dos in exchange for the help he gave them in overcoming Cleopatra and her Mercurians. Whether or not they intend to keep their word (and coincidentally trust Rutgar.dos and his associates with the life of at least one of their number) is the party's business.

**Action.** After the battle ends, Rutgar.dos appears and tells the PCs to go to the hospital in Beta Nostrov and ask for Dr. Jak Sun. Dr. Sun, the DP claims, is an expert in microcomputer implants, and should be able to extract the microchip without risk to the carrier.

If the PCs don't immediately set course for Beta Nostrov, Rutgar.dos reappears and accuses them of going back on their word. He releases a flurry of programs designed to attack the PC's ship systems. The table below describes the programs, their effects, and the level of the Programming Skill Check required to defeat each program which Rutgar.dos unleashes on their ship.

### Rutgar.dos's Revenge

<i>Program Attacks</i>	<i>Effects</i>	<i>Skill check to defeat</i>
Sensors/commo Controls	Sensors blind Reaction Bonus +4 AC Defense Bonus +4	Average Difficult
Life Support	Save vs. Toxic Gas once/hour or fall unconscious	Average
Fuel Engine	Leak 20 hp/hour Speed reduced to 2	Difficult Difficult

If the PCs overcome Rutgar.dos's programs, he will not bother them again for some time. They are free to continue on their way; proceed with the event Chase. If, however, they fail to do so, a RAM heavy cruiser eventually catches up to them. The PCs are escorted aboard, then taken to Beta Nostrov to have the microchip removed.

**Dr. Jak Sun.** After arriving at Beta Nostrov, the PCs have no trouble finding Dr. Jak Sun. He is a bug-eyed gennie with long, delicate fingers and a prehensile, tubular tongue. If the PCs don't know which one of them is carrying the microchip, he shows them each into a megalithic x-ray machine and performs a quick examination, then selects the PC carrying the microchip and shows him into a cluttered surgery.

The surgery is so packed with microscanning equipment that there is barely room for Dr. Sun and the victim—patient, that is. The room is also incredibly unsanitary, with dried blood stains on the surgical table, dust everywhere, and rusty blades in the tool trays.

The room's appearance should give the PCs a clue to the true nature of Dr. Jak Sun's talents. What Rutgar.dos said is true; Dr. Sun is an expert in micro-computer implants, but he is much more interested in theoretical applications than practical. Most of his subjects are animals, and he is rarely interested in the success of his operation beyond the immediate ramifications of whether the microchip does what he expected it to. Therefore, he does not bother keeping a clean operating room.

Assuming the PCs don't flee upon seeing Dr. Jak Sun's operating room, the good doctor straps the PC onto the table. The other PCs will be ushered away and locked out of the room. Then, without applying any anesthetic or pain killer, the doctor begins to operate.

To escape the straps, the PC must make Strength or Dexterity check with a -10 penalty or a Difficult Acrobatics Skill Check. This attempt may be made once per round, but the PC must also make a Constitution check to remain conscious at the end of every round. Once the PC fails this roll, he falls unconscious. If his friends don't intervene to save his life, he is at 1 hp at the end of the surgery, and within 8 hours will reach 0 hp due to massive bleeding. The PC will need immediate medical attention or must be gotten to a life suspension device before the 8 hours are up, otherwise he will die.

PCs outside the surgery room cannot see anything, so must be alerted to their companion's fate before they feel compelled to interfere with the good doctor's work (perhaps by screams of agony).

Once alerted, they must make an Average Open Locks Skill Check to overcome the room's defenses. Although Dr. Sun will protest loudly, he will not attempt to stop the party from rescuing their friend from his clutches. He's a doctor, he explains, not a warrior.

If the party does not interfere with the surgery for ten rounds, Dr. Jak Sun emerges with the microchip intact. Their companion will be lying on the surgery table, bloody, unconscious, and at one hit point (see above for attempts to save the victim). Unless the party stops him, Dr. Jak Sun disappears into the hospital and they never see him again.

On the other hand, any attempt to interfere with Dr. Jak Sun after the surgery results in the arrival of several modified Terrines. The Terrines attack immediately, chasing the PCs all the way back to their ship, if necessary. Whether or not the PCs still have the microchip at the end of this event, proceed with the event Chase when they leave Beta Nostrov.

#### Statistics.

**Dr. Jak Sun** (3rd level Martian medic): Hp 6; AC 6; THACO 20; Str 9; Dex 18; Con 10; Int 17; Wis 6; Cha 9; Tech 17.

*Weapon:* Mono knife (scalpel); Dmg 1d6.

*Skills:* Biology 65, Chemistry 50, Design Engineering 35, Physics 70, Diagnose 70, Repair Electrical 50, Repair Mechanical 65.

**Modified Terrines** (3rd level warriors): Hp 18; AC 7 (natural armor); THACO 18; Str 13; Dex 13; Con 13; Int 9; Wis 10; Cha 8; Tech 11.

*Weapon:* Laser rifles; Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Shots 14, Max Range 3000. Rocket rifles; Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Shots 10, Maximum Range 2000. Half of the Terrines are armed with laser rifles, the other half with rocket rifles.

*Career Skills:* Battle Tactics 20, Demolitions 30, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Repair Weapon 20, Use Rocket Belt 30.

*General Skills:* Move Silently 30, Planetary Survival 30.

## To Mercury

**Setup.** The PCs have decided to accompany Cleopatra to a "NEO Base" in order to have the microchip extracted.

**Action.** Cleopatra invites the PCs to travel with her aboard the *Kiss of the Falcon*. If they refuse,

however, she does not press the issue and suggests that she ride with them on their ship in order to guide them and to transmit the proper clearance codes when they reach the base. She will have her crew follow in her own ship.

No matter which mode of transport the PCs opt for, Cleopatra sets a course for Mercury, explaining that the Sun King Al'ak Bar is a NEO sympathizer and has loaned them a small orbital space station to use as a hospital. The PCs may believe her or not as they wish.

Should the base location arouse PC suspicions, there is nothing to prevent the party from turning around—except Cleopatra and her crew of Mercurian thugs. If they are aboard Cleopatra's ship, they will have to overpower its 20-man crew before turning away. On the other hand, if Cleopatra is aboard the party's ship, her Mercurian thugs fire on the PCs regardless of their mistress's safety—those are her orders. Cleopatra attempts to reach the engineering stations and disable the ship by making an Average Demolitions Skill Check. Under no circumstances will the Mercurians bargain for Cleopatra's life; their ultimate loyalty lies with Al'ak Bar, not with the beautiful mercenary. Should the PCs be overcome during the conflict, Cleopatra and her thugs continue to Mercury with the PCs as prisoners. Assuming the PCs escape, however, continue with the event Chase.

The chances are good that the party will believe Cleopatra's explanation for the trip to Mercury. Allow the player characters to plot out their navigational course according to the Space Travel rules in *Characters & Combat*, taking into consideration the planet locations as shown on the inside front cover of this adventure.

The trip to Mercury proceeds without incident, and the party eventually arrives at a small, undesignated cylindrical space station near one of the mammoth Mariposas. Cleopatra directs the party to the station's docking bay. Proceed with the next event.

**Statistics.** Statistics for Cleopatra, her Mercurian thugs, and her ship *Kiss of the Falcon* are presented earlier in this chapter.

## "NEO" Base

**Setup.** When the PCs arrive at Mercury, Cleopatra directs them to a small cylindrical space station. In order to reflect as much of the Sun's heat as possible, the station is painted in a brilliant silver. Beyond the station, the pitted, heat-blasted crescent of Mercury's daylight side hangs in space. To the left of the planet, the immense, fiery ball of the sun

completely fills the ship's viewports.

Normally, the station is used as an advanced hospital specializing in the use of genetic engineering in order to reverse the effects of aging and serious illness. However, to lure the PCs into his trap, Al'ak Bar has temporarily imported a few dozen Terran actors and converted the station into a rough facsimile of a ramshackle NEO hospital.

**Action.** After Cleopatra broadcasts the clearance code, the PCs are given permission to dock. They will enter the station at airlock A, where a distinguished Terran wearing a doctor's frock greets them. After introducing himself as Dr. Motobotwe, he asks the party to please refrain from exploring the station (to protect NEO's security) and, accompanied by a pair of security gennies, shows them to the guest cabins located near the security brig. At this time, Cleopatra excuses herself and goes to collect her money from Al'ak Bar.

Although constructed in the gaudy, overly decorative Mercurian style, the station is immaculately clean. The NEO insignia hangs everywhere, and all the people scurrying through the halls, Terran and Mercurian alike, wear snappy new overalls bearing NEO patches.

There are several inconsistencies that might alert clever PCs to Cleopatra's deception. First, NEO is a great believer in equality and not much of a believer in genetic manipulation, so it is unlikely that they would utilize a specific class of gennie for security tasks. Second, they are not particularly well-off financially. The new overalls worn by the crew and the pristine condition of the station are out of place in an organization that must devote every spare credit to maintaining its ragtag battle fleet.

Allow anyone commenting on these factors to make an Intelligence check. A successful check indicates that the individual realizes the station has been redecorated recently. PCs making *discreet* inquiries into how long NEO has had the base will be told "over five years, now," a statement that seems inconsistent with its immaculate condition. PCs making direct inquiries into how long NEO has had the base will be asked why they want to know, and any answer will be avoided.

If none of the PCs comment on the fresh redecoration of the station, make a secret skill check at the Impossible Notice Skill Check for the character with the highest level of that skill. A successful result indicates that he has noticed the inconsistency inherent in the fresh redecoration of the station.

