

A movie poster for the Serenity Role Playing Game. The background features a collage of images: on the left, a man in a brown shirt (Zoe Washburne); in the center, a man holding a gun (Malcolm Tullus); on the right, a woman with a bloody forehead (River Tam); and at the bottom, the Serenity spaceship flying through space. The title 'SERENITY' is in the center, with a circular logo containing the Japanese characters '寧靜' (Ninsei) behind it. Below the title is a banner that says 'ROLE PLAYING GAME'. At the bottom, the word 'ADVENTURES' is written in large blue letters. A small signature '2/6' is in the bottom right corner.

SERENITY

ROLE PLAYING GAME

ADVENTURES

SERENITY ROLE PLAYING GAME ADVENTURES

GHOSTS OF THE REBELLION
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THE BEST THINGS GET BETTER WITH AGE
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FREEDOM'S FLIGHT
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SEVEN ARKS OF CIBOLA
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THE WAY IT IS

Any number of things can happen to a crew. Sure, you want things to go smooth. Do the job, get paid, keep flyin'. Seems simple enough, don't it? Truth is, though, things are rarely that easy. Alliance patrols, con artists, thieves, Reavers, and big business might all be ready to ruin a perfectly good week. It's *wei shan* out in the Black, but if you love your boat and the crew sticks together you'll live to fly another day.

What Is This? My friend, you're holding a collection of adventures for the *Serenity Role Playing Game*. It's a story that you—the Game Master—play with a group of friends using the Cortex System game rules. The players can use the crew of *Serenity*, the sample *Aces & Eights* crew, or even characters of their own creation. Pick a story from this book, do a little prep, and you'll be ready for adventures of your own.

Any of these tales can be played, and in any order that suits your campaign—though if you're looking to start out with a brand new crew you could do worse than start with "Freedom's Flight."

Your Story & Your Crew

These stories are told in the 'Verse of Serenity and as Game Master you'll be the one telling it. It's a story that's told in many different places and, as the way of stories go, the telling of it changes dependin' on who's doing the telling. That's shiny—it don't matter what *chwen joo* told the story elsewhere or how he told it. This is your story and you'll be tellin' it your way.

No one quite remembers who was in the story in the first place, so you and the players in your game will be tellin' it with the crew that you choose. Maybe they're all big, damn heroes or maybe they're all Greenhorns just startin' out. (This tale is meant to be told for a Veteran crew, so if you tell this tale with characters of less stellar capabilities, then you'll need to ease up on them a mite—or make things tougher for big damn heroes.)

The Tellin' of the Tales

Some of these stories are divided into episodes, while others are just a single episode unto themselves. Each episode is divided into acts that may be comprised of a single scene or several scenes depending on how the act is played out. The episodes and acts are given in the correct order to make the story work. What takes place inside the acts and especially in sideshow

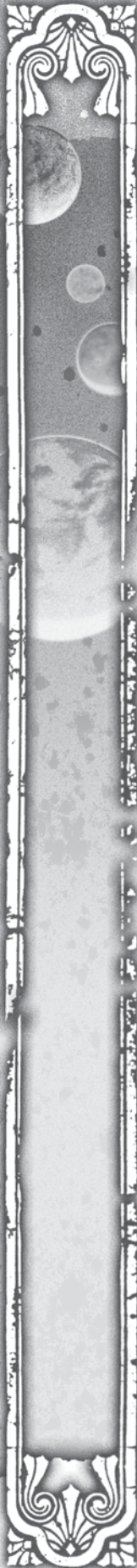
scenes may happen in any kind of order—so it's important that you keep the whole picture of what's goin' on in your mind as you tell the tale.

Acts that have only one scene and all scenes and sideshows follow this order:

- **How It Is:** This first part sets up the scene, paints the backdrop, and puts the chairs on the stage, so to speak. It usually starts with boxed text—colorful prose that you can either read to the players or use as a guide for your own words and fancy description.
- **Problems:** Things don't stay peaceful for long. Every scene has a problem or two for the crew that they are goin' to have to either get past or get buried. Good or bad, rich or poor, pleasantly helpful or downright ornery—here's where you'll also find the most important folks populatin' the scene the crew is in. Most often as not, you'll want to keep their stats in front of you.
- **New Way of Things:** Now the crew has to clean up the mess. When they come out the other side of a problem—if they live through it—then some things will have changed. In this part of the scene, the crew examines the results of what they did. Might be the problem is solved or might be the crew now has even bigger problems!

Note: Words in all capitals are usually Difficulties (like EASY, HARD, FORMIDABLE). Thus, when you read a phrase like: "Pilots find landing in the steep canyon FORMIDABLE ..." this means that the Difficulty for the described action is, indeed, Formidable and requires a roll of 15 or higher to succeed. In this way, you will know what's what about rolling dice without interruptin' the flow of the tale.

So what are you waiting for? Pick an adventure, grab your crew, and get to flyin'!



CHAPTER ONE

GHOSTS OF THE REBELLION

THE WAY IT IS

The War has been over for years and most folk' want to forget it. For some the old wounds never heal. They'll listen to a veteran's bar story for awhile, then get up and go about their business. And then there are the relics, the ghosts of the Rebellion, those people for whom the war never ended and never will.

For our heroes, just making a living is hard enough. It seems the 'Verse's poker deck is stacked against them right now and they need a winning hand to get them out of the red. A winning hand is coming ... dealt by a ghost.

HERE'S THE STORY

At the end of the War for Unification, **Roland Sharpe** was the admiral of what remained of the Browncoat fleet. Because he did not attend the Armistice negotiations on Osiris, he lost his chance at amnesty, and was branded a traitor and outlaw. He's been on the run ever since, keeping to the Rim territories and depending on the kindness of Independent sympathizers to keep him safe.

But Admiral Sharpe is getting older and over six years on the run has taken its toll on him. He's developed a hacking cough and is convinced that he doesn't have much more time to kick around the 'Verse. So when one of his confidants told him of an opportunity to snatch one last piece of glory and escape into the Black, he could not refuse. The last ship of Sharpe's command, *Freedom's Glory*, was captured near the end of the war, almost with Sharpe inside her. Now word has reached him that the Alliance is transferring the vessel to a scrapping facility on **Pegasus**—a moon of Bellerophon. In a last bit of spiteful vengeance or the simple grinding efficiency of bureaucracy, the Alliance intends to destroy the *Glory* after stripping her of salvage.

Hiding on Whitefall, Sharpe, his right-hand man, **Saul Potter**, and two soldiers plot to steal the *Glory* from the clutches of the Alliance. Once the ship is Sharpe's again, he believes he will have no trouble keeping free of the Alliance when he's out in the Black. And he will have left the "stage" with a masterstroke.

But Sharpe and his men don't have a ship at hand and have used up all the favors owed to them. They are currently holed up in a marginal shipyard on Whitefall, relying on the sympathetic yard boss to look the other way. They have set up quarters in the junkyard area.

Assuming they get transport to **Pegasus**, they also need an engineer to get the ship running again. Once space-worthy, Sharpe has enough Skills to fly the ship into the black and escape. Such a mission is even harder without money, and Sharpe is desperately trying to find a suitable ship and crew.

Your Story, Your Crew

The story is originally set just prior to the events of the movie, *Serenity*. It can be run with the heroes from the movie or an original crew. If using the movie characters, Shepherd Book has already been left at the mining colony of Haven to tend a flock there. River is still on the ship, but has been sedated to help her rest and recover from recent debilitating nightmares. She is not an active PC or NPC, but must be watched, cared for, and protected. With some adjustment, however, you can make this story work for other times and include the other characters if you wish.

Note that in this adventure, we have suggested happenings for characters or equivalents for a player-created crew. Figure out which character fits best for certain problems, plot twists, and circumstances. It will make the players feel more directly involved and invested in the story!

GMs are welcome to play the adventure with a campaign crew who follow the classic campaign model (Browncoat sympathies and history, taking jobs to keep flyin' and keep free). Additional references in the adventure have been made to generic roles as applicable. The adventure can also be used if the crew are not Browncoat sympathizers, though the GM will need to invest more time in adapting the adventure. It is highly recommended that the GM read through the entire adventure before running it, because various elements can come earlier or later than expected depending on how the crew handle the challenges.

In particular, the sedated River becomes a hostage halfway through the adventure. If using an original crew, substitute another character (least likely to put up a fight) or perhaps use the threat of a bomb on board the ship to keep things interestin'.

The Tellin' of the Tale

The adventure is driven by Roland Sharpe and his need to escape into the Black. The crew come along willingly or not, giving the adventure its basic structure. There may be side roads and distractions along the way, but if the crew separate from Roland and his goals, then they have basically declined the adventure and returned to the work of making a living as a tramp freighter on the Rim. Hopefully, the lure of payment and some level of sympathy for the Browncoat cause will be sufficient to get them to commit. Either that or they'll be blackmailed into going along!

A Little Bit More

Throughout the adventure, sidebars provide additional information on details designed to help Game Masters take the adventure a bit further afield or weave it more easily into their own campaigns.

Episode 1 **DOG DAYS**

Life on the Rim is never easy and some days it's downright difficult. Luck ain't been running so well for the crew and they are in a precarious situation. Debts are owed, the ship's tanks are running dry, and the hired hands haven't been paid for weeks. Some might take it with a smile, but most are grouchy and stressed, dreaming of a big payday to set them to rights again—or even something more drastic.

ACT I: APPROACHING WHITEFALL

The crew's ship is a few hours out from Whitefall on the way to delivering 100 Sinhon Coursers—pure-breed hunting dogs—to the home of a cattle rancher known as **Eagle-Eye Sarafina**. The coordinates for the drop are known: 10 miles southeast of the Whitefall settlement. The dogs have demanded constant attention from most of the crew, who've been feeding, watering, and exercising them up and down the passageways narrowed by their stacked cages. The cargo hold has cages three stories high throughout it. The barking and noise is near constant and the whole ship smells of dog *mi tian gohn*.

But the ship is haulin' worries along with the high-strung dogs. Jobs have been scarce and the best paying ones have been too risky to dare with Simon/Doctor and River/Fugitive onboard. Two weeks earlier, Mal/Captain was forced to jettison some contraband cargo before being boarded and searched by an Alliance customs vessel. This left him in debt to a fixer named **Percival Chao** (see sidebar page six) on Persephone to the tune of 4,000 credits. By the time *Serenity* touches down in Whitefall, their fuel stores are down to five days with no significant cash to replenish their supply. Kaylee/Mechanic has a growing list of repairs that need to be made as soon as possible. Food is down to protein paste and hard biscuits. There's been no pay shares among the crew in several weeks. The dog run has already

A Little Bit More

Percival Chao: One of the most respected socialites on Persephone, Percival is a gracious Asian bachelor with assets and estates on Sinhon. As he tells it, he ventured out into the 'Verse to find "challenges and opportunities that just weren't available in the Core worlds". Most know him for the seasonal shindigs he throws at his country estate. A select few also know about his extensive black market network and his role as a "fixer"—a kind of trade agent for illegal merchandise or goods needin' to avoid tariffs or inspection. Very few know that Chao left Sinhon to escape the wrath of the Tongs who exert near absolute power over illegal activities in the Core.

The ISV Francisco: The *Francisco* is a newly commissioned Alliance Patrol Boat sent out to the Border Planets to attack the rampant problem of contraband smuggling. Her commander, **Eugene Renaldo**, is a senior captain and veteran of the Unification War. He is thrilled to have a ship again and looking forward to the opportunities for "prize money"—portions of the value of confiscated cargo and ships paid to the officers and crew of an Alliance vessel. He is quite eager and dogged in his attempts to find contraband. Though he is currently just using official channels for tips on smugglers and their illegal trade agents, the fixers, he is open to suggestions.

been paid for and that money had gone against their debt with Chao, leaving 2,000 credits of debt remaining. Prospects can't be considered bright on Whitefall, where they've had repeated run-ins with the local authority, a frontier boss named Imogene Patience. Doin's on Whitefall need to be quiet for the drop and quieter still finding another job. (If you're playing with the *Serenity* crew, they have even more reason to avoid catching the attention of Patience.)

SCENE 1: SICK AS A DOG

Cargo goin' bad is unavoidable, and rarely pleases the recipient. Another fouled up job is exactly what this crew *doesn't* need.

How It Is (Setup):

The ship is late for its intended drop by three days on account of a nosy Alliance patrol boat, the *ISV Francisco* (see sidebar page six). Food for the dogs has just about run out. During the nearly constant feeding, watering and exercising of the dogs, Zoe/Browncoat (who grew up with dogs

and appreciates the fine form and instinct of the coursers) finds two that are acting strange: listless and crouching, but will not lie down. They are panting heavily and don't want to move. You can either have the character roll to notice the dog's condition or fully role play the scene so the player can draw his own conclusions.

Problems:

For Simon/Doctor (or anyone with medical training), it will be a **FORMIDABLE** task to identify the malady with the crude equipment on the ship. If he succeeds, he'll realize that it is a common canine disease that responds to antibiotics. The dogs should be isolated and should recover in 3-4 days. If his attempt is an Extraordinary Success, he'll also realize that this disease is one that all dogs should have been inoculated against, not a good sign for the breeder that supplied them. If he really botched the diagnosis, he is convinced that it's Hudler's Malady, a highly contagious and lethal canine virus, undoubtedly already infecting the rest of the dogs and which will end with each dog's death two weeks after first symptoms have been seen.

Dogs aren't people, so finding the right drug to fight the disease is a problem in itself. Again, the medical expert will be tested and find it a **FORMIDABLE** task to come up with medicine to treat the problem. With success, a cocktail is developed to relieve the symptoms and attack the underlying virus. Injections are quick, but there isn't enough to inoculate the rest of the dogs. If the doctor's Skills are Extraordinary, he'll find a way to make enough for all the dogs. If treating animals just isn't his thing (botch), the concoction proves quickly fatal to the first dog, but that happens quickly before the rest of the ailing dogs are injected.

New Way of Things (Results):

Either the dogs are fine, sick, or at least one is dead. Two of those situations don't bode well for delivering the cargo

SCENE 2: SLIPPING THROUGH THE NET

Most planets and moons have some sort of network of satellites that let the local authorities know what's going on around them. The poorer the planet, the less capable the satellites, but still, it's best to avoid them if you can. If there was ever a time this crew needed to fly low, it's now.

How It Is (Setup):

The approach to Whitefall is fairly quiet. The planet isn't heavily populated and being the fourth and mostly forgotten moon of the Rim world of Athens, most folks who live there are poor. Even the upper class feels more comfortable in the saddle than a hovercraft. That said, the moon is watched over by a rudimentary system of satellites drifting about in inconsistent orbits. Spaceship traffic is light—just a few salvage lighters picking over the bones of a long-dead cruiser floating high above the moon.

Problems:

Finding a gap in a satellite network should be *Jahn* for any experienced Pilot/Wash. It's only of AVERAGE difficulty to slip through the net, the consequences of failure can be pretty intimidating. With a deft hand and sharp eye, the Pilot/Wash can successfully slip through the net and descend toward dirtside. With special Skill, an Extraordinary job allows the ship to draft one of the salvage lighters and slip down to the surface while Patience's ships harass the lighter. If the Pilot/Wash's Skill fails him, the ship will be spotted. A botched job means Patience has identified their ship and she's not pleased to know competition has come to town.

New Way of Things (Results):

If their ship was just spotted landing on Whitefall, Patience will send out a pair of hands to investigate and maybe charge a tariff on the cargo. If she has identified the ship as belonging to someone she knows, she'll ride out in force with five gun hands, demanding landing fees and a high tariff. She's ready to settle any old scores.

If the Pilot/Wash was good enough to escape notice, Patience could interfere later or not at all.

Settling Debts with Sarafina

It is quite possible that the crew ends up owing Sarafina quite a few credits. This might lead to a sidetrack adventure wherein Sarafina finds some way for the crew to pay him back, holding their ship hostage until he is satisfied. If this is the case, Sarafina could be packin' a major grudge against Patience and he'll use the crew to score one against his rival. This could be a heist, a raid, or even something more dastardly against Patience's properties, cattle herds, or people.

SCENE 3: DEALING WITH EAGLE-EYE

The life of a tramp freighter is made up of comings and goings, deals done on one planet and concluded on another. Even with the Cortex, there is usually miscommunication, if not outright dishonesty takin' place somewhere in the deal. In this case, at least the crew don't have to try to get money from the delivery end. They were paid up front. Don't mean it won't get interestin'.

How It Is (Setup):

Sarafina's ranch stretches on both sides of a wide river with scrub and dirt near the banks and scraggly forest beyond that. A large expanse is fenced in and a herd of horses run in front of the ship as it approaches the center of the ranch, like dolphins racing the sailing ships of old. The center has several stables (enough for 50 horses) and a large main house on a hill overlooking a bend of the river. A cleared area on the far side of the river from the house appears to be the designated landing site.

After the ship lands, Eagle-eye will emerge from the forest beyond the main house accompanied by three other men. They are all on horses and go splashing across a shallow part of the river to reach the newly landed ship. They all appear to be excellent riders and all have both hip holsters and rifles in saddle sheaths. They could be read as threatening if any of the characters choose to interpret it that way.

Eagle-Eye Sarafina is an energetic man with hastily slicked back hair and shaving cuts on his face. He wears riding pants and boots with a more ornate jacket. His light brown hair is drawn

back into a ponytail and a brown-leather patch covers one eye (the eagle got that one). Sarafina loves hunting and trains horses and dogs at the ranch. He has clients from all over Whitefall and even some from Athens.

Sarafina will approach the ship openly, though his men are more wary keeping their hands near their weapons. He knows a great deal about the breeding of dogs and will blather on about them as he moves through the ship inspecting his purchases. His men will begin leashing each dog to a long tow line to be taken to the stables. (This is typical and not considered cruel treatment.)

Problems:

If Inara/Companion is aboard, it would be a task of AVERAGE difficulty to look up Sarafina's records in the Guild database. A success in the search reveals that Sarafina is a trustworthy client, a sportsman, and widower. In Extraordinary situations, the Companion has actually spent time with Sarafina in the past. A botch indicates that Sarafina has been denied by the Guild in the past and is marked as "holding a grudge." If he spots the Companion or recognizes her shuttle, this could sour relations quickly. He will become difficult to deal with and finds fault in anything just to cause trouble.

If any of the dogs still exhibit signs of illness or if any of them are dead, Sarafina will be very concerned about all the dogs. He will refuse to take any off the ship until his vet looks at them. The Doctor/Simon might try an INCREDIBLE bluff, but if not, Sarafina will call in a local vet. Any sick or dead dogs will cause him to demand a refund of 250 credits for each dog—credits the crew does not have. Plus he'll leave them with the sick dogs.

New Way of Things (Results):

If Sarafina is happy with the dogs, he'll be in a good mood, and the crew might ask him about potential jobs or sources of badly needed fuel. He'll explain that Imogene Patience runs most things on Whitefall and it's soon obvious that he dislikes the situation a good bit. If the crew aren't eager to make Patience's acquaintance again, he suggests that they might want to ask around at the Slaughterhouse, an unofficial hangout for cattle ranchers and hunters in town.

Sarafina is appreciative that the dogs arrived safe and sound and, if asked, is willing to let the crew keep their ship on his land for a few days if they like.

ACT II: FINDING A JOB

After the delivery of the dogs, the crew need a paying job desperately. There are several ways the crew can come into contact with Saul Potter, Sharpe's aide-de-camp. Sharpe and Potter have recently learned about the location and intended fate of *Freedom's Glory*. Potter will be looking for a discrete crew that can be convinced to take them to rescue the old ship.

There are several role playing options for making this connection. Generally, the crew should find their way to the Slaughterhouse and contact Saul Potter there. Here are several more ways to make the connection, depending on how the crew approach the problem.

a. Inara/Companion spends time with Sarafina who, through pillow talk, reveals that a gentleman and his retainers are seeking passage off Whitefall. Rumor has it they are important Browncoats and can be contacted by talking to the spaceport's junkyard boss. Sarafina hopes someone gets rid of this bunch, as he has no time for Browncoat trash.

b. If Simon/Doctor shows his face, Potter may contact him in his capacity as a doctor to examine a friend of his. He might even promise to help Simon/Doctor find black market drugs in exchange for his services.

c. Kaylee/Mechanic might head to the junkyard to scrounge for parts, giving her cause to encounter Potter or the others.

d. If Patience spotted the crew, word will spread that there's a strange ship out at Sarafina's place. Potter will definitely approach them.

e. If Zoe/Browncoat ventures into town, she'll be noticed (Trait: Memorable). Saul Potter remembers her from a time during the war when she was assigned to guard and protect a group of Navy officers waiting for a clandestine meeting. Potter sticks out in *her* mind as he seemed so out-of-place, someone uncomfortable with dirt or even Border-world slang. He was the quintessential Core-worlder, yet he was the trusted aide-de-camp to a high ranking naval

officer. Potter will trust Zoe/Browncoat as a loyal Browncoat. He will approach her quietly and try to engage the crew's services.

f. If Sarafina isn't softened by the Companion's touch, Mal/Captain might try to persuade Sarafina to reveal job leads. He might tell them about Potter, but Sarafina has no patience for Browncoat sympathizers. He was neutral in the war and hurt financially by it. If he does mention Potter, he will term him little more than a junk yard dog.

SCENE 1: EVENINGS AT THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Entering the club of the local barons is certainly risky, but can also be rewarding.

How It Is (Setup):

The Slaughterhouse is near both the stockyards and the spaceport. It serves as the local cattleman's club, as well as a slaughterhouse. It can process 50 head of cattle a day and can handle wild animals brought in by hunters or local ranchers. A large outer room features various cattlemen's tools for sale, as well as beer and grilled meat. In the South Room several cattlemen loiter about. More come in the evenings. Deals are made there, stories told, and lies swapped. Heads of ranches and major businesses in town socialize here. Patience is not welcome at the Slaughterhouse, making it one of the few places where people can speak freely about their "Governor."

If the crew visits, they will note a high-stakes poker game being played at a corner table. Several local-landed gentry are playing, as well as a traveling gambler named Hiram Clogg.

Problems:

Unlike its moniker, the Slaughterhouse is not a rough and tumble bar. Leading members of the ranching community gather to socialize and beat each other at cards or deals. They don't take kindly to crude language or behavior. They will be impressed by fine clothes and civilized manners and will treat a person accordingly. Trusted men stand at the bar or quietly by the doors, one or two per rancher, ready to defend the boss. With so many gun hands in the room, things rarely get out of hand.

At the first sign of trouble or unacceptable behavior, Joseph Chiu, the bar man, will politely ask the offending person and friends to leave. If there is resistance or truly shocking behavior, the ranchers and their men have no qualms about pulling guns on "drifters."

While there is a chair open at the poker table, most strange folk won't be welcome sitting in on the game. It'll take a bit of HARD persuasion if any of the crew wants to get in on the action, as well as a surety of funds to play with. For every 50 credits they can put on the table (or equivalent in platinum, 2.5 platinum coins = 1 credit), they get a +1 Skill step bonus on the roll. If they fail, they will be barred from joining. A botch and they are immediately thrown out of the Slaughterhouse.

Sittin' at the gamblin' table are: Enos Barclay (owner of the largest general store in the town), Dimitri Markham (local sheep rancher), Giles O'Malley (cattle rancher), Hiram Clogg (gambler), and Jeremiah Fong (cattle rancher).

If the crew manages to join the game, more possibilities arise. The crew are talkative and several things come to light. First, the snide jokes about "Imogene" prove that these folks are not fans of "Governor Patience." They might be entertained if told how the new player put one over on the "old girl."

Much of the rest of the talk at the table is about "the Fights." It seems that a popular pastime in Whitefall is bare-knuckle boxing matches. Enos Barclay will even point to his gun hand standing nearby to display the bandages on his hands and face from his last winning bout. Matches are usually between ranch hands for bragging rights and betting.

Assuming they act properly, the crew will hear from the Slaughterhouse regulars about a deal involving a cattle haul. Giles O'Malley, who might be interested in a discreet cargo run, needs 20 head of cattle delivered to Persephone. The down side is that they won't back from late pasturing for two or three more weeks. Negotiating terms with Giles will require an opposed Willpower + Perception/Empathy action. If the negotiations succeed, Giles will offer the crew fuel costs plus a 100CR profit to run the cattle to Persephone in three weeks. (Waiting that long is sure to let Patience get wind of them.) If the crew's negotiating Skills are Extraordinary, Giles will admit he can't

A Little Bit More

Hiram Clogg: One of the most notorious cads and gamblers on the Rim, Clogg has made and lost more fortunes than he can count, enjoying the risk as much as the reward. One particularly bad hand of cards left him stranded here on Whitefall, where he has been patiently grooming the locals for a big take. He's passing himself off as a somewhat experienced card player who has won just enough to keep a room at the local excuse for a hotel. He has helped the vain to win and convinced the suspicious that nothing untoward is goin' on. He's nearing his moment of triumph, but he'll need a fast get-away off the moon. He might contact the crew to see if they would help him. He could be another passenger along with Sharpe or he might bring Patience down upon the crew as he runs for their open ramp, credit notes and bullets flyin'.

For His Own Good: (An Optional Complication) Saul Potter doesn't like to see Sharpe suffer. Potter plans to turn Sharpe over to the Alliance in hopes he will receive medical care and the comfort of imprisonment. Potter has made contact with his family's representative in Parliament and needs only to broadcast a special signal near Alliance ships to tip them to Sharpe's location. This option might be useful if the GM is running out of time and wants to have a stand-off/battle on the *Serenity*, pitting Potter against his former friends and the crew. Add a dash of confusion and the crew might not realize who is on whose side.

afford much more, but he will point toward the dandy loitering at the bar. He is much more desperate than Giles. If things are botched, Giles recognizes them from a previous visit to Whitefall (or perhaps by some other misdeed that he might have caught wind of). He will politely decline the offer and inform Patience as soon as he can.

New Way of Things (Results):

Either the crew walk up to Saul Potter or he at least marks them and approaches them outside the Slaughterhouse or at the next convenient opportunity.

SCENE 2: THE SWEET SCIENCE

When playing the adventure over several sessions, you may want to include this little diversion. It can provide a variety of role playing and who doesn't love a good old fist-fight? It's optional if you're short of time or don't want to be side-tracked.

How It Is (Setup):

The "Fights" are a popular entertainment. The local bosses compete with their champions and bragging rights are held dear. Nothing burns like listening to a rival prattle on about how he won the latest bout. Jeremiah Fong has been the losing patron of fighters for months and he's desperate. Any whisper of a new fighter on the scene will get his immediate interest.

Problems:

If any of the crew who entered the Slaughterhouse look at all like a fighter (such as Jayne), Jeremiah Fong will approach him during a break from the table to see if he would be interested in fighting for him. He starts with an offer of 50 credits for a win, five for a loss. If persuaded, which is EASY to do, he'll go to 200 credits for the win and 25 for just stepping in the ring.

Assuming one of the crew agrees, the fight will be set up for the following night and will be held in a warehouse in Whitefall. The building has a crude ring with actual rope barriers on the side and seating for about 200 spectators. It is more than likely that Patience will make an appearance and immediately recognize them.

The boxing match is to be a non-lethal combat between the crew's "champion" and a fellow named Black Bill Watson. The match is one continuous round, no breaks and no pauses. First man to be knocked down and not get up for a count of 10 seconds loses. The combatants do not wear gloves. They strip to the waist, going barefoot and wearing whatever pants they wore walking into the Slaughterhouse. In general, the locals leave the fighters alone as long as all they're doing is boxing. If someone starts kicking or trying any other "nonregulation" moves, the referee will stop the fight with a warning. Keep it up and the boxer will get tossed in the street with no payment at all.

In general, fisticuffs mean testing one man's Strength + Athletics/Boxing against the other's, the difference being inflicted as Stun damage. Any fighter with Mean Left Hook changes that damage to Basic damage. If someone is struck in the head, he has to make an Endurance test (Vitality + Willpower) against the damage inflicted in that round. Fail, and he is on the floor for 1d6 turns (1-3 gives them a chance to get up, 4-6 turns means he's been counted out.) A fighter might be able to get away with switching to Unarmed Combat and a specialty, but it might be trickier to obey the rules that way. Penalize a combatant if he's trying to fight in his preferred style but stay within the boundaries of the rules.

Black Bill fights "all out" (a +2 step to his Boxing dice, but leaves him only his Innate Defense (Agility) and he won't take any defensive actions. He tends to go for the head (Called Shot, Vital Organ. A -2 step to his Boxing dice, but it brings his fists up to adding d8 W if he hits.) He can feint to get his opponent to leave an opening (Alertness + Athletics/Boxing versus Alertness + Perception). If his opponent loses, he has only Innate Defense against Black Bill's next attack. As soon as he loses half his Life Points, Bill will back off and get his Second Wind, rolling his Vitality die (d6) and regaining that much Stun damage.

New Way of Things (Results):

If the crew member wins the fight, he'll be the toast of the Slaughterhouse. Several of the ranchers will offer him jobs, giving him the chance to stick around and fight again next week. He'll receive free drinks and be the center of attention in the South Room, no matter how bloody he is.

If he lost, well, it's up to his friends to drag him out of there, haul him back to the ship, and patch him up. For some men, losing to a ranch hand might not sit well, once he has a chance to stew over it.

SCENE 3: SAUL POTTER'S OFFER

Saul Potter was Admiral Roland Sharpe's aide-de-camp during the war and has been on the run with the Old Man ever since. He is



fanatically loyal to Sharpe and will obey Sharpe's commands, even though he doesn't agree with them. Saul is about 50 years old. He was born on Sinhon to a wealthy family, who disowned him when he joined the Independent Factious. That said, he has not lost his genteel manners nor his admiration for the "finer things" of Core life.

How It Is (Setup):

Saul spends a lot of time at the Slaughterhouse, waiting for any opportunity to find a ship and reach Pegasus. The locals all know what he's after and have given up trying to socialize with him. He's polite and carries himself well, so he doesn't offend them; though Chiu would rather he spent more on drinks while loitering.

Problems:

Saul can be approached, or he will approach the crew, even if they've already cut a deal with O'Malley. His manner is polite, but discreet as he inquires if they are the owners of the Firefly that recently made planet fall. Would they be available for a small job? Nothing strenuous. If the crew seems interested, he'll tell them he needs a ship to ferry four passengers and their personal belongings to Bellerophon as soon as possible.

Negotiations can be as tricky or simple as the GM likes. Potter makes an offer of 500 credits, payment on reaching Bellerophon. If the crew presses for more, it can be role played over opposed Willpower + Perception/Empathy actions. If the crew succeeds, Potter's offer will rise to 1,000 credits at Bellerophon and five drums of fuel now from the nearby Whitefall Shipyard. Extraordinary Skill in negotiating reveals Potter's desperation and the end payoff rises to 2,500 credits, plus the fuel. Failure leaves them at Potter's original offer of 500 credits and no fuel. A botch doesn't ruin the deal, but it does make Potter extremely wary of the crew for the rest of the adventure, seeing them as people as desperate as he is.