Should the PCs bring up the subject of the station's immaculate condition, Dr. Motobotwe explains by saying the Al'ak Bar is a generous host.

After reaching the guest cabins, Dr. Motobotwe suggests the PCs refresh themselves. He'll return in two hours to begin preparations for recovering the Krait schematics. At this point, if the PCs have already turned the schematics over to Cleopatra, Motobotwe gives the plans to his employers. After confirming that the microchip does, indeed, contain the Krait schematics, the Mercurians drop all pretense of treating the PCs as guests. In this case, go to the section titled Doublecross at the end of this event. If the PCs have lost the Krait schematics and informed Cleopatra of this fact, Dr. Motobotwe and his employers insist upon inspecting them both for duplicate microchips and for physical damage related to being injected with the chip. In this case, events proceed as outlined below.

**The Station.** While waiting for Motobotwe to return, the PCs may wish to explore the station. This will be difficult without being noticed, since it is small and well-populated. However, if they manage to sneak past the guards at the security post and acquire a set of coveralls with drawing attention to themselves, they will be able to move about the station with a fair amount of freedom. A list of what they will find follows. Each time the party turns a corner or enters a corridor, roll 1d6. On a roll of one, the party encounters a Terran actor, and on a roll of two, they encounter a Mercurian. Upon meeting the PCs, Terrans always try to call for security since they know each and recognize the PCs as being the objects of this elaborate subterfuge. Mercurians, however, only call for security if the PCs behave in a suspicious manner—to them, the PCs look no different than the imported Terran actors. Any time security is called, four security gennies rush to the scene immediately.

Unless otherwise noted, opening any locked door requires an Average Open Locks Skill Check.

**1. Guest Cabins.** This is where Dr. Motobotwe expects the PCs to stay. The gaudy Mercurian decoration has been replaced with utilitarian furniture (desk, beds, chairs) more in line with NEO's nature.

**2. Security Station.** From this open-walled post, the four security gennies stationed here have a clear view of the hall in front of the guest cabins, in front of the galley, and down the hall toward airlock A. They can also monitor any location in the station via closed-circuit video.

Anytime the PCs enter one of the hallways within their direct sight, make an Intelligence check for the security gennie watching that hallway. Modify the roll by -4 if the PC is disguised in NEO coveralls. Anytime the PCs enter a hall anywhere

on the station without being disguised in NEO coveralls, make an Intelligence check for the security gennie watching that monitor. Success indicates that the gennie notices the PCs. Four gennies will be dispatched to intercept the party and escort the PCs back to the guest cabins. If the player characters are disguised in NEO coveralls or resist, they will be locked in the brig. They could, of course, attempt to overpower the guards, in which case they would be well-advised to get out of the station as rapidly as possible.

Should the PCs use a distraction or some other trick when attempting to slip past the security gennies, their Intelligence checks are made at -4 penalty.

**3. Brig.** There are several bunks and one set of sanitary facilities in this room. Opening the door requires a Difficult Open Locks Skill Check. Once the PCs are locked into this room, they are treated as Mercurian prisoners rather than NEO guests.

**4. Communications.** This locked room is manned by two security gennies. They try to capture anyone breaking into it.

**5. Crew Cabins.** These rooms are all locked. Inside, they are filled with personal items that seem more appropriate to Mercurians than NEO personnel expensive, gaudy jewelry, paintings of Mercury's barren surface, letters from relatives in the mining colonies. There is an extra set of brand new NEO coveralls in each room.

**6. Storage.** This locked room is filled with miscellaneous supplies, few of which seem appropriate to the running of a frontier hospital. Among them is a large box of brand new NEO coveralls.

**7. Power Conversion.** This room is filled with capacitors that store solar energy.

**8. Showers.** These rooms contain the station's common sanitary facilities. There are three Mercurian actors in either one at any given time. They will not call the security gennies unless the party behaves in a suspicious manner, as they mistake the PCs for the Terran actors imported to make the station seem more like a NEO base.

**9. Station Services.** A lone Mercurian engineer (3rd level) works in this locked room. He calls for security if the PCs intrude on him.

**10. Life Support.** This room contains the equipment for recycling the station's air and water.

**11. Galley and Kitchen.** There are a dozen Mercurian personnel in these two rooms at all times (eating and relaxing). They call for security only if the PCs are not wearing NEO coveralls.

**12. Gennie Lab & Incubation Chamber.** Any Medic recognizes the equipment in this room as be-

ing used for genetic manipulation. There are two gennies growing in the incubation chamber, but the room is otherwise empty.

**13. Nurse Station.** Two Terran actors masquerading as nurses are stationed here at all times. If they notice the PCs trying to move past them, they call for security.

**14. Diagnosis Chamber.** This room is filled with various screens, computers, and projectors which any Medic recognizes as being diagnostic equipment. Otherwise, the room is empty.

**15. Supply Closet.** Any medic making an Intelligence check realizes that the medical supplies in this locked room are more appropriate to a genetics laboratory than a hospital.

**16. Cold Storage.** This frigid, locked room contains thousands of test tubes containing different DNA samples. There is nobody in the room.

**17. Sterilization Chamber.** This room contains various machines and chemical baths used to sterilize surgical utensils. There is no one in the room.

**18. Prep Room.** This is the doctors' preparation room. Dr. Motobotwe and a Terran nurse are in here with a Mercurian doctor and nurse, rehearsing the roles they will play when the PC bearing the microchip is brought into the Computer Scan Body Map-

ping facility. They call for the security guards as soon as they see the PCs.

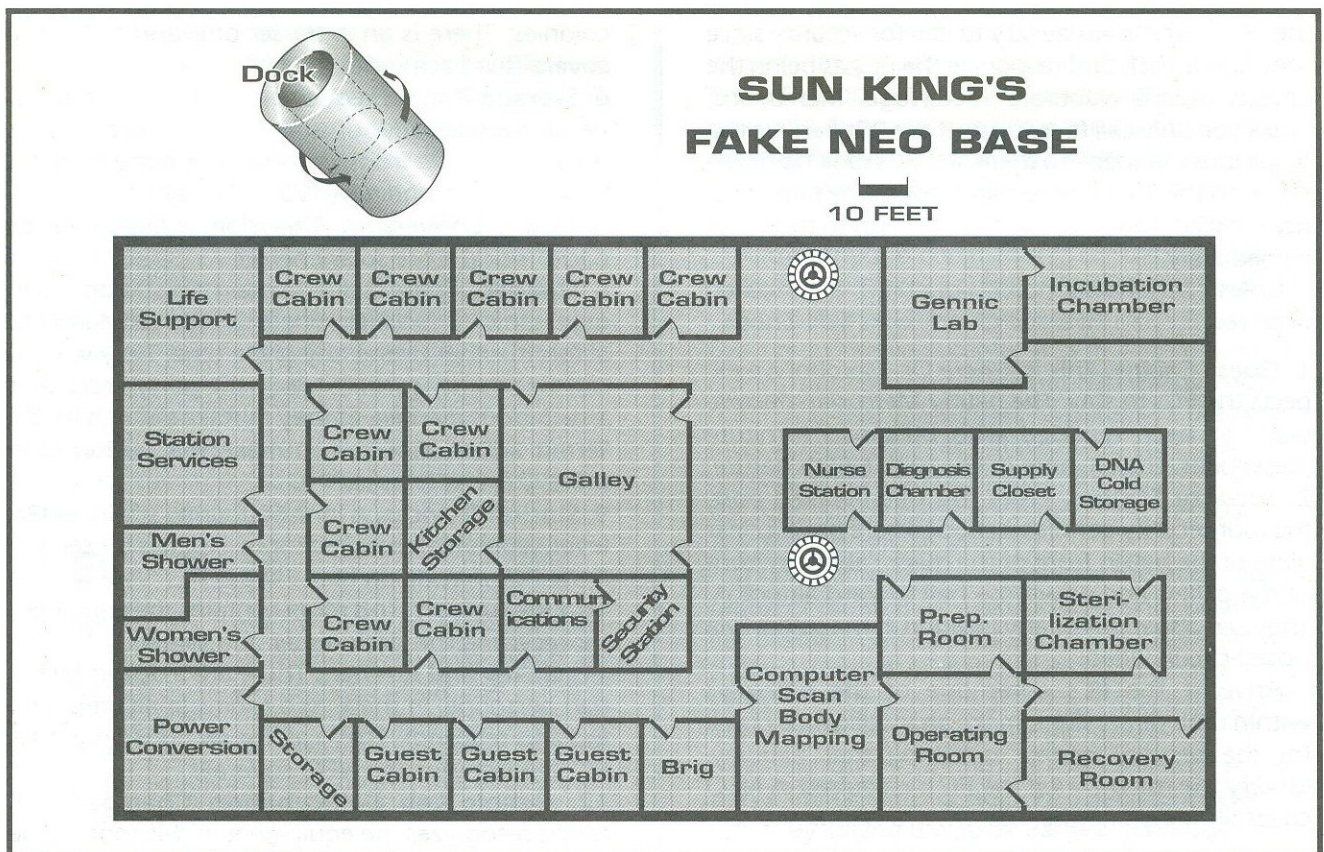
**19. Operating Room.** This room contains all that is necessary for microsurgery: an operating table, lights, vital-function monitoring equipment, anesthetic masks, etc. There is no one in the operating room when the PCs arrive.

**20. Recovery Room.** This room contains several beds with straps for confining delirious patients. Each bed is attached to a computer that automatically monitors vital signs. There is nobody in the room at this time.

**21. Computer Scan Body Mapping.** This room contains a large examining table onto which a person can be strapped with absolute immobility. When the table is passed through the large holographic imaging machine, a perfect map of a person's body can be created. There is no one in the room at the current time.

**22. Airlocks.** One security gennie stands guard at each airlock. The PCs' ship is located outside airlock A. The dock outside airlock B is empty.

The guards stationed outside the airlocks will not hesitate to use force to prevent anyone from leaving the station. One round later, one security gen-



nies for each PC arrives and attacks. If the PCs escape, continued with the event Chase.

**Surgery.** If the PCs do not escape within two hours, Dr. Motobotwe is ready for surgery. Unless they can tell him which one of them is carrying the microchip, he must examine each of them in turn. He starts with the PC with the highest Strength score and works down.

A Terran nurse comes for each PC separately, then leads him into the Computer Scan Body Mapping room. Dr. Motobotwe and the nurse secure the PC to the examining table, then administer an anesthetic that knocks the PC unconscious (save vs. Toxic Gas each round to resist). After Dr. Motobotwe administers the anesthetic, the Mercurian doctor and his assistant come in and perform the body map on the unconscious character.

PCs who are not carrying the microchip are sent to the recovery room and strapped into a bed. They awaken 1d10 x 10 rounds later, groggy and disoriented. Before they can remember where they are and what they are doing there, they must make a successful Intelligence check. After that, they may attempt to escape, if they wish. They will need to make a Difficult Acrobatics Skill Check or a Dexterity check with a -8 penalty to the roll.

Meanwhile, when the PC bearing the microchip is found, he is taken into surgery while still unconscious. The Mercurian doctor attempts to remove the microchip. To do so, he must make a Difficult Bypass Security Skill Check. If he fails, the microchip explodes, inflicting 1d12 x 2 points of damage on the unlucky PC and destroying the microchip. A successful check indicates that he extracts the microchip intact and without injury. The PC is then taken to the recovery room.

**Doublecross.** After the microchip is extracted (successfully or unsuccessfully), if the PCs let matters get that far, Cleopatra gives the order to kill the PCs. In addition to avoiding the remainder of any payment due the PCs, Al'ak Bar wishes to eliminate any chance that RAM will trace the theft of the Krait plans back to him and take retaliatory measures. Four security gennies take the party to an airlock and, Cleopatra watching on with a crooked smile, the guards systematically expose the party to the vacuum of space—one at a time. If the PCs are to survive, they must escape.

Whether or not the PCs still have the microchip when they escape, continue with the event Chase.

**Statistics.** Cleopatra's statistics are presented earlier. The Mercurians aboard the station have the same statistics as the Mercurian thugs, also presented earlier in this chapter.

**Terran Actor/Actress, including Dr. Motobotwe** (2nd level rogues): Hp 8; AC 10; THACO 20; Str 11; Dex 10; Con 10; Int 12; Wis 10; Cha 10; Tech 10.

*Career Skills:* Fast Talk/Convince 60, Notice 20.

*General Skills:* Drive Groundcar 20, Leadership 20.

**Security Gennie** (3rd level warriors): Hp 18; AC 6 (space suit); THACO 18; Str 14; Dex 14; Int 9; Wis 9; Con 15; Cha 7; Tech 11.

*Weapon:* Laser pistol; Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

*Career Skills:* Battle Tactics 20, Demolitions 40, Move Silently 40, Repair Weapon 20.

*General Skills:* Use Rocket Belt 20, Maneuver in Zero G 20, Bypass Security 20.

## Chase

**Setup.** Cleopatra is a careful woman, and is ready with a backup plan in case the PCs see through her story or escape after she has already lured them into her control. Use this event when the party flees the Mercurians—whether they are still in the asteroids or within Mercury's orbit itself.

**Action.** As the PCs flee in their ship, a dozen Mercurian light cruisers jump on their tail. Initially, the range is six hexes, just inside beam laser range. Should the PCs attempt any risky maneuvers in order to shake their pursuers, a Difficult Pilot Rocket Skill Check will increase this range to seven hexes, but it will be reduced to six hexes the instant the party slows down for any purpose at all. The range will never be less than six nor greater than seven hexes. The Mercurian light cruisers will take potshots at the PCs whenever they're within range. When the situation begins to look desperate for the PCs, such as when their ship has suffered a lot of damage or they are in danger of running out of fuel, continue with the next chapter.

### Statistics.

**Mercurian cruisers** (12 40-ton light cruisers): Hull points 160; Sensors/commo 40; Controls 40; Life Support 80; Fuel 120; Engine 120; AC 6; Speed 4; Reaction Bonus -1; AC Defense Bonus -2.

*Weapons:* One beam laser, two gyro cannons, one light acceleration gun.

## CHAPTER 8: ISHTARIAN AID

Fortunately for the PCs, corrupt liars and cheats like Ardala Valmar and the Mercurians aren't the only ones who have an interest in the Krait schematics. The Ishtar Confederation of Venus has also learned of the existence of the schematics, and is quite interested in recovering them. To this end, they have sent a representative to track down the PCs and present Venus' offer.

### Unexpected Help

**Setup.** Use this encounter when it appears the PCs are about to succumb to the superior numbers of the Mercurian cruisers.

A huge cruiser of elegant design flies out from behind the nearest moon, asteroid, planet, or stray comet, depending on where the PCs happen to be at the moment. The sleek ship is a silvery white, with long graceful curves and a marked avoidance of any square corner.

**Action.** A voice crackles over the radio, addressing the PCs by their ships' name (*Intrepid Pedagogue*, if they are still flying the scout cruiser loaned to them by Professor Jarlshorf). "This is the Ishtarian cruiser *Home of the Magnificent Wind*. Are you in need of assistance, little one?" the voice inquires.

Assuming the PCs respond positively, the voice instructs them to come closer. At the same time, the 1,000-foot cruiser moves toward, placing itself between the PCs and their attackers, screening them from the continued wrath of the Mercurian cruisers. Because Ishtar has no wish to start a war with Mercury, the huge cruiser carefully avoids firing on its smaller cousins. Sensing the Ishtarian reluctance, the Mercurians continue to beleague the PCs.

Finally, the captain of the *Home of the Magnificent Wind* suggests docking, pointing out that the PCs' ship would then be considered under the protection of Venus, and that any attack against them would be considered an attack against Venus herself—and would be dealt with accordingly.

If the PCs refuse to dock, the captain of the *Home of the Magnificent Wind* says, "If that is your wish, then so be it." The huge cruiser turns away, leaving the party to the Mercurian dogs. If any PCs survive the resulting mayhem, the *Home of the Magnificent Wind* sends out rescue shuttles for them.

On the other hand, the Mercurians *do* stop attacking the instant the PCs' ship touches the Ishtarian cruiser. However, they do not leave. Instead, they simply back away and surround the heavy cruiser, like hungry dogs waiting for their prey to

come down out of the tree.

Assuming the PCs survive, continue with the next event.

**Statistics.** See the event Chase in the previous chapter for the Mercurian light cruisers.

**Home of the Magnificent Wind** (500-ton large cruiser): Hull points 2,000; Sensors/commo 500; controls 500; Life Support 1,000; Fuel 1,500; Engine 1,500; AC 6; Speed 1; Reaction Bonus +1; AC Defense Bonus +2.

**Weapons:** Ten beam lasers, five pumped lasers, ten gyrocannons, one missile mount, two heavy missile mounts, one K-cannon, two acceleration guns, and three heavy acceleration guns.

### A Suspicious Offer

**Setup.** As the PCs' ship clings to the giant Ishtarian cruiser, the Mercurian light cruisers circle like vultures awaiting the kill.

**Action.** The Ishtarian voice again contacts the PCs, this time inviting them aboard his cruiser to discuss their situation. If the PCs voice any suspicions about such an arrangement, the Ishtarian kindly offers to come aboard their ship—as cramped as he is sure it will be. He reacts to continued suspicion rather testily, pointing out that their radio communications are probably being intercepted by the Mercurians.

When the PCs finally meet the Ishtarian face-to-face, they see a slightly-built man standing nearly six-feet tall. His features are remotely oriental, with eyelids folded at the corners, long black hair, and high prominent cheekbones. He wears a billowing white robe with a silver smart suit underneath. The man introduces himself as Councilor Qwon Rey of the Ishtarian Confederation of Venus.

Qwon Rey gets right down to business. He explains that it has recently come to his government's attention that the PCs have had a set of Krait schematics thrust upon them, and that this has caused them no end of trouble. On behalf of Ishtar, he would like to offer the PCs safe haven on Venus in return for turning over the Krait schematics.

Assuming the PCs explain any troubles they will have in delivering the schematics, the Ishtarian says that his offer for safe haven still stands. This applies even if the PCs no longer have the schematics. In the event that the microchip has not yet been extracted, Qwon promises that any extraction at-

tempt made by Venus would be performed only by the finest microsurgeon in Ishtar. Nevertheless, he is quick to point out, there would still be a considerable risk to the chip-bearer's life. If pressed for monetary considerations, Qwon agrees to give the PCs 50,000cr for the schematics, in hard currency and only after the schematics are recovered.

Qwon is more than happy to let the PCs think over their options, for as long as they like. If they decide not to strike a deal with him, he offers them safe escort to any nearby port, but suggests that Luna's high security hotels may be their only other hope of obtaining any refuge from the merciless dogs hounding them. In this case, continue with the next chapter.