When asked for more details about the fuel, Potter will insist that the fuel belongs to him, although he'll admit that there has been some disagreement on that point. He'll be vague on this and make excuses, if the crew asks him to come with them to get the fuel.

New Way of Things (Results):

Assuming the deal is struck, arrangements need to be made for the passengers and ship to get to the same place. This could involve Potter and his people making their way to Sarafina's Ranch or a more daring option of flying the ship to the Shipyard, in which case there's a chance they'll be spotted by Patience's men. If fuel is included in the deal, then getting the fuel to the ship will be another task, one that might also tempt them to fly to the Shipyard.

ACT III: BARE NECESSITIES

Fuel is getting mighty low on the ship. The crew has 10 tons of fuel upon touch-down at Sarafina's (100 hours of flight time). The nearest planets are Bellerophon (72 hours) and Hallsey (120 hours). (While it is left open to the Game Master to determine where the crew started this adventure, it should be assumed they were farther away than either of these options.) The tanks are drier than anyone likes, but the money problems keep the crew from refilling. Whitefall Shipyard can sell them as much fuel as they can

afford, piping it in from underground storage tanks at a cost of 5 credits per ton. Each ton gives the ship an extra 10 hours of flight time.

Saul Potter will try to sell five drums of fuel to the crew. One drum of liquefied hydrogen contains 0.25 ton (500 pounds) of fuel, which equals 10 hours of flight time. If they got all five drums and loaded them into the ship's tanks, they would gain 50 hours of flight time, a nice cushion if they can afford it. Purchasing these drums should cost 10 credits each, covering the cost of making the dangerous fuel "safe" and portable.

Note: These figures are for *Serenity*. Fully fueled, *Serenity* holds 60 tons of fuel letting it fly for 600 hours (or 25 days) in normal use. If your crew is using a different ship, you may want to adjust the figures for its capabilities, keeping the needs of the plot in mind. They have barely enough fuel to get to Bellerophon. Potter's offer of more fuel is tempting, Buying fuel at the Shipyard is risky.

SCENE 1: SEARCHING FOR SCRAPS

Although it may seem a distraction, the Kaylee/Mechanic should not forget about the repairs to the ship. The chance to scrounge in a shipyard is ideal for her, even though finding a way to pay for what she finds will be a challenge.

How It Is (Setup):

The Whitefall facilities are a poor excuse at best for shipyards. A few machine-shops which operate independently of each other are surrounded by junked ships and poorly maintained landing pads. The yards extend for several acres in each direction. Kaylee/Mechanic might decide to come here to scrounge for parts or Sharpe might suggest she visit here after he boards their ship, or she may follow Potter or one of his men back here.

Three small, intact, metal buildings stand in the upper section of the yard, among the vehicle skeletons. Two buildings are locked with rusty chains and padlocks. Inside are rusting tools meant for cutting metal and disassembling vehicles. The third building is the largest and it also locked, only from the inside.

Around the three buildings at 20 yards a perimeter of silent, laser-eye alarm beams are hidden in the junk. (If examined, they can be identified as 10 common paramilitary field alarm devices). If any of their beams are broken, silent alarms alert Sharpe's men. They retreat to the third building and stay there. They can see outside the building through simple optical periscopes, but will wait three hours before daring to enter what appear to be safe circumstances.

If for some reason, the crew breaches the third building or are led there by Saul, they will find a storage shed. It has been cleared out, however, and inside are bedrolls for four people, some meager supplies, weapons, and the four members of Admiral Roland Sharpe's group.

Problems:

Searching the junk yard for the parts that Kaylee/Mechanic needs for the ship is FORMIDABLE task, especially when done in a hurry, positively HEROIC if done at night. Anyone with a Mechanical Engineering Skill would be able to recognize the parts if they saw them. Anyone else is no help in the search. If multiple crew members search, use the "Indirect Assistance" rules, taking the best roll for everyone searching. A successful search locates a large spool of high capacity electric wire that can be used to address the brownout issues aboard the ship. Some Extraordinary luck and they will stumble on a compressor coil that will fit their need, though it will take some effort to bring it back to working condition. Failure means nothing of interest is found in that 10 minutes of searching. If they botch, they are spotted by the shipyard workers who will approach them, ready to either haggle or fight.

The compressor coil can be carried by a strong person. The wire can be shouldered and walked off, as well. If they're haulin' the take back to Sarafina's, better hope they brought the mule! If the crew offers to purchase the scrap, the coil will cost them 300 credits, negotiable down to 225 credits. The wire is only 150 credits.

There is no intake manifold in the scrap yard, though no self-respecting mechanic would ever put a used one on a ship anyway.

New Way of Things (Results):

If the crew obtains any of the parts the ship needs, they need time for installation. The compressor coil is not a difficult change out, but the engine cannot be running while it is being installed. Changing the coil is a complex, though AVERAGE task, each roll consuming five minutes. A good hand with machines might get it done in one go round. Better hope no one is shooting at them or riding hard to intercept their ship!

The electrical wire can be used more as flavor during the adventure; something Kaylee/Mechanic works on during the flight to Bellerophon. From time to time, the GM might have her roll a Mechanical Engineering check. A failure leaves dim lighting in some part of the ship; a botch disables a key system on the ship (communications, fire-suppression, air-recycling, etc.)

SCENE 2: RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE

If the adventure is running too slowly, or if the crew has managed to tip off their old nemesis, feel free to introduce Imogene Patience/local boss into the picture. Patience herself isn't part of this adventure, though if you want to bring her into a scene, the "Town Leader" stats from the Core Book would suit her just fine.

How It Is (Setup):

There isn't much that happens on Whitefall that Imogene Patience doesn't know about. Either she'll identify your ship as you approach the moon, eyeball you in town, or one of her many "deputies" will spot you. She has a number of ships at her command and getting airborne isn't exactly safe. Then, too, there's always a risk either she or one of her hired hands might fly over Sarafina's ranch, spot the strange ship, and come to investigate.

Problems:

Patience's interference can take many forms, depending on how much pressure the GM wants to put on the group. If it's the *Serenity* crew, Patience might be gunning for blood after

what happened the last time she and Mal met. Other crews might not have the same history, but given the kind of person Patience is, there's probably no love lost between them. If the crew didn't double-cross her, you can be darn sure she double-crossed them.

Interference can take the form of "inspectors" demanding to board the ship and demanding a variety of local fees and tariffs (landing fee, airspace transit fee, tariff on imported cargo, vaccination fees for the dogs, local dog licenses, etc.) Her men could demand a bit more than the crew actually has in cash or just enough to wipe them out, making the rest of their adventure a lot more interestin'. Paying off Patience might placate her or at least make her feel more kindly to them—so long as they don't outstay their welcome.

Most likely, she'll send her armed "deputies" to try to confiscate the ship as a "contraband smuggler," perhaps even threatening to turn the crew into that "nice Captain Renaldo" on the *ISV Francisco*. This can work well if the deputies catch the crew trying to buy fuel from

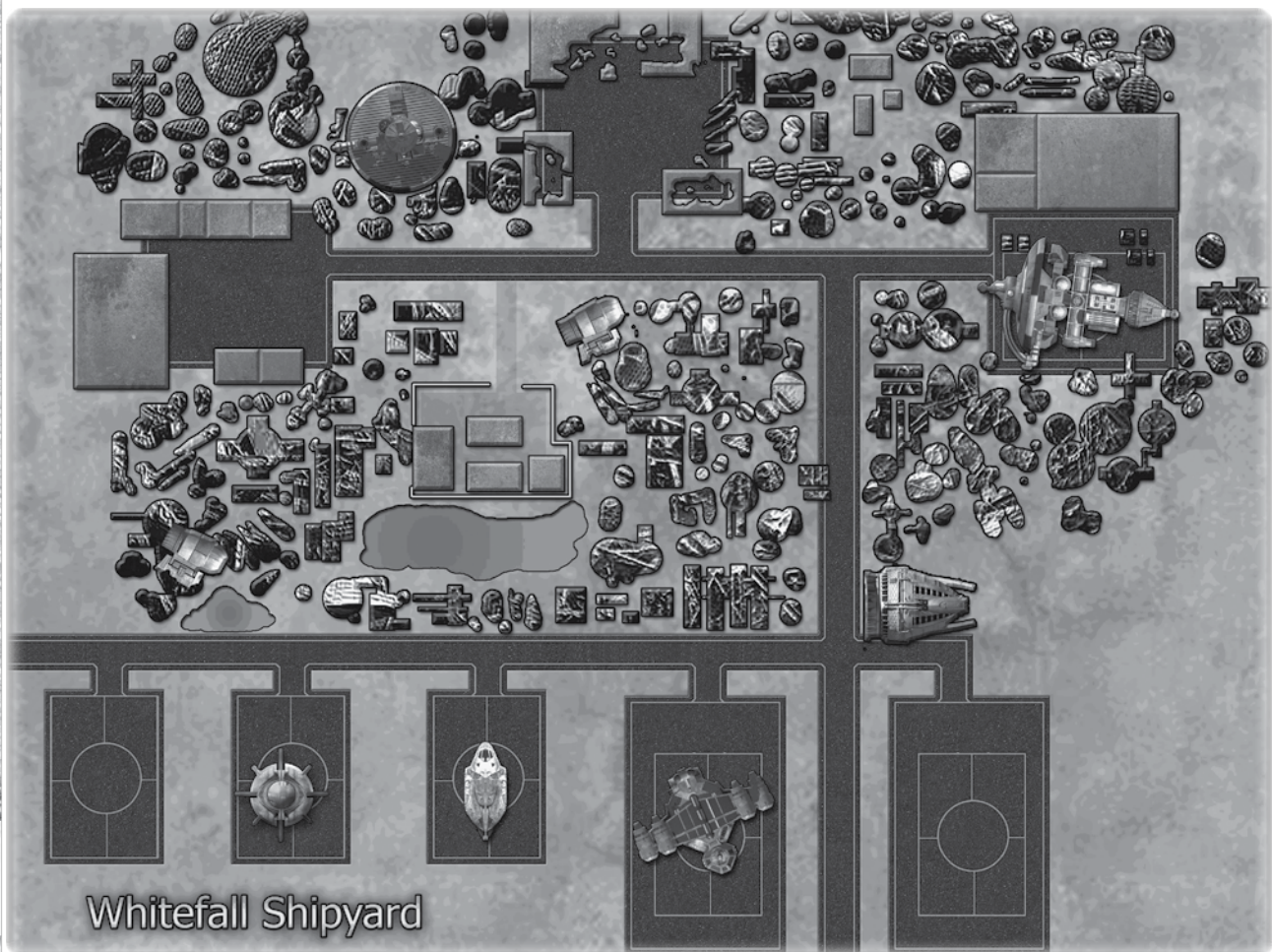
the Shipyard or they find Sharpe's group on board the ship. 'Course no one's going to give up *Serenity*—or whatever boat they're flyin'—without a fight! Game statistics for the deputies are located in the **Bit Parts** section of this adventure.

New Way of Things (Results):

At the end of dealing with Patience, the crew have either got away clean, paid her off, or are doin' their best to avoid her. If she is alerted to their departure, her ships will be in the air to harass the crew's ship when it tries to take off. Even if the crew paid her off, she might still like to be ornery.

SCENE 3: FETCHING THE FUEL

This scene is optional. If the crew made no deal with Potter for more fuel, then skip this scene.



Whitefall Shipyard

How It Is (Setup):

The hydrogen drums need to be removed from the Shipyard and hauled back to the ship using the mule and the trailer. Once at the ship, the fuel can be loaded into the fuel tanks (this can also be done in flight). Whoever goes to retrieve the fuel cells will find them located by the gate, inside the fence of the busiest machine shop in the scrap yard (next to the largest waste pool).

Men are working in the machine shop, but they're not paying particular attention to the fuel drums. Neither Sharpe nor Potter actually purchased this fuel, so taking it will be outright theft. If discovered stealing the fuel, the crew will be treated appropriately by the wrench-wielding men in the machine shop.

Each drum contains the liquefied fuel, a hydrogen mixture, along with systems to maintain its low temperature and detect loss of integrity. There are handholds all around the top and bottom edges of the drum, which are large enough for crane hooks, as well.

Problems:

First, the drums are heavy. It takes a FORMIDABLE complex action to lift one drum into the mule's trailer, although multiple crew members can directly contribute in the lifting, adding their rolls together. A success means that one drum has been safely loaded and secured to the trailer. If the action is botched, the drum is dropped and its integrity is damaged. This activates red flashing warning lights imbedded in the drums' outer casing.

After four turns, one of the machinists will notice the crew stealing the fuel and will run out to try and stop them. If guns are drawn or fired, the machinists will retreat and simply alert the "sheriff," aka Patience. If no guns are involved, the machinists will use their tools to try to drive off the thieves.

Depending on the number of drums the crew is able to grab, they still have to haul them back to the ship. This should be a tense operation. Using the mule or whatever their conveyance, they try to avoid being spotted or are being chased by Patience's deputies. If you are really looking to make things exciting, you could rule that bullets fired at them during transport have a chance of striking one of the fuel drums. Each drum can take two bullet hits (damaging

its integrity), before a third will rupture it in an explosion of pale blue, almost invisible flame. Those standing or sitting next to the drum when it explodes take 3d6 W while those from five to 15 feet away take 1d6 W. People farther away are unharmed. Drums next to the ruptured drum are considered to have taken two bullet hits of damage. If already damaged, they rupture.

Once the fuel is aboard and secured, the crew can load the fuel into the tanks at any time, hopefully when no bullets are flying about. Any drums which have damaged integrity (from being dropped hard or taking a bullet) can still be loaded, but it is a FORMIDABLE task to do so without a rupture (as above).

New Way of Things (Results):

When all is said and done, the crew could have more fuel for their flight. This might give them the option to head to Hallsey instead of just Bellerophon.

Episode 2 CHASING GHOSTS

ACT I: REACHING THE BLACK ALIVE

The ship should now be ready to leave Whitefall. All they need are some payin' passengers.

SCENE 1: TAKING ON PASSENGERS

This scene provides plenty of opportunity to use someone's "Things Don't Go Smooth" trait. Passengers arriving, Patience's deputies in hot pursuit, the mule loaded with the fuel drums dodgin' bullets, everyone rushing to get on board. Perhaps Sarafina's men join in the

skirmish just to tick off Patience. Even the men from the Shipyard might be chasing the “fuel thieves.”

How It Is (Setup):

However the deal has been made, Sharpe and his men will reach the ship on time, arriving in a rough-running mule which they abandon outside the ship. Hancock and Budge are Skilled military bodyguards, alert for danger. Potter will be helping Sharpe walk. An oxygen mask covers the Admiral’s face, obscuring his features. In case his identity has not already been revealed to the crew, Saul introduces him as “Mister James” and explains that he has breathing difficulties. The other two men will be introduced as “Mister Hancock” and “Mister Budge.”

Problems:

If Patience has not hounded the crew yet, consider having her people come chasin’ after the passengers on some charge or other, from vagrancy to skippin’ out on gamblin’ debts.

When Sharpe arrives, it is possible that some of the crew might recognize him. Since he’s wearing an oxygen mask, it would be a **FORMIDABLE** task, though only **AVERAGE** if he removes the mask. Successful crew members recognize him as a Browncoat Admiral and famous outlaw. With Extraordinary success, they know his story well and have heard of him traveling the Rim with some dedicated followers. Failure means no recognition, while a botch convinces the crew that Sharpe is none other than Silas James, a director in the Corone Mining Consortium, kidnapped for ransom months ago.

Brutus Hancock will be carrying a large black tote and wearing hunter’s camouflage gear that has seen better days. Jerome Budge will be wary of his surroundings. He’ll hesitate a long time before stepping onto the cargo ramp. He’ll brush past people (letting the GM emphasize his bulk) and speak to no one. Saul asks that they be permitted to take to their cabins for the flight, as Mr. James needs his rest. Saul will evade questions as best he can, refusing to reveal the true identity of Mr. James. If the deal included access to the hydrogen drums and Saul hasn’t told the crew where to find them, he’ll let them know where they are.

If Patience’s deputies or the shipyard men are in pursuit, use their stats from before. None of them are suicidal in their pursuit, but will shoot and press things as best they can until the ship flies away. If any get on board, they’ll hold one crew member at gunpoint and disarm the rest of the crew, holding them prisoner until Patience arrives.

New Way of Things (Results):

Whether the leave-taking is calm or done through a cloud of gun smoke, the ship will likely get off the ground with passengers and crew and maybe some more fuel. Too bad they can’t breathe a sigh of relief quite yet.

SCENE 2: LEAVING IN PEACE OR PIECES

With fuel drums and passengers on board, the crew are free to leave the planet. Flight to orbit needs to be planned to try to avoid arousin’ the notice of Patience or avoiding her ships if she’s already alerted. The departure from Whitefall will begin quietly enough.

How It Is (Setup):

Lifting off and heading out of atmo should be a simple task. Sure there’s still the satellite grid up in orbit and the *ISV Francisco* sniffin’ about, but each of these issues can be handled one at a time. That is, if nothing else goes wrong.

Problems:

Plotting a course off Whitefall and avoiding the satellite grid (and Patience’s ships) is a **HARD** test of Wash/Pilot’s Skill. Success finds a gap in the grid overhead, necessitating that he fly the ship about 30 degrees around the planet’s bulk and then straight out to the Black. Extraordinary Skill reveals many gaps and holes in the satellites’ scanning coverage which the ship can slip through. If Wash/Pilot should fail, the satellites will detect the ship heading to the Black and get a positive ID. A botch means Wash/Pilot missed seeing one of Patience’s Gyrfalcons flying nearby. It can easily identify them and begin pursuit.

Being detected is the least of the crew's problems. Halfway up the gravity well of the planet, they hear a loud boom and the ship starts to shake violently. Anyone not seated in a functional chair (Pilot/Copilot) has a **HARD** test of their Agility + Agility to keep from being thrown to the decking or against something painful. (The Game Master should consider what each crew member is doing at that moment to see how dangerous being thrown really is and if any Stun or Wounds should apply.) The port (left) thruster drops down to less than five percent output, which makes the ship shudder continuously. With the starboard thruster at full velocity, the ship quickly begins spinning and losing altitude. (This would be an ideal time to award a couple Plot Points to someone with "Things Don't Go Smooth" Complication!)

Unless otherwise specified, the crew members are in these parts of the ship:

- Malcolm, Wash, Zoe (Pilot/Command): Bridge.
- Jayne (Mercenaries/Laborers): Cargo hold checking tie-downs.
- Simon, River (Doctor): In Simon's passenger quarters.
- Inara (Companion): In her shuttle.
- Kaylee (Mechanic): In the engine room.
- Sharpe, Potter, Hancock, and Budge: In two passenger quarters.

Things are going to be pretty scary for awhile, but everyone has a chance of coming out of this alive. First Wash/Pilot has to throttle back the starboard engine and minimize the spin. It's a **FORMIDABLE** task, but if successful, the spin stops accelerating (2 turns spent) and people can move about the ship with moderate difficulty (half speed). If Wash/Pilot's reflexes are Extraordinary, he stops the engine quickly (1 turn spent) and the spin is a lazy one with no penalty to people's movement rates. A botch is serious trouble, as not all the safeguards are disengaged in cutting the thrust. It takes twice as long to throttle back the engine (4 turns spent), making the spin twice as fast and movement that much harder for people (one-fourth speed).

The ship begins to follow an arc trajectory, rising up for 2 turns, hanging in the air 1 turn, and then accelerating toward the planet, reaching it in 12 additional turns (15 total or about 45 seconds). Wash/Pilot can easily estimate this when he's done wrestling with the starboard thruster.

It will take Kaylee/Mechanic's investigation of the engine room consoles to determine what has happened, although if she goes with her hunch (intake manifold broke off and fouled the engine), she can save a turn. Studying the screens confirms it with an **EASY** Skill check. If the Skill check is botched, it takes 1-4 extra turns to decide what has happened and if it's safe to try to fix it. Once the problem is identified, Kaylee/Mechanic will realize that to save the ship, she has to shut down the port thruster completely, cut off its fuel feed, restart the fuel flow, and hot-start the engine in flight.

TABLE - SAVING THE SHIP SUMMARY

Number of Turns	Activity
1 - 4	Turns it takes Wash/the Pilot to regain control of the ship; all others are hanging on for dear life.
0 - 4	Time for Kaylee/the Mechanic to diagnose the problem
4 - 8	Time for Jayne/Muscle to get to the engine room
1 - 2	Moving the lever
1	Letting the port thruster burn out the remaining fuel
1 - 2	Pull the lever back, starting fuel flow
1	Fuel floods into thrust
1	Engine spins up
1	Pilot can hot fire the engine and blast out the broken manifold parts.
11 - 24	Total Turns before the Pilot can regain control of the ship and halt its descent

CHAPTER 1

A Little Bit More

Patience's Navy: Once just an aspiring gang boss, Patience has been acquiring wealth and ambition. Since the crew's last visit to Whitefall, she bought a pair of Gyrfalcon System Enforcers—two-man ships designed for flight in atmo and space for short ranges. These two ships are concealed near the main spaceport. Patience paid for a small upgrade to their sensor software to make them better hunters. If Patience has any idea that the crew are on Whitefall, the ships will be manned and flight ready, waiting to capture them when they try to leave. If she has not heard about the crew, the ships will still try to capture the ship in order to collect any unpaid fees (and there will be unpaid fees!). There's a 10 minute delay getting the first Gyrfalcon into the sky and another five minutes for the second, making them unable to catch the crew's ship if it has successfully escaped atmo.

Gyrfalcon System Enforcer: Ton: 35; Speed: 7cr/9hb; crew: (2) Pilot, Gunner; Quarters: Two-person cockpit; Fuel: 0.5 ton (5 hrs); Cargo: none; Arms: Two 1-lb autocannons with 250 rounds each; Price: \$2,200 plus ammo. **Agi** d10, **Str** d2, **Vit** d4, **Ale** d8, **Int** d4, Will d2; **Init** d10+d8; **LP**: 4; Lightweight. Pilot d4, Perception d6; Complex: Avg; Mtee Costs: C150/year. The Gyrfalcon is produced by the Hitoro Shipyards as a post-war solution to the lawlessness on the Rim planets. The ship performs its job well, though it has high maintenance costs and is suitable only for planetary and near-space operations due to its cramped cockpit.

Kaylee/Mechanic knows where the emergency lever is in the engine room used to shut down the fuel to the port thruster. She's moved it in the past to clean the thruster, but only with Jayne/Muscle's help. Jayne/Muscle will likely be in the cargo hold when the thruster dies. To run full out, he rolls Agility + Athletics and adds 30 to get a number of feet he can run each turn, divided by the ship's spin penalty. His run from the cargo bay to reach the engine room is about 50 feet to the back stairwell, 30 feet up the stairwell, and 30 feet into the engine room. He can try to run full out, but needs to make an AVERAGE check of his Agility + Athletics. Should he fail on any turn, he falls and makes no progress that turn. If he simply hustles (30 feet/turn modified by the spin penalty), the extra care helps him keep his feet, making the tests EASY.

If he or another crew member runs from the bridge, the idea is the same although the distance is 150 feet.

To force the emergency fuel flow lever up to the off position is a FORMIDABLE task of Strength + Strength. Two people can try at the same time (adding their results), but no more than two can grip the bar together. With success, the lever moves up and the port thruster begins to flameout. Extraordinary success dislodges a chunk of rust that falls to the floor and shatters. The lever will never again be hard to push up. If the effort is botched, the lever jams for a turn, has to be opened all the way, and then an attempt made to close it again.

Once the fuel lever is moved to shut off the fuel, the engine will burn another turn before going silent. Then the crew has to reverse the fuel lever movement. Note: If this went too easily the first time, consider making the other way more difficult due to poor leverage angles. If this went too hard the first time, consider making the other way easier, now that they have it moving. Do whatever it takes to make the event more exciting. Another turn passes as the fuel reaches the thruster and then Kaylee/Mechanic can hot start the engine. Another turn passes while the engine spins up and then Wash/Pilot can engage the thrust. If everything goes smooth (finally!), they should be able to pull this off. If not, there's more excitement and chances to spend those Plot Points.

In the unfortunate circumstance that the crew is unable to avoid kissing the dirt, Wash/Pilot has one last chance to soften the landing. It's an IMPOSSIBLE task, but that's what heroes do, right? Make it clear that this will be a very difficult roll and if anyone has the Leadership trait, now would be a good time to use it. A success means the ship has landed and is sort of in one piece when it reaches the end of a long furrow of dirt. Occupants take d12 + d12 Wound damage from the impact, unless they are strapped into safety harnesses, and even they take d12 + d12 Stun damage. The ship is severely damaged and will require ship yard work before it can fly again. An Extraordinary success is truly a marvel and the landing is almost graceful, occupants taking only 1d6 Wounds (or Stun if in harnesses). The damage is repairable by the crew if given enough time. In the unfortunate event of an unrecoverable botch, the ship is destroyed

on impact and all occupants take d12 + d12 + d12 + d12 Wounds (d12 + d12 Wounds for those in safety harnesses).

New Way of Things (Results):

After all the excitement, our heroes are either flying into the black, making their way out of a pile of twisted metal on the ground, or corpsified. Continue reading in the first of those three cases. Ad lib in the second. Raise a glass to the dead in the third.

ACT II: THE ROAD TO BELLEROPHON

The flight to Bellerophon will take 72 hours using the normal routes, longer if the crew needs to avoid any other ships en route. During this flight time, some or all of the following role playing opportunities may be introduced. Add or subtract them as you see fit to regulate the speed of the adventure. This also provides opportunities to involve crew members who may not have had much to do in the adventure so far.

SCENE 1: TENDING THE SICK

An opportunity arises for the doctor to show his Skills and perhaps gain advantage over the passengers.

How It Is (Setup):

Simon/Doctor is asked by Saul Potter to attend Mr. James in his cabin. The admiral is having difficulty breathing, a problem Simon/Doctor might be able to mend with the drugs he has on board.

Problems:

Diagnosing and treating "Mr. James" is an AVERAGE task for a Skilled physician. Success allows Simon/Doctor to administer an injection which will ease the patient's breathing. An Extraordinary success diagnoses the problem as a rare and fatal form of emphysema, requiring attention in a first-class hospital. A botch means Simon/Doctor used the wrong drug and Mr. James stops breathing altogether.

Restoring the patient's breathing (if necessary), is a FORMIDABLE task at this point. Success means breathing is restored, though Potter (and probably most others on board!) loses all faith in the Doctor's abilities. An Extraordinary success lets Mr. James breathe quite easily. A botch and the patient dies outright—possibly having been dosed with a medication to which the Admiral was allergic.

If no one has recognized the Admiral before now, Simon/Doctor will discover Mr. James's true identity (though dropping hints and allowing the player to make some rolls make the discovery feel earned), perhaps finding an indent card or from something the Admiral says. Simon/Doctor will find out that he is a Browncoat fugitive named Admiral Roland Sharpe and he is renowned for a variety of crimes, including the unnecessary slaughter of civilians during the war, his stubborn repudiation of the peace deal, and his involvement in various criminal activities since the war (All lies). He is supposed to be a dangerous guy, but for now he just looks like a sick old man. Simon/Doctor (or any other non-Browncoat veteran or Alliance-sympathizer) has no reason *not* to believe the black picture painted by the Cortex reports.

New Way of Things (Results):

Hopefully the patient has recovered. Simon/Doctor has decided to either tell the others the truth about the man's true identity or to withhold it.

SCENE 2: A TOUCH OF CLASS

If Inara/Companion is on board the ship, Saul Potter will seek her out, hoping to be able to "talk to someone civilized."

How It Is (Setup):

At a quiet moment during the flight, Saul Potter will seek out the Companion, requesting a moment to speak with her alone and away from others. He is quite class conscious and glad to find someone of her obvious gentility aboard. "I doubt I shall ever get this border world dirt off me," he says wistfully.



Problems:

Inara/Companion may choose to be a passive listener, discussing only trivialities or share whatever gossip she may know about those in the “right circles.” She may attempt to learn more about Saul and the mysterious Mr. James. This will involve a discussion of INCREDIBLE difficulty, unless she accepts him as a formal client, which reduces her task to HARD. Even then, she knows that anything he reveals to her must be held in confidence, leaving her in a quandary.

If Saul remains aloof, unswayed by her attempts at confidence, he’ll say only that Mr. James is an important man who wants to get back to his home on Bellerophon before he dies (A lie).

If Inara/Companion gains Saul’s confidence without taking him as a client, he’ll confess that Mr. James is actually Roland Sharpe, an honorable veteran of the war who is being hounded for political reasons. Potter continues to maintain that Bellerophon is their destination.

If Saul becomes her client, he will pour out all his worries upon her. He’s worried about Sharpe’s health and tempted to take him to the Alliance just so he can get medical attention. He

doesn’t trust Jerome and Harrison, fearing they might turn them in for the bounty. He’ll even reveal Sharpe’s scheme to snatch his old ship from the clutches of the Alliance.

You can adjust these ideas for a more romance—or friendship—based encounter with members of the crew, depending on the characters in the group. But there should be some way to potentially win Saul over, and offer a chance for some role playing and social Skill rolls.

New Way of Things (Results):

Saul’s talk with Inara/Companion may serve to simply pass the time, or she might have important information on the plot to pass along to the crew, accelerating things.

SCENE 3: SOMETHING SMELLS GOOD

With time to kill during the flight, Brutus Hancock announces with some pride that he’s a damn fine cook. Now if the crew can just convince him to make enough for everyone.

How It Is (Setup):

Unless confined to quarters, Brutus will find his way to the galley. He can be heard snorting a string of army obscenities over the extra lack of food in the ship, although there is that four-year old box of protein-paste tubes under the sink. He’ll take the paste and throw in some spices from a pouch that hangs off his belt between his pistol and his combat knife. The smell of frying meat-like patties quickly wafts through the ship’s air circulation system.

Jerome Budge, Sharpe’s other bodyguard, will be loitering in the galley, waiting to take food to Potter and Sharpe. Brutus will rebuff any attempts at polite conversation, preferring to focus on his cooking.

Problems:

This opportunity can be played for the role playing opportunity unless someone decides that eating good cooking is worth pressing the issue. Neither Jerome nor Brutus are interested in talking about anything of importance, or anything that might give away their past or

facts about Potter and Sharpe. However, asking Brutus about cooking or asking Jerome about the exercises he was doing in the cargo hold might loosen their tongues.

Persuading Brutus to talk will take Intelligence + Influence/Persuasion better than Brutus' reluctance (Willpower + Discipline; d6 + d6). If successful, Brutus will discuss where he learned to cook, what he likes to make, and how he got something edible from the bare galley. If asked, he'll cook enough for the whole crew. Extraordinary persuasion really opens Brutus up and he will teach the crew how to make the meat patties. A failure indicates that Brutus is not interested in talking at all. A botch causes Brutus to draw his gun. He takes his cooking seriously.