Should the PCs decline even this offer of escort, Qwon offers to restock their fuel supplies, and will then leave them to deal with the Mercurians on their own. Under no circumstances will he risk starting a war with Mercury by firing on the Mercurian ships in order to clear a path for the PCs. Neither will he rescue any PCs foolish enough to decline his offer of escort. In the event that such PCs survive the encounter with the Mercurians, they are free to go wherever they wish in the solar system. But, Rutgar.dos, Ardala Valmar, Cleopatra, and even the Black Brotherhood will never be far behind.

Assuming the PCs accept either Qwon's offer of escort or refuge on Ishtar, proceed with the event Travel.

**Statistics.** See the event Chase in the previous chapter for the Mercurian light cruisers.

**Councilor Qwon Rey:** Hp 10; AC 4 (smart suit); THACO 20; Str 14; Dex 14; Con 15; Wis 17; Cha 13; Tech 13.

**Skills:** Notice 45, Economics 60, General Knowledge 45, History 65, Law 45, Literature 40, Mathematics 35, Memorize 40.

## Travel

**Setup.** The PCs have decided to accept Qwon Rey's offer of escort, most likely to Ishtar or to Luna. Presumably, the party travels with their ship attached piggyback to *Home of the Magnificent Wind*. The Mercurian light cruisers follow at a close distance, switching off every now and then to stop at available way stations and refuel.

**Action.** Should the party detach their ship from the *Home of the Magnificent Wind*, the Mercurians attack instantly. There will be ten of their ships present. The Ishtarans will not make any move to

aid the PCs, but will allow them to redock (in which case, the Mercurians will cease their attack).

During the trip, Qwon treats the PCs with respect and kindness. He is more than willing to show the party around his ship, and the PCs will certainly notice the devout nature of the Ishtarian crew members. It is not uncommon to find an officer sitting on the floor cross-legged and in a state of meditation, or, at certain times of the day, to come across an engineer prostrated in a corridor, facing the direction of Venus and chanting some prayer.

Qwon will be happy to explain that Ishtar is a reverent place. Most of the country's people are followers of the Faith, which is a mixture of the ancient Islamic, Bahai, and Taoist religions. Other than noting that one of the basic tenets of the Faith is to treat other people with courtesy, respect, and honesty, Qwon will not say much more about his homeland's religion. It is not possible to understand the Faith with words alone, he will explain. To fathom the One True Meaning, one must spend years learning to unite his yin and yang. Only then may the One Ultimate Truth be known, experienced more as a peaceful emotion than as a rational concept.

If the PCs have not already agreed to give the microchip to Qwon, he will politely use his hospitality to press the case for entrusting it to Venus. All the other powers who seek the secret of the Krait will use it to increase their power over the inhabitants of the solar system, in the process sowing strife and discontent throughout all of mankind's homes. Because of their uniquely philosophical approach to life, however, the Ishtarans would be more of a guardian of the secret than an oppressor of other peoples. They would use it only in defense of mankind's inalienable rights to life and liberty.

Whether or not the PCs agree to give the microchip to Qwon, he keeps his word and escorts them to wherever they wish to go. If the PCs' destination was Ishtar, the Mercurians stop following the cruiser as soon as it enters Venus' orbit. Qwon and the PCs are transferred to a smaller cruiser for transport to the surface. Qwon suggests that the PCs leave their ship, which has not been constructed to withstand Venus' acidic environment, in storage at an orbiting facility. Continue with the event Ishtar.

If the PCs were instead heading to Luna, the *Home of the Magnificent Wind* stops at the edge of Luna's territorial boundaries and asks for an escort. A Lunarian scout cruiser comes out to escort the PCs and their ship down to Luna's surface. The Mercurians leave as soon as they see the Lunarian scout. Continue with the next chapter.

Should the party be going anywhere else, the Mer-

curians land shortly behind them. Within hours, a group of 20 Mercurian thugs attacks the party, trying to kidnap them and return to Mercury. Assuming the PCs escape the thugs, it will not be long until Rutgar.dos, Ardala Valmar's gennies, and the Black Brotherhood track them down. Until the PCs successfully dispose of the Krait schematics in a manner that leaves no doubt that the party no longer has them, the aforementioned individuals will keep trying to recover the microchip. Improvise the appropriate events based on the party's location.

**Statistics.** Owon Rey's statistics are presented in the event A Suspicious Offer. Those for the Mercurian cruisers and the average Mercurian thug are presented in the previous chapter.

## Ishtar

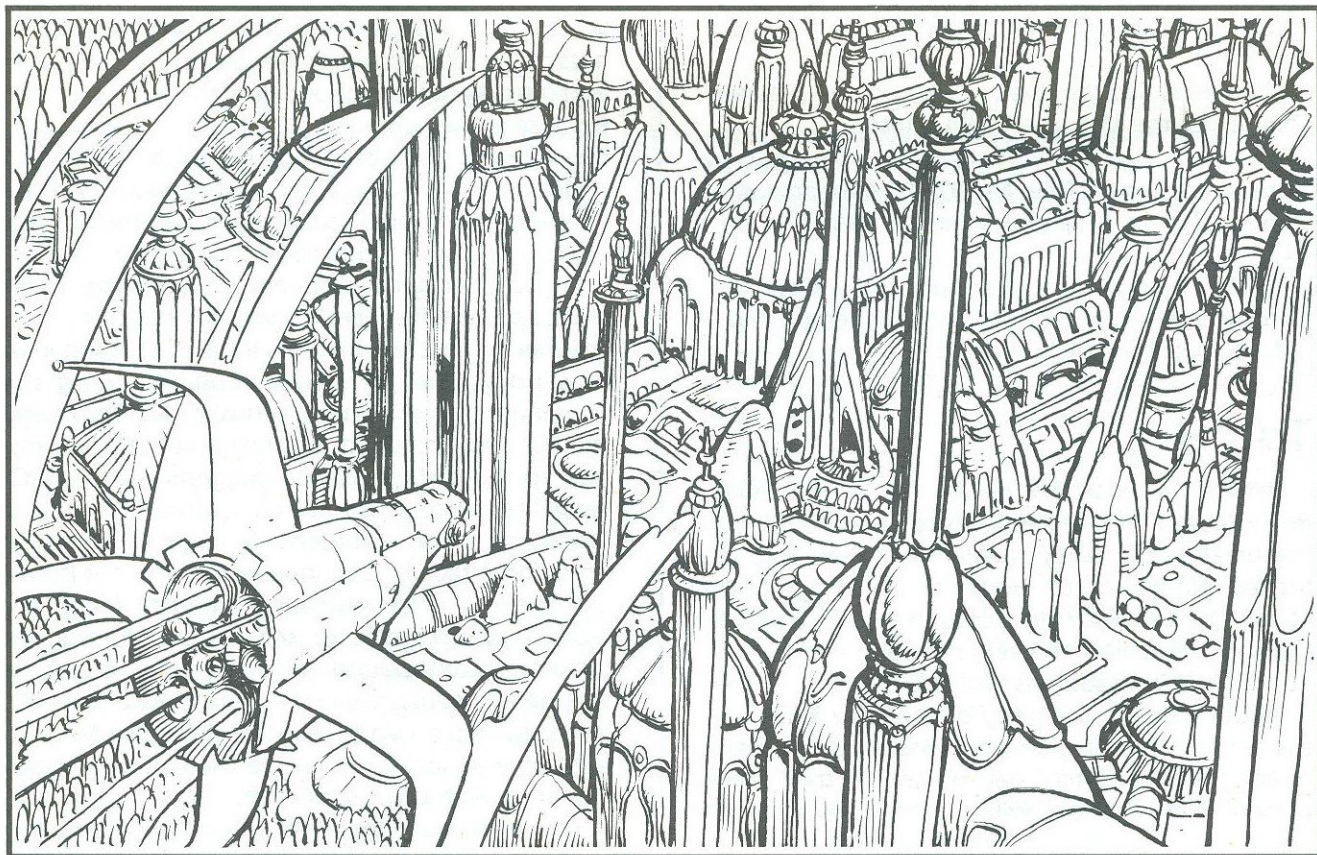
**Setup.** The PCs have accepted Owon's offer of refuge in Ishtar. As they descend out of the planet's heavy clouds, a vast continental mesa towers out of the dense acidic mists. Ishtar is covered with stands of dense stubby, blue-needled conifers bioengineered to withstand the high winds and acidic rains of the Venusian highlands. As the party approaches New Elysium, the city's ceramic minarets, rounded

towers, and onion-shaped domes are clearly visible below its spun-glass dome. The silver-white architecture is marked by gentle curves and sweeping arches. Nowhere in the entire city is there visible a sharp edge, corner, or a single niche where acidic dew can settle or collect.

**Action.** As soon as the PCs land, a messenger greets Owon and whisper something to him. The PCs' host frowns, and then turns to the party and says, "It seems that word of your intentions have preceded our arrival. Certain parties have been making discreet inquiries as to the location of your accommodations."

By certain parties, Owon can explain that he is referring to an unknown DP (Rutgar.dos), certain individuals known to have connections to Ardala Valmar, and a motley information broker known to service pirates. In view of the number of individuals turning their resources toward finding the PCs, Owon says, it is obviously impossible to guarantee the party's safety until the microchip is removed and the successful operation well-publicized. Knowing this, the PCs are free to stay or leave.

If the party chooses to leave, Owon recommends going to Luna. In addition to its famous high-security hotels, it is well-known that Luna aggres-



sively defends its neutrality and would frown on any attempt to recover the Krait schematics within its borders. He also suggests trying to contact NEO, since they certainly have the codeword and removing the microchip safely would be a simple matter for them. If the PCs show any interest in this option, Qwon tells them to contact an importer in Tycho named Stave Waxer. As an additional precaution, he also escorts them to Luna's borders in the *Home of the Magnificent Wind*.

Assuming the PCs decide to risk staying on Venus, Qwon arranges to have them taken secretly and directly to a high-security apartment near New Elysium's finest hospital. After emphasizing to the PCs that they are Ishtar's guests and under no obligation to stay on Venus or to deliver the microchip, Qwon posts a dozen guards outside their apartment and asks them to remain inside until he can make better arrangements for their security. Should the PCs decide to ignore the councilor's request and leave the apartment, the guards do not attempt to stop them. Instead, they simply surround the PCs and escort them wherever they go.

Whether or not the PCs wait for Qwon's return, continue with the next event, Surprise Attack.

#### Statistics.

**Venusian security guards** (Twelve 2nd level warriors): Hp 10; AC 4 (smart suits); THACO 20; Str 12; Dex 11; Con 12; Int 11; Wis 12; Cha 10; Tech 12.

**Weapon:** Laser pistol; Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Shots 7, Max Range 800.

**Career Skills:** Battle Tactics 15, Move Silently 25, Notice 25, Repair Weapon 15.

**General Skills:** Drive Groundcar 20, Bypass Security 20.

## Surprise Attack

**Setup.** Four hours after Qwon leaves the PCs, Rutgar.dos tracks them down. He attacks immediately, whether or not the party is still in the apartment in which Qwon left them.

**Action.** While the party is in some confined space, such as an elevator or their apartment, the door suddenly jams shut. A moment later, thick black smoke begins pouring into the space. Rutgar.dos has infiltrated the building's environmental control center, disarmed the safety switches, and overloaded the electrical system near a vent leading into the confined space containing the PCs. The resulting fire is now blazing deep within the building.

Having been unable to recover the stolen Krait

schematics, Rutgar.dos has altered his programming to try another tactic for safeguarding Hammerhead, Inc.'s secrets. He is attempting to kill the PCs and destroy their bodies and the microchip.

The PCs have one round to escape the trap. Opening the jammed door requires an Average Open Locks Skill Check, 100 points of damage from any ranged weapon, or a successful Strength check with a -5 penalty. (The party may make only one attempt per round to open the door.) If the party has not escaped the room by the end of the first round, each PC must save vs. toxic gas at the beginning of each subsequent round. Failure means the PC succumbs to smoke inhalation and falls unconscious. Should all of the PCs fall unconscious before escaping, Rutgar.dos's plan works. If the escorts are in the same room as the PCs, they all fall victim to smoke inhalation the first round they are required to save vs. toxic gas.

**After the Fire.** Rutgar.dos doesn't do things in a small way. By the time the PCs escape, the entire building is engulfed in flames. Dozens of Ishtarrians perish in the resulting blaze, and the entire community is rocked by the tragedy.

Qwon tracks down the PCs a few minutes after they escape. He explains that the central computer has reported that the fire is the result of arson, probably aimed at killing the PCs. He reluctantly informs the party that Ishtar cannot subject her citizens to such risks on their behalf, and says that they must either risk having the microchip removed now or accept an Ishtarrian escort to Luna. If the PCs choose to go to Luna, Qwon takes the PCs back to the *Home of the Magnificent Wind*, then to Luna (or any place else—within reason—that they wish to go). He suggests that the PCs contact an import agent named Stave Waxer who may be able to put them in contact with NEO and arrange for the removal of the chip.

If the PCs elect to have the chip bearer risk the operation and stay on Venus, Qwon rushes them to a hospital immediately. After determining which PC has the chip (if necessary), the bearer is taken into surgery. Unfortunately, the doctor fails his Bypass Security Skill Check and the microchip explodes as he extracts it, inflicting 1d12 x 2 points of damage on the bearer. Of course, the Ishtarrians will do everything in their power to save the PC.

After the unsuccessful attempt to remove the chip, the Ishtarrians leak news of their failure (in order to protect the PCs). The PCs are given a permanent home on Ishtar and made honorary citizens. They may now use this home as a base of operations. If they accept, the adventure ends here. Otherwise, continue with the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 9: LUNA

Like the Switzerland of 20th Century Earth, Luna has adopted a policy of official neutrality—a position which it aggressively safeguards. Ironically, Luna's policy of non-participation in system affairs makes it a hotbed of political intrigue. Here, agents representing every power in the system come to meet each other and their covert operatives on neutral territory.

Of course, neutral territory is not necessarily safe territory, and, again like 20th Century Switzerland, Luna is a center of espionage activity. Because of its unique position and needs, Luna has developed some of the most secure facilities in the system. Almost every hotel has a security floor which is heavily monitored and to which access is carefully controlled.

Such protection comes at a price, however. The price of even the smallest rooms on such floors starts at 1,000 credits per night, *without* the amenities. Fortunately, at least if the PCs have shown any initiative in using their possession of the Krait schematics to their own advantage, they should be able to afford such prices. In addition to the modest sum Professor Jarlshorf has paid to them, they could have one or more numbered accounts at Erste Luna Geschäft-Zollstelle, GB with total deposits of up to 200,000cr.

### Touchdown in Tycho

**Setup.** Presumably, the PCs are arriving with an Ishtarian escort. The Ishtarrians stop 100,000 miles away from Luna and transmit a request for a Lunar-ian escort for the PCs. A short time later, a pair of Luna's scout cruisers oblige by meeting the *Home of the Magnificent Wind*.

The Mercurians, if they are still following the party, immediately withdraw. Though they outnumber the Lunarians significantly, they would not even dream of attacking the PCs in the presence of a Lunar-ian escort—unlike the Ishtarrians, the Lunarians have no fear of starting a war with Mercury. In fact, they would consider the Mercurian use of violence within their boundaries as an act of war.

**Action.** The PCs are escorted directly to the Hotel Apollo and cleared for a suite on the security floor. The Lunarians automatically assume that since the PCs needed an escort to Luna, they will be requiring top-notch security facilities.

At the Hotel Apollo, the clerk offers the PCs a choice of accommodations: a Saturn room (sleeps two characters for 1,000cr per night), a Gemini suite

(sleeps four characters for 3,000cr per night), or the Apollo suite (Apollo I sleeps four characters for 3,500cr per night, or Apollo I and II can be joined to sleep up to eight characters for 6,000cr per night). If the PCs decline these accommodations, the Lunar-ian rolls his huge eyes, then, with a snobbish intonation, says, "If you needed a security escort to get here, you need a security suite to stay here. If you didn't need a security escort, you had no business asking for one. Now, which do you prefer—to pay for a secured room, or to pay the fine for unnecessarily summoning a security patrol?"

The Lunarian is bluffing. The security escort was extended to the PCs as a diplomatic courtesy to the Ishtarrians. Nevertheless, by hesitating to take a secured room, the PCs have tipped the clerk off to the fact that they're not diplomats.

If the PCs refuse to stay in a secured room, they can find accommodations in Hotel Apollo for as little as 100cr per night apiece, or in another hotel in Tycho for as little as 20cr per night apiece. Of course, the less they pay, the less secure they are.

If the PCs choose to stay at one of these unsecured locations, they will be set upon by all of their enemies. On the first night, Ardala's gennies (one per PC) attack the PCs, trying to kidnap or kill them. On the second night, a group of pirates (two per PC) attacks, simply trying to kill the PCs. On the third, a group of Mercurian thugs attacks. On the fourth, Rutgar.dos seals their room as they sleep and pumps all the air out of it. Until the PCs decide to seek more secure lodging, improvise these encounters as necessary.

On the other hand, if the PCs are willing to pay for it, they will enjoy a relatively safe environment on Hotel Apollo's secured floor. The choice is theirs.

**Statistics.** Statistics for Ardala's gennies, pirates, Mercurian thugs, and Rutgar.dos are all presented in earlier chapters.

### The Lunar-ian Offer

**Setup.** One day after the PCs have settled into their room, an official-looking Lunar-ian seeks them out. Standing only four-and-a-half feet tall, he has hairless, alabaster skin, with huge, dark eyes. Over his slender frame he wears a silver smart-suit, and the triangular patch affixed to his forehead indicates that he is a highly placed official in the Lunar-ian government. He carries a portable computer about the size of a briefcase.

**Action.** Introducing himself as Heinrich Sievarr,

the Lunarian asks the PCs if they have enjoyed their stay on Luna so far. In the event that the PCs aren't staying in a secured floor and answer negatively, the Lunarian simply shrugs and tells them it's their own fault.

After the PCs' response, Heinrich cuts straight to business. Representing Luna's government, he has come to make the PCs an offer for the Krait schematics. He opens negotiations by offering them permanent refuge on Luna, and will very reluctantly agree to pay them as much as 50,000cr in hard currency or deposit in Lunarian bank, but only upon delivery of the schematics. Heinrich is not willing to make any concessions for the risk involved to the PC bearing the microchip, claiming that such risk is covered in his price.

When negotiating with the Lunarian, the PCs must be careful to specify all terms of the contract and to protect their own interests. For example, the Lunarian's initial offer of refuge on Luna includes only the right to live on Luna. It does not include a house or money for any expenses. Although the Lunarian answers all questions honestly, he feels no compunction whatsoever to point out details that they should ask about themselves. Heinrich is the stereotypical Lunarian—cold, calculating, and unwaveringly efficient.

Should the PCs demand more than 50,000cr payment, the Lunarian says he'll have to discuss the matter with his superiors and leaves abruptly. On the other hand, if the PCs agree to his terms, the Lunarian pushes a button on his portable computer and produces a laser-printed contract specifying the exact terms of the agreement. Needless to say, the PCs will not discover all the loopholes in the contract until after they have delivered the schematics.