Separately, Jerome can be approached (Willpower + Discipline against d6 + d6) with similar results. If persuaded to speak, he'll explain that he practices the ancient art of Tai Chi to maintain his flexibility and inner peace. An Extraordinary success inspires Jerome to offer to teach the crew the basics of Tai Chi.

New Way of Things (Results):

If the crew has opened up either of these men, there will be opportunities during the voyage to talk more. Both men will feel more at home on board and more likely to reveal personal information. If things went badly with either of the men, they'll both be more wary and quick to draw iron if things get tense.

ACT III: A CHANGE OF COURSE

The adventure is about to spin off in a new direction, taking the crew into even more danger. A good time will be had by all!

SCENE 1: SHARPE SPEAKS

If the GM feels the thespian urge during this adventure, this is the time to use it. Stand and walk stiffly, use a cane if you have one. You could give the Admiral an accent, something memorable, perhaps an American Southern drawl.

How It Is (Setup):

When the ship is only a few hours out of Bellerophon, Saul Potter asks everyone to gather in the dining area. He then leads "Mr. James" respectfully into the room. James is no longer wearing the oxygen mask. (Note that Jerome is not with them in the dining room. If asked, Saul will explain that he's not feeling well and he remained in his cabin.) If Browncoat members of the crew haven't identified the Admiral before now (or Simon/Doctor or Inara/Companion hasn't told them), Mal and Zoe (or other Browncoat veterans) will now recognize Mr. James immediately as Admiral Roland Sharpe, although they will note that the last six years have aged him greatly. Civilian clothes and white hair contribute to his transformation. They will know about his honorable role in the war and the attempted assassination hours before the Armistice was to be signed. Sharpe fled to save his life and has kept the hope of "Rising Again" in the minds of many former Browncoat veterans just by his very survival.

Simon, Wash, and Inara (or Non-veterans) will recognize Sharpe from the Cortex broadcasts telling the Alliance version of things. Others (Jayne and Kaylee) will be clueless about his identity.

Problems:

Sharpe will thank them for meeting him.

"I request that our Captain change course just slightly. We need to go to Bellerophon's moon, Pegasus, not Bellerophon itself. On that moon is a scrapping yard, a place where the Alliance's lackeys take out-of-date vessels to be stripped and destroyed. I recently learned that a ship of great historical, social and personal significance to me and to all Independents, Freedom's Glory, has been transferred there. In hours, she will be torn asunder and destroyed."

Without a successful HARD check of their Intelligence, no one will recognize the name of the ship right off. Saul will explain that "The Glory was the last Browncoat flagship of the war," before Sharpe continues.

"Even as their leaders were sitting down to a large table, smiling for all the vid-cameras, the jackboots were ringing through the decks of my ship. I barely escaped with my life.

"I need your help, Captain. I know you served the Independents in your time, and I'm hoping that you still feel the righteousness of our cause, and be glad to strike a blow against the Alliance. With the help of you and your crew, we can steal the Glory from the Alliance's grasp!"

If the crew members are not former Browncoats, Sharpe realizes that "patriotic" persuasion will not convince them and he will move to Tactic number two.

"I had hoped to keep this a secret, but I see you folk are in a financial fix. Inside the hull of Freedom's Glory, a Browncoat Cache was hidden away, meant to support the cause. Our information says that it was never found by the Alliance. There is more than 10,000 credits of platinum hidden in her hull. I offer you 10 percent of the coin if you agree to do what it takes to get the Glory away from Pegasus free and clear."

If driven hard, Sharpe will be willing to raise the deal to 30 percent to the crew. If patriotism and money fail, Sharpe will take the last resort. When the ship is only a few hours out from Bellerophon, Sharpe's group will make its move. If the classic *Firefly* characters are used and River is sedated in her room, Jerome will quietly go to that room to hold her hostage under gun. If there is no convenient hostage aboard, Jerome will manage to place a bomb near the fuel cells, threatening the ship. He will be armed and waiting near the bomb in the starboard-fore corner of the cargo bay, ready to prevent anyone from deactivating it. Sharpe says:

"I'd hoped you were the sort of folk I could count on. At least, I expected you to be the sort of folk who were interested in great reward for reasonable risk. Now, it's obvious that I'm dealing with spineless cowards. Fine. The cause is greater than any of us. We've [taken the girl/another crew member hostage below OR placed a package of high

explosives in the ship]. Take us to Pegasus, into the Scrapping Facility, and help us get the Glory space-worthy. Do that, and we'll leave your ship and your crew unharmed."

Brutus appears mildly shocked, but covers quickly. Saul is not shocked at all by Sharpe's threat. One way or another, Sharpe is going to steal that ship or die trying.

New Way of Things (Results):

Almost anything can happen at this point. Some of the crew might use violence to free the hostage or get to the bomb, though in both cases, Jerome is perfectly ready to go through with the threat. Perhaps the crew finds a different way to neutralize Sharpe's threat. Either way, the crew is at a crossroads. They can deliver Sharpe to Bellerophon as they'd originally arranged (though without payment), or they can throw in with him and help save *Glory*. In that case, Sharpe will be true to his word and, once they have landed, he will order Jerome to free the hostage or remove the bomb.

New Way of Things (Results):

While it is possible that the crew would turn down Sharpe's offers and manage to neutralize his threat, it is most likely that they will end up helping him in his quixotic goals.

Episode 3 **FREEING GLORY**

ACT I: PEGASUS

The flight to Pegasus should be fairly quiet, though if River/crew Member has been taken hostage, planning and plotting among the crew to free her is to be expected.

The moon is a poor cousin to the thriving planet of Bellerophon, and is home to some Alliance facilities (including a defense space/air base), as well as many large corporate industrial complexes, including Blue Sun's "A703 Reclamation Facility" where *Freedom's Glory* now rests. Beyond those sites, the world is mostly cold and barren occupied by a few hardy homesteaders making their homes on the band of fertile equatorial islands. The industrial areas belch choking acids into the air and the ground has been poisoned. The water is full of noxious chemicals undoing the careful engineering of the terraformers. Sealed-off labor camps are located outside each facility.

SCENE 1: THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

Whitefall's "defenses" were small and poor. Pegasus proves to be the opposite.

How It Is (Setup):

Just as he did with Whitefall, Wash/Pilot needs to plot a course to avoid detection by the Alliance or other ships. With Alliance and Blue Sun traffic all around them, piloting will require creative approaches.

Problems:

Landing on the moon with Blue Sun and Alliance shipping in the area will be tricky. There are no gaps in the satellite coverage. All ships are watchful for strangers. The ship will need to be altered to look like another ship or concealed in some way. Careful sensor work and quick reactions will carry the day, if Wash/Pilot succeeds at his attempt. Note: someone trained in Technical Engineering or Piloting can directly assist the pilot, letting both take the better of their two rolls. Success allows them to find a slow chemical transport that they can draft down to the planet, hiding in its signature. Extraordinary success reveals a transport ship called the *Narnhal* is late in arriving and, as luck would have it, she's scheduled to land on the same platform as *Freedom's Glory*. If the crew can mask their ship's identity, they can pose as the *Narnhal*. Or they can choose to just accept the same result as success (above). Failure shows no way of getting to the surface undetected. A botch drives

them 50 miles away from the scrapping facility, forcing them to land to avoid detection. Further flight closer to the base at that point will alert the Alliance to their presence.

Following the chemical transport down is a HARD feat to pull off, for it means staying close to its engines without damaging the ship. A Success lands them two miles from the facility. A failure means they drop out of the signature and are detected by the Alliance and/or Blue Sun. A botch and they've struck the chemical transport, requiring expert piloting to avoid a catastrophe and they've certainly gotten everyone's attention!

Masking their ship as the *Narnhal* will require about half an hour of adjustments by someone Skilled in Technical Engineering/Hacking or the like. A success at this FORMIDABLE task gives the ship the identity of the *Narnhal*, letting them fly down unmolested to land within a few dozen yards of their goal.

New Way of Things (Results):

If they are landed outside the Scrapping Facility, the crew's got a walk ahead of them, possibly a long one. At any time, they might just roll the dice and try to fly straight into the facility, hoping to get in and out before the Alliance or Blue Sun can react.

SCENE 2: THE PEGASUS PROCESSING FACILITY

While they don't really expect folk to try to infiltrate a scrap yard, Blue Sun has gone out of their way to secure the facility. Did anyone mention they're paranoid?

How It Is (Setup):

The Blue Sun facility is a groundside installation designed for the teardown of damaged and obsolete craft (space, aerial, land). Four work areas are located around a two-story, central control tower. Windows in the control building overlook the work areas. An antennae spire rises from the top, including communication antennae and the silvery sphere of a landlock control module.

Each work area has a web of cranes and large cutting and moving tools ready to tear a ship apart like a bug on a dissection plate. Outside

the cluster of work areas, rail beds stretch away into hundreds of yards of junk, divided into salvageable (blue area) and just junk (green sections). Massive metal rail cars wait by the work area. One has a huge crane to load and unload the cars. Equipment removed from the ships is stored in buildings around the work area before being shipped to other facilities for refurbishment and reuse.

Around the perimeter of the facility is a 20-foot-high chain fence with razor wire on top of it (standard perimeter barrier). Motion-activated cameras are on top of every third fence pole providing spotty coverage of the area. When cameras activate, a signal is received in the Control Tower by the facility guards. They can take control of the camera to try to see what is going on.

Problems:

Now is the time for the military-minded of the crew to shine. Getting past the outer fence requires avoiding or disabling the security cameras—a HARD job indeed. Success means

a camera is disabled, letting the crew sneak through the fence unobserved. Guards will come inspect the camera in 1d6 x 10 minutes. If the crew's efforts are Extraordinary, the camera is not disabled, but they create a gap in its coverage, so the crew can get in and out without being seen. This gap won't be noticed for d6 hours.

Once inside the scrap yard, the crew can find a wealth of cover among the heaps of junk. Movement is cautious due to the jagged metal and toxic waste, which is everywhere. Walking through the junk areas of the facility is not difficult, but it is dangerous. In the direction from which they approach, a ship is dumping a load of scrap. A rail car crane will "toss" a huge section of hull right at them. To avoid being hit by the hull or the piles of junk that the hull strikes, each crew member must undertake an AVERAGE test of their Initiative. If successful, they are able to dodge out of the way, taking d6 Basic Damage from flying shrapnel. Those who have reflexes that are Extraordinary escape



without a scratch. A botch means a large chunk of metal strikes the crew member, doing d12 + d8 Basic Damage.

When the crew arrives at the center of the facility, the *Glory* is located on the northeast work area. The ship is seemingly intact with no workers near her. All of the activity is concentrated on the northwest work area, where a gunship a bit larger than *Serenity* has been stripped and is now being cut into scrap metal. The ground shakes and rolls as huge sections of metal crash down. After a few pieces are cut away, the cranes stop for workers to climb around and remove salvage parts they couldn't reach before. It will be two hours before the ship is completely destroyed, and another hour for all the scrap to be loaded on the rail cars for dumping. After that, the crews will head toward the *Glory*.

Reaching the *Glory* without being spotted requires careful movement. Workers wear jumpsuits, with backpack generators needed to run their cutting tools. They also wear eye protection, ear protection, and breathing masks. crew members who can manage to steal or otherwise get hold of such attire should be able to avoid suspicion, if contact with the workers is limited. Other methods of subterfuge are certainly available for the creative.

If the crew attempts to simply dart across the open area to try to reach the entry port of the *Glory*, they will find the attempt to be a HARD task, requiring their best Alertness and Covert Skills. A large group of people are not likely to all sneak across undetected. Each person who succeeds EXTRAORDINARILY can actually save someone who failed from being seen, pulling them out of the way at the last moment. If anyone botches, they are all spotted and the tower guards sound the alarm.

The *Glory's* entryway is secured, but either Saul or Roland knows a secret code to open the door, so gaining entry should be quick if one of them is along or they've revealed the code to others. Any Pilot and/or Mechanic can help things along, be it a crew member or Sharpe himself. Working together, they have to do a systems check of the ship. Other crew members can do an eyeball search to see if anything critical has already been removed from the ship. If they do such a search, they will discover that

A Little Bit More

Upon entering *Freedom's Glory*, the crew could discover that they are not alone. A Blue Sun engineer named Icarus Crane has sneaked on board the ship, looking for the hidden cache of platinum. He is the one who has been pulling open various parts of the ship, trying to find the cache. He can be played as an armed rival providing another action sequence as he tries to shoot his way out of the ship or raise the alarm. Or Crane could be sympathetic to Admiral Sharpe, meeting the old soldier with tears in his eyes and offering to "accidentally" shut off the landlock for them. Or Crane might be unarmed, but hostile, a prisoner or a nuisance who needs to be booted off the ship before takeoff.

the navsat is missing and there is only four tons of fuel in the tanks (40 hours flying time). Any personal items or luxuries are long gone.

As to the missing navsat, Sharpe will claim he can navigate by the stars. "There was life before navsats, son."

Getting the *Glory* operational again is a HEROIC complex task for Kaylee/Mechanic. Most systems haven't been altered since the ship flew to the facility, but coils of wire have been yanked out at various points as if someone had already begun taking apart the ship, searching for something. Each roll toward the goal burns 10 minutes of time. If Wash/Pilot or Sharpe is available to directly assist, they can take the higher of their two rolls each turn. If they achieve success before they are discovered the engines are ready to be turned up and *Glory* can fly 30 seconds later. An Extraordinary success discovers a faulty fuel line that can easily be replaced, bringing half of her tanks back on line along with their 20 tons of fuel. If they botch at this critical moment, a key part has been removed from the ship, leaving her engines inert. There might be a spare part back on the crew's own ship. This is definitely *ma fuhn!*

Once the crew's got the systems up and running, they'll learn that the ship is landlocked to the tarmac. The only way to free her is to cut the landlock signal. To do this, they can either destroy the silver sphere on top of the control tower or penetrate the control building and shut it off from there. This will likely bring them into conflict with the Blue Sun guards. If alarms

CHAPTER 1

A Little Bit More

The escape from Pegasus can be simple if you're running out of time or complex if you want to have a great chase scene. Wash/Pilot could maneuver the ship through the maze of chemical plants along the planet's surface to keep the interceptors sensors confused until it's ready for hard burn. Imagine the ship swinging under pipelines and through clouds of discharge gasses with the Alliance in hot pursuit. A series of Piloting skill checks should be made until the Mechanic's job is complete. A botch means striking something on the ground or being hit by an interceptor, possibly crippling the ship and keeping them from escaping, landing them in an Alliance prison. (And we just happen to have another adventure in this book already set up to handle that there little problem! See *Freedom's Flight*.)

have already been raised, Alliance grunts will soon arrive in a personnel carrier with 12 heavily armed and armored soldiers to secure the facility.

New Way of Things (Results):

With the landlock gone, the *Glory* is ready for takeoff. Sharpe and his crew are prepared to fly her and try to escape. Does the crew think to make arrangements to meet them later? How will the crew members who helped breach the facility get back to their own ship? Will the Alliance activity be such that they don't dare take off? Can they risk waiting?

SCENE 3: ESCAPING PEGASUS

The Black never looked so good.

How It Is (Setup):

Once the *Glory* lifts off, alarms will be raised at the facility, if they haven't already. Anyone on *Serenity* who would reasonably be monitoring local communications might "overhear" Blue Sun making a plea to the Alliance Airbase for assistance and receiving an affirmative response. Blue Sun scrapping crews will look on in surprise or curiosity as troopers storm the ship. If Blue Sun guards or Alliance troops are already there, they will fire small arms. Bullets ring off the heavy hull of the ship as it is airborne.

Problems:

Blue Sun will send out a call for help. The air base has a squadron of eight short-range two-man *Blackjack* interceptors (treat as ASREVs from the *Serenity Role Playing Game*) with two out on patrol in the system, two in maintenance, two in pre-flight, two in post-flight. The two in flight will be some minutes from the facility, but will immediately head back toward the moon to intercept the *Glory*. If not disrupted, the interceptors will close on their prey, fire upon it and disable the ship, killing or capturing Sharpe and his crew. If they are distracted or disrupted in some way, they will leave the *Glory* alone, allowing it to escape, though alerting authorities across the Cortex, giving Sharpe the publicity he sought.

The key to saving the *Glory* is to provide a distraction that prevents the interceptors from catching her. Blowing things up at the scrapping facility would work. If the crew's ship makes itself known, it might attract more attention than a stolen junker, especially if it has any Alliance warrants posted for it. The crew will likely be creative.

If their ship ends up being chased by the Alliance, the crew can rig for Hard Burn if the ship has gained enough distance from the interceptors to give them time. It's an AVERAGE task for Kaylee/Mechanic to make the changes, but it takes 10 minutes which should be quite a tense time, running from the interceptors which are closing fast. A failure wastes 10 minutes before Kaylee/Mechanic can try again. An Extraordinary success allows Kaylee/Mechanic to complete the changes in only five minutes and the interceptors never even get close. A botch and something on the engine breaks, preventing the Hard Burn.

New Way of Things (Results):

With luck, Sharpe and *Freedom's Glory* escaped into the Black. As is typical after doing a good deed, the crew will hear nothing from him. They have no idea where he planned to take the ship. A few weeks of hard-living later, they catch up to the post at a skyplex, where they find a large, heavy crate waiting for them. The shipping paperwork specifies it as "steam engine pistons for refurbishment," delivered from Serenity Valley on Hera.

Opening the crate, the crew find it filled with small platinum bars (worth their promised reward plus a little extra) and a note.

“Captain, I hope this finds you and your crew well. Your aid was invaluable to our cause. As per our agreement, here is your reward for you’re acts of bravery. Be well and keep flying. – Saul Potter.”

PROPS AND EXTRAS

CHARACTERS

Every adventure hinges on the characters the crew meets, deals with, and sometimes has to shoot.

Key Figures

These folk are the keys to the adventure. Their motivations, their Assets, and their Complications will have direct bearing on the crew and the various predicaments in which they find themselves landed.

Joseph “Eagle-Eye” Sarafina

Agi d8 **Str** d8 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d8 **Wil** d12
Init d8+d8 **LP** 12

Traits Credo (“A Deal is a Deal!”), Fighting Type (Extra action w/out penalty), Friends in High Places (regional clients), Leadership (group goal +2S), One-eye (minor)

Skills Animal Handling d6/Animal Training d12+d4/Riding d10, Discipline d6/Leadership d8, Guns d6/Pistols d12/Rifles d10/Shotguns d12, Influence d6/Barter d8, Melee Weapon Combat d6, Perception d6/Gambling d8, Planetary Vehicles d6, Survival d6/Land Survival d8

Weapon/Gear Pistol (d6 W—8 shots), Rifle (d8 W—30 shots), Shotgun (d10 W—10 shots)

Description Native born to Whitefall some 40-odd years ago, Sarafina has made a good living training horses and dogs for others. He is respected on Whitefall and other Rim worlds. A widower, Sarafina spends time in town at the Slaughterhouse with friends and also courts the few available women of his age. He has 15 ranch hands who live on his ranch. A neutral in the war, he lost a lot of money to “insiders” who

got the deals to sell beef to the Independents, so he isn’t sympathetic to Browncoats. Since he lost his wife, he’s requested visits from Companions.

Roland Sharpe

Agi d8 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d10 **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d8 **LP** 12

Traits Last Legs (–1 attribute step all physical activities), Leadership (group goal +2 skill step), Military Rank (+2 step Will/Discipline), Vain (–2 step Will when flattered).

Skills Athletics d2, Covert d6/Streetwise d10, Discipline d6/Leadership d12+d2, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Influence d6/Administration d8/Politics d10, Knowledge d6/History d12, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Swords d10, Perception d6/Intuition d18/Tactics d12, Pilot d6/Capital Ships d10/Yachts d8, Survival d6/Space d10.

Weapon/Gear Walking stick only.

Description Roland Aloysius Sharpe was a senior officer in the Londinum Navy before the Alliance Parliament put all military forces under a unified chain of command. Sharpe retired, refusing to serve the new Parliament, and was one of the key conspirators who forged a disparate collection of independent rebels into a fighting force able to resist the vastly superior Alliance for five years. He led the small Independent Navy throughout the war, capturing as many ships as he lost. An assassination attempt was made on him just prior to ceasefire talks at the end of the war. He was forced to run for his life and lost any chance of the amnesty given to many of the military officers of the Independents. Since that time he has lived as an outlaw with a 10,000 credit bounty on his head. Roland is a striking man with a receding hairline of white hair and the stiff bearing of a military officer. He loves spaceships which are to him like the sailing ships of old. He is a legendary hero to Browncoat veterans and sympathizers.

CHAPTER 1

Saul Potter

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d10 **Int** d8 **Wil** d10; **Init** d6+d10 **LP** 14

Traits Loyal (Get plot point when played)

Skills Animal Handling d6/Riding d10, Athletics d4, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8

Weapon/Gear Browncoat Service Pistol (d6 W—9 shots), Derringer (d4 W—2 shots)

Description Saul is Sharpe's most trusted confidant and aide during and after the war. He was a minor bureaucrat in the Londinum Naval Office when Sharpe retired. Certain he would lose his position with the reorganization of the naval forces, Saul accepted the role of aide-de-camp to Sharpe. Over the years, Potter has become a very capable agent, protecting Sharpe and helping to foment resistance against the Alliance among sympathizers and Browncoat veterans. He is fanatically loyal to Sharpe and is willing to sacrifice his life to save him. Saul is a man in his fifties with an upper class air. He wears a dress jacket and carries a revolver.

Hiram Clogg

Agi d10 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d12 **Int** d10 **Wil** d6; **Init** d10+d12 **LP** 12

Traits Friends in Low Places, Lightnin' Reflexes, Nose for Trouble (Major), Talented/Perception/Gambling (Major), Amorous, Branded (Minor), Dead Broke, Non-Fightin' Type, Things Don't Go Smooth (Major)

Skills Covert d6/Sleight of Hand d12/Streetwise d10, Discipline d6/Concentration d8, Guns d6, Influence d6/Barter d10/Persuasion d12, Perception d6/Gambling d12+d4, Unarmed Combat d4 (always dirty)

Weapon/Gear Derringer Pistol (d4 W—2 shots); dice, cards, large coins for gambling. Daddy's pocket watch (comes complete with sob story, replaced often with whatever is in the bargain bin at the pawn shop)

Description Shorter than average, Hiram is a bit chubby and always has a warm smile. He has receding jet black hair kept neatly combed. He's generous to everyone in small ways, especially bartenders, waitresses, and others who can help him escape out the back door when things go badly. He was born in the back hills on Athens about 30 years ago and has a drawl to his speech. Hiram will never be found without his fez which he uses to cover his balding scalp

and to conceal a derringer pistol. He thinks the fez makes him appear sophisticated and he generally tries to wear a suit of some sort to keep up appearances. Married five times, he's sworn off women, until the next one knocks him over. He has been known to affect all manner of "war injuries," so people (women) will feel sympathy for him. In truth, he spent most of the war in prison for fraud.

Secondary Characters

Less critical, but often more colorful than the Key Figures, these folk are allies, enemies, and interested bystanders.

Brutus Hancock

Agi d10 **Str** d8 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6; **Init** d8+d6 **LP** 16

Traits Fightin' Type (1 free non-attack), Tough (+2 life points), Mean Left Hook (Unarmed Basic)

Skills Animal Handling d6, Artistry d6/Cooking d10, Athletics/Dodge d8, Covert d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d10/Rifle d8, Perception d6, Survival d6, Unarmed Combat d6/Judo d8

Weapon/Gear Combat Knife (d4 W), Pistol (d6 W), Assault Rifle (d8 W)

Description Brutus is a former Browncoat marine who grew up on Higgin's Moon. He is a quiet man who spends his free time cooking. He professes to be a mercenary, but he has stayed with the dirt-poor Sharpe for about three years. Brutus is tall and muscular with a distrustful attitude bred by his time protecting Sharpe. Brutus wears a long brown duster and the black beret that signified Independent Marines. He carries a large tote with his weapons.

Jerome Budge

Agi d6 **Str** d12 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6; **Init** d8+d6 **LP** 16

Traits Traumatic Flashes (—2 step 10 minutes after episode), Sharp Sense (sight, +2 step to Alertness)

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Weight Training d10, Covert d6/Stealth d10, Discipline d6/Concentration d10, Guns d6/Pistol d10/Rifle d8, Heavy Weapons d6, Influence

d4, Perception d6/Search d8, Tracking d8, Planetary Vehicles d4, Survival d6/Land d10, Space d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Judo d8

Weapon/Gear Combat Knife [d4 W], Pistol [d6 W], Assault Rifle [d8 W]

Description An imposing black man, Jerome was a ground-pounder in the war. What he saw in Serenity Valley has haunted him ever since. Sharpe makes sure Jerome is looked after and Jerome is willing to kill or die for Sharpe. Jerome keeps his head shaved in a quiet ritual to honor those brothers of his who fell in Serenity Valley. The five-foot, eight-inch tall Jerome appears to be as wide as he is tall. He is all muscle, spending hours every day lifting weights and doing Tai Chi for flexibility and awareness.

Black Bill Watson

Agi d6 **Str** d12+d2 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6; **Init** d8+d6 **LP** 16

Traits Fightin' Type, Mean Left Hook, Tough as Nails, Lightning Reflexes, Crude, Chip on the Shoulder, Dull Sense (hearing), Overconfident

Skills Animal Handling d6/Horsemanship d10, Athletics d6/Dodge d10, Discipline d6/Concentration d8, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d6/Intuition d10, Planetary Vehicles d4, Survival d6/Land d10, Unarmed Combat d6/Boxing d12

Weapon/Gear Combat Knife [d4 W], Pistol [d6 W]

Description Black Bill stands six-foot, four inches tall and has a powerful frame. He keeps his hair close-cropped, running to mutton-chops on his face. If there was ever someone who just looked hard, Black Bill is it. Folks say he used to be a miner and a steel worker. He fought in the war, though no one is sure which side he was on, for he never talks about it. He came back to Whitefall after the armistice. He's not talkative and prefers to be "employed" by a rich patron so he can focus on boxing, his true passion. If you ever get him to open up, he'll tell you about the famous boxers he's seen on planets across the Rim and his time spent in the salon of a passenger liner after Bill had won a big purse.

He's in his late thirties, too old for the real boxing circuit, but his punches have lost none of their sting.

Bit Parts

Sometimes all you need to know about a person is that he or she is holding a gun on you.

Sarafina's Ranch Hands

Agi d6 **Str** d10 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6; **Init** d6+d8 **LP** 14

Traits Tough as Nails, Fightin' Type, Mean Left Hook, Loyal

Skills Animal Handling d6/Horsemanship d10, Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Melee Weapons d6/Knives d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapon/Gear Rifle [d8 W], Pistol [d6 W]

Description These people work for Sarafina and are fiercely loyal to him. They aren't afraid to defend the property, the horses, the dogs, or each other. They're independent-minded, but not Independents. They dress in ranch gear that is usually clean, if somewhat worn.

Slaughterhouse Gun Hands

Agi d10 **Str** d6 **Vit** d10 **Ale** d8 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4; **Init** d10+d8 **LP** 16

Traits Tough as Nails, Fightin' Type, Mean Left Hook, Loyal

Skills Animal Handling d6, Athletics d6/Dodge d12, Guns d6/Pistol d10, Rifle d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Boxing d12, Brawling d8

Weapon/Gear Pistol [d6 W]

Description One or two of these people guard each big shot in the South Room. They are fast with their guns and tough in a scrap. They are loyal and vigilant. They tend to be dressed in ranch hats, long formal coats, string ties, and boots. Their clothes are a ranch hand's Sunday Best.

CHAPTER 1

Joseph Chiu

Agi d8 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6;
Init d8+d8 **LP** 12

Traits Prejudice (against religious folk), Vain (appearance of the bar and himself), Walking Timepiece

Skills Artistry d6/Mixology d10, Animal Handling d6, Athletics d4, Guns d6, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Weapon/Gear Pistol (d6 W)

Description As bar man at the Slaughterhouse, Chiu has a focused interest in making sure his patrons are well-served and that no one bothers them. He pours drinks and arranges food which is delivered from the kitchen in the back. He has a pistol in a hidden holster underneath the bar. He always wears a waiter's tuxedo, part of the charm of the place.

Patience's Deputies

Agi d6 **Str** d10 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d8 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4;
Init d6+d8 **LP** 20

Traits Tough as Nails, Fightin' Type, Mean Left Hook, Chip on the Shoulder

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Melee Weapons d6/Knives d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapon/Gear Two combat Knives (d4 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Description Bruisers on Patience's payroll. They are adept in fisticuffs, as well as riding and gunplay. They hang out in places where Patience needs eyes and ears, including the Whitefall Spaceport and the Slaughterhouse. They are swaggering toughs who are given a wide berth by the locals. They generally dress in utilitarian (frontier) clothes.

Salvage Yard Workers

Agi d4 **Str** d8 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d4;
Init d8+d4 **LP** 14

Traits Fightin' Type, Heavy Tolerance, Crude.

Skills Athletics d4, Mechanical Engineering d6/Machinery Repairs d10, Melee Weapons d6, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Weapon/Gear Crowbar (d6 B)

Description Local folk who service spaceships and local vehicles as necessary. Their boss owns all the material in the junkyard and he has made the deal with Saul Potter to provide refuge. The workers are strong and use

improvised weapons and their own fightin' Skills. They are easily scared by gunfire, but will rough-up thieves before thinking to call the sheriff.

Blue Sun Guards

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d4;
Init d6+d8 **LP** 14

Traits Wears a Badge (Minor), Sharp Sense (Sight), Military Rank, Fightin' Type

Skills Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d4

Weapon/Gear Stun Baton (d2 S), Pistol (d6 W)

Description These folk are not the most formidable opponents, but they will diligently investigate any odd happenings or if someone sets off the perimeter alarm. Any serious threat will cause them to call in help from the nearby Alliance base. They are dressed in uniform gray coveralls with Blue Sun logos on the back and over the left chest pocket.

NEW COMPLICATIONS

Everyone has something that makes them special.

Dandy

[Minor Complication]

The world treats you better when you're dressed well. You spend a lot of time and money to look this good. **Penalty:** Might hesitate to take actions that could harm clothes or be distracted by even a minor stain or tear. Plot Points are awarded when this complicates things.

Last Legs

[Major Complication]

You kicked around the 'Verse for quite a spell, but now she's kicked back. You've got an ailment which saps your strength and is likely to put you six feet under, lest you know a mighty fine doctor and can afford his remedies. **Penalty:** Minus one step from all physical Skill checks (Strength, Vitality, Agility) due to the weakness caused by your disease.

Loves the Wind

[Minor/Major Ship Asset]

[Minor/Major Asset] Though the ship flies normally using her pulse drive in space, she really excels in atmo. Whether it's the extra effort they put in designing her wings or tweaks in the

reactor thrust, she's mighty quick. **Bonus:** As a minor Trait, the ship gets a +1 to its speed rating in atmosphere. As a major Trait, the ship receives a +2 to the rating instead.

One-Eye

[Minor Complication]

Through accident, disease, duel, or injury, you've lost the use of one of your eyes. (The eye might still be there, but it's a non-working passenger). Although you have learned to compensate, the loss makes you a little less observant. **Penalty:** -1 step to Alertness-related checks which rely upon eyesight.

Slothful

[Minor Complication]

Nothing could possibly be as urgent as everyone makes it out to be. A pause for reflection (and a good nap) always does wonders for your outlook. Whenever considerable or long-term effort is required, you're the last to volunteer. **Penalty:** Whenever you role play this trait to the detriment of yourself or your crew, the GM can award you Plot Points.

Vain

[Minor Complication]

Why doesn't everyone realize how special you are? True, some do, and you never tire of hearin' them tell you how wonderful you are. **Penalty:** Your resolve tends to weaken when others flatter you or lavish compliments on you. This imposes a -2 Attribute step to Willpower when resisting the sweet words of your ardent admirers.

TECHNOLOGY NOTES

Landlock: Landlock is a signal from the control tower that shuts down control of key components. Jamming or stopping the signal releases the lock. The controls on the ship are manufactured into the firmware of the systems themselves, so they are very expensive to remove. Doing so is illegal and could cost you your ship if you are ever detected without those controls in place. (Authorities can "ping" your ship to make sure the correct manufacturer's encrypted code is returned.) Landlock cannot be activated when the ship is airborne or in space.

Browncoat Service Pistol: A variation on the oft-copied standard McKinley Forelock, the Browncoat Service Pistol is difficult to distinguish as different except for the slightly fatter grip. Another distinguishing feature comes from the memorable or gallant phrases Independent soldiers etched along the barrel. The difference is primarily that it holds nine rounds as opposed to the ubiquitous eight rounds among the McKinley types. Chester Ozawa, the gunsmith who created the variant and helped manufacture thousands of them during the war, was fond of saying that the Independents needed every edge they could get.

HELPING THEM SHINE

Just as you want all your players to enjoy themselves in your home gaming group, it is even more important in a demonstration or convention adventure that all the characters get a chance to shine. For example, it would be unfair to pass out pre-generated characters which include a doctor and then no one gets sick, wounded, or beat up. To this end, the following areas of the adventure are aimed at providing moments for individual characters to shine. If you are using a crew other than the movie characters, consider which of the players might get the most out of each of these moments.

Captain (Mal)

The Captain's role is to show leadership, make decisions, and command the crew. He might be the one trying to make the deal with Giles O'Malley or with Saul Potter. He'll have to manage the passengers and lay down the rules. It will be his decision if the ship will help Sharpe or not, a moment to wrestle with his own past and connection to the war.

Mercenary/Browncoat (Zoe)

This character is tagged with taking care of the dogs and will be the one to spot the sick ones. She'll support the captain and can take the lead in fights. Her connection to Potter's past might make her the negotiator. Her military Skills will come in handy dealing with the Pegasus Processing Facility.

Companion (Inara)

In a tramp freighter's life on the Rim, a Companion must make her own things happen. She'll check to see if anyone the crew will be dealing with is known in the Companion Guild databases, unearthing key information. She's likely the best at social skills and can interact well with Sarafina, Potter, and even Sharpe. She could use her connections to help the crew find another job. She'll also have to rise above the crude, frontier atmosphere into which she's been thrown. She can use charm to smooth the way out of tricky situations, but she's also handy with a gun (or a sword) and not afraid to use it.

Pilot (Wash)

The pilot plays a key role in the adventure, saving the ship from destruction and helping them escape the notice of the authorities on Whitefall and Pegasus. Working to get the *Glory* flight-worthy will be important too. Escaping the Blackjack Interceptors at the end will be up to him as well.

Mechanic (Kaylee)

When the captain ignores the mechanical needs of his ship, it's up to the mechanic to scrounge for parts or kick him in his tight pants so he'll buy them. She'll be vital to saving them from crashing into Whitefall, as well as getting the *Glory* flight-worthy. Rigging their ship for hard burn will be important, as well.

Doctor (Simon)

The doctor gets the spotlight early, dealing with the ailing dogs. Later, he can address Roland Sharpe's ailments, as well as treating anyone wounded in the firefights and brawls. This is good for an introverted or unskilled player. A skilled player can generate more action and interest by drawing on his background and complications.

Mercenary (Jayne)

Shooting stuff and hauling stuff are his line of work. Snatching the fuel cells without getting caught comes to mind, as well as holding off Patience's deputies, irate machine workers or Alliance soldiers. His brawn will help save the ship on Whitefall and he'll be vital in sneaking on board the *Glory*.

STARTING NOTES

When running this adventure for a one-shot game or as the start of a new campaign, it might be helpful to offer starting notes to each of the characters. If you're not using the crew from the movie, pick which one fits the archetype and modify the information to suit that particular character. This will help the player understand the current situation and give them ideas that will encourage role playing and character interaction. Encourage each player to get into their roles, and to have fun!

Captain (Mal)

You're having a hard time of late. The best jobs are too risky to take for they would bring you into contact with the Alliance. Your last big job went south on you, putting you in debt to Percival Chao to the tune of 4,000 credits. The run you're completing now is earning you 2,000 credits, but that's already been applied against the debt, leaving you with no new cash for expenses. You really need to land a well-paying job on Whitefall to turn the crew's fortunes around. The crew is irritable at the hardships and starting to complain. You have only 20 platinum to your name.

Your mechanic has been nagging you about necessary repairs to the ship for weeks now, but you don't have the money to do anything about it. All you know is that the ship has brownouts from time to time and other parts might break and kill you all. Everything the mechanic wants to do with the ship will take time and credits, in varying amounts. Ask your mechanic for details.

Fuel is getting mighty low. You have 100 hours of flight time left after you touch down on Whitefall. The nearest planets are Bellerophon (72 hours) and Hallsey (120 hours). This is drier than you care to run, but the money problems are keeping you from refilling your tanks.

Mercenary/Browncoat (Zoe)

Work has been scarce and lack of funds has been rough on the Captain. He gets surly with bad luck. You know that you're also running low on ammo for the personal weapons. It will cost 25 credits to restock ammo.

You enjoy the time with your current cargo—dogs called Sinhon Coursers. You grew up with dogs and you spend a lot of time exercising them

as best you can (and cleaning up after them). You note that the Pilot is afraid of them and tease the dogs to growl at him whenever he passes by.

Before joining the 57th Overlanders you served in various detachments for the Independents, including a security detail. During your security work, you performed personnel protection for high-ranking Independent officials at various summits and strategy meetings. You know most of the top Independent naval and political leaders and their aides by sight.

Companion (Inara)

You've always been a fish out of water with this crew, but there are times when your position and your history comes in handy. You are respected, admired almost anywhere. There's always a chance the person the crew needs to help them out is an old client. You always seem to have the right connections.

The ship is far from civilized places right now, leaving you little opportunity to pursue your profession. Given the lack of funds the crew is experiencing, you might want to find a new client.

Pilot (Wash)

You haven't been paid in awhile and the ship is showing some crankiness on account of needing repairs. In atmo, the left thruster is lagging the right, forcing you to compensate as you fly. The mechanic has mentioned various parts may be breaking and killing you all or stranding you in the Black. You figure the less you know, the better.

The current cargo—dogs called Sinhon Coursers—make you nervous. You've been afraid of dogs since you could remember and you swear the dogs in the crates filling the cargo hold can smell your fear, because they growl as you pass by.

Fuel is getting mighty low on board. You'll have 100 hours of flight time left after you touch down on Whitefall. The nearest planets are Bellerophon (72 hours) and Hallsey (120 hours). This is drier than you care to run, but the money problems keep you from refilling the tanks.

For reference, one drum of liquefied hydrogen contains 0.25 ton of fuel (500 pounds); four drums makes one ton of hydrogen which provides 10 hours flight time; one drum of fuel costs 10 credits since it has been made "safe"

and portable. At a regulated spaceport, fuel can be filled directly from underground storage tanks, usually for 5 credits per ton. Fully fueled (60 tons), a Firefly can fly for 600 hours (25 days).

Mechanic (Kaylee)

The crew has not been doing well lately. The Captain has been forced to turn down good jobs because they roamed too close to the Alliance. The money for the current cargo has already been spent on debts. You have twenty platinum to your name.

You've been keeping the ship running by cobbling together broken parts and jury-rigging systems. Your key areas of concern are:

The compressor coil on the engine housing has developed fractures. You keep rewelding it, but it won't last forever. If it breaks, the engine and the ship stop dead. Near a gravity well, that's a death sentence. A used one from a scrap yard would cost 250 credits and would only take a few minutes to replace. A new, higher grade coil would cost 750 credits, and is guaranteed to last a "lifetime."

The intake manifold on the port outboard thruster has been losing efficiency of late due to corrosion on the pipes. You've tried, but you can't fix it. Your pilot has had to compensate for this when flying in atmosphere. It is possible that pieces of the corrosion could break off during use and foul the thruster. This would require you to shut down fuel to the port thruster and then do a hot restart to blast the thruster clear of the blockage. If the thruster blocks in flight over a planet, the ship would likely start spinning and hurtling toward the ground. A new Intake Manifold would take a day to install in an equipped shipyard and cost 500 credits.

The electrical systems on the ship are showing their age, resulting in power fluctuations that can cause a brownout during rough maneuvers. You keep replacing sections of wire and patch panels, but you really need fresh, high-capacity line to rewire key stretches. It would take you 2-3 days of downtime and about 150 credits of supplies to fix the major wiring problems.

Fuel is getting mighty low on board. You'll have 100 hours of flight time left after you touchdown on Whitefall. The nearest planets are Bellerophon (72 hours) and Hallsey (120 hours).

This is drier than you care to run, but the money problems are keeping you from refilling the tanks.

You know that one drum of liquefied and sealed hydrogen fuel contains 0.25 ton (500 pounds). Four drums makes 1 ton of hydrogen which provides 10 hours flight time. At a regulated spaceport, fuel can be filled directly from underground storage tanks, usually for 5C/ton. One drum of hydrogen (0.25 ton) costs 10C since it has been made “safe” and portable. Fully fueled, a Firefly can fly for 600 hours (25 days).

You will happily relate all this in detail to the Captain, should he ask.

Doctor (Simon)

If playing the Serenity crew: River has suffered a series of nightmares and has lashed out violently. To appease Mal and allow her body to rest, Simon agreed to keep River sedated for several days. She will effectively be unconscious for the length of this adventure, but may still need to be protected and/or rescued.

The recent lack of funds have meant that supplies in the infirmary are scarce. You’re afraid a crew member or passenger could die due to lack of meds and you’re prepared to cut a deal with someone or find the money to restock. Any medical man on Whitefall might be able to part with some supplies for coin or a good deed.

With the tough times, you have only 25 platinum to your name.

Mercenary (Jayne)

The crew has had a string of bad luck lately and you’re feelin’ poor. You haven’t gotten paid in a month, the food is down to protein paste and dreck, and the Captain insists on sneaking around the Black instead of taking on a fair fight. Lack of money to spend dirt-side has got you irritated and likely to be more aggressive. You’ve got ten platinum to your name.

The governor of Whitefall is Imogene Patience, an old woman you’d love to see pushing up daisies. You’ve got a personal score to settle, when the time is right.

LOOKING UP ADMIRAL SHARPE

Cortex Search Criteria: Roland Aloysius Sharpe

PersFile: Roland Aloysius Sharpe—RED FLAG

Origin: Born 2458 on Londinum.

Paternal: Bartholomew Andrew Sharpe, retired Alliance Civil Service, deceased.

Maternal: Rebecca Elizabeth Chan, retired Alliance Civil Service, deceased.

Education: Naval Academy Graduate with Honors.

Military Record: Londinum Naval Officer 2478-2503, retired with distinction. Recipient: Frontier Guardian Medal, Parliamentary Medal of Honor. Court Martial 2506: In absentia. Ruling: Treason. Sentence: Death.

War Record: Identified as a Senior Officer with rebel naval forces in 2506. At cessation of hostilities, held rank of Grand Admiral of all rebel naval forces.

Criminal Record: Desertion, Treason, Murder, Espionage, Terrorism, Unmeritorious Conduct, Acts of Rebellion.

Additional Notes: “When the surrender of the Independent Factions was declared and Armistice was signed in Jasper Grove on Osiris, Sharpe was notably absent. His absence lost him what slim chance he had at amnesty for his actions. He was reconfirmed a renegade outlaw and traitor to the Alliance.”

—Colonel Elizabeth Lee

Standing Bounty: 25,000 Credits

Current Location: Unknown, suspected in the Rim Territory

CHAPTER TWO

FREEDOM'S FLIGHT

THE WAY IT IS

Not good, is how it is. The Alliance wrongly incarcerates the crew on the hellish penal moon aptly named Perdition. If the crew don't think much of the accommodations, likely they'll try to escape, in which case they have to outmaneuver heavily armed guards, outwit sadistic torturers, seize a bounty hunters' spaceship, and race for the Black.

For a new crew, this episode gives a reason for a handful of strangers to have to work together to survive. For a crew that lacks its own ship, this adventure provides a 1,920-ton bulk transport modified for risky uses. This episode can also serve as a generic escape adventure any time the crew's escapades land them in an Alliance prison. In such circumstances, skip Act I and weave your storyline into the beginning of Act II.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Let's begin our tale in a city on Hera. We could set it equally well on another Border planet or even in a big mining town out on the Rim. The story then moves to Perdition, an arctic moon circling a dead planet in the same system.

HOW THINGS GOT THIS WAY

How we got here is a mite complicated, but greed and a thirst for power underlie it all. A bounty hunter is about to frame a young woman in the crew's charge as a terrorist. The bounty hunter will summon the authorities, who will imprison the crew right along with the young woman.

Carved out of the snow-and-ice-sheathed moon of a dead planet, the Perdition Penal Facility is home to captives the Alliance would just as soon forget. A cunning sociopath named

Tech Support

A crewmember with solid Technical Engineering Skills is worth his weight in gold in this here little tale. Without one, the GM should consider substituting Mechanical Engineering Skill checks for comparable Technical Engineering checks. It won't make perfect sense, but it'll keep your crew breathin' somewhat longer.

Colonel Jared Rejovic commands the facility for the Alliance military. To feed his insatiable greed and fund his labyrinthine schemes for regional power, Rejovic works thousands of inmates to death in the extensive titanium mines beneath his prison.

Rejovic's only titanium competition in this neck of the 'Verse comes from Far Yukon Corporation located on the planet Hera. Elias Wingate is Far Yukon's Chief of Hera Operations. A brilliant and charismatic captain of industry, Wingate kept Far Yukon's Hera operations profitable throughout the Unification War and has diffused endless conflicts with the Miners' Guild to ensure Far Yukon's success today. Without Wingate's astute leadership, Hera's volatile labor issues would break the titanium industry asunder. True, he does use indentured servants, but he feels he treats them fairly.

Colonel Rejovic harbors a fierce hatred of Wingate. Rejovic is firmly convinced that Wingate must be doing something shady and illegal in order to be so successful, since Far Yukon regularly undercuts Perdition's titanium prices and cripples Perdition in the marketplace. Far from wanting Wingate investigated, Rejovic would just like to know how the man does it! Rejovic contemplated assassinating Wingate, but figured someone else in on Wingate's secrets would just take over Far Yukon. Rejovic hit on the brilliant plan of abducting and torturing Wingate, to force him to reveal his secrets. To carry out the kidnapping, Rejovic hired Xi Wang Black and "Swift Justice," Black's remorseless group of bounty hunters. When Swift Justice

couldn't penetrate Far Yukon's sophisticated security protection without risking detection, Rejovic called off Elias's kidnapping and adjusted the plan. If Rejovic couldn't have Elias Wingate, he'd control him through his daughter, Mercedes.

Mercedes Wingate and her father don't see eye to eye. He champions Far Yukon's use of indentured servants. She works for the Miner's Guild as a labor advocate and openly opposes this practice. Recently, Mercedes fell for a dashing, but dangerous Independent insurgent named Jeremiah Crane. Crane led a cadre of former Independent soldiers devoted to sabotaging Border Planet Alliance facilities. Mercedes thinks Crane is a heroic freedom fighter. Truth is Crane just likes to blow things up and kill people.

Rejovic instructed Black to plant something on both Crane and Mercedes that would undeniably incriminate them as terrorists, then summon the Federal Marshals. By law, terrorists are sent straight to Perdition, there to await trial, which, considerin' how busy the Alliance is these days, might be awhile in comin'. With Mercedes in one of his cells, Rejovic will finally bend Elias Wingate to his will.

What Rejovic doesn't know is that Black and Swift Justice were really taken with the idea of abducting Elias Wingate and they don't plan to give it up. Black smells credits. If he manages to pull this off, he's certain Rejovic won't be able to resist having his enemy in his clutches and he'll pay big. If Rejovic doesn't want Elias, Far Yukon will fork over a sizeable sum for his return.

Either way, Black wins.

ACT I: ROUND UP

CRANE'S NEED

Jeremiah Crane seeks intelligence on Alliance facilities for his insurgent attacks. The military has recently captured several of his followers and shipped them off to Perdition, so Crane has particular interest in that prison.

BLACK'S PLAN

Xi Wang Black plans to give Crane the intelligence he seeks. Black murdered an Alliance courier and stole a data disk containing top-secret architectural schematics and security access codes to many Alliance military facilities, including Perdition's prison. Posing as "Shing Xiao," a high-level member of a Hera crime organization, Black offers Crane that data disk. In exchange, "Xiao" wants detailed information on Far Yukon's security and protection systems.

Crane convinces Mercedes to get hold of the Far Yukon data from her Guild contacts. Tonight at midnight, Mercedes will meet "Xiao" at Ace in the Hole—a shady gambling house and saloon frequented by Independent sympathizers. The Hole is located in the back of "Gambler's Run," an alley filled with low-class casinos and gambling bars all wedged in a narrow box canyon on the edge of town. "Xiao" claims to want this information to rob Far Yukon. Mercedes doesn't want to do anything to hurt her father, but Crane insists that he needs the information and Mercedes is so smitten with him that she agrees, providing "Xiao" promises that no one will get hurt. Black plans to use the stolen data disk containing Alliance top-secret information to frame Mercedes. Then he'll use the Far Yukon security information Mercedes has provided to kidnap her father, Elias.

Once Black gives Mercedes the top-secret Alliance data disk, Black will call in the Feds. Mercedes' possession of the top-secret Alliance disk is irrefutable evidence of her involvement in terrorist activities. The disk's security code information, however, provides the keys to escaping the prison.

LOOK-ALIKE

Just to really complicate matters, Crane bears an uncanny physical resemblance to one of the crew. (Choose any crew member with distinctive looks or style. If he has a strong Influence, Persuasion, or Acting Skill, so much the better, although this isn't essential.) The crew member is the same height as Crane, has the same color hair and eyes and, in fact, could be Crane's twin brother. This unfortunate resemblance is bound to muck up everyone's evening and ensure that the crew is hauled off to the slammer.

SCENE 1: ACE IN THE HOLE

Wherein a little mistaken identity can land a fella in a whole heap o' trouble.

How It Is (Setup):

The Job

Mercedes Wingate is the best labor advocate for the Miner's Guild on Hera. She shares her father's intellect and magnetism, but she sees the world differently. She's a young idealist who voices open criticism of Alliance control of Hera's resources through big business and military might.

Mercedes recently quit her job, however, giving no reason. Attempts to contact her have failed. Rumors have been circulating among the staff that she's meeting with terrorists at Ace in the Hole. Such news deeply troubles Jacob Walton, the Vice President of the Miner's Guild, Hera Chapter. He is fond of his talented, young colleague and fears she's headed for trouble. Add to that the worrisome fact that Guild cannot afford to have one of its public figures linked to terrorism. Walton turns for help to one or two of the crew members. If any of the crew has Friends in High Places, Walton uses that connection. If anyone has Friends in Low Places, Walton has a shady associate who will contact the crew member. (Several Guild members have criminal affiliations.)

Walton (or his low-life friend) offers 500 credits to the crew to find Mercedes. Walton has reason to believe she's going to be at the Hole tonight. The crew's job is to discover if she is consorting with terrorists. If so, they're supposed to give her a good talking to, protect her from immediate harm, and drag her out of there by the hair if she won't come peaceably. Oh, and Walton would like them to find out what information they can on the people she's been meeting with. To help the crew identify Mercedes, Walton (or his friend) shows the crew a recording of Mercedes giving a speech.

If the crew members don't yet know each other, it's likely they meet up while visiting Gamblers' Run, which is well known for its liquor, gaming houses, and other forms of entertainment.

Crewmember Allegiances Don't Matter

This episode is designed to land every crew in trouble. Don't matter if they're the upstandin', law-abiding type, the dastardly criminal sort, or that fella dancin' in and out of the shadowy edge of the law. It's surely possible that your crew could include loyal Alliance citizens—even statesmen—local police, Feds, or present or former Alliance military members. Unfortunately, bad things just seem to happen to good folk, and here the road to Perdition is truly paved with good intentions. In this episode, even those who strive simply to help save some poor, misguided girl from herself, will find they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. When the Alliance military raids Ace in the Hole, they note the look-alike crewmember's resemblance to Joshua Crane. That and the fact that he's with Mercedes is more than sufficient evidence to ship them and all their colleagues off to Perdition. To add to the crew's problems, Black's accusations are backed by the well-respected (among the Alliance) Rejovic. And if the military finds the data disk too, that'll be right conclusive! Crewmembers can swear they're loyal to the Alliance 'til they're blue in the face and show all the credentials they can pull out of their pockets, but the deck's stacked against them. The military will deem the credentials forgeries and accuse the crew of being villains with secret terrorist agendas. Calls to Friends in High Places, even in the military, won't secure help to prevent capture. Once Rejovic's long reach has clutched the crew, their only hope lies in devising their own escape.

Gambler's Run

Gambler's Run is a high-walled box canyon on the city's seedy side. It's just about wide enough for a single street to wind its way among the gambling dens, game parlors, and watering holes. Simple folk who aren't permitted to enter Hera's classy casinos find their way here. Gambler's Run is a raucous warren frequented by miners, migrant workers, down-on-their-luck war vets, and grifters who gather to drink, try their luck, and gripe about everything. On any given night, a half dozen brawls break out. Everyone packs iron, and shootings are common.

CHAPTER 2



Ace in the Hole

The Hole, as its affectionately known, is a gambling hall and saloon frequented by working-class folk and former Independent soldiers who are nursing their grievances and scraping out a thread-bare existence at society's edge. Black shows up here at midnight. Mercedes arrives slightly later. Since the crewmembers don't know when Mercedes will

show, they have time to drink, gamble, and mingle. The crowd of about 300 appears to be having a roaring good time, but if the crew looks closely, they will notice undercurrents of tension. If any of the crew happens to favor the Alliance, they better keep their mouths shut or they could find themselves dead. Rumors abound, including one that the Feds have been arresting people on trumped-up terrorism charges. Folks say that the Feds use these phony charges to circumvent Hera's criminal justice system and ship those who dare speak out against the Alliance straight to Perdition.

Problems:

Meeting Black

Black mistakes the look-alike crewmember for Crane and introduces himself as "Shing Xiao." He's direct, open, and friendly, and seems delighted to have found "Crane." With an engaging smile, Black quietly offers to show the look-alike "the data you seek" on his databook.

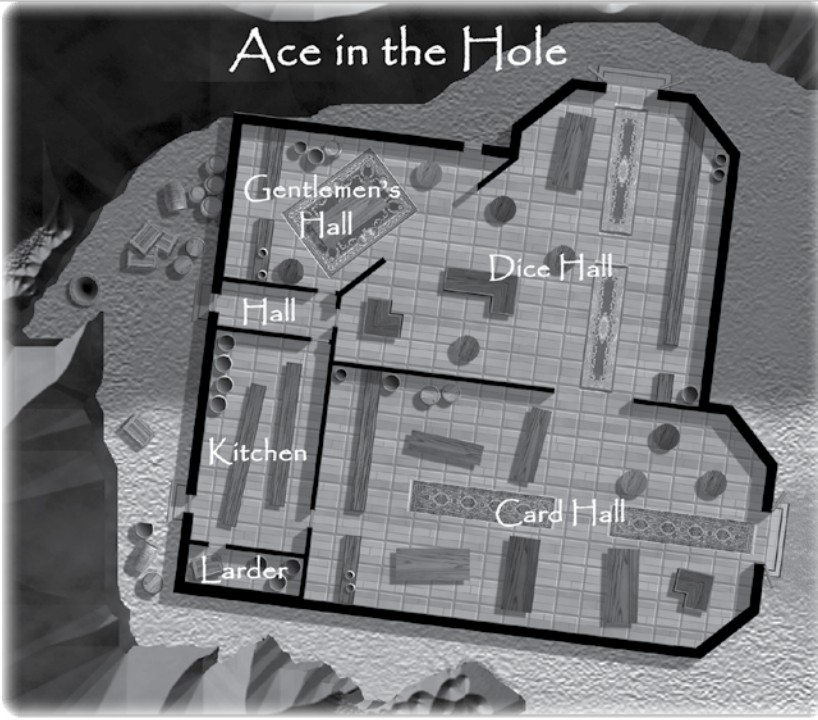
The look-alike might pretend to be Crane to learn more about Black and what he's offering. To persuade Black he's Crane, the look-alike needs to make an Intelligence or Willpower + Influence (or Persuasion) or Performance (or Acting or Impersonation) check. The crewmember gains a +2 step bonus on his Action because of his physical similarities to Crane. Black opposes this check with an Alertness (d10) + Perception (d6) roll. Black is overly eager, however, causing him to suffer a -2 step penalty on both his rolls (reducing his check to d6 + d2).

CHECKING OUT "SHING XIAO"

Difficulty Level Achieved Scuttlebutt Revealed

EASY	Xiao who?
AVERAGE	Xiao is a suspected member of a moderate-sized crime ring with Independent loyalties. (False. Black started these rumors as cover.)
HARD	Xiao's real name is Black, and folks say the Feds once sought to arrest him. (True)
FORMIDABLE	Xiao/Black captains <i>Freedom's Flight</i> , a mid-bulk transport. (True)
HEROIC	Xiao/Black may work as an Alliance bounty hunter. (True)
INCREDIBLE	Xiao/Black runs "Swift Justice," a ruthless gang of bounty hunters pretending to be Browncoats to hunt Alliance fugitives. (True)
RIDICULOUS	Colonel Jared Rejovic of Perdition issued many of Xiao/Black's bounty-hunting contracts. (True)
IMPOSSIBLE	Rejovic hired Xiao to frame Mercedes and kidnap Elias Wingate so that Rejovic can monopolize all titanium production. (True)

Ace in the Hole



If the look-alike fools Black, he asks the look-alike if he has the information Black requested. If the look-alike says no, Black retreats to wait for Mercedes. If the look-alike says yes, Black shows the look-alike (and his companions, if the look-alike insists) the contents of his data disk on his databook. These contents include the security codes and schematics for military facilities such as shipyards, way stations, and surface spaceports. Black highlights the architectural schematics and security access codes for Perdition Penal Facility because he knows the Alliance recently imprisoned Crane's comrades. (See the *Actively Memorizing Disk Information* Sidebar on page 40.) Black explains that all Alliance codes will expire in 72 hours (which the disk verifies).

Black then asks to see the Far Yukon data. If the crewmembers can't comply, the look-alike and Black again make opposing rolls, but this time the look-alike gets no bonuses for appearance, while Black suffers no penalties for eagerness. If the look-alike wins, Black still thinks the look-alike is Crane, but Black retreats warily to wait for Mercedes to see if she has the Far Yukon data. If Black sees through the charade, he still retreats. He's experienced and cool under pressure, so he doesn't lose his composure. But he's furious at the trick the crew played on him and angry at himself for falling for it. He'll watch closely to identify all of the look-alike's associates, determined

to either hand them over to the authorities or kill them before the night ends. In the firefights in Scenes Two and Three, Black will look for opportunities to shoot the crewmembers (only if he can do so without being noticed).

Four Swift Justice members are scattered around the Hole. They'll back up Black, but only if guns are drawn. They won't break cover readily because they often hunt fugitives in Gambler's Run. They'll even let Black take a beating, unless his death seems imminent.

The crew may decide to ask around the Hole, see what they can find out about Xiao. If so, have them roll Alertness + Influence (or Streetwise) or

Alertness + Technical Engineering depending on whether they're asking around the Ace or searching the Cortex. Compare the results to the table.

Xi Wang Black [Bounty Hunter, Captain of Freedom's Flight]

Agi d8, **Str** d6, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d10, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8; **Init** d12+d10; **LP** 18

Traits Fightin' Type [Major], Greedy [Minor], Lightnin' Reflexes [Major], Overconfident [Minor], Prejudice—Independents [Minor], Tough as Nails [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Covert d6/Infiltration d8/Surveillance d6/Stealth d12/Streetwise d8, Guns d6/Pistol d10/Rifle d10, Influence d4, Perception d6/Tracking d8/Intuition d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Karate d8

Weapons/Gear Submachine Gun (d6 W), Pistol (d6 W), Micro Transmitter, Dark Red Hat

Description Black is tall, handsome, sports a dazzling smile, and seems open and trustworthy. He wears a dark red cowboy hat and a long brown duster to curry favor with the locals. He's an adrenaline junky who lives for risk and thinks he's immortal. But he has the brains and discipline to plan and execute slow, subtle stratagems. What he lacks is any shred of conscience.

CHAPTER 2

Actively Memorizing Disk Information

One of the crew (without Total Recall) may take it into his head to try to memorize some of the data disk's information when shown the data by Black or Mercedes.

The data disk contains dozens of alphanumeric security codes for each facility. Only two Perdition codes are crucial here. One controls the computer terminals that operate Perdition's security system, from unlocking doors to gassing entire cellblocks. The other, used in combination with a passcard, opens Guard Station doors. The data disk doesn't label these two codes in a fashion that makes identifying their importance easy. And there are too many codes on the disk for anyone without Total Recall to memorize them all in a brief period.

If a crewmember *doesn't* announce that he's trying to memorize what he sees, assume he doesn't actively memorize anything now and will need to try to recall specific data in Act II using a FORMIDABLE Intelligence + Discipline (or Concentration) check.

If he actively tries to memorize data in Scene one, it takes a HARD Intelligence + Intuition check, or HARD Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Hacking or Technical Security Systems) check, to identify the two most valuable Perdition codes. In Scenes Two and Three, when capture and imprisonment seems more likely, this drops to an AVERAGE check.