In the event that the PCs agree to the Lunarian offer, see the event Home on Luna for details on the surgery. Otherwise, continue with the next event, Stave Waxer, Importer, when and if the PCs decide to try to contact NEO.

#### Statistics.

**Heinrich Sievarr** (5th level rogue): Hp 20; AC 4 (smart suit); THAC0 18; Str 10; Dex 13; Con 10; Int 15; Wis 16; Cha 8; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Rocket pistol; Dmg 1d10, ROF 1, Shots 5, Max Range 400.

**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 15, Fast Talk/Convince 125, Notice 50, Pick Pocket 10.

**General Skills:** Drive Groundcar 20, Drive Jetcar 20, Use Rocket Belt 20, Leadership 40.

## Stave Waxer, Importer

**Setup.** Use this event when the PCs decide to track down and meet a NEO agent. The party can find Stave Waxer's address in any city directory. If they have not yet been given his name as a NEO contact, a judicious bribe in the right place (hotel concierge, bartender, etc.) will produce it. Stave Waxer's identity as a NEO recruiter is one of those open "secrets" common to centers of espionage.

Waxer's office is located just north of Spacertown (off the north edge of the Map of Tycho provided in the XXVc™ game).

**Action.** As the PCs enter Stave's, allow the character with the highest Notice skill to attempt a Difficult Notice Skill Check. Success indicates that he notices a shady looking Lunarian watching the entrance to the warehouse.

When the PCs introduce themselves to Stave, he curtly denies having any connection to NEO. Stave claims that whoever told the PCs that he did is a liar and should be tied "to the thrust end of a rocket burner." The PCs can do nothing to convince him to reveal his connection to NEO.

What the PCs don't know is that Rutgar.dos has planted a rumor that the PCs are RAM agents trying to use the Krait schematics as a lure to infiltrate NEO. This maneuver has effectively sabotaged their efforts to meet with the rebel organization.

**A Better Offer.** Unless the PCs noticed the shady Lunarian watching Stave's warehouse, word of the PCs' contact with the NEO recruiter gets back to Heinrich Sievarr. Within hours, Stave Waxer is publicly accused of being a NEO spy and ordered to leave Luna. The PCs are sure to learn of this through everyday news channels.

A few minutes after the PCs learn of Stave's deportation, Heinrich contacts the party and increases Luna's offer to as high as 75,000cr. If questioned about Stave's deportation, Heinrich pointedly reminds the PCs that Luna is neutral territory and that all NEO agents will be deported.

If the PCs accept Heinrich's offer, see the event Home on Luna for a description of the removal of the microchip. Otherwise, continue with Attack.

#### Statistics.

**Stave Waxer** (5th level rogue): Hp 25; AC 10; THAC0 18; Str 14; Dex 12; Con 15; Int 12; Wis 14; Cha 13; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Heat gun; Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Shots 7, Max Range 60.



**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 40, Hide in Shadows 35, Move Silently 30, Hide in Shadows 25, Notice 40, Open Lock 20, Pick Pocket 10.

**General Skills:** Drive Groundcar 20, Drive Jetcar 20, Pilot Rocket 20, Use Rocket Belt 20, Maneuver in Zero G 20.

## Attack

**Setup.** After the PCs have contacted Stave Waxer, or negotiated further with Heinrich, Rutgar.dos grows desperate. He attacks, hoping that by simply killing the PCs he can activate the microchip's defense and destroy the stolen schematics.

**Action.** As the PCs are sleeping in their rooms one night, ask each one to save vs. toxic gas. Those failing the save take 1d4 points of damage and must save vs. paralysis as well. Those failing will be unable to get out of their beds.

The instant a PC tries to leave the room, all the doors and windows automatically lock. A holograph of Rutgar.dos appears in the room, laughing madly. The DP informs the PCs that he has made retribution against them a primary objective in his programming, and that they'll never be able to escape him no matter where they go.

Assuming the PCs are staying in a secured room, opening a door or window requires a Difficult Open Locks Skill Check or 100 points of damage inflicted by any ranged weapon. No door or window can be forced open by strength alone. If the PCs are staying in a normal hotel room, the requirement will only be an Average Open Locks Skill Check, or 50 points of damage must be inflicted. Any door or window can be opened by a successful Strength check.

Assuming the PCs survive the attack on their lives, Heinrich Sievarr quickly appears. He suggests that the party might not be the object of such frequent violence if they agreed to his terms and gave the Krait schematics to Luna. In no way will he accept responsibility for the attack, claiming that it is the party's own foolishness in not seeking the protection of a powerful group like Luna that is the cause of their problems. If he detects any likelihood at all that the party is willing to give him the microchip, he will go as high as 100,000cr.

If the party accepts Heinrich's offer, continue with the next event, Home on Luna. If the party rejects the offer and decides to seek out NEO again, proceed with the event Sent to LaGrange. If the party does neither, they are welcome to stay in Hotel Apollo as long as their money lasts—always

looking over their shoulder for Ardala's gennies, Mercurian thugs, and RAM's assassins. Eventually, they will have to decide what to do with the schematics or someone will decide for them.

**Statistics.** Rutgar.dos's statistics are presented earlier in this adventure. See the event The Lunarian Offer for Heinrich's statistics.

## Home on Luna

**Setup.** Use this event if the PCs decide to give the Krait schematics to Luna.

**Action.** When the PCs inform Heinrich that will accept his deal, he smiles as warmly as a Lunarian can and inform's them that they've made a wise decision. Assuming it is necessary, he has the PCs taken to the Tycho hospital and, after determining which PC is carrying the Krait schematics, rushes him right into surgery.

The doctor, one of the leading microsurgeons on Luna, has a Bypass Security Skill of 70. To remove the microchip without activating its self-destruct mechanism, he must make a Difficult Bypass Security Skill Check (allow the player whose character is bearing the chip to roll the dice). Failure indicates that the chip explodes while still inside the PC's body, inflicting 1d12 x 2 points of damage. Success indicates that the chip is extracted intact.

Once the surgery has been resolved, things start getting ugly. Luna will live up to the deal Heinrich struck, but not one bit more. For example, unless the PCs made revealing that they no longer have the Krait schematics a condition of the deal, Lunarian agents will actively circulate rumors that the PCs still have the microchip—simply to keep RAM guessing about whether or not Luna has recovered the plans. They will also charge the PCs for any steps taken to heal or save the chip-bearer's life (1,000cr per hit point of damage). All in all, the PCs will find that doing business with Lunarians is inevitably an expensive proposition. However, they will have a safe refuge to use as a permanent base.

## Sent to LaGrange

**Setup.** Use this event if the PCs try a second time to contact NEO. If the PCs are reluctant to visit Stave Waxer again, an NPC concierge, bartender, or friend advises them to try once more, pointing out that now that he's been exposed, he may be more willing to talk.

**Action.** When the PCs go to see Stave, have the character with the highest Notice skill score make an Average Notice Skill Check. Success indicates that he notices a half-dozen official-looking Lunarians lurking across the street from Stave's warehouse.

When the PCs enter the warehouse, Stave scowls and growls, "What do you want? Trying to get me thrown in the clink instead of just deported?"

Stave is quite angry and short with the PCs, blaming them for getting him, "an honest importer," expelled for political activities. He resolutely maintains that he has nothing to do with NEO. If confronted with the news accounts of his activities, he claims that the accounts are nothing but a pack of lies fed to the media by jealous competitors. Should the PCs mention that Qwon is the one who gave them his name as a NEO recruiter, Stave rubs his chin and says, "Maybe he's the one behind all this. I wonder what he's got against me?"

Finally, assuming the PCs continue to press the issue, Stave will say, "Just for curiosity's sake, why don't you tell me how you came into possession of these schematics and what's happened to you since. I'm not saying that I have anything to do with NEO, mind you. I just want to hear your story." Note that he asks about the schematics whether or not the PCs have told him they have the microchip.

When the PCs mention Rutgar.dos, Stave lifts an eyebrow and comments, "A DP, huh? That could explain a lot." Assuming that the PCs do mention Rutgar.dos, Stave lets them finish their story, then says, "Sorry I can't help you. But if I were in your shoes, I'd go to Dead Man's Wharf in L4. I hear it's a hangout for NEO rocketjocks."

If the PCs did not notice the six Lunarian officials lurking across the street from Stave's warehouse, or took no precautions to keep the Lunarians from seeing them enter the building, the six officials rush into the warehouse at this point. "Raid!" Stave snarls. Then, cursing, he opens a secret panel in the wall and rushes out into the alley. If the PCs follow and immediately return to their ship and leave Luna, they can avoid any complications with the Lunarian government. Otherwise, they must explain to Heinrich what they were doing speaking with Stave. In this event, Heinrich will freeze any deposits they have in the Firste Luna bank for an indeterminate length of time, "pending investigation." This is Heinrich's attempt to blackmail the PCs into giving him the Krait schematics.

**Statistics.** Stave Waxer's and Heinrich Sievarr's statistics are listed in earlier events.

**Lunarian Officials** (Six 2nd level rogues): Hp 8; AC 4 (smart suit); THAC0 20; Str 11; Dex 11; Con 12; Int 10; Wis 12; Cha 10; Tech 13.

**Weapon:** Rocket pistols; Dmg 1d10, ROF 2, Shots 5, Max Range 400.

**Career Skills:** Hide in Shadows 25, Move Silently 25, Notice 30.

**General Skills:** Drive Jetcar 20, Drive Groundcar 20.

# CHAPTER 10: DEAD MAN'S WHARF

The party has finally tracked down the organization responsible for stealing the Krait schematics from RAM's subsidiary: NEO. Unfortunately, NEO isn't sure it wants to have anything to do with the schematics or the PCs. Rutgar.dos has planted a rumor that the PCs are RAM agents who hope to use the Krait schematics to infiltrate the rebel organization. If the PCs are to rid themselves of the Krait schematics, and perhaps join NEO, they must clear their names.