Next, an AVERAGE Intelligence + Discipline (or Concentration) check locks the data in mind.

Swift Justice Bounty Hunters [4]

Agi d6, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d10, **Int** d8, **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d10; **LP** 12

Traits Friends in Low Places [Minor], Greedy [Minor]

Skills Covert d6/Infiltration d8/Stealth d10/
Streetwise d12, Guns d6, Influence d4,
Knowledge d6, Perception d6/Tracking d6/
Intuition d8

Weapons/Gear Rifle [d8 W], Pistol [d6 W]

Description The men and women of Swift Justice care for only money and vengeance (if events warrant). They're rough-looking, cunning, crafty, and experienced.

Meeting Mercedes

Once the crew's first encounter with Black ends, Mercedes arrives. She is pale and rattled, constantly glancing about, clearly nervous. She also mistakes the look-alike crewmember for Crane and rushes up to him before realizing her error. The look-alike's presence at her first clandestine meeting unsettles Mercedes. She can't conceal her shock and will demand to know who the hell this look-alike is and what the hell is going on. Give the crewmembers a reasonable chance to charm her. They might convince her Walton hired them out of concern for her safety. If they do, she'll warm to them. If they protect or save her in an upcoming firefight, she'll be their friend for life.

Meanwhile, Black watches the crew meet Mercedes and sidles closer, trying to eavesdrop. If he succeeds, he notices that the meeting between the look-alike is not a meeting between long-parted lovers! He considers the possibility that Crane and Mercedes act like strangers in public as cover. Give Black an Alertness (d10) + Intuition (d8) check. An EASY success suggests something peculiar is going on. A HARD success reveals to Black that Mercedes knows the look-alike isn't Crane.

Whether or not Black knows the look-alike isn't Crane, he approaches Mercedes shortly after she meets the crew to pursue his data disk trade with her. While Mercedes may harbor suspicions about the crew's intent towards her, at least she's sure Black is "Xiao." If Black remains suspicious, he asks Mercedes if the look-alike is Crane. How she responds depends on how the crew has impressed her. If she tells Black the look-alike isn't Crane, or Black already knows he's not Crane, Black will try to drive a wedge between Mercedes and the crew by whispering that the crew might be undercover Feds. He won't show her his data disk's contents if the crew is anywhere close to them.

Mercedes has the Far Yukon security data disk to exchange for Black's Alliance facilities data disk. Unless the crew does something stupid, Mercedes and Black verify each other's information and make the trade.

Mercedes Wingate (Labor Advocate for the Miner's Guild)

Agi d6, **Str** d4, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d4, **Int** d10, **Wil** d10;
Init d6+d4; **LP** 18

Traits Allure [Minor], Combat Paralysis [Minor], Friends in High Places [Minor], Highly Educated [Minor], Prejudice—Alliance and Far Yukon Corporation [Minor], Straight Shooter [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6, Guns d2, Discipline d6/
Morale d8, Influence d4/Barter d8/
Conversation d8/Persuasion d10, Perception d6/Intuition d8

Description A striking, willowy woman in her late 20's, Mercedes is a knock 'em dead stand-out in this crowd. She ties her deep brown hair up neatly and wears glasses of the latest fashion. Her precise walk, impeccable business suit, and fine leather briefcase give her an air of professional austerity inconsistent with her engaging smile and rich voice. One minute of conversation tells you she's both articulate and intelligent. Her perspicacity (hey, we know big words, too!) and magnetism are her chief assets as a labor advocate. Unfortunately, Mercedes has more smarts than sense. She's consumed by her compulsion to rebel against her conservative father. She really does love him and she's secretly saddened by their split, but she buries those feelings. Seems she's also got a weakness for big damn hero types. She idealizes the radical and admittedly charming Crane.

New Way of Things (Resolution):

Once he has the Far Yukon disk, Black uses his micro transmitter to bring down the law, and then he slips out as stealthily as possible. If the crew see him leave and tries to follow him, the police burst in just as Black exits and catch the crew who will still be inside. If the crew fight and/or kill Black and manage to take the Far Yukon disk from him, other Swift Justice members attack them and try to recover the Far Yukon data disk by force. If they succeed and escape, the police burst in before the crew can pursue them.



Memorizing Perdition Information

Mercedes will show the crewmembers the data disk if they befriend her and convince her they'll help her verify its authenticity or understand its content. See the *Actively Memorizing Disk Information* Sidebar on page 40.

Plot Points

Award one point to anyone Mercedes befriends. Award one point to anyone who discovers real evidence that Black is a villain. Two points (awarded in Act II) to anyone who successfully memorizes useful Perdition data.

SCENE 2: HOW W'RIIN BU LAI ("THINGS NEVER GO SMOOTH")

Wherein some long-buried angers find an unexpected target.

How It Is (Setup):

Local police backed up by Alliance troops raid all the establishments in Gambler's Run to round up suspected terrorists. At the Hole, 30

local police go in first, as 100 military troopers march up the Run in a show of force meant to quell any resistance in other saloons.

If crewmembers happen to be watching the street or if the crew has posted a lookout, an AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Sight) check notices 30 adults in groups of six, dressed like civilians and carrying satchels, move casually toward the Hole's exits. A HARD check suggests the bags conceal large guns. This gives the crewmembers two minute's warning. After one minute, an AVERAGE check reveals the advancing military troopers.

Problems:

The police burst in through all five of the Hole's exterior doors, assault rifles raised. Lieutenant Wallace Birch announces by megaphone, "This is a joint police/Alliance raid! Everyone freeze and put 'em up!"

If the crew doesn't intervene immediately, a short man bolts for a window. Birch shouts "Halt!" The fleeing man doesn't. Birch says, "Take him," and an officer shoots, misses, and wings a barmaid instead. The barmaid collapses. A heartbeat later, virtually every patron in the bar pulls a gun and opens fire on the police. The fury of this unexpected response kills half of the police and drives the rest from the building, to wild applause.

For this encounter, groups of crewmembers can face off against officers, numbering one less than them. Place patrons whose number equals the crewmembers' number directly beside the crew, where they're equally likely to receive police fire. Bars and overturned tables can provide cover. If an officer takes a hit, he retreats, and all police flee in round three. Mercedes is worse than useless in a fight. She'll immediately want to rush around to help the wounded, never mind that bullets are still flyin'. She'll need to be stopped and dragged to safety. She will refuse to take a gun and will not shoot anyone under any circumstances.

Police Officer (2)

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d8; **Init** d6+d6; **LP** 14

Traits Loyal [Minor], Wears a Badge [Minor]

Skills Athletics d4, Discipline d4, Guns d6/Pistol d8/Rifle d8, Melee Weapon Combat d6

Weapons/Gear Rifle (d8 W), Pistol (d6 W), Stun Baton (d2 S), Ballistic Mesh, Handcuffs

Description Capable and professional, this officer is determined to prove that Hera's police don't need babysitting by the Alliance military. He'll stand his ground in any reasonable fight, but knows when he's outgunned and won't throw his life away uselessly.

Saloon Patron (4)

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d6; **Init** d6+d6; **LP** 12

Traits Heavy Tolerance [Minor], Hooked—Alcohol [Minor], Prejudice—Alliance [Minor]

Skills Athletics d4, Guns d4, Melee Weapon Combat d2, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Weapons/Gear Pistol (d6 W)

Description This middle-aged miner thinks he's being ill-treated by both Far Yukon and the Alliance, which seem much the same to him. He longs for the brawling, rollicking days of his youth on the Rim. He didn't come looking for a fight, but by God he's still got one good one left in him!

Swift Justice

If trapped inside, Black and his minions all put on their dark red hats. The police (and the military) avoid shooting anyone in a dark red hat.

New Way of Things (Resolution):

The celebration inside the Hole is short-lived. The police have killed four patrons and wounded six more. A glance outside reveals military troopers descending on the bar.

Plot Points

One for surviving and one for protecting Mercedes.

Escape Attempt

If the crew escape before the raid, they walk into the arms of 100 military troopers barring the canyon floor between the Hole and The Last Chance Saloon, half in full tactical suits. The military aims to show it takes terrorism seriously. They demand all civilians surrender. Two ASREVs overhead block flight. The cliff faces are too steep to climb without RIDICULOUS success.

Alliance Trooper [100]

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 16

Traits Loyal [Minor], Military Rank [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6/
Assault Rifle d8, Perception d6, Melee
Weapon Combat d4

Weapons/Gear Assault Rifle with Rubber Bullets (d8 S), Pistol (d6 W), Stun Baton (d2 S), Gas Grenade (3d6 S), Full Tactical Suit or Ballistic Mesh, Handcuffs. Platoon gravcarts contain RPG launchers, various grenades, and heavier weapons and ordnance.

SCENE 3: LOST CAUSE

Wherein hope is dashed and a betrayal revealed.

How It Is (Setup):

Crewmembers still inside the Hole find themselves in a pickle. They have very little time before the military launches a devastating attack.

Problems:

Surrender!

The military troopers take cover behind the drop-off between the Hole and The Last Chance Saloon. Two minutes after the police retreat, the military calls by bullhorn for everyone inside to surrender. Two minutes later, half the crowd (150 patrons) walks out with its hands up unless persuaded otherwise by a crewmember.

Swift Justice

If trapped inside, Black and Swift Justice members make a good show of rabble-rousing. When the troopers open fire, they appear to fight on the side of the patrons. If a

crewmember watches Black and his crew closely (HARD Alertness + Perception (or Sight or Intuition)) he'll see they're actually blasting away at some of the patrons when they think no one is looking.

Memorizing Perdition Information

In the time-lapse between raids, the crew may try to review the data disk if they fear imminent capture. See the *Actively Memorizing Disk Information* Sidebar on page 40.

Leading the Defense

If any crewmember seeks to lead the Hole's defense, an AVERAGE Willpower + Influence (or Leadership) check puts him in charge, with an angry, armed mob solidly behind him. This leadership may come back to haunt the crewmember during the torture scene, but he deserves Plot Points for showing a Browncoat's devotion to lost causes. This night will become the stuff of legend on Hera. A year from now, thousands will claim they stood in the Hole in the hopeless but noble stand against tyranny. Locals will welcome any crewmember who returns to Gambler's Run again as a hero, "one who stood down a thousand Alliance storm troopers with nothin' but honor and two fistfuls of iron!" The longer the leader holds back the troopers, the longer they'll remember him.

Negotiating Surrender

If a crewmember seeks to negotiate surrender, he meets substantial patron resistance and needs a FORMIDABLE Willpower + Influence (or Leadership or Persuasion) roll to take command. Although the military requires that everyone surrender, the Alliance will negotiate terms for a bloodless surrender. The military will confiscate all arms, load most folk into waiting paddy wagons, and haul them off the local hoosegow. Sadly, this will not be the case with the crew or Mercedes! (Go to "Black's Betrayal." on page 44) A leader crewmember who demands that everyone be allowed to lay down arms and go home requires a FORMIDABLE Willpower + Influence (or Barter) check. Although a negotiating crewmember likely saves lives, folk hereafter brand him a yellow-belly turncoat. If the crew decides to stay to fight, the military will allow those patrons who want to surrender to leave.

Mercedes will stay with the crew, whether they want her or not. If they try to convince her to leave, she'll refuse, saying Crane would want her to be brave.

Here They Come!

Five minutes after the surrendering patrons leave, the military lays down suppressing fire as 20 troopers circle behind the building. If defenders blocked windows and doors, troopers will use concussion grenade launchers until they blow them all open. Troopers then fire numerous gas grenades by RPG launchers through windows and doors. Their gas doesn't spread evenly inside (none enters the Larder at all). Role a d4 to determine at what range increment a crewmember stands from an explosion. A four places him outside any explosion's range increment. Otherwise, the result indicates the number of d6 Stun damage he suffers. The gas drops two-thirds of the patrons (likely leaving 50).

Troopers wait four rounds for gas to dissipate, and then launch flashbang grenades five feet inside all doors. Under suppressing fire, 10 troopers in tactical suits storm through each door, for a total of 50. The Alliance doesn't need a massacre and a whole passel of martyrs on its hands, so troopers fire rubber bullets from their assault rifles, which do d8 Stun damage (on top of Basic damage).

Each round, the troopers take minimal losses and drop either 50% of the standing patrons or 10 patrons, whichever is more. On the third round, most patrons still standing surrender or hide. Troopers round them all up.

Black's Betrayal

Once the troopers capture and disarm the crew, Black (or a minion if he's dead) points out the look-alike crewmember as Crane and Mercedes as his lover. Black also suggests the military search for a data disk on their persons. If they don't find the disk on either of them, Black suggests they must have hidden it somewhere and the military will search the Hole. If the crew led any type of defense, other patrons loudly dispute Black's accusations, thereby further convincing the Alliance that the crew are criminals. Troopers access images

confirming that the look-alike is, indeed, Crane. On that basis alone, they arrest the crew and Mercedes.

An officer openly thanks Black and Swift Justice for "calling in the raid" and "identifying the terrorists."

"You bounty hunters are worth your weight in platinum," he says loudly enough for the crew to overhear.

Black is furious and lashes out at the officer, fearing his Browncoat alias will be compromised. Black will make sure the loose-lipped officer answers to Colonel Rejovic. The chagrined officer assures Black that he'll take these terrorists off planet before any bleeding heart lawyer can show up to try to free them.

Summary Execution

An angry soldier declares he lost friends in one of Crane's bombings. He pulls his sidearm and shouts, "Give me one good reason not to execute you all here and now!" The officer warns, "Don't do nothin' stupid Troy," but the young man keeps waving his pistol. The crew can talk him down with an AVERAGE Willpower + Influence (or Persuasion) check. Give them a +1 skill step on their check for each good argument they make. If they fail, the officer knocks him down as he fires, ruining his shot, which does only one-fourth damage if it hits, rounded down. Several other soldiers drag him away.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

To Perdition

The military shackles the crew hand and foot, sedates them, then stuffs them in the cold hanger of an alliance patrol boat bound for Perdition. Several dozen other prisoners accompany them. The injured receive full medical treatment, including surgery. The trip takes 62 hours, so the crew has ten hours left to use the security codes.

Fugitives

If the crew managed to escape the roundup, Alliance troopers pursue them. The GM can play out the chase, place an unrelenting marshal on their trail, and capture them all later. Perhaps

Running the Prison Escape as a Stand-Alone Adventure

If you run this episode as a generic escape adventure after the Alliance (or another authority) imprisons the crew, read the introductory sections above thoroughly and browse through Act I, but start here with Act II.

Weaving in Mercedes Wingate

When the guards first separate the crew from the other new inmates in Scene one, they drag out Mercedes, too. The guards shackle Mercedes and the crew together near the north wall in Room 17. Rejovic, Yang, and Lin linger in Rejovic's office for half an hour. In that half hour, the crew and Mercedes can share their plight and bond. She's terrified, claims to be wrongly imprisoned for terrorism, and has no idea why she's been singled out for whatever horrible fate awaits them. Mercedes knows all about the horrid things that go on in Perdiction, for she's heard about them from her father. She can convince the crew that they don't want to be here, like they need further convincin'!

Security Codes

The crew's escape depends on remembering two alphanumeric codes, one of which grants computer terminals control over many aspects of Perdiction's security system. The other code keyed into the keypad locks on Guard Station doors and accompanied by the swipe of a guard's passcard unlocks those doors.

During Scene one, Rejovic, Yang, and Lin torture the crew and Mercedes for information. Rejovic turns on an intercom into the adjacent Communications Room to obtain facts to bolster his interrogations. The intercom picks up audio waves coming into Communications from elsewhere in Perdiction and broadcasts them into Room 17. They will be hard to hear, especially with all the screamin', but among the mix of messages are a half dozen coming from prison administrators and guards confirming security protocols. The crew overhears bored voices droning out alphanumeric codes from time to time, two of which will save their lives. If a crewmember decides to try to memorize any of the codes, he must succeed on an AVERAGE Intelligence + Discipline (or Concentration) check to do so.

Black was wrong, and the security codes continue to be active longer. Or perhaps the security codes cycle back into usefulness later.

Plot Points

One point each awarded to everyone who helped Mercedes survive. Two points (awarded in Act II) to anyone successfully memorizing useful Perdiction data. One point handed out for leading a meaningful defense or negotiating a bloodless surrender. One point for talking down the soldier and persuading him not to murder them.

ACT II: PERDITION

Perdition houses thousands upon thousands of inmates in several massive underground complexes walled with black metal and stone. The moon's extensive ore-processing facilities likewise lie below the crippling cold of the surface. Colonel Rejovic cares nothing for the inmate's living conditions and lets the cellblocks fall into disrepair. Pervasive rust and grime transform the already bleak netherworld into a squalid purgatory. Presently, a virulent flu

infects more than half of the guards (and many inmates) in this closed community, gravely weakening Perdiction's security.

SCENE 1: TWIST AND SHOUT

Wherein our heroes have somethin' taken from them and learn a little bit about how to hate.

How It Is (Setup):

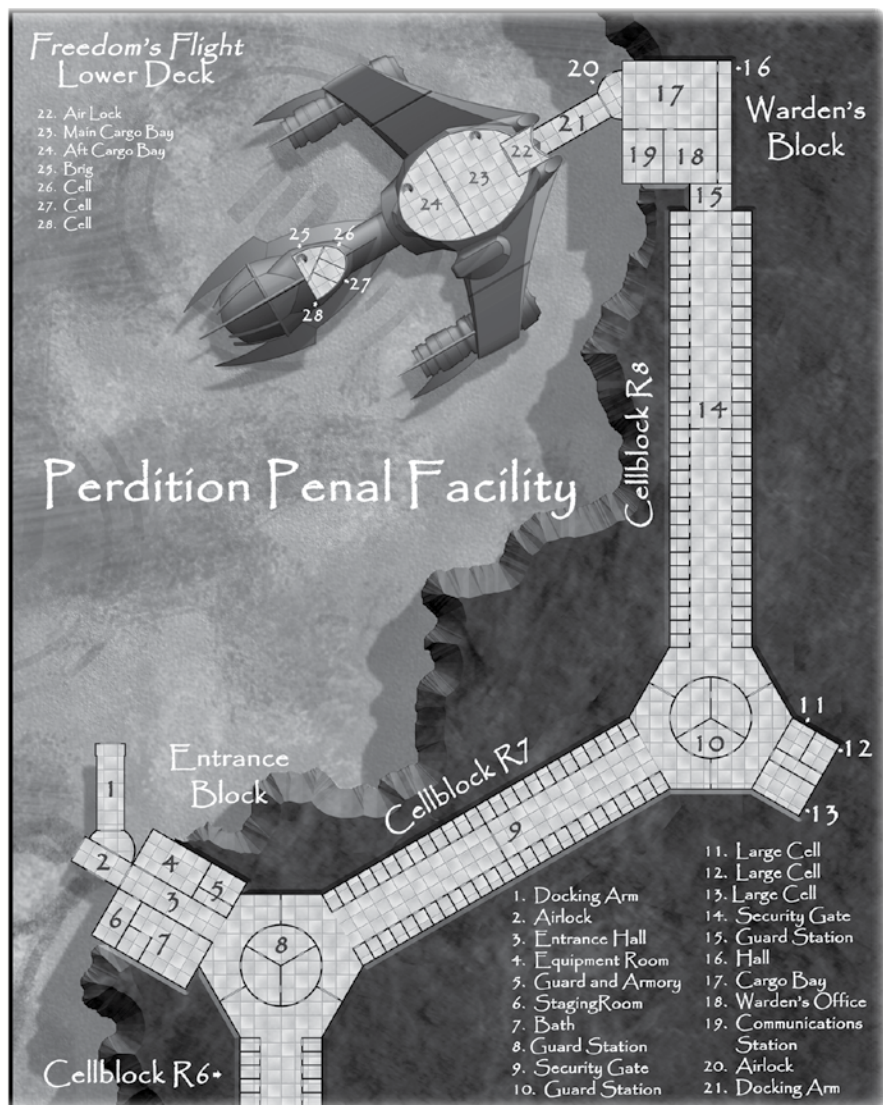
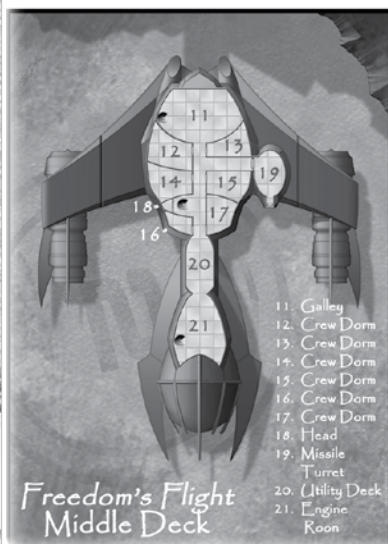
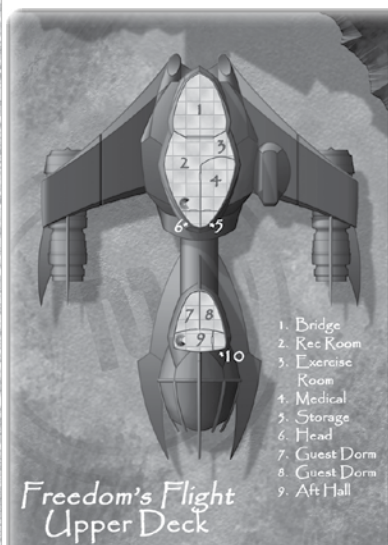
A glance out of the Alliance patrol boat's cargo hold porthole during descent reveals a desolate wasteland of ice split by jagged mountains and lashed by vicious, snow-filled winds. The ship glides down between the flaming tops of monolithic smokestacks that rise from the surface. As soon as the ship touches down by the Area 1 docking ramp, 12 prison guards march the prisoners single file, shackled hand and foot, through Areas 1 and 2 into the Room 7 showers.

The guards force you down the docking ramp into a towering corridor made entirely of some black, oily metal. The sharp cold of the place grips you. Many of the fluorescent strips hanging from the ceiling have failed. The dim, yellow light flickers and falters, making moving objects seem to stagger and jump like in an ol' time movie in an Earth-That-Was artifact museum. You hear a steady hiss of forced air from above, and the acrid smells of chemical cleansers and rot make your eyes water. Rust spreads out from the metal wall-plate's seams, cloaking huge rivets. The metal floor thrums as if some great engine labors deep below. The sharp barks of the guards' orders don't sound human. Your footsteps resound and multiply like the footfalls of all of the lost souls who've been driven down this dark hall before.

Once the prisoners are in the shower area, the guards force them to strip and then subject them to the frigid, choking chemicals of a decontamination shower. Guards then make them to dress in poorly fitting gray jumpsuits and shackle their wrists and ankles.

A senior officer addresses the prisoners:

"You are here so that the 'Verse can forget you exist. We don't care whether you repay whatever societal debt you owe for your crimes. We have no interest in your rehabilitation. You are no longer part of any society except ours. You will labor hard in our mines and ore-processing plants. If you obey the rules, you may live. No one has ever escaped. But please try. Life's boring here and we enjoy the show. The temperature outside averages 20 degrees below zero. Our moon's thin atmosphere has a wisp or two of



oxygen. An escapee once lasted 14 minutes. That's the record. The low atmospheric pressure will burst your blood vessels and organs and kill you within one hour. There are no spacecraft on the moon's surface. Alliance patrol ships destroy any craft approaching Perdition except for Alliance transports that touch down just long enough to disgorge supplies or prisoners. We search them all before they lift off. We know what to do with anyone we find trying to stow away. There are no legal restraints on the kinds or punishment we inflict on the disobedient. This is an Alliance military prison. None of the planetary laws behind which you may have hidden apply here. You have no rights. We are the law."

A prisoner grumbles. The officer draws his sidearm, walks over, and shoots him point-blank in the side of the head.

"Welcome to Perdition Penal Facility," he says.

The officer orders all the other prisoners taken to the infirmary for tissue sampling and other tests. He separates out the crew and Mercedes, saying, "Take them directly to the Warden's Block *ma shong*. The Colonel has plans for this *mi tian gohn*." Six armed guards lead the crew through Cellblock R7 (Area 9), Cellblock R8 (Area 14), and Guard Station 15 to the Cargo Bay warehouse (Room 17). Three guards are clearly sick, coughing, sniffing, and flushed. Hacking and coughing sounds fill the cellblocks, suggesting many prisoners are sick, as well.

Problems:

There's little in this lofty, iron-walled warehouse. Two forklift gravcarts sit along the wall to your left amidst several stacks of wooden crates. A complex array of chains and shackles hang near the wall to your right. One door in the left wall bears a label reading, "WARDEN'S OFFICE—KEEP OUT." A second is labeled "COMMUNICATIONS—AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY." The massive door

in the wall straight ahead reads, "AIRLOCK TO DOCKING RAMP—WARDEN'S BLOCK." Beside it, four vacuum suits hang on pegs.

Torture

Once in Room 17, Rejovic orders the prisoners chained to the north wall. He introduces himself and two large guards named Corporal Yang and Corporal Lin. He says he will now get acquainted with his new guests.

Colonel Jedak Rejovic

Agi d6, **Str** d10, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d10, **Wil** d10; **Init** d6+d6; **LP** 20

Traits Greedy [Minor], Intimidatin' Manner [Minor], Leadership [Minor], Mean Left Hook [Minor], Military Rank [Minor], Sadistic [Major], Stingy [Minor], Tough as Nails [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6/Interrogation d8/Intimidation d8, Guns d6/Pistol d10/Rifle d10, Influence d6/Administration d8/Bureaucracy d8/Interrogation d8/Intimidation d8, Perception d6

Weapons/Gear Assault Rifle (d8 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Description This man looks formidable. His craggy facial features seem chiseled from stone. When his mouth smiles, his gray eyes do not. His broad frame, powerful limbs, and thick neck could belong to a man much bigger than his six-foot-one-inch height. Other than his is thinning, steel gray hair, he appears ageless. Not a speck of dust mars his perfectly creased uniform.

CHAPTER 2

Corporal Lin

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 16

Traits Greedy [Minor], Intimidatin' Manner [Minor], Military Rank [Minor], Sadistic [Major], Steady Calm [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Covert d6/Stealth d8/Streetwise d8, Discipline d6/Interrogation d8/Intimidation d10, Guns d6, Influence d4, Perception d6

Weapons/Gear Assault Rifle (d8 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Description Lin is a towering scarecrow of a man, pushing seven feet tall, but thin as a rail. He shaves his head and tends to stoop. When he speaks, which is rare, his deep, raspy voice tends to unsettle folk. Tendons and veins cord his skeletal hands, and his nails are long and broken. He's caustic, cruel, and completely devoted to Rejovic.

Corporal Yang

Agi d8, **Str** d4, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8;
Init d8+d8; **LP** 16

Traits Military Rank [Minor], Sadistic [Major], Tough as Nails [Minor], Twitchy [Minor]

Skills Covert d6/Stealth d6/Streetwise d10, Discipline d6/Interrogation d8, Guns d6, Influence d6/Administration d10, Perception d6

Weapons/Gear Assault Rifle (d8 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Description Yang's great height and obesity make him look like a moving wall. His hair on his head is buzz-cut, while the curly hair on his forearms and the backs of his hands is so long he looks almost simian. A broad, single eyebrow crosses his wide forehead. He breathes audibly, as if he's always winded, and sweats a lot. He grins incessantly and occasionally chuckles and clucks like a fool. He's no fool. He's just insane. He's a brilliant administrator, but his true vocation is torturing people.

The GM summarizes the following torture scene:

Colonel Rejovic interrogates each of you, moving around the group, finding out who you are, what crimes you have committed, what Independent resurgence contacts you

have, what assets you have, and how he can get them for himself. If anyone refuses to answer, Rejovic, Yang, and Lin torture all the crew and Mercedes with devices that look like cattle prods. When Rejovic catches one of you in a lie, he and the corporals punish everyone again. Rejovic delves extensively into any secrets each of you may have. He doesn't seem to particularly care what secrets you have or whether or not they could be of value to him. He likes the feeling of power this gives him. He is cunning and methodical and good at his work.

Rejovic tortures the crew and Mercedes for three hours.

As he works, Rejovic turns on an intercom to the Communications Station (Room 19). Rejovic has the guard within search the Cortex for facts that verify or contradict answers his victims give. When the guard's replies contradict a victim's answers, Rejovic punishes all the victims. With the intercom on, Mercedes and the crew overhear verbal waves coming in from throughout the prison, all of which concern mundane warden issues.

Extracting Secrets

To simulate the torture's effects without becoming ghoulish, the GM chooses the four most valuable secrets each crewmember has. He then goes around the crew, one person and one secret at a time, telling the crew which secret he's selected. The GM makes each player try to resist disclosing that secret. Rejovic rolls a Willpower (d10) + Interrogation (d8) check. The crewmember opposes with a Willpower + Discipline (or Mental Resistance) check. If Rejovic wins, the crewmember discloses the secret. A crewmember can substitute a Willpower + Concentration, or Morale check, or a Willpower + Influence (or Persuasion) check (to lie successfully), if he wishes, but suffers a -1 Skill step penalty on the Action. After each set of checks, the GM moves on to the next player as Rejovic moves onto the next crewmember. The GM (as Rejovic) cycles through this rotation four times.

Mercedes' Information

At the end of each of the four cycles through the crew, Rejovic questions Mercedes.

Rejovic devotes most of his attention to Mercedes, who resists the torment far better than you'd have guessed. Between screams, she defies him and insults him and even makes jokes at his expense. But everyone has limits, and Rejovic persists. Eventually Mercedes falls apart.

Each rotation, Rejovic tortures one of the following admissions out of Mercedes (which the crew must hear). He explores these personal facts looking for emotional leverage—like love—to use against Elias Wingate:

- Elias Wingate is her father, and she works as a labor advocate for the Miner's Guild to oppose his efforts to run the Hera titanium production for Far Yukon Corporation.
- She opposes her father and Far Yukon because Far Yukon represents Alliance domination of Hera, and because Far Yukon uses inhumane practices, like compelling indentured servants to perform the most dangerous labor.
- Her rebellion against her father goes back to his domineering parenting throughout her childhood.
- She still loves her father deeply. Their personal and professional schism is her deepest hurt. She believes what he does is fundamentally wrong, and she's determined to make him see that.

Rejovic's Plans for Mercedes

Rejovic laughs and declares that Elias Wingate is the biggest thorn in his side too. He tells her that Perdition titanium mining, refinement, and production funds all of his many enterprises.

"Far Yukon, through your father, presents my only competition in this part of the Verse. Without his intolerably brilliant leadership, Hera's explosive labor issues would have sunk Far Yukon long ago. Control of the titanium trade should be mine. Mine. Your father steals from me! He STEALS from me!"

The fury in Rejovic's eyes suggests mad obsession. He leans in over Mercedes' shuddering form and promises to extract from her all of the information he needs to undermine Far Yukon.

"You should be happy! I will destroy Far Yukon for you. Through you, I will ruin the mighty Elias Wingate." Rejovic points to two security cameras on the ceiling and says, "I'm recording this first session. I'll record all our sessions together and send them to your father! Maybe Daddy will capitulate before we begin sending him body parts."

Mercedes' Possible Collapse

Mercedes finally slips into hysterics, begging incoherently for help. The crew can bolster her morale by shouting support, which requires a

PHYSICAL STRUCTURES AND ACCESS

Structure	Construction	Armor Points	Life Points	Access
Doors throughout complex	2-inch solid steel. Cell doors have a 1-foot square barred window at head level	4W	15	Guard's Passcard
Freestanding walls throughout complex	2-inch solid steel	4 W	15 per 5-foot square area	None
Security Gates (Areas 9 and 14) and Security Gates by Guard Stations 8 and 10	2-inch steel bars	4W	10	Guard's Passcard
Doors into Guard Stations 5, 8, 10, and 15	2-inch steel bars	4W	10	Guard's Passcard, plus type alphanumeric code on keypad
Bulletproof windows of Guard Stations 8, 10 and 15	4-inch bulletproof glass	2W, 8W vs. bullet	10	None

Physical Structures and Access

Doors, gates, and walls have Armor Points that reduce Wound damage. A guard's passcard unlocks most doors, but Guard Station doors also require typing an alphanumeric code into the keypad lock. This code is different than the code necessary to access the computerized security system; one must remember each separately. Unlocking any door or gate without a passcard (or access code) requires a HEROIC Agility + Open Locks check. Without proper tools, the Open Locks roll suffers a -2 step penalty.

HARD Willpower + Influence (or Leadership, or Persuasion) check. If they succeed, Mercedes finds inner reserves. Providing support brings swift reprisal from Rejovic and the corporals.

If the crew's support fails, Mercedes spirals down mentally until she becomes almost catatonic. She remains conscious but unresponsive. Once each hour, she makes a HARD Willpower + Morale check to shake off the catatonia.

Swift Justice's Message

As Rejovic threatens Mercedes, a particularly important verbal wave comes into Communications. Each crewmember makes an AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Listening) check to hear it:

"This is Swift Justice on the mid-bulk transport Freedom's Flight. Clearance code 'Hackleback's Rimrakers 17.' This is secure wave W18KJ9. We are inbound for the Warden's Block, Perdition. Arrival in four hours. Freedom's Flight will masquerade as an Alliance supply ship, as usual. Please advise Colonel Rejovic we have captured the target. Repeat. We have taken custody of his former top priority target and will sell him for twice the original contract price. The most crucial part is ... [STATIC]"

The message breaks up, causing Rejovic to curse. Over the intercom, the Communications guard says, "They're in the nebula. The static should clear in a minute or two. We'll get the rest of the message."

Rejovic is confused. "Target? What top priority target ... " Suddenly he figures it out. He realizes that Swift Justice is talking about Elias Wingate. They've managed to kidnap him! "Good God!" Rejovic exclaims and orders Yang and Lin to remove the prisoners immediately, but to keep them out of general population.

"If any one of them passes a single word to anyone, I'll skin your back to use for my umbrella," he snarls. He leans close to Mercedes, saying, "I have a surprise for you, my dear! Your father is paying us a visit! We'll have much more fun now!"

If the crew wants to hear the rest of the message, they need to stall, though this will likely provoke Rejovic to torture them more. This requires a Willpower + Influence (or Intimidation or Persuasion) check opposed by Rejovic's Willpower + Mental Resistance check. Rejovic suffers a -2 step penalty on both his Willpower and Mental Resistance rolls because he's distracted by the message from Swift Justice. If Mercedes is catatonic, she will collapse the moment they remove the shackles and there will be some delay as they endeavor to try to make her stand or otherwise deal with her. If she is alert and has heard about her father, she will shriek in anger and try to fight to free herself, which might also delay things.

If the crew stays in the room for three minutes, the interference clears and the message continues:

"... code 'Hackleback's Rimrakers 17.' Repeat. We captured him without detection. No witnesses, no collateral damage, no evidence. No one can trace his extraction. Repeat. Request permission to pass no-fly perimeter and make landfall at the Warden's Block dock. Estimated touch down four hours. Acknowledge."

Rejovic again orders the corporals to remove the prisoners immediately. They summon six guards and all lead the shackled prisoners to Cell 11.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

Torture Damage Suffered

Each crewmember makes an Endurance roll (Vitality + Willpower) and subtracts the result from 15. This is the total number of Stun points he suffers from the torture session. If a crewmember deliberately answered questions truthfully to avoid injury, he suffers d6 fewer Stun points of injury. If a crewmember shouted support to Mercedes, he suffers one more Stun point.

Plot Points

One Plot Point awarded for each crewmember who resisted disclosing two or more secrets. Give one Plot Point each for hearing Swift Justice's whole message, and one Plot Point each for bolstering Mercedes' morale. One or two Plot Points can be given for role playing the scene dramatically.

SCENE 2: BY HOOK OR BY CROOK

Wherein our fine folk finally begin their unlikely escape.

How It Is (Setup):

The crew has four hours left before *Freedom's Flight* arrives and seven before the security codes expire. The guards shove the crewmembers and Mercedes into Room 11. This chamber was originally a mechanical utility room. The prison converted it to a makeshift cell, but no one's been in here for a long time.

The metal and stone block walls of the chamber into which the guards push you echo with your footsteps. An industrial chemical stink fills your lungs. A single fluorescent lamp in the metal ceiling crackles and hums, emitting broken moments of yellow light through the filth that coats it. Numerous thick pipes hang overhead and run down into the walls and concrete floor. Metal panels are scattered seemingly at random around the walls, some hanging on hinges at odd angles over openings. Warped wooden benches stand before each wall. A lidless

Full Emergency Response

The Guard Station sounds the alarms and summons six guards with assault rifles from Guard Station 5. They arrive in three minutes. Six more, wearing tactical suits and bearing submachine guns, arrive 10 minutes later. Usually there would be 12 guards, but the flu has caused staff reductions.

toilet sits in the far corner. Grime and dust coat everything, and rust covers most metal surfaces. The pipes above hiss, vibrate, and drip, and puddles cover sinister stains on the floor.

Problems:

Locked In

A set of large, metal loops spaced six feet apart protrude from the metal wall over a bench. The guards handcuff one of each prisoner's hands to a metal loop and remove the ankle shackles. The guards leave and the door locks.

Guard Patrols

One guard comes by once every hour and looks in, but doesn't enter unless he sees or hears something suspicious. The flickering light makes it an AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Sight) check to view the room's contents clearly. If a prisoner has freed himself from the shackles, the guard calls a second guard before entering. Other ruses (such as shouting that they think Mercedes is dying) might lure him in alone. Someone watching from the door's window spots his approach automatically. A HARD Alertness + Perception (or Listen) check from farther in the room catches his approaching footsteps 15 seconds before he looks inside.

CHAPTER 2

Perdition Guard

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d4, **Wil** d8, **Init** d6+d8, **LP** 14

Traits Loyal [Minor], Military Rank [Minor]

Skills Athletics d4, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Assault Rifle d8, Perception d6, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Technical Engineering d6/Technical Security Systems d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Weapons/Gear Stun Baton (d2 S), Assault Rifle (d8), Pistol (d6), Handcuffs (2 sets), Micro Transmitter (ear clip), Passcard for Doors, Handcuffs Key

If the guard fails to check in with Guard Station 10 within 15 minutes of entering this hall, Guard Station 10 calls him on the micro transmitter clipped to his ear. If the guard fails to respond, a team of two guards from Guard Station 5 investigate three minutes later.

The one in front readies his stun baton; the trailer sights down his assault rifle. Both keep a communication link open to all Guard Stations. They retreat from trouble, requesting backup, and the Guard Station calls for a full emergency response. (See the *Full Emergency Response* Sidebar).

If the crew subdues the guard and detects Guard Station 10's call on the micro transmitter, they can pretend to be the guard. Bluffing the Guard Station guard requires an Intelligence + Performance (or Acting or Impersonation or Mimicry) check opposed by the guard's Alertness + Perception check. (Note that the Guard Station guard is ill and suffers a -1 step penalty on both Attribute and Skill actions.) If the crew doesn't fool him, the guard calls for a full emergency response. (See Sidebar *Full Emergency Response*.)

PERDITION SECURITY COMPUTER FUNCTIONS

Difficulty Achieved, Cell 10	Difficulty Achieved, Guard Stations 5, 8, 10, and 15	Action
EASY	EASY	Lock and unlock the Cell 11 door.
AVERAGE	EASY	Shut off water and the fire-repression systems to Cellblocks R8 and R9. Lock or unlock any door on corridor between Rooms 11-13. Learn that pipes in Cell 11 carry sleep gas* that Guard Stations can pump into the cellblocks, and identify those pipes.
HARD	EASY	Turn on or shut off security cameras in Rooms 11-13 and the hall that connects them (they aren't monitored). Deactivate hand-pull alarm in hall between Rooms 11-13
FORMIDABLE	AVERAGE	Lock or unlock and open any or all doors in cellblocks. Lock or unlock large security gates in Areas 9, 10, and 14. Turn on or shut off security cameras in Cellblocks R7 and R8. Make security cameras in Rooms 11-13 and hall between replay specific recorded loop. Shut off sleep gas* system to Cellblocks R7 and R8.
HEROIC	HARD	Make security cameras in Cellblocks R7 and R8 replay specific recorded loop. Lock or unlock all small doors into Guard Stations 8 and 10.
INCREDIBLE	FORMIDABLE	Deactivate alarms in Cellblocks R7 and R8 and Guard Station 10. Activate or sever all communication links between Guard Stations 8 or 10 and the rest of Perdition.
RIDICULOUS	HEROIC	Pump 30 seconds of sleep gas* into Cellblocks R7 and R8.
IMPOSSIBLE	INCREDIBLE	Activate or sever all communications among all Perdition Guard Stations Deactivate all alarm systems in Perdition.
—	RIDICULOUS	Pump 30 seconds of sleep gas* into Guard Stations 8 and/or 10. Prevent any Guard Station monitor from detecting or revealing any of the above actions.
—	IMPOSSIBLE	Pump 30 seconds of sleep gas* into Guard Station/Armory 5 and/or Guard Station 15.

*Sleep gas is the same chemical found in gas grenades, causing 3d6 Stun. Thirty seconds fills the designated area. It dissipates in 5 minutes.

Guard's Keys

A pocketed passcard chained to each guard's belt opens all cell doors, the large Security Gates adjacent to Guard Stations 8 and 10, and Security Gates 9 and 14. A metal key chained to the guard's belt opens handcuffs.

Security Camera

One security camera near the door points into the room, its red power light on. No one monitors its signal, however, because the guards are too short-staffed.

Breaking the Wall Loops

Two wall loops are rusty and rattle slightly. To break free requires a FORMIDABLE Burst of Strength (Strength + Strength) check, or a FORMIDABLE Strength + Athletics (or Weightlifting) check. All other loops require an INCREDIBLE check. Each check represents 30 minutes of continuous pulling. Initially, crewmembers are too far apart to help each other break free. Once free, up to four can combine their check results on a single effort to free another crewmember. Each additional crewmember's efforts reduce the time required for a check by five minutes.

Clubs

Dismantling pipes to make clubs requires a HARD Burst of Strength (Strength + Strength) or Strength + Athletics (or Weight Lifting) check representing 10 minutes of work. Up to three crew members can combine their check results.

The Computer Terminal

An AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Search) check, representing 10 minutes of searching, locates how to open a metal wall panel covering a deactivated computer console. Repairing it without tools requires an AVERAGE Intelligence + Technical Repair check. Alternately, repair requires a HARD Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Electronics or Technical Security Systems) check, or a FORMIDABLE Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering (or Fix Mechanical Security Systems, or Mechanical Repairs) check. Appropriate tools (this room has none) reduce any check's Difficulty by two (*i.e.*, from HARD to EASY, etc.). Each check takes 10 minutes.

Remembering the Code

Once repaired, the computer terminal can provide limited security system access, easily controlling the door lock and, with more complex usage, many other prison controls. To acquire access, the user must input the proper eight-digit alphanumeric security code. This was one of numerous security codes listed on Black's data disk. Unless someone actively memorized it in Act I, recalling it requires a FORMIDABLE Intelligence + Discipline (or Concentration) check. Each check takes 10 minutes of contemplation.

Using the Computer

After entering the proper security code, the crewmember can perform various functions depending on his usage check, which can be retried every 15 minutes. He uses Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Hacking, or Technical Security Systems). He can perform any and all activities listed for all Difficulties up to and including the Difficulty he achieves. This terminal has limited capabilities. The terminals in Guard Stations 8, 10, and 15 provide the same results more easily.

Sleep gas is the same chemical found in gas grenades, causing 3d6 Stun. A designated area can be filled in 30 seconds. It dissipates in 5 minutes.

Detection by Guards

The Guard Stations will notice if a remote terminal unlocks doors to Guard Stations 8 or 10 or doors in Cellblock R7 or R8. They will notice if a remote terminal pumps sleep gas or deactivates security cameras (except those in Cells 11-13). Discovery takes d12 minutes. Thereafter, the guard in Guard Station 10 calls in help and attempts system repair. A Guard Station guard can override the crews' system interference with 15 minutes of work and an AVERAGE Intelligence + Technical Security Systems check.

The Corridor

The doors to Rooms 12 and 13 have no windows. The Area 10 door has a barred one-foot-square window.

CHAPTER 2

Room 12, Getting Wise

Labeled filing cabinets fill this poorly lit room. Most files concern prison operations, facilities maintenance, and titanium mining and processing operations.

An AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Search) check locates a cabinet labeled "FACILITIES ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS." A thick file within is labeled "Security Systems." Fifteen minutes spent reading this grants the reader a +2 step bonus on Technical Engineering (and all Specialties) checks related to Perdition's Security System. It also alerts the reader that to open a Guard Station's door into its interior requires both a guard's passcard and typing an alphanumeric code into the door's keypad lock. That code differs from the one that access the computerized security system generally. One must recall it separately. Notes in this file grant a +1 step bonus on efforts to remember this door-lock code.

Room 13, Gearing Up

This long-unused storage room contains floor-to-ceiling stacks of prison uniforms, cots, blankets, toilets, and other unremarkable items. Each 10-minute Alertness + Perception (or Search) check finds the highest difficulty item not yet found that the search results could find. (See storage Room Searches Table below.)

New Way of Things (Resolution):

Ain't no tellin' exactly what an angry group that's itchin' to be free might make of all this here stuff. But I promise you, you'll be right glad you bought yourself that front-row ticket to see this show!

Plot Points

One each can be awarded for breaking all wall loops. Two given to anyone who memorized or remembers a code number. One each for escaping Cell 11. One each if someone reads the Security System file. One each given if anyone made a FORMIDABLE search of Room 13.

SCENE 3: KICKIN' UP A ROW

Wherein just about anythin' can happen. And it's probably gonna.

How It Is [Setup]:

Here's the crew's view through the corridor door's window toward Guard Station 10:

A broad, black metal chamber under bright fluorescent lights sweeps both right and left, each side ending in a towering, barred gate. Both gates are closed. Directly across the chamber is a curved, convex wall with a four-foot-high green glass window running the length of the wall at waist level. A wall beyond the glass divides the area within into two rooms. Two metal doors stand in the wall, one leading to each interior room.

Problems:

Guards

The flu left this Guard Station undermanned. Instead of six guards, there are three, one in each chamber. All three are sick, suffering a -1

STORAGE ROOM SEARCHES

Difficulty Level Achieved

Items Found

EASY

A basic tool kit and an electronic tool set.

AVERAGE

A duffle bag containing two guard uniforms (men's size large), 2 gas masks, 2 micro transmitters, 2 assault rifles, two pistols, and 2 fully-charged stun batons. The rifles and pistols have empty magazines, but each has one bullet chambered.

HARD

A misplaced assault kit containing a 3 ChemPlast charges, a flashbang grenade, and an optical bomb.

FORMIDABLE

A locker of mine-working supplies, including picks, shovels, and one mining charge with a remote detonator.

HEROIC

A trunk containing 4 ballistic mesh jackets.

INCREDIBLE

A box of 10 assault rifle magazines (40 rounds each).

step penalty on both Attribute and Skill actions. Two guards are visible. They face computer monitors overlooking the cellblocks, not the crew's corridor.

How the crew proceeds is up to them. If they move openly, the closest guard spots them with an AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Sight) check. If they move covertly, they make opposed checks. Opening a gate to a cellblock automatically alerts the closest guard.

Guard Station Doors

A person needs to swipe a passcard and key an alphanumeric code into the door's lock to unlock a door into the Guard Station's interior. That alphanumeric code differs from the one accessing the security system generally, and must be recalled separately. Doors open easily from inside.

Subterfuge

A shiny ruse may be the best approach, and a guard-uniform disguise is a good start. The flu epidemic redistributed those guards able to work all throughout Perdition's massive facilities, so guards don't readily recognize each other. Nothing works nicer than tricking the guard to open the door and then zapping him with a stun gun. But then, there's always

Explosives

Blowin' things up! Who cares if it's stupid? It don't *never* get old! (See the Physical Structures and Access Sidebar on page 50.) Any explosion alerts all Guard Station 10 guards, who call for a full emergency response. (See Full Emergency Response sidebar on page 51.) If an explosion does twice the damage (or more) needed to blow a door, parts of the walls and ceiling collapse, destroying the computer within. Any explosion inside an interior room destroys the computer.

If an explosion destroys a computer, there's a 50% chance that the security system goes haywire, opens all doors and gates in both cellblocks and all large gates circling that Guard Station, and jams them open until physical repairs are made. Go to Scene 4: *Da Shiong La Se La Ch'wohn Tian!*

Guard Station Contents

Each Guard Station inner room has:

- A locked door to both other inner rooms, accessible with a passcard.
- Numerous security monitors.
- Communication equipment linked to all Guard Stations and micro transmitters in Perdition.
- A basic tool kit, a mechanic tool set, an electronic tool set, and a cutting torch.
- A first aid kit.
- An arms locker containing two assault rifles, two pistols, two stun batons, two gas grenades, two concussion grenades, two gas masks, eight pairs of handcuffs, and 20 magazines of ammo for both gun types. A combination padlock secures the locker (AVERAGE Intelligence + Pick Locks check to pick, Armor Points 4W, Life Points 2).
- A computer terminal (see the Perdition Security Computer Functions table, on page 52). Each terminal also displays a full prison architectural schematic, accessible with an EASY Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Hacking, or Technical Security Systems) check. An AVERAGE check reveals no spaceships are scheduled to land anywhere on Perdition for five days.

Cornered!

If guards corner the crew inside Guard Station 10, it ain't over. On the computer, an EASY Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Hacking, or Technical Security Systems) check locks all Guard Station 10 doors (but not gates). Another Guard Station can override this, but it takes 15 minutes. Three AVERAGE checks of the same Skills open all doors in Cellblocks R7 and R8 and the security gates at Areas 9 and 14. The tide of prisoners rushing for the Armory in Room 5 and the Area 1 docking area, where a spaceship could be docked, likely routs or overwhelms besieging officers. See Scene 4: *Da Shiong La Se La Ch'wohn Tian!*

Security Gate 14

A passcard opens it.

CHAPTER 2

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

What, you think I know what's gonna happen here? You must be *chai neow* or *buhn dahn*. But, if Lady Luck's a-smilin' or the crew is *gao gubn*, they now approach Guard Station 15.

SCENE 4: DA SHIONG LA SE LA CH'WOHN TIAN!

("EXPLOSIVE DIARRHEA OF AN ELEPHANT!")

Wherein a tide of enraged prisoners washes over everything.

This here scene gets itself a-rollin' only if the crew released all jailbirds at once. You just couldn't resist, could you? Well, now we're all deep in the *joo fuen chse*.

How It Is [Setup]:

Every door and security gate in Cellblock's 7 and 8 opens with a teeth-hurting screech. There are 104 female inmates in Cellblock R7 (Area 9), 22 of whom are too sick to move. There are 144 male inmates in Cellblock R8 (Area 14), 34 are too sick to move. That makes 82 women and 110 men dashing out of their two-inmate cells. All of them know the guards just screwed up, and most have been waiting for just this moment.

Typical Perdition Inmate

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6; **Init** d6+d6; **LP** 12

Traits Friends in Low Places [Minor], Prejudice—Alliance [Minor]

Skills Athletics d4, Guns d6, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Weapons/Gear Improvised weapon (d2 S [pipe] or d2 W [shiv/sharpened spoon])

Problems:

Overwhelming Mob

Thundering shouts roll down the cellblocks. The two phrases that predominate are "To the Armory!" (Room 5) and "Docking area!" (Area 1). Forty-one inmates from Cellblock R7 and 55 from R8 rampage toward the armory and docking area. Mob mentality, fear, desperation, and a sudden hope drive them. The

prisoners charge all guards without hesitation. Guards flee if possible, fighting if cornered, dropping a dozen or so inmates before the mob overwhelms them.

If the mob sees armed crewmembers, they will try to steal their weaponry. If a crewmember wears a guard's uniform, he or another crewmember needs a **HARD** Willpower + Influence (or Persuasion) check to keep the mob from tearing him apart. Either way, they take his gear.

Gang War

In Cellblock R8 22 Tongs and 20 Independents remain. They have formed rival prison gangs and their hatred runs so deep little else matters. They attack each other, clogging security gate 14 for four minutes. If the crew approaches, the Tongs attack any who look like Independents and the Independents attack any who look like Tongs. After four minutes, 8 Tongs are left standing, and 14 Tongs and all 20 Independents are dead or unconscious.

Trailing Thugs

Thirteen inmates linger uncertainly in Cellblock R8. Anyone with Friends in Low Places may recognize a potential ally. A gang of five thugs trails the crew covertly, hoping to jump them and take whatever weapons they have.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

If the crew survives this gauntlet without being disarmed, they approach Guard Station 15 without guards breathing down their necks. If disarmed, they need to be creative. If Mercedes is still with the crew, she is determined to find her father.

Plot Points

Two points each given for surviving, two more to anyone who keeps his gear.

SCENE 5: PAYIN' A NEIGHBORLY CALL TO THE WARDEN'S BLOCK

Wherein our heroes penetrate the last Guard Station and may meet an old friend.

How It Is (Setup):

Guard Station 15 is the same as Guard Station 10, except it has only one room. Its contents are identical. Only one guard mans it (unless the alarm has gone off, then Rejovic is also here). The crew must be very, very careful. The guard is fully alert. And he doesn't have the flu.

Problems:

Getting in

If the alarm's gone off, the guard is expectin' trouble, so any ruse here better be damn good! Otherwise, a crewmember can blow the door with explosives or type the access code into the door lock's keypad. The guard uses his computer to prevent the door from unlocking. The challenger must beat the guard in opposed Agility + Technical Engineering (or Hacking or Technical Security Systems) checks. If the jig is up and the guard sees the crew coming, he'll try pumping sleeping gas into the cellblock, wait until it dissipates, and then shackle them all hand and foot.

Rejovic Watches

If the alarm's gone off, Colonel Rejovic is also in Guard Station 15. He shouts orders at the guard as the crew approach. He glares at the crew, shouts something no one can hear due to the sound-proof glass, makes an unmistakable gesture, and retreats up Corridor 16.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

If the crewmembers don't close the door behind them, the trailing thug gang follows. If the crew leaves any weapons in the weapons locker, the thugs arm themselves.

Plot Points

Award one each for getting past Guard Station 15.

ACT III: FREEDOM'S FLIGHT

Wu Du Bu Juhn Fu

Black was right. Colonel Rejovic couldn't resist seizing Elias Wingate. After considerable haggling by wave, Rejovic agreed to pay 25,000 platinum for Wingate, nearly twice what he originally offered when he first commissioned Swift Justice to abduct him. Rejovic granted *Freedom's Flight* clearance to land.

Black was also, unfortunately, wrong. Rejovic feels no loyalty to Swift Justice, despite their years of successful work for him. Swift Justice's members are the only people who know who kidnapped Elias and where the secret prisoner is being held. Rejovic can't trust anyone with a secret this important. He fears Swift Justice will blackmail him. And he's secretly enraged that Black dared to jack up the price. Rejovic has decided he needs to get rid of both Black and Swift Justice.

Rejovic met Black and Swift Justice on landing in the ship's airlock (Area 22) where it attaches to the Warden's Block docking arm (Area 21). Rejovic gave Black a chest of platinum for Wingate. The Colonel apologized for the fact that the chest contained only 2,500 platinum, explaining truthfully that he kept no more than that in his office. He promised to have Perdition's titanium operation's treasury deliver the bulk of the payment. That will take an hour or two, he claims, to gather the payment and deliver it by ground transport through the storm. Black and Swift Justice don't intend to fly off with their cash. They have retreated to *Freedom's Flight* to wait for the delivery, which Rejovic never plans to make.

The Colonel thought about ordering the ASREV flying CAP over Perdition to blast *Freedom's Flight* to smithereens, but he feared damage to the docking arm and loading dock would be too great. Moreover, Rejovic decided to keep *Freedom's Flight* for himself and he wants as few folk as possible to know about it. So Rejovic has decided to board *Freedom's Flight* with his most loyal guards, purportedly to deliver the remaining payment, and then kill all Swift Justice members up close and personal-like.

In the meantime, the Colonel has a more pressing matter to attend to: Elias Wingate.

Betrayal

Rejovic, Yang, and two guards drove two gravcarts, each carrying a crate, through *Freedom's Flight's* airlock (Area 22) and into her Main Cargo Bay (Area 23). Each crate had two layers. Silver filled the smaller top section of each. The bottom of the forward crate, farthest into the bay, was empty. The bottom of the rear crate held a drum-fed medium machine gun fixed on a tripod. Before inspection, the two groups exchanged pleasantries and small talk for quite some time. Rejovic uncorked a bottle of wine for all and toasted their mutual future. When all the Swift Justice members were near the forward crate, Rejovic opened the crate's top, revealing the silver. Black objected, saying he'd been promised platinum. Rejovic stepped back. The guards pulled a lever, dropping the rear crate's top and sides away, and opened fire with the machine gun. The mounted gun rounds tore right through the forward crate and blew away two Swift Justice members. The betrayal didn't catch Black wholly off guard. As Rejovic sprung his trap, Black dove for cover, pulled a concussion grenade, and tossed it into the rear gravcart. It exploded, killing the gunner guard and destroying both the rear gravcart and its mounted gun. As bullets flew, Black and the remaining two Swift Justice members fled upstairs. Rejovic, Yang, and the other guard pursued. They're now in a firefight, with the Perdition guards in the Galley (Room 11) and the Swift Justice members in the hall leading to the Utility Deck (Room 20).

Rejovic as a Continuing Villain

Here, you must choose whether Rejovic escapes to become a continuing villain, using secrets he extracted during torture to bedevil the crew, or whether to serve the Colonel up to the crew now. If he's to be the main dish here, he's inside shooting at Swift Justice. If Rejovic will become a continuing villain, he never went into the ship. He stayed in his office when Yang and the guards boarded *Freedom's Flight*. Once Rejovic learned the crewmembers were approaching, however, he realized his vulnerability, donned one of the four Vacuum

Suits from Room 17's wall just north of the airlock, and escaped into the icy storm, heading away from the Warden's Block, the Entry Block, and Cellblocks R6, R7, and R8. In about an hour, he'll enter another facility building. The storm blocks his suit's micro transmitter until then. If the crew goes looking for him in his office, they'll find him gone. An AVERAGE Alertness + Perception (or Sight, or Intuition) check will cause them to notice the empty peg where the Vacuum Suit hung. The winds, ice, and snow make tracking Rejovic virtually impossible.

SCENE 1: REDEMPTION

Wherein guns will speak, and a wall built brick by brick o'r many a long year may finally come tumblin' down.

How It Is [Setup]:

Rejovic spent as much free time as he had living out his horrid fantasy by torturing Elias Wingate. Wingate's a tough nut to crack, but he's in bad shape now. Rejovic went beyond the cattle prod. Wingate's presently chained upside down to the north wall of the cargo-bay warehouse (Room 17). The doors to the Area 20 Airlock are closed.

Problems:

Firefight

Rejovic posted Corporal Lin inside Room 19's door with an assault rifle. (See page 47 for Lin's statistics.) His aim covers the door to Corridor 16. Once bullets fly, Lin threatens to shoot Elias from across the cargo bay if the crewmembers don't lay down arms and come out, hands up. He's bluffing, for now. Rejovic ordered Lin to keep Elias alive, and Lin needs Elias as leverage against the crew. Lin fights to the death, afraid of what the prisoners he tortured might do to him. If Lin's situation becomes hopeless, he'll shoot Elias out of spitefulness.

When Mercedes sees her father, she awakens from her catatonic state (if she hasn't already) and insists on trying to reach him, no matter what. It takes physical force or a HARD Willpower + Influence (or Intimidation or Persuasion) check to prevent her from doing

something rash to help him. He sees her and shouts for her to leave him, which breaks her heart.

One forklift gravcart against the east wall 10 feet from the door holds a five-foot tall stack of wooden crates. With luck and care, a crewmember could maneuver the gravcart and crate to provide medium or heavy cover for Elias and the operating crewmember—if the crewmember can reach the gravcart alive.

It's possible the crewmembers will move right past Lin into the airlock and docking arm to *Freedom's Flight*. If so, they hear distant gunfire from inside. (The battle in the Main Cargo Bay, described in Scene 2: A Hog-Killin' Time!, has already occurred, and the guards and Swift Justice are exchanging small-weapon's fire in *Freedom's Flight's* Middle Deck.) If the crewmembers head inside, Lin will follow cautiously, looking for a chance to ambush them.

Either way, the trailing thug gang hangs back, trying to figure out what's going on.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

Reunion

If the crew defeat Lin, Mercedes rushes to her father and unshackles him. He's badly beaten, but conscious and clear-headed. They hold each other for a long time. He says he's been wild with fear since she disappeared. He abandoned his job to find her, which meant Swift Justice managed to penetrate his security. He says he realizes she's more important to him than anything. She says the same to him.

Room 18, Warden's Office

Rejovic's elegant, if austere, office contains numerous files from which the crew could reconstruct his criminal activities which range from bribery, to extortion, to election fixing, to abductions and assassinations of people who crossed him. This task would take several days. These papers are too voluminous to carry. (The gravcarts could transport them easily.) A monitor on the desk accesses all security cameras.

Room 19, Communications Station

The communications equipment here requires a single EASY Intelligence + Technical Engineering (or Communications Systems) check to operate. It has full Cortex access. A monitor shows two Alliance patrol boats circling Perdition in high orbit, and an ASREV flying CAP in the low atmosphere.