## Dead Man's Wharf Station

**Setup.** As the PCs work their way through all the debris cluttering the L4 point and approach Dead Man's Wharf, they see a cell-type space station. Consisting of over a dozen cylindrical modules attached to a common rotational access, the station looks like four rows of cans nailed to a long tube. Some of the cylinders have gaping holes and are obviously abandoned, evidence of the station's age and neglect.

Contrary to Stave Waxer's insinuations, Dead Man's Wharf is anything but a NEO rocketjock hangout. It is an ancient, run-down space station that originally served as research colony, then was abandoned for over a hundred years before being claimed as salvage and refurbished by a group of enterprising businessmen (under the name of Rocketstop). Over the years, as bigger and better stations were built, Rocketstop fell into disuse. Eventually, individuals with good reason for avoiding the beaten path took the station by adverse possession (that is to say, they stole the station), and renamed it Dead Man's Wharf. The descendants of those individuals still inhabit the station, and its most frequent guests are pirates and other interplanetary criminals.

**Action.** When it becomes clear that the PCs intend to dock at Dead Man's Wharf, an elderly woman's cranky voice crackles over their radio. "Whoa, there! Where do you think you're going?"

The speaker is Sayla Sweetbread, the owner of the Where Ya Are chart shop. Before giving the PCs permission to dock, she asks them what they want at Dead Man's Wharf and whether or not they have hard currency to pay for it. Electronic credits are no good here, she explains. Assuming they respond positively, they are allowed to dock and come aboard. Otherwise, they cannot get into the station.

The airlock opens into a pressurized access tube running the length of the station. Within the tube, the PCs are weightless. They may pull themselves

along its length using a set of handholds. Individual cells are entered via a secondary (often dysfunctional) airlock, from which a short ladder descends into the middle of the room. There will be a few people conducting business in each chamber, but the station could hardly be said to be bustling. A trap door in the bottom of each cell opens into the owner's private living quarters. Individual cells are described briefly below.

## Dead Man's Wharf Cells

**A. Free Floater Cantina.** This is a dimly lit tavern. Fights are valued as free entertainment, so long as weapons that might breach the hull are not used.

**B. Flophouse Hostel.** This establishment offers dormitory type lodging. Anything not secured by the guest disappears. Rooms cost one credit per night, or more if PCs are foolish enough to pay it.

**C. Accident.** Someone left a crate of rocket rifle ammunition unattended here. A pyromaniac found it. The entire area is heavily damaged and not used.

**D. Trixie's Fix It Shop.** The tinker proprietor has a 40% chance to repair any broken item.

**E. Zebadar's Supplies.** Items commonly needed for spaceship travel are available here at twice the normal price.

**F. Hotel Space.** Private sleeping cubicles here go for 10cr each.

**G. Thelma's Restaurant.** Thelma's has cheap prices, but the food is worth what you pay.

**H. Bunny's Personal Defense.** Bunny, the cute tinker who runs this shop, stocks at least one of every kind of personal weapon listed in *The Technology Book*. Prices are twice that listed there.

**J. Jed's Rocket Repair.** This Terran engineer has Repair Electrical 50, Repair Life Support 50, Repair Mechanical 60, Repair Nuclear Engine 45, and Repair Rocket Hull 55. If not carefully watched, he steals his employers blind.

**K. Empty.**

**L. Life Support and Reactor Room.** In return for a certain amount of credit in any establishment on the station, Jeb maintains the station's life support and reactors. The NEO personnel staying on Dead's Man Wharf are paying Jeb a handsome sum to let them stay in the private quarters beneath the life support cell.

**M. Where Ya Are.** Sayla Sweetbread, an aged Terran woman who has never been off Dead Man's Wharf, runs this chart shop. Her information is remarkably up to date and accurate (much of it is supplied by pirates).

N. Himey's Storage. An untrustworthy Lunarian runs this storage facility. If anything worth more than 1,000cr is stored here, the locker will be broken into and the item stolen.

**O. RAM Executive Suite.** This is where RAM's agent stayed when he came to inquire about buying the station.

## Warning

**Setup.** The personnel aboard Dead Man's Wharf will treat the PCs as they do all strangers: with suspicion. No matter how cleverly the PCs ask, nobody seems to know anything about any NEO agents working out of this station or any other at L4. Such inquiries are treated with irritation, amusement, or even outright laughter.

**Action.** After the PCs have been aboard the station for a while, a handsome Martian dressed in filthy overalls and wearing a patch over his left eye approaches them. He will most likely make his approach when the PCs are at the Free Floater Cantina. He discreetly flashes a RAM badge identifying him as one Theocarsus Paoli, then whispers, "I have a message for you. Your cover's blown. Abort mission and return to base as soon as possible." Theocarsus stands and leaves immediately, pointedly ignoring the PCs.

Should they attempt to follow, he angrily tells them that he's spent two years working to establish his own cover, and he'd appreciate it if they didn't blow it for him. If pressed further, he tells the PCs that he received instructions from Coprates Central to relay the message he just gave them.

If the PCs somehow get Theocarsus' credentials and one of them makes a successful Difficult Notice Skill Check, they can tell that the credentials are forgeries. Theocarsus, of course, will maintain that the credentials are legitimate.

Theocarsus is actually a NEO operative. He was sent to relay the message to the PCs to see how they responded. If the PCs respond in a manner that indicates they are RAM agents, Theocarsus disappears at the first opportunity and the PCs never make contact with the rebel organization. In this case, their best option may be to return to Luna or Venus.

After their encounter with Theocarsus, the PCs will probably want to investigate Dead Man's Wharf or Theocarsus or both. Proceed with the next event, Investigation. If, on the other hand, they try to approach Theocarsus again, proceed with the event Denial.

## Statistics.

**Theocarsus Paoli** (3rd level rogue, NEO agent): Hp 12; AC 10; THAC0 19; Str 11; Dex 13; Con 12; Int 13; Wis 12; Cha 14; Tech 11.

**Weapon:** Needle gun; Dmg 1d3, ROF 3, Shots 20, Max Range 40.

**Career Skills:** Bypass Security 40, Fast Talk/Convince 50, Pick Pocket 30.

**General Skills:** Maneuver in Zero G 20, Pilot Rocket 20, Use Rocket Belt 20.

## Investigation

**Setup.** The PCs have not even received a warm welcome at Dead Man's Wharf, much less made satisfactory contact with NEO. Use this event when and if they investigate to find out why.

**Action.** The best source of information about Dead Man's Wharf is the old woman Sayla Sweetbread. She is a direct descendant of the scoundrels who wrested control of the station from the Rocket-stop partnership over two hundred years ago. Anybody whom the PCs question about the station's history will direct them to Sayla. Of course, Sayla will only tell her story for a price—though a single credit of hard currency will loosen her tongue sufficiently to reveal the whole story as outlined in the setup of the event Dead Man's Wharf Station.

Notably missing from Sayla's story is any reference to NEO or NEO rocketjocks. If questioned about this, the old woman laughs so hard that she almost stops breathing. NEO has no interest in Dead Man's Wharf, and never has, according to Sayla.

For 10cr an hour, Sayla will allow the PCs to use her computer—the only one on Dead Man's Wharf. By passing an Average Programming Skill Check, any PC contacting any mainframe computer can confirm Sayla's account of Dead Man's Wharf's history.

**Theocarsus Paoli.** PCs asking around about Theocarsus Paoli will meet nothing but blank stares and noncommittal shrugs—unless they are willing to pay for the information. Any bribe of 10cr or more reveals that he arrived a short time before the PCs. Nobody seems to know much about him, save that he pays in hard currency for their services.

Discreet bribes or other investigations at the Flophouse Hostel or Hotel Space reveal that Theocarsus is not registered at these accommodations. If asked about where else Theocarsus could be staying, the PCs will be cryptically directed to speak with Jed of

Jed's Rocket Repair.

If questioned about Theocarsus, Jed becomes noticeably uncomfortable, but denies any knowledge whatsoever of the Martian's accommodations. If threatened or bribed (10cr or more), Jed readily reveals that Theocarsus is paying 25cr a day to rent the living quarters below the life support unit, and he doesn't want anybody to know where he's staying.

Any PC renting Sayla's computer and using it in an attempt to inquire about Theocarsus from the RAM mainframe computer must pass a Difficult Programming Skill Check. A successful check reveals that Theocarsus is a refugee from Martian justice with a price on his head. An unsuccessful check brings an inquiry from an officious-looking Martian bureaucrat into the PCs' reason for inquiring about Theocarsus, and where they last saw him.

Just to contact NEO's mainframe computer requires an Average Programming Skill Check. Inquiring about Theocarsus requires a separate Difficult Programming Skill Check. A successful check reveals that, after escaping from a Martian prison transport two years ago, Theocarsus joined NEO. He is currently listed as an "operative trainee."

The PCs can learn no more about Theocarsus. Proceed with the next event, Denial, when they attempt to contact him again.

## Denial

**Setup.** Use this event when and if the PCs confront Theocarsus about being a NEO agent directly, or if they go to search his quarters below the life support cell. Theocarsus will not be hard to find. He spends most of his time in the Free Floater Cantina holding subdued conversations with rough-looking rocketjocks (the conversations are about convoy routes and RAM activity, and the rough-looking rocketjocks are mostly pirates).