If the crew enter here before obtaining *Freedom's Flight*, the battle in her Main Cargo Bay is happening right now. An audio wave from *Freedom's Flight* comes into the Communications Room, unmonitored. One voice (Black's) is saying: "... No, I don't give a *feh feh pi gob* if there's a prison riot going on! This is silver, not platinum! Where's the rest of my pay? You're stalling, Rejovic! We brought you your prisoner! We did the job! We get paid! You owe us—" A loud clattering cuts Black's words short, followed swiftly by the roar of machine gun fire. This continues for several moments, then there's an explosion, and the wave connection dies.

If the crew enters here after going into *Freedom's Flight*, the battle in the ship's cargo bay has already occurred. No unmonitored wave plays now.

Plot Points

Award one each for defeating Lin. One each for reuniting Mercedes and Elias.

SCENE 2: A HOG-KILLIN' TIME!

Wherein our heroes might just find themselves a little payback.

How It Is [Setup]:

Freedom's Flight's open front bay attaches to the docking ramp. One can mosey right on in, although black smoke is pouring out of the entrance.

Just inside the Main Cargo Bay, the flaming remains of the rear gravcart and machine gun lie on the floor. The bay is filled with smoke. The gunner guard's burned body protrudes from the wreckage. Bullets occasionally explode from the wreckage and ricochet around the bay. Silver coins and small pieces of metal debris are everywhere, some still smoldering. The second,

forward gravcart, still holding the splintered remnants of its crate, hovers a-kilter, rotating in a small circle, farther into the bay. It is smoking, whining, sparking, and dripping oil. Beneath it, lie two more bodies amidst a spill of silver coins and blood, each corpse cut in half by bullets. Empty cargo boxes around the bay collapsed under machine-gun fire, and lines of machine-gun bullet holes trace across the far metal wall to the Aft Cargo Bay. No one here is alive.

Miraculously, the airlock remains fully functional. Gunshots echo from upstairs.

Problems:

Showdown

Corporal Yang and Rejovic (if he's here) crouch behind a counter in the Galley, exchanging fire with two Swift Justice bounty hunters holed up in the hall by the stairwell near the Head (Room 18). If Rejovic's not here, replace him with a guard. All four devote their full attention to their opponents. Another guard lies dead on the Galley floor.

Yang took two bullets, leaving him with 4 Wound and 8 Stun (of 16 Life Points total). Rejovic hit both Swift Justice members, leaving each with 3 Wound and 6 Stun (of 12 Life Points total each). Rejovic (if present) is unharmed. (See page 40 for the bounty hunters statistics, and page 47 for Rejovic's and Yang's statistics.)

Rejovic and Yang won't surrender. They'll fight until they are either killed or rendered unconscious. The Swift Justice members retreat to the upper deck if pressed, but will surrender if all seems hopeless.

Black's Bridge

Black took a bullet too, falling to 9 Life Points. He retreated to the Bridge to prep for emergency takeoff, fearing more Perdition guards are coming. He left the Bridge door partway open and keeps an eye out for unwanted company. Shots fired into the Bridge may damage equipment.

Black fights viciously, but he knows when he's beaten and will surrender in hopes of escaping. If captured, he'll happily confess to setting Mercedes up at Ace in the Hole and to

using her Far Yukon security information to kidnap Elias. He'll also describe his "deal" with Rejovic and Rejovic's betrayal.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

Mercedes has the image of her father beaten and shackled fresh in her mind. She wants to kill Rejovic and/or Black, if either lives. But Elias tries to persuade her to turn them over to Hera's justice system. When they argue, they actually listen to each other.

Plot Points

Award one Plot Point each for defeating Yang and the living Swift Justice members. Give two each for defeating Rejovic (if he's there) and two each for defeating Black.

Freedom's Flight

Agi d10, **Str** d4, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d2, **Wil** d2;
Init d10+d8; **LP** 6

Traits Allure [Minor], Fast Throttle [Minor], Gas Guzzler

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Science Ship d2, Perception d4, Space Navigation d2, Space Transport Operations/Science Ship d2

Specifications

Dimensions (LxBxH) 106 x 125 x 48

Tonnage 1,920

Speed Class 5/8 hard burn

Fuel Capacity 60 tons (400 hours)

Cargo Capacity/Maximum Deck Load 480 tons; 1 ton internal weapons

Crew Quarters 6 single cabins

Passenger Capacity 2 double cabins

Armament Four 100-pound short-range explosive missiles concealed in the right wing's sensory-array pod

Price Unknown (but extremely expensive)

Description *Freedom's Flight's* builders designed her for a wealthy philanthropist dedicated to scientific causes. They built a shiny performance ship with great fuel economy containing all the equipment one needs for exploration and research—a top-flight navigation system, sensor array, and numerous laboratories. The philanthropist became a fugitive after performing unlicensed terraforming of a moon on the Rim. Black captured him and turned him over to Alliance authorities. Black falsely declared the ship



destroyed during the fugitive's pursuit and kept the ship. He renamed it, and sold most of its scientific gear to pay for modifications to hide its origins and better suit his trade. He converted lab space to cargo space and an infirmary. He added Fast Throttle, turning the craft into a Gas Guzzler. He sold some high-tech equipment from the starboard wing's sensory array pod to make space for a concealed missile launcher. Now, identifying *Freedom's Flight* as stolen (at least from the philanthropist) would be challenging (but not impossible).

SCENE 3: FLIGHT

Wherein our folk finally light a shuck for the stars.

How It Is [Setup]:

Unless the crew remained covert throughout their escape, the Guard Stations are sharing information about them. If all the inmates exited their cells at one time, guards restored order by pumping gas into Cellblocks R7 and R8 and the Entrance Block. A team of six guards in tactical suits with submachine guns and concussion grenades is heading from Guard Station 5 towards the Warden's Block. Anyone

wearing a guard's micro transmitter overhears their progress reports. They'll reach the ship in three minutes.

Problems:

Clearing the Docking Collar

Black prepped the ship for lift off, but the docking arm still holds the ship's front. Removing it requires an AVERAGE Agility + Mechanical Engineering (or Mechanical Repairs) check taking one minute. Heavy smoke and occasional exploding rounds from the burning wreckage of the machine cannon and gravcart add atmosphere, but no real peril. The guards will arrive in three minutes.

Before then, however, the trailing gang of five thugs from the cellblock (if not already encountered) makes their move, confronting the crew at the docking arm and ship's airlock. The thugs have collected any arms the crew left behind. The thugs beg to be taken of this rock. Whether welcomed or denied, they'll soon try to seize the ship for themselves. (See Scene 4: "*Da Shiong La Se La Ch'wohn Tian!*" on page 55 for a typical inmate's statistics.)

ASREV CAP

An ASREV flies combat air patrol 10 miles out. Its pilot detects *Freedom's Flight's* liftoff unless the craft's pilot makes a FORMIDABLE Ship's Agility (d10) + Pilot (or Mid-Bulk Transport) check. The ASREV hails *Freedom's Flight* demanding clearance codes. Rejovic, Yang, Black, and Swift Justice's pilot know the clearance code is "Hackleback's Rimrakers 17." If the crew doesn't give the code, the ASREV pursues, trying to close to point-blank or short range and fire missiles. If *Freedom's Flight* maintains top atmo speed, the ASREV can't gain. With a hard burn, it can escape, but in the atmosphere that requires a HEROIC Ship's Agility (d10) + Pilot (or Mid-Bulk Transport) check.

Freedom's Flight handles like a sports car, but dodging a missile still requires a HARD Ship's Agility (d10) + Pilot (or Mid-Bulk Transport) check. Any Swift Justice member knows there's a missile launcher hidden in the sensor pod on the right wing. Its four 100-pound missiles look as old as relics in the Earth-That-Was museum, but function normally. If the ASREV takes missile damage, it bugs out.

Alliance Patrol Boat

The orbiting Alliance patrol boats let *Freedom's Flight* pass if it gives the clearance code and the ship didn't tangle with the ASREV. Otherwise, the Patrol Boat attempts to intercept. Evading requires a HARD Ship's Agility (d10) + Pilot (or Mid-Bulk Transport) check until *Freedom's Flight's* faster hard burn carries her out of range. Otherwise, she's dodging at least one missile.

New Way of Things [Resolution]:

If all went according to plan (wait, there was a plan?!), the crew won their freedom and now controls a unique ship. True it's a stolen ship which the Alliance will be hunting, but at least they're flyin'.

Plot Points

Award one point for anyone who remembers: "Hackleback's Rimrakers 17." Give one for a pilot who evades the ASREV and One for a pilot who evades the patrol boat. Two each can be awarded for escaping Perdition.

CONCLUSION

If he lives, Elias Wingate clears the crewmembers' names of terrorist charges and exposes Colonel Rejovic's criminal practices. If Rejovic or Black lives, Hera authorities charge them with kidnapping, and perhaps more.

Rejovic controls many people, however. The military may dispute Rejovic's charges, creating a lasting scandal. Hera authorities may "officially" award the crew *Freedom's Flight*, depending on how they present themselves. (These authorities consider this award only after Elias donates generously to Hera's Relief Fund on the crew's behalf.) Elias could become a Friend in High Places for any crewmember.

Moved by his daughter's arguments, Elias makes Far Yukon free all indentured servants from their contracts. It'll take years for Far Yukon to recover the financial loss. Elias nonetheless keeps his post, largely because shareholders rightly believe no one else can handle Far Yukon's volatile Hera operations.

If Black and/or Rejovic escape, the crew has a lasting enemy.

Mercedes has a weakness for heroes. Need I say more? Of course, the real Crane is still out there and he's the jealous type.

CHAPTER THREE

MOTHER LOAD

Ni How. Yep, I'm talkin' at you. Come sit with me for a spell. I'll make it worth your while.

I hear tell you have a line on some folk who might be interested in earning a sizeable stack of credits. You do, huh? These friends have a ship? A crew? Folk that can be trusted to keep their mouths shut? Better and better.

Now, these friends of yours wouldn't mind bendin' the law a mite, would they? Not if the price was right. I think we can take care of that.

How does 5,000 credits grab you? Hard coin only? Should be able to make that work

If you happen to know a crew ready to earn 5,000 in hard cash, then this is the adventure for you. **Mother Load** is geared to all types of role players—from those with a wide range of experience to those who have no idea what the funny dice are for. You look like a person who's been around some, so I'm figurin' that you've run your fair share of adventures before. If not, if this is your first, you might want to read up on how to run a good adventure in the *Serenity Role Playing Game* core book before you get started.

We make some basic assumptions starting out. This adventure involves the crew of a ship. May be a Firefly-class ship. May not. May be captained by Malcolm Reynolds and his crew. Mayhaps not. Could be the *Aces and Eights* crew. Could be your own crew. Doesn't make a lick of difference.

We figure that your crew is flyin' a ship, that they have a strong tendency to take care of their own, and that they don't mind bending a law or two if it's called for. The crew should have weapons and know how to use them because, as we all know, the 'Verse can be a dangerous place.

And because things tend to not go smooth, your crew might be happier (and they'll tend to live longer!) if they have a healer/doctor among them. If their doc got eaten by Reavers already, you should consider running a nonplayer doctor as a secondary character for the group if they haven't found a replacement by now.

You also might want to turn a thought to how tough the crew might be, in general; this adventure is geared for a middling range of Veterans. That means that a crew of raw Greenhorns are like to get et before they finish, while some Big Damn Heroes might breeze through, bored as hell. If you want to run this for a crew that ain't Veterans, though, no sweat. Adjust the numbers a bit: most Difficulties shift up or down one category, and the numbers of foes could shift a bit as well. You know your crew best, so don't make it too hard, but don't hand them that reward without making them work for it.

Because there's a lot of credits riding on this, you might want to take a read through the entire adventure before you start to play, maybe even make some notes on how you want to run the NPC characters presented in these pages. Who knows? You might want to add characters and encounters of your own to make the adventure more personal to your group. Think about the skills, traits, and other information about your crew and customize the story so they feel like it was made just for them.

Now, let's get one thing straight. This is not what folks might call a linear adventure—one that leads your folk through the black in a straight line from point A to point X. Let your players roam about a bit. If they do something you hadn't anticipated (and, believe me, they will!), don't let that throw you. Find a way to work their wanderings into the plot. The adventure provides ideas for leading them back to the fold if they go astray.

THE WAY IT IS

A convoy of Alliance ships went missing during the war. Seems the crew members of several of the ships were afflicted by a mysterious disease. Due to the rapid spread of the deadly sickness, the ships were abandoned. In the confusion of the war and the enforced peace that followed, the location and information about convoy was filed away and forgotten. The ships were never recovered. Every now and again you'll run across someone who's heard about a lost convoy from his uncle's wife's brother's aunt, who seemed to recall hearing the story. But you won't find anything in the history books and you won't find anyone in the Alliance who claims to know anything about it.

THE TELLIN' OF THE TALE

This adventure has two different starting points. The first scene, "Help Wanted," is designed for the crew who maybe doesn't have a lot of experience under their belts or for those who want to jump straight into the action. In this scene the players receive a wave from an old friend, Todd Wilkinson. Todd knows the location of the convoy and he wants to hire the crew to help him find it.

The second scene, "Treasure Map," is designed for those who like to take their time starting up a new adventure, maybe go planet-side, do a little souvenir shopping, have a few drinks, get into a bar fight or two. In this scene, the crew members are given the chance to discover information about the lost convoy on their own by rummaging through Alliance files. And if you'd like to bring good ol' Todd in on the action, we've given you a way to do that!

ACT I: TALE OF THE LOST CONVOY

Here the crew will learn, one way or another, about a job that could score them a mighty fine profit. All they have to do is find a convoy that was abandoned in the Black and since forgotten. Easy as pie—right?

SCENE 1: HELP WANTED

A scene in which an old friend tracks down the crew with an offer they might not be able to refuse. Characters who have Friends in Low Places or held military rank in the war will be the focus here.

How it is (Setup):

The crew docked their ship at a spaceport on Athens, one of the planets on the Rim. They're here because they have received a wave from Todd Wilkinson, an old friend of at least one of the crew members. All Todd said in the wave is that he's onto something very lucrative and he wants to do an old buddy a good turn by including him in on the deal.

When they land, the crew can either set up a meeting with Todd in person or they can contact him by wave. He tells them he's looking to hire a ship and some capable folk to help him on a salvage operation. He'll pay 5,000 credits in untraceable hard cash, provide the fuel for the ship, and, in addition, give the crew 10 percent of whatever is hauled away in salvage. He won't tell the crew how much this will be, but hints that it will be substantial.

Todd will resist all attempts to try to make him reveal his destination or the nature of the job. He tells the crew he'll give them the coordinates once they are out in the Black. He's good-natured about this.

"It ain't that I don't trust you, buddy! Butchya never know who might be listenin'. You can bet the pay off will be worth the wait."

If the crew looks up Todd on the Cortex (a HARD complex task with a half-hour increment, since it's a mite difficult to sift through records from the war), they find that he was a sergeant in the supply division for the Independents during the war. Records show he was given an honorable discharge. He has since earned a fair living selling fuel and engine parts. One of the crew might also know this information, since he and Todd have remained in contact over the years. If the crew members aren't Browncoats, they might have gone to school with Todd or worked with him in the past. (Make use of any traits characters in the crew might possess.)

Todd comes complete with two bodyguards, Ace Johnson and Rick “King” Gray. If anyone asks Todd why he needs bodyguards, he’ll hint that it has something to do with the nature of the job, but won’t get more specific.

“It’s best not to tell you any more about the job than you need to know, buddy,” Todd will say and it’s EASY to tell that he’s in earnest.

Todd won’t go anywhere without Ace and King and he will refuse to hire the crew if his bodyguards aren’t included as part of the deal. He met Ace and King in the army. They all served together, fighting for the Independent Cause. Ace and King once saved Todd’s life at risk of their own and he trusts them. In addition, both are good shots and both can fly a ship if need be. He figures they can help fly any of the ships that might be spaceworthy.

Once the ship is in the Black, Todd will show the crew a file marked: “Open Case. Investigation Pending.” In that file they will find the exact coordinates of the abandoned convoy. The report states that the crews of the lost ships came down with some sort of strange illness believed to have been caused by biowarfare. The survivors were evacuated and the ships left where they were until biohazard teams could go in and investigate. There are no further entries and it appears that this report was filed and forgotten. Todd says he intends to scavenge the ship and sell the parts. He wants to hire the crew to take him to the ships and offers to pay them 5,000 credits plus a percentage of the take.

It seems there’s an entire convoy of shiny Alliance warships, just waiting for some enterprising folk to come lay claim to them! Sounds almost too good to be true! Todd is a smooth-talker and is

ready to lay it on thick to sell the idea to the crew. And he believes what he’s saying, that this is a fat take waiting to help make them all a tidy profit.

Todd Wilkinson

Agi d8, **Str** d8, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d6;
Init d8+d8; **LP** 16

Traits Things Go Smooth (Major)

Skills Athletics d6/Throwing d10, Covert d6/Stealth d8/Security d10, Discipline d6, Guns d6, Influence d6/Fast Talk d10, Knowledge d6, Mechanical Engineering d6, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Perception d6/Search d8, Pilot d4, Survival d6/First Aid d8

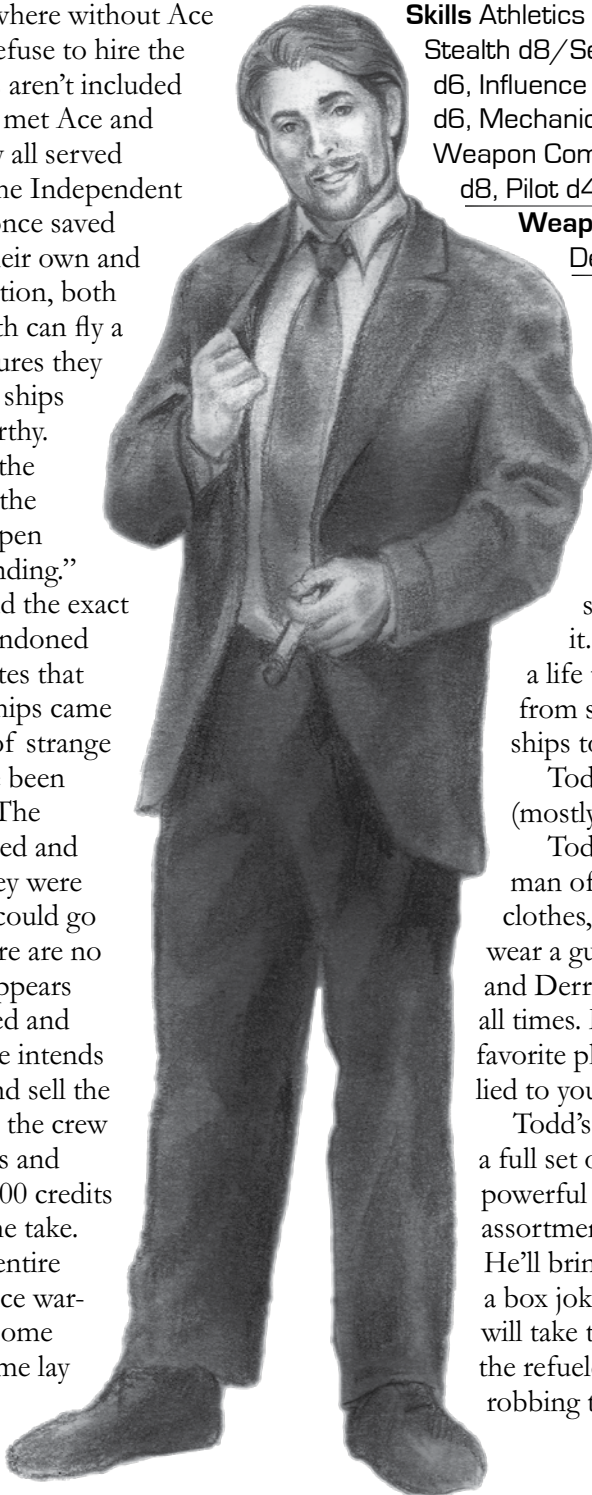
Weapons/Gear Knife (d2 W),
Derringer (d4 W)

Todd worked in supply during the war. Part of his job included scrounging and stealing from the Alliance and he was quite good at this. He gained knowledge of several “lost” supply caches of Alliance equipment and fuel and, over the last few years, he’s been hunting out these caches, salvaging what he can, and selling it. He’s now made the discovery of a life time. He plans to earn enough from scavenging these abandoned ships to make himself very wealthy.

Todd is a thief, but he is loyal and (mostly) honest with his friends.

Todd is a muscular, youthful-looking man of 35. He likes wearing expensive clothes, always black in color. He doesn’t wear a gun openly, but he keeps a knife and Derringer hidden on his person at all times. He’s chummy and chatty and his favorite phrase is: “C’mon, buddy! I ever lied to you before?”

Todd’s personal equipment includes: a full set of body armor, an unusually powerful wrist computer, and an assortment of 15 different grenades. He’ll bring the grenades on board ship in a box jokingly labeled “Pineapples.” He will take these with him when he boards the refueler. (Yes, even though they are robbing the place and not occupying it.)



Complication Painfully Shy

You are reserved or timid when in the company of other people. You have the feeling everyone is judging you and finding you lacking. You would crawl into a hole if one was available.

Penalty: As a Minor Trait, you are uncomfortable whenever you're with a group of strangers. You find it difficult to make conversation. You keep your true feelings bottled up inside and rarely say or do anything to draw attention to yourself. This gives you a -2 Skill Step penalty to all Influence-based actions.

As a Major Trait, your shyness is debilitating. You are tongue-tied in the presence of strangers. You can't even make eye contact with anyone. If someone talks to you, you don't respond, but stare down at your feet or gaze out into space. You will avoid meeting new people and, if forced to do so, you will take the first opportunity to find the nearest exit. You come across as arrogant, surly, or aloof, which gives you a -4 Skill Step penalty to all Influence-based actions. You couldn't convince a cat to drink milk.

Ace Johnson

Agi d10, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d10, **Int** d6, **Wil** d4;
Init d10+d10; **LP** 10

Traits Painfully Shy [Major, see sidebar]

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d10, Covert d6/
Sabotage d12, Discipline d4, Guns d6/Sniper
Rifle d12/Pistol d10, Heavy Weapons d6,
Knowledge d6, Perception d4, Pilot d6/Small
Transports d8/Mid-Bulk Transports d8,
Unarmed Combat d6

Ace is in his 30s. He's a tall, muscular man with a buzz hair-cut, broken nose, and a permanent scowl. He doesn't talk over-much and when he does, he grunts or mumbles. Only his friend King understands what he's saying and he serves as translator if Ace has anything important to contribute (which is mostly never). Ace appears to be sullen and hulkish on first acquaintance, but, in truth, he's Painfully Shy. The reason he mumbles is that he is too shy to speak and he mostly keeps his head down, afraid to look up for fear someone might actually be looking at him.

Ace made it through the army because his buddy King took care of him. Ace is good at taking orders, which he obeys with alacrity, no matter who's giving them. He is a good bodyguard, but has an unfortunate tendency to get into fights, because those who don't know

him mistake his shyness for arrogance and figure they'll take him down a peg or two. Ace is terrified of women and will blush up to his ears and go dumb if one speaks at him. He enjoys playing Faro and will noticeably relax a mite during a game. Ace's weapon of choice is the sniper rifle or the pistol, but he also has extensive training planting explosives as part of a fighting retreat. This particular skill is not one Ace or King will advertise, since it benefits their plan to keep it quiet from the crew; however, Todd does know of it, if the crew ask him about his bodyguards. If they question Ace or King, the schemers downplay the significance of Ace's demolitions talents.

Ace admires King and looks up to him. He will do anything King asks of him.

Ace's equipment includes: a sniper rifle (d8 W), six pistols (d6 W) of various types, and explosive blocks with easy-to-set timers. All his weapons have electronic sites and stabilizers (which provide a +1 Skill step when using them and making them more valuable if re-sold).

Rick "King" Gray

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d8, **Wil** d10;
Init d8+d6; **LP** 18

Traits Amorous [Minor], Can't Get Enough [Faro] [Minor]

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Discipline d6,
Guns d6/Pistols d8, Influence d6, Knowledge
d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knife d10,
Perception d6, Pilot d6/Mid-Bulk Transports
d10, Ranged Weapons d6/Knife d12, Survival
d6

Weapons/Gear Knife [d2 W], Big Knife
[d4 W], 2 Throwing Knives [d2 W]

King is a strong, muscular, and considers himself the brains of the operations. His pride and joy is a huge handlebar mustache that he is constantly waxing and admiring, using a hand mirror he carries in a leather case in his pocket. He's a snappy dresser with an eye for the ladies. King is a knife man—carries four knives on his person at all times. He enjoys practicing throwing his knives and the first thing he will do when he boards the ship will be to set up a target.

King got his name from his love of cards, particularly the game Faro. He is an excellent Faro dealer and will be happy to help liven up the boredom of space travel by running games for the crew. (See the adventure, *Out In the Black*

for rules.) King knows how to cheat, but he'll be careful to keep the game honest while on board ship, even to the point of chastising a crew member who might try to put one over on him. He prefers playing for money, though he enjoys the game well enough that he'll play for canned protein, fresh vegetables, or chores. He will likely suggest to the crew that they might want to stake some of the money they're going to be making on the salvage operation on a friendly game.

King is fond of Ace, mainly because Ace admires him and is dependent on him.

Ace and King have been working together for a long time. They met up with Todd in the army and helped him in his scrounging operations. Figuring he had a good thing going, the two latched onto Todd when they got out. They've earned their pay up to now. Todd has no reason to distrust them.

Problems:

Things never go smooth. When the crew plots the coordinates, they discover that the convoy is in Reaver territory.

"Bah!" says Todd. "Who believes all that *mah tian gohn*? No thinkin' man believes in Reavers."

Skunks in the woodpile. Ace and King seem like stand-up guys, but in truth they've been biding their time, waiting for Todd to score it big, so they can double-cross him and clean him out. This seems to them like the perfect opportunity.

Their plan is to let Todd lead them to the abandoned convoy. (He hasn't let them in on the exact coordinates. Todd's a trusting, loyal guy—but not a complete idiot.) They intend to take the best stuff for themselves, stealing the crew's ship to use as a get-away vehicle. They don't plan to leave any witnesses. Up until the point of their betrayal, Ace and King will be loyal to their boss and to the crew. They both like a good fight and will readily join in any action.

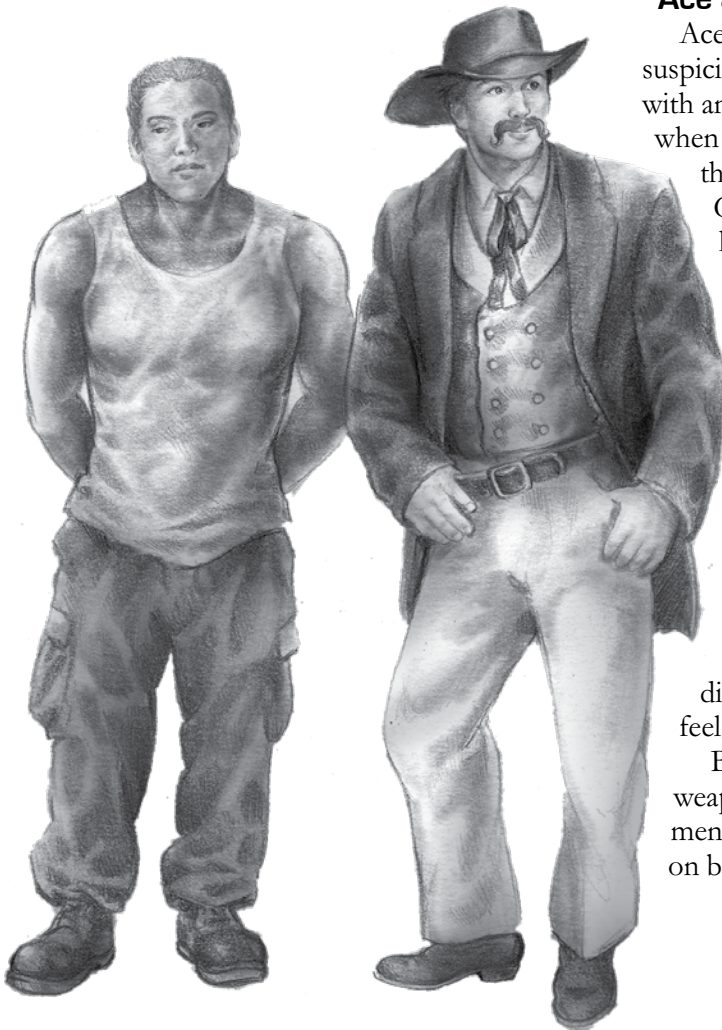
Ace and King On Board Ship

Ace and King are too smart to arouse suspicion. King will make a nuisance of himself with any women among the crew, but he knows when to take "no" for an answer. The truth is, he thinks too well of himself to beg. If a female Companion happens to be on board, first he'll try and seduce her into a "freebie," and barring that will try to negotiate her rates.

King does ask a lot of questions about the running of the ship, which someone might find odd. He will say truthfully that he used to fly an older model and he's interested in what changes were made when the new model came out (which is EASY for a pilot or engineer type character to suss out if talking to him about the details).

Ace mostly keeps to himself or hangs out with King. Any of the crew who discover his affliction might actually come to feel sorry for him.

Both Ace and King will give up their weapons if the crew members insist on it. Both men will cheerfully do what they are told while on board the ship.



Can't Get Enough

You are addicted to something that provides you with physical pleasure or stimulus (as opposed to drugs or alcohol, which comes under the Complication "Hooked"). You may be addicted to sex, gambling, playing video games, eating, etc. You simply can't get enough of what turns you on.

Penalty: As a Minor Trait, this complicates your life. You may be chubby because you can't give up the Fruity Oaty bars or you're flunking your History of Ariel class because you're spending time playing Reaver Madness instead of studying. When the opportunity presents itself, you have to make an AVERAGE (7) Willpower + Discipline/Concentration roll or indulge your addiction. As a Major Trait, this is ruining your life. You've gambled away your savings and owe money to the mob. You were fired because you skipped work to play video games. Your wife left because you can't keep your pants on. You're obese, living from one meal to the next. The Difficulty to resist indulging is now HARD (11), and if you haven't indulged in over a day, you suffer a -4 Skill step due to distraction to any action requiring discipline, hard work, and dedication, such Medical Expertise or Pilot. You need to seek professional help.

New Way of Things (Results):

Ace and King will wait until they see the convoy to make their final plans. Once they do, they plot to steal the refueler. They will plant explosive charges on board the crew's ship, intending to blow up the ship by remote transmitters when they have taken over the refueler. The two are smart and they plant the explosives in a well-chosen spot, while everyone else is busy drooling at the sight of all these valuable ships just waiting to be picked clean. Neither Todd nor the crew has any reason to suspect Ace and King of planning to betray them. If someone does take it into his head to think the two might have planted explosives, it will be IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to find them, short of dismantling the ship.