Should the PCs elect to search Theocarsus' quarters while he is not there, they must make an Average Open Locks Skill Check to break into the room (or blast the lock off with a laser pistol or similar weapon). Inside, they find nothing of interest—a bed, an extra laser pistol, and a smart suit. Shortly after they enter his room, however, Theocarsus returns.

**Action.** Whether the PCs meet Theocarsus in a public place or he catches them searching his quarters, he draws his needle gun on them and discreetly lets them know they are covered. Then he asks the PCs why they didn't obey their orders and leave.

If the PCs play along and pretend to be RAM operatives, Theocarsus concludes that they are truly RAM infiltrators. He will pretend to accept their explanation, but at the first opportunity, he simply disappears and cannot be found. If this happens, the PCs' best chance of ridding themselves of the Krait schematics is to sell the microchip to Luna or Venus.

Assuming the PCs deny being RAM operatives, however, Theocarsus allows that he might not be a RAM operative either, then asks them what they want with him. After the PCs explain their situation, he tells them a story. Without directly admitting that he belongs to NEO, he asks the PCs to suppose that RAM wanted to infiltrate a group of spies into a rebel organization. "Wouldn't it be possible," he asks, "that they would give these spies some valuable piece of information that they knew this rebel organization was desperately trying to acquire, hoping to tempt the rebels into accepting the spies as their own?"

Clever PCs will realize that RAM has set them up in order to keep NEO from accepting the microchip. If they point out this possibility to Theocarsus, he will admit that it seems as likely as the first scenario, then suggest that the PCs must find a way to prove that they are who they say they are. When the party has developed a plan for doing this, proceed with the event The Final Trap.

Should the PCs attack at any time, Theocarsus will flee. If necessary, he has two friends who will cover his retreat, and all three will disappear as soon as possible. Under no circumstances will they linger to fight. As far as they are concerned, the PCs' attack has demonstrated that they are RAM agents, and that is all Theocarsus needed to know.

**Statistics.** Theocarsus' statistics are presented earlier in this chapter. His two friends are similarly skilled and armed.

## The Final Trap

**Setup.** Use this event when the PCs have developed a plan for proving that they are not RAM agents. Theocarsus will readily agree to provide what assistance he can, as long as the plan does not involve placing himself in unreasonable danger, leading the PCs to a NEO base, or revealing the names of any NEO operatives.

**Action.** It is impossible to predict all the different ways that the PCs can prove they are not RAM agents. However, the following strategies will prove effective in convincing Theocarsus that the party is what it claims to be:

1) By now, clever PCs should realize that Rutgar.dos

has them under constant surveillance, and that the DP has probably found a way into the Dead Man's Wharf computer system (such an assumption would be correct). Luring him into the open and tricking him into discussing the party's past history regarding the Krait schematics will convince Theocarsus of the party's truthfulness. However, Rutgar.dos will be watching for such a trick. By making a successful Intelligence check, he can avoid falling into their trap.

2) Rutgar.dos is convinced that the PCs have turned the Krait schematics over to Theocarsus, Rutgar.dos will have no choice except to make a desperate attack. He will cause all of the station's airlocks to simultaneously open, leading to rapid decompression. The PCs have two rounds to correct the situation (by climbing into space suits or making a Difficult Programming Skill Check to counteract Rutgar.dos's control of the computer system). After two rounds, they must save vs. suffocation each round or take 1d8 points of suffocation damage.

3) Volunteering to turn the Krait schematics over to NEO without expectation of payment or of joining the rebel organization will also convince Theocarsus of their sincerity. Of course, he will then check the authenticity of the schematics.

If the PCs cannot think of a satisfactory way of proving who they say they are, then Theocarsus reluctantly tells them to go back to Luna or Venus. Even for the Krait schematics, he cannot risk introducing spies into the rebel network.

On the other hand, assuming the PCs convince Theocarsus of their sincerity, he tells the PCs that he believes their story. Continue with the next event.

## Welcome to NEO

**Setup.** The PCs have convinced Theocarsus of their sincerity. At some signal that the PCs don't notice, a tall, striking strawberry blonde woman and powerfully built, sandy-haired man join the party at its table.

**Action.** The man and holds out his hand in friendship. "Welcome to NEO," he says. "I hope you don't mind our little test, but we couldn't afford to take any chances."

The man, of course, is Buck Rogers and the

woman is Wilma Deering. They have been carefully observing the PCs since their arrival, and are the ones the party really had to convince of their truthfulness. Buck and Wilma treat the PCs like long-lost friends, treating them to whatever they want to drink and eat. They take it as granted that the PCs are going to join NEO.

If the subject of payment comes up, Buck gladly agrees to pay the PCs whatever they want for the Krait schematics. Wilma, however, frowns and starts to object, saying that she doesn't see how NEO could possibly afford such an outrageous sum. Buck responds that it's simple—the PCs can have half of anything they steal from RAM!

Should the PCs decline to join NEO, but simply wish to turn the Krait schematics over, both Buck and Wilma seem disappointed. The pair tries to convince the PCs to change their minds, noting that NEO can use resourceful characters like them, and suggesting that NEO is the only place where they will ever be safe from Rutgar.dos, Ardala, and everybody else who will hold a grudge against them for giving the Krait schematics to NEO. Should the PCs persist, however, both Buck and Wilma will agree that the PCs will always have friends in NEO. The adventure ends as Buck suggests that they go to a safe place and have the microchip extracted.

In the unlikely event that the PCs change their mind and decide not to deliver the Krait schematics to NEO, Buck will suggest that NEO could come up with 10,000cr to reimburse them for the cost of recovering the schematics, but the rebel organization simply doesn't have the resources to pay any more.

If the PCs still don't want to give the schematics to NEO, Wilma gets quite angry. After trying to appeal to their collective conscience, she accuses the PCs of being everything from greedy Martian sand squirmers to Mercurian lead-pond scum. Buck tries to calm her, reminding her that the PCs have the right to do whatever they wish with the schematics. He takes her by the wrist and leaves. The next time the PCs find a RAM cruiser pounding on their ship, they'd better be smart enough not to call NEO for help.

**Statistics.** The statistics of both Buck Rogers and Wilma Deering are listed in the XXVc™ game.

# EPILOGUE

By the end of this adventure, the PCs should no longer have the Krait schematics. For the adventure to be considered a success, however, it is not necessary for them to have joined NEO. Instead, they might have delivered the plans to any one of a number of individuals or organizations—though with better results from some than others.

RAM, its subsidiary Hammerhead, Inc., Ardala, or the Mercurians, for instance, would all betray the PCs at the first opportunity, judging them to be of little future value. On the other hand, if the PCs decided to return to the Black Brotherhood with the plans, the pirates would receive the schematics gladly, but would also begrudge the PCs only as much respect as they could earn. The Venusians and Lunarians would do their best to live up to any agreement they made, though it might be difficult with a crazed DP and Ardala seeking vengeance. NEO, of course, would gladly accept the party into their ranks, and the PCs would be sure to find plenty of adventure and excitement with the rebel organization in the years to come.

It is quite likely that the PCs have accumulated a considerable amount of wealth in this adventure. A lot of organizations were willing to pay a lot of money for the Krait schematics, and clever PCs will have used this to their advantage. In addition, they are probably still be in possession of the *Intrepid Pedagogue*, the ship loaned to them by Professor Jarlshorf.

As the referee, it is your choice as to whether or not the PCs retain their ship and wealth. The *Intrepid Pedagogue* can always be destroyed by a vengeful Rutgar.dos, or repossessed for Jarlshorf by a RAM cruiser. If the money is in a bank on Luna, the PCs' assets can always be frozen, to be dribbled out to them a little at a time. If they are foolish enough to carry such a large amount in hard currency, there are always plenty of thieves, custom agents, and pirates who would be happy to relieve them of some of it.

## Appendix One

Somehow, the PCs have defeated Rutgar.dos and are going to Jupiter. This should pose no problem to the flow of the adventure. Using the information provided in the boxed set, improvise an event or two as the PCs refuel and stock up on supplies. Within a day or so, however, Rutgar.dos, Ardala, and the others will catch up to the party, and the adventure will continue much as before, save that it occurs in the exotic frontier of Jupiter.

## Appendix Two

The PCs have been taken to Mars. They will be incarcerated in a maximum security facility and subjected to a dozen torturous examinations. Finally, the Martians announce that they have discovered where the Krait schematics are hidden and prepare the chip-bearer for surgery. The PCs must escape, preferably before the surgery begins, or they will all spend years in prison. See the events in Chapter 4 for examples of RAM guards and strategies for escape opportunities—though, of course, escaping from a full-sized prison will prove much more difficult than escaping from a ship's brig.

## Appendix Three

Ardala has recovered the microchip containing the Krait schematics and the PCs want it back. They will have to go to Coprates on Mars and either break into Ardala's fortress mansion (an adventure in itself), or find some way of blackmailing her into returning the chip. There is little that would embarrass Ardala, so any blackmail attempts will have to be based on the very real threat of being incarcerated or having her assets seized for some severe violation of RAM's interests. Of course, Ardala will not take such actions lightly. She will attempt to have the PCs assassinated—probably several times, in progressively clever and dangerous ways.

# NEO in the 25th Century

by Troy Denning

There's something rotten in Coprates. A professor from Mars University hires your band of shady vagabonds to search Jupiter's moons for alien artifacts. Strange, though—that isn't the sort of job RAM subcontracts. Is the professor pursuing a proscribed area of inquiry? Or is he just a crackpot who can't engage a reputable salvage company?

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