If the battle against the Reavers on the refueler goes badly, Ace and King will abandon Todd and the crew and sneak back to steal the crew's ship. Once Ace and King have taken over the ship, they will figure the Reavers have killed the crew and

they'll hang about the convoy, searching for more salvage opportunities, giving the crew (if they're still alive) the chance to take their ship back.

SCENE 2: TREASURE MAP

Here we have a scene that allows the crew to stumble upon the location of the lost convoy on their own—with or without the chance to meet up with Todd Wilkinson and company. Why the crew decides to travel to Athens is up to you and it's best to offer a setup that is unique to the background and story of at least one of the characters. (Perhaps a character is from Athens, or perhaps they get a "job" to pick up some inconsequential item or passenger there, etc.) But once they get there, you can put the adventure right into the crew's hands.

How It Is (Setup):

Many cities on the Frontier planets were reduced to rubble by Alliance bombing during the war. Some of the planets remained under Alliance control with the signing of the peace treaty and were deemed "off-limits" to the unfortunate folk who used to live there, even those who once had homes and businesses. These areas were deemed "unsafe," either from radiation or some other type of contamination. After hanging onto these planets for a number of years, Alliance forces have finally moved off these worlds and are now kindly permitting the inhabitants to return to try to salvage what they can of their past lives.

The planet of Athens was hit hard. Four of its cities were bombed and left in ruins. These are just now being opened to former inhabitants. Folk are returning in droves, searching for lost goods and precious family heirlooms.

The crew are encouraged to fly to Athens to see what they can find. Perhaps a crew member once owned property here or someone may have relatives who were from those parts. If any crew member can prove he was a resident or property owner, he will discover he'll be allowed to land without problem. Even if the crew has no ties to Athens, it's only of AVERAGE difficulty to sneak past the security guards, who have been overwhelmed by the influx of people.

During their search of the ruins, the crew will come across Alliance files and reports. In the reports, they will discover the location of a convoy of ships abandoned during the war due to

an outbreak of a mysterious disease. It won't take a rocket scientist to realize there's a lot of credits to be gained by flying to the location and either dismantling the ships and selling off parts or stealing any ships that are still operational. There's a *gorram* fortune to made here!

Of course, there are those on the planet who take exception to the crew snooping about an Alliance building. If you'd like to bring in Todd and Ace and King at this juncture, they'd be glad to make an appearance.

Problems:

Searching the Ruins

When the crew arrives, their ship is just one amidst a throng of ships of every type bringing people to search the ruins or lay a claim to property. The crew may have planned some sort of elaborate scheme to sneak onto the planet. If so, they find it's not needed. Harried security guards are waving the milling crowds through the check points, rarely asking to see ident cards. If the crew checks for radiation, they will find only normal levels. This city wasn't nuked.

The moment the crew sets foot on the planet, they start to think this trip was a mistake. They find the remnants of a once thriving frontier city thronged with people picking through the rubble. The crew can search through all the buildings they want, but they won't find anything. Looks as if everything of valuable has already been hauled off.

Then the crew spots a three-story building that's still standing—an Alliance Outpost.

Alliance Outpost

The Alliance Outpost building is covered in graffiti, most of it vulgar—folk venting their outrage at the Alliance. All the windows have either been broken or shot out and the doors smashed in. After the Alliance left, the building was supposed to be guarded, but it was attacked by a mob of furious citizens. The guards fled and the mob ransacked the place. Most everything of value was either stolen or destroyed.

Now the crew may still have all sorts of good reason for rummaging around in an Alliance Outpost, even one that has been looted. For example, the Alliance is good at one thing and that's keeping track of its citizens. They have files on everything and everybody. A crewmember

might want to take a peek at his file to see what the Alliance knows about him and maybe try to find a way to alter it. A crew who comes from this planet might want to see if he can locate a title or deed to property or maybe try to find out what happened to friends or family members who've gone missing.

If the crew doesn't come up with a reason, they can always overhear talk that the Alliance left behind a safe stuffed with cash hidden in the Outpost. Thus far, no one's been able to find it. (There is no safe, by the way.)

Now ain't that interestin'! This looks to be a pretty typical military office building. There's a central hallway with rooms opening off on each side. Two bathrooms on every floor at the far end. A lunch room on the second level. There's a single elevator that doesn't work any more. Flights of stairs lead up to the other levels.

Lunch Room

The crew can search all the rooms in the building, but it's obvious that the mob did a swell job of hauling off everything including the kitchen sink which was in the lunch room. Looters ripped that sucker right off the wall. If the crew searches the lunch room area, they will find it EASY to locate what appears to be a storage closet. But there's something strange. The door is locked with an extremely good lock. Seems odd to lock up a room meant for storing mops and buckets and such like.

Opening the lock will be a HARD task. Inside the storage closet, the crew will find a stockpile of weapons, including ten sets of high quality body armor, four rifles, four pistols, four boxes containing assorted candy bars for the vending machine (no longer there), a box of six stun grenades, and a case with 24 of toilet paper.

Could be useful, considering what's in store for them.

File Room

On the third floor farthest from the stairs (which are at the end of the hall) is the room used for file storage. It has been trashed. The filing cabinets have been overturned and files dumped onto the floor. A cursory search through these reveals that these are files kept on the local citizenry. Anyone from this planet who would like to take the time to sort through them will

find it an AVERAGE (7) task. The files were in alphabetical order and have mostly stayed that way, though they may have slid around some.

One filing cabinet remains standing, its drawers unopened. Investigation reveals that this cabinet is heavily locked with extremely sophisticated locks. The cabinet is dented from hammer blows, but otherwise intact.

Obviously important stuff was stored here, though apparently not important enough for the Alliance to take with them.

Opening the file cabinet is a FORMIDABLE task, requiring either blowing the locks with explosive charges or picking the locks. Once they've managed to crack the cabinet, the crew will find numerous files detailing Alliance troop movements. Everyone will likely get real excited until they notice the dates. These go back to the time of the war.

If the first file drawer is pulled out, a file that has been plastered to the side of the drawer will fall to the floor. It is marked: "Open Case. Investigation Pending." In that file the crew will find the report on the abandoned convoy, as well as the exact coordinates. The report states that the crews of the ships came down with some sort of ailment believed to have been biowarfare. The survivors were evacuated and the ships left where they were until biohazard teams could go in and investigate. There are no further entries and it appears that this was filed away and forgotten.

Could be an entire convoy of shiny Alliance war ships, just waiting for some enterprising folk to come lay claim to them!

There's only one downside. Once the ship's pilot sees the coordinates, he will likely realize (with only an AVERAGE Difficulty in sussing it out) that the convoy is in Reaver space!

We're being shot at! The minute the crew walk out the door of the file room, they come under fire. The crew are being attacked by four thugs who took note of the crew when they were walkin' around town and decided they need to be relieved of some of their valuables. The thugs followed the crew into the building, fixin' to jump 'em when they were out of sight of people in the street.

The thugs will allow the crew to take their time searching the building, figuring it will save them work in the long run. They'll attack when they figure the crew is getting ready to leave, counting on stealing the loot.

Thugs [4]

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d8;
Init d8+d6; **LP** 14

Traits Coward (Minor)

Skills Athletics d4, Discipline d6, Guns d6/
Pistols d8, Perception d4, Unarmed Combat d6

Weapons/Gear Pistol (d6 W)

The thugs are using pistols and will fire from cover. When two of the thugs are killed or stunned, the others will run for their lives. They were hoping for easy pickin's and have no taste for a real battle.

Sorry about that, old buddy! If you want to bring Todd and Ace and King into this scenario, they can be the ones who attack the crew. (You might want to do this if the crew hasn't found the files.) Todd and his boys are not here to rob anyone, however. They simply want to encourage anyone inside to leave in a hurry. Todd had a girlfriend who used to work at this outpost and he is here to recover the very files that the players have presumably already found. It was his girlfriend who deliberately hid the file by sticking it in the side of the cabinet. If the crew hasn't found the files, Todd can lead them to the file cabinet. Todd also knows about the guns and armor locked in the storage closet.

Todd immediately recognizes one of the crew members during the gun battle as his long time friend and he lowers his weapon and tells Ace and King to stop firing. Todd says he's real sorry he and his boys shot at them and he hopes they didn't hurt anyone.

Todd says that meeting his old buddy like this downright providential.

"Here I am, needing someone with a ship, and here you are, old buddy!"

If the crew has not found the file, Todd will offer them 5,000 credits plus a share in the profit if they'll fly him and his two bodyguards to "the job site." Todd won't tell the crew any more details about the job until they accept. Then he will take the crew to the file storage room and show them the file.

If the crew has found the file, Todd will either see one of them holding it and tell them that he wants to hire them for this very job or he will go immediately to the file room in search of it. When he finds the file missing, he'll guess that the crew discovered the file with the information on the lost convoy. If the crew tries to hold out on him,

Todd will tell them that he can provide them with additional information, plus he'll pay for the trip and he offers them a share in the proceeds. He adds that both Ace and King are pilots and they could come in handy in helping to salvage some of the ships, not to mention the fact that they're handy in a scrap.

If anyone happens to mention the fact that the convoy is in Reaver territory, Todd will laugh heartily. "Reavers! Do you believe in Santa Claus, too, old buddy?"

The room is bugged! It's possible that the crew won't get the message that they should be going to look into the abandoned convoy. They may want to continue trying to rummage through the wrecked office building, although it should be pretty clear that the good stuff is all gone by now. If it begins to look as if they are going to sort through rubble for the next year, they enter a room only to discover that this is one place they don't want to be.

A swarm of roaches rushes from the room. The roaches are three inches long, jet black, and appear to number in the thousands. They don't eat flesh, but they do eat just about everything else—including clothes, rubber, and wires of all types. If the crew still doesn't get the hint, the roaches start making nasty buzzing sounds, which appear to be some sort of a signal to their mates. Now roaches are everywhere—falling down from the ceiling, emerging from cracks in the walls. There is no way the crew can kill them all and, soon, their clothes and equipment are covered with them. Fleeing the Alliance Outpost is the only way to get rid of the roaches and then the crew will be plucking roaches off each other for the next hour or so.

New Way of Things (Results):

The crew has decided to go in search of the lost convoy, either with Todd and his buddies or on their own. Note that if you don't bring Todd, Ace, and King into the adventure, the fight with the Reavers (Scene Seven) is the Big Finish. If Todd, Ace, and King are present, the crew has to fight the Reavers, only to discover they still have to deal with Ace and King.

ACT II: SAILIN' THE BLACK

Here the crew must make their way to the lost convoy and whatever treasure awaits them. But things never go completely smooth

SCENE 1: SURE IS BORING OUT HERE IN SPACE

Depending on the type of ship the crew has, it's going to take several days or perhaps even a week to reach the lost convoy. Roll a d4 (or hell, just pick one) and make the crew's lives interesting by running one or more of these entertaining diversions.

- 1: Alliance Patrol Boat
- 2: Navigation Sensor Malfunction
- 3: Asteroid
- 4: Reaver Trap

ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT

How it is (Setup):

An Alliance Patrol Boat (the *Varuna*) is on a routine patrol, checking out every ship they come across. They are not looking for anything in particular and are more than happy to let the crew's ship depart in peace if no one gives them a reason to do otherwise. If Todd is on board, he either recognizes that this is a routine patrol and will recommend that the crew just smile and wave or he makes some comment that causes the officer to become suspicious and decide to board the ship. In any case, Todd will be strongly opposed to either fleeing or fighting.

Problems:

The crew's ship is spotted by an Alliance Patrol Boat and hailed by an Alliance officer. It's up to the crew how they handle this, although Todd could get them into some trouble if he feels like it.

New Way of Things (Results)

This can go one of a couple different ways.

A: The crew members are respectful to the nice man. They have the proper codes on the hull of their spaceship. All appears to be in order. The officer wishes them safe travels and the Alliance Patrol Boat proceeds without stopping.

B: Todd grumbles that the Alliance should learn to mind its damn business and leave honest folk alone. Unfortunately, the communications channel is wide open when Todd says this. (Even better if the players say something you can use against them!) The officer hears him and immediately orders the crew's ship to halt or be blown out of the Black. If the ship tries to run, go to C. If the crew complies with the order, five well-armed and armored Alliance troops board the ship and do a routine investigation. If Todd and the crew are friendly and polite and apologize for their rash behavior, the troopers won't look at anything too closely and they will leave with a warning to the crew to obtain the proper registration. If the crew and/or Todd continue to be belligerent, go to C.

C: The crew is belligerent or they try to flee the cruiser. The captain will attempt to disable the vessel in order to board it. The ship's pilot will find it a HEROIC task to dodge missiles and out fly an Alliance Patrol Boat. If the pilot succeeds, the crew's ship escapes, but both ship and crew will be stars on "Most Wanted." If the ship is disabled or the crew surrenders and stands down, Alliance troopers will board the ship. The crew will be questioned and roughed-up by the Alliance forces. The troopers will look at things very closely and, at the very least, will levy a fine on the crew for not having the proper markings and for trying to avoid arrest. Fast talking and contrite behavior can probably get them out of this one. If the crew gets stupid, go to D.

D: The crew decide to fight the troopers. More Alliance troops board. The crew is outnumbered and either killed or arrested and imprisoned, their ship confiscated.

Alliance Troopers

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 16

Traits Loyal (Minor), Military Rank (Minor)

Skills Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6/
Assault Rifle d8, Perception d6, Melee
Weapon Combat d4

Weapons/Gear Assault Rifle (d8 W)

Alliance Patrol Boat

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d2 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d2; **LP** 12

Skills Perception d6, Pilot d6

See *Serenity Role Playing Game* page 125 for more details.

NAVIGATION SENSOR MALFUNCTION

How it is (Setup):

What the hell's wrong with this damn boat now?

As the ship is flying through space, sets of sensors keep track of the ship's position in the system. Suddenly the sensor screens start blinking on and off for some unknown reason.

Problems:

Crew members with technical skills will find it a HARD complex action to diagnose the problem, which is a small circuit-board that needs to either be replaced (an EASY complex action if the part is available) or repaired (a FORMIDABLE complex action). The time increments for each of these actions is one hour, and navigation becomes a risky prospect while the sensors are shut down.

New Way of Things (Results):

A: The crew finds the problem and fixes it. The ship is back on course and there is no further trouble.

B: The crew fails to discover what's wrong. Sensors suddenly indicate that the ship is back on course. In actuality, the sensors are completely fried. The ship is flying in the wrong direction and eventually ends up near the core world of Ariel.

They can then eliminate the malfunction and replot their course, though they've wasted some time and plenty of fuel.

ASTEROID

How it is (Setup):

Home, Sweet Asteroid. The ship comes across a huge asteroid on which someone started building a domed structure. The crew can see from their vantage point that the structure has a large crack in the roof and it appears to be abandoned.

Problems:

If the crew takes the time to explore, they will discover that this could be a perfect base of operations. Logs indicate that several scientists and their families traveled to this asteroid during the war, hoping to avoid the conflict that was ravaging their planet. They were living here peacefully until a meteor struck the dome, killing many of the settlers and forcing the rest to evacuate. The log indicates that the survivors do not plan to return.

New Way of Things (Results):

A: The crew doesn't want to take the time to make repairs. They depart, though they could plan to return later.

B: The crew decides to use this as a base. All they have to do is patch the crack and start up the power systems. The buildings under the dome are intact. There is housing for up to one hundred people, but not much in the way of supplies or valuables, since the settlers took everything with them when they left.

REAVER TRAP

Those members of the crew who have traveled the Black extensively may have encountered Reavers before. If so, they know that Reaver ships remove their core containment shields and are contaminated by radiation. Such folk also know that they should check radiation levels before entering and wear appropriate protective gear if they are boarding a Reaver ship.

Reavers

Reavers are savage humans with manic strength. They like to capture folk alive so that they can torture, rape, and brutalize them. They have no fear of anything, including death. For more on Reavers, see Chapter Six in the *Serenity Role Playing Game* core book (and the game information on page 187).

If the crew doesn't know anything about Reavers, Todd has heard rumors (though he doesn't believe them), and he will provide the crew with gruesome details.

How it is (Setup):

Wong Ba Duhn! Reavers! A pack of Reaver ships attacked an Alliance ASREV and managed to disable it. The Reavers boarded and killed the crew and cannibalized them. Most of the other Reaver ships have flown off in search of new victims, but one Reaver skiff was disabled and its crew of seven Reavers are still aboard the ASREV. Their own ship was rendered useless in the battle and they are trying to get the Alliance ship running so that they can take it over. They have allowed the Alliance ship's distress signal to keep transmitting, figuring that this could lure in more victims. It might be best to run this encounter for crew who have some experience under their belts.

Problems:

The crew comes across an Alliance ASREV on the drift. The gunship has been shot-up and is floating aimlessly in space. The crew can see some type of signal lights flashing. It takes only an AVERAGE bit of reasoning to figure that the flashing lights form a pattern—as if someone inside was desperately trying to attract attention. The gunship is also sending out a distress signal that's EASY to detect with any standard communication equipment. Attempts to hail the gunship will elicit no response. It's mighty HARD to tell from looking who attacked the Alliance ship or why, unless they have personally encountered Reavers before (in which case such crew receive a +2 Skill step bonus to their action).

ASREV

Agi d10, **Str** d2, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d4;
Init d10+d6; **LP** 6 (the ship has suffered 4
Wound damage)

Traits Everybody Has One

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Gunship
d4, Perception/Search d4, Space Transport
Operations/Gunship d4

See *Serenity Role Playing Game* page 118 for more
details.

New Way of Things (Results):

A: The crew doesn't want any part of this.
They fly past the ship. Nothing happens. As Todd
says, "They're Alliance. Let them take care of
themselves!"

B: The crew decides to board the ship, figuring
they'll check for survivors and perhaps do a
little scavenging. Likely there's lots of valuable
equipment on board that ship. Unfortunately no
one thinks to check the sensor readings before
boarding. The crew goes in without further
investigation and they do not see the disabled
Reaver ship, which is on the other side of the
gunship.

C: The crew does some in-depth investigating
before boarding. If they check for radiation levels,
it is EASY to note that the levels in the area are
unusually high (possible evidence that Reavers
were here). They can see bits of junk floating
around. It's HARD to deduce that these parts fell
off Reaver ships. If the crew circles the gunship,
they will see the Reaver skiff that has locked onto
the vessel. At this point the crew realizes that this
ASREV was attacked by Reavers and they decide
to get the hell outta there. If they run, they escape
safely, since the Reavers can't get the Alliance
gunship operational. The crew may decide to risk
boarding. If they attach their ship or shuttle to an
air lock, continue to D. If they board by means of
space walking, go to E.

D: As the crew attach their ship to the air lock,
a Reaver explosive trap latches onto the crew's
ship. This trap will not detonate until the ship tries
to leave.

Anyone who has dealt with Reavers in the
past knows that Reavers sometimes sabotage
ships they have boarded by placing explosive
traps on the ships. These traps will explode when
the ship disengages. If the crew thinks to look
for such traps before they dock, the traps are

only of AVERAGE difficulty to detect, but are
a FORMIDABLE complex action to remove.
Failing to remove it before detaching results in
1d4 Basic Ship Scale damage to the ship (and any
unfortunate crew who are caught in the blast—
they'd almost certainly be goners). Whether they
find the traps or not, go on to E.

E: The crew enters the air lock and finds seven
armed Reavers waiting to attack when the lock
opens. If the crew members enter the ship by
any other means (space walking, for example),
the Reavers will see them coming and they will
be waiting for them. If the crew kills the Reavers,
the crew discovers a rich treasure haul: two suits
of body armor, four Alliance stun rifles, quite a
lot of ammunition, a full refuel, and 500 credits'
worth of high-tech spare parts. They also find a
pile of human body parts. It's clear the Reavers
have been feasting on the bodies since the time of
the space battle.

Reavers (7)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil**
d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails (Major), Fightin' Type
(Major), Sadistic (Major).

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8,
Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception
d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/
Axes d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10
Weapons/Gear Axe (d6 W), Knife (d4 W)

Reavers suffer no Stun effects and never run
from melee. Even though horribly wounded,
they will continue to fight until they drop down
dead.

SCENE 2: FANCY FLYIN'

It's time for the pilot to show his stuff, while
the rest of the crew prays that he won't *bie woo*
lobng.

The Way It Is

You expect me to fly through that? The
small moon near where the convoy is located lies
in the center of a chaotic asteroid field.

Problems:

Old Earth-That-Was space movies to the
contrary, flying through asteroids isn't that tough,
since asteroids are generally a considerable
distance apart. Just your crew's luck! This asteroid

field is an exception! It seems a Reaver ship managed to collide either with another ship or with one of the asteroids or maybe both. This looks like a floating junkyard! Parts and pieces of destroyed ships are everywhere, heading off in all directions, whizzing by at different speeds, all mixed up with chunks of smashed asteroid.

Flying through this mess will be almost like dodging attacks; fortunately, they're slow-moving attacks. When a rock swings close, attack with a $d6 + d6$ once per minute of flying, forcing the pilot to make defensive maneuvers to avoid. If an asteroid hits, treat it just like any other attack with a $d2$ Basic weapon damage. Taking certain precautions (such as having "spotter" characters watching out for flying rocks on the instruments) can offer the pilot a +1 or +2 Skill step to his action.

At standard cruising speed it will take 10 minutes to navigate to the site of the convoy. A pilot can choose to go at a stronger burn, cutting the time in half—but causing the pilot to suffer a -2 Skill step penalty to his maneuvering actions. He can also go slow and careful, doubling the time but offering him a +2 Skill step bonus for maneuvers.

New Way of Things (Results)

The crew has either flown safely through the asteroid/junk field or their ship is badly damaged and they're sending out distress signals or attempting repairs. If they survived the asteroids, they can now see what Todd jocularly refers to as "the Mother Load."

SCENE 3: THE MOTHER LOAD

It's the moment the crew has been waiting for, a chance to score big at the expense of the Alliance. Surely it's easy pickings from this point on, right? Wrong. There are Reavers here, and if they aren't careful, skilled, and lucky the crew will be humped—ending up as a three course meal and a set of dinner jackets.

How it is (Setup):

The crew arrives at the coordinates for the lost convoy. Sure enough, there are three Alliance ASREVs, a large military cargo ship, and a

refueler just sitting around out here in the Black. Unfortunately, the crew are not the first ones here. It's HARD for any of the crew to discover a small Reaver ship attached to the refueler ship. The crew detects no power readings on any of the ships, but it's safe to assume the Reavers are on board the refueler, undoubtedly looking for fuel for their ship—it would be overly optimistic to assume the Reavers are dead.

Problems:

The crew could decide to leave the refueler to the Reavers, fire up the engine systems on the other ships, and fly off with those (depending on how many have piloting skills). On the other hand, the refueler is probably the most valuable ship here. Fuel cells are hot items on the black market. Too bad the *cheong bao ho tze* Reavers found it first. If the crew has only one pilot on board, he'll be needed to fly their own ship. In this instance, the crew could always take over one of the Alliance vessels and tow their ship behind it.

If Todd Wilkinson is on board, he wants every credit worth of merchandise he can get his greasy hands on and he will urge the crew to go after the refueler. Go to either A or B, depending on whether or not the crew encountered Reavers earlier.

A: Now that Todd has fought Reavers aboard that Alliance ship, he is a whole-hearted believer. "Reavers do exist! *Ta Ma Dub!*" Todd didn't think the Reavers were all that hard to defeat, however. Todd has Things Go Smooth as an Asset and he makes a good argument using his social skills, and the GM should try to role play this convincingly.

B: Never having met any Reavers personally, Todd still maintains that Reavers are a tale cooked up by the Alliance to scare people into good behavior. He's convinced that ship belongs to a scavenger, same as himself, and he'll do whatever he can to convince the crew that they shouldn't be scared of space-boogeymen.

New Way of Things (Results)

The new way of things will depend on what the crew decides to do.

A: The crew has decided (or been persuaded) to go with Todd, Ace, and King to the refueler. Go to Scene 6.

B: The crew refuses to board the refueler. Reavers are just too damn dangerous. Todd and his two men will decide to fight the Reavers on their own. They have their own gear and they plan to space walk to the refueler and enter via a hatch on the bulkhead. Todd is not upset about his old buddy's refusal. "Fewer ways to split the take!" Todd says cheerfully. He only has half the promised cash available (2,500) but insists that he's "good for the rest"—especially after he gets done with this bit of salvage. He'll attempt one last chance to sweet-talk the crew into going along with him.

C: The crew decides to board one or more of the Alliance ships and leave the refueler to the Reavers. In this case, the crew heads for either the ASREV (Scene 4) or the cargo ship (Scene 5). Todd, Ace, and King tag along, hoping to convince them to change their minds.

GM Alert! It should occur to the crew that a mysterious illness caused these ships to be abandoned and that it might be best to don protective gear. If they don't remember this, Todd may or may not remember, depending on how much trouble you'd like to inflict on the crew.

GM Alert! No matter what decision the crew makes, Ace and King will set explosive charges on the crew's ship before they leave. They are very careful to not to tip their hands—though cautious, smart, or just plain paranoid. There is no reason for either Todd or the crew to distrust them. Ace and King will not blow up the crew's ship until they have defeated the Reavers and killed Todd and are ready to make their getaway.

SCENE 4: ALLIANCE ENFORCEMENT

If the crew decides to board one or more of the ASREVs, they'll find it easier said than done to haul or pilot these ships away.

How it is (Setup):

The ships don't show any outside signs of Reaver boarding or tampering, though if they're careful they'll find out otherwise. (See the *Serenity Role Playing Game*, pg. 118 for details on an ASREV.)

Problems:

If the crew tries to dock their ship with either one of the ASREVs, it's **HARD** to notice Reaver explosive traps placed on each of the air locks, though characters specifically looking for such a thing will receive a +2 Skill step bonus to the action. (See page 74, section D for details on how to get rid of these.) If the crew space walks, they can enter without encountering any traps.

Once on board, the crew finds evidence that Reavers have been here. There's some random destruction, but not as much as one might expect. There's a reason for this, as the crew will discover if they try to fire up the engines.

Now the crew might get the notion that they want to keep one of these shiny ASREVs for themselves. Not a good idea. The Alliance takes a very dim view of civilians flying about in military ships and the crew will be in deep *da shiong la se la ch'wohn tian* if the Alliance catches them in a stolen ASREV (and the Alliance will certainly catch them!). Todd would be the first to warn the crew against taking this course of action.

If the crew has taken over the base on the asteroid, they could probably fly the ASREVs that far without attracting Alliance notice. They could hide the ships on the asteroid and strip them for parts, which they could sell on the black market and make a tidy sum for themselves. This does involve some risk, of course, and could be the basis for a new adventure.

There's just one teeny fly in the ointment of these fine plans. The Reavers have removed all the ASREV's fuel cells.

New Way of Things (Results):

Since they can't fly the ASREVs anywhere without fuel cells, the crew could decide to simply strip the ships while they are here, though they will be limited in how much they haul off by how much room they have on their own ship to stow it.

A: If the crew hasn't investigated the cargo ship, they could look that over to see what they might find there. Perhaps it still has fuel cells! Go to Scene 5.

B: If the crew figures they've done a decent day's work, they return to their ship, in which case they have to deal with the explosives left by Ace and King. Go to Scene 8!

C: The crew could decide to fight the Reavers aboard the Reaver skiff or the refueler, hoping to find fuel cells they could use to power up the ASREVs. Go to Scene 6 (Skiff) or 7 (Refueler).

SCENE 5: CONVOY CARGO SHIP

How it is (Setup):

The crew decides to board the cargo ship. ‘Course, Reavers have already been here.

Cargo Ship

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d2, **Int** d2, **Wil** d6;
Init d8+d2, **LP** 8

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Transport d2, Space Transport Operations/Transport d2

See the *Serenity Role Playing Game*, page 128 for more details.

Problems:

The cargo ship has several Reaver trapped air locks. Anyone who has dealt with Reavers in the past knows that Reavers sometimes sabotage ships they have boarded by placing explosive traps on the ships. These traps will explode when the ship disengages. If the crew thinks to look for such traps before they dock, the trap’s are only of AVERAGE difficulty to detect, but are a FORMIDABLE complex action to remove. Failing to remove it before detaching results in 1d4 Basic Ship Scale damage to the ship (and any unfortunate crew who are caught in the blast—they’d almost certainly be goners). If the crew space walks, they can enter without problem.

The main hold of the cargo ship is a mess. The crew discovers hundreds of crates of military weapons. All the crates have been broken open and pillaged, undoubtedly by Reavers. Most of the weapons have either been removed or destroyed in what appears to be mindless fits of savage rage. Finding anything salvageable in the rubble is HARD, but if the crew succeeds, they find five Alliance sonic rifles and five Alliance laser pistols still intact but missing battery cells. These are highly expensive and highly illegal; if the crew escapes with any of them, they may try to either fence them, or purchase batteries on the black market. You may want to encourage one of

these options by making it less risky, depending on whether or not you want the crew to have weapons or cash.

If they continue to explore the cargo ship, they find two smaller cargo holds. In one of the holds are two crated pulse drives (for small spacecraft) and eight crated reaction thrusters. Each is brand new. In the other cargo hold are two crates containing 10 sonic rifles with 50 power packs.

The ship is in good shape and is spaceworthy. Probably would be tough to sell an Alliance cargo ship on the black market, but it could be flown to a nearby base (such as that asteroid the crew may have discovered) and stripped for parts.

That’s always providing the cargo ship’s fuel cells are still there. Unfortunately they’re not. Reavers took the fuel cells.

New Way of Things (Results):

Depends on what the crew decides to do. This trip hasn’t been a rousing success so far.

A: If the crew hasn’t investigated the ASREVs, they could look them over to see what they might find there. Perhaps they still have fuel cells! Go to Scene 4.

B: If the crew figures they’ve done a decent day’s work, they return to their ship, in which case they have to deal with the explosives left by Ace and King. Go to Scene 8.

C: The crew could decide to have it out with the Reavers aboard the refueler or the Reaver skiff, hoping to find fuel cells they could use to power up the cargo ship. Go to Scene 6 (Skiff) or 7 (Refueler).

SCENE 6: THE REAVER SKIFF

Maybe the crew thinks they are tough, or maybe they’re just *yi dwei da buen chuo rob* just waiting for some Reaver teeth. Either way, they have decided to see what’s waiting for them aboard the skiff.

How it is (Setup):

The Reavers have docked their skiff with the refueler. The crew could decide to attach their ship to the Reaver skiff in order to take care of any Reavers there, then board the refueler. If Todd, Ace, and King are along, they won’t bother

with the skiff, but will board the refueler, space walking to reach it. The crew could also split up, with some boarding the skiff and some going with Todd.

Reaver Skiff

Physical d12, **LP** 24; **Armor** 6 W. (For more information on a Reaver skiff, see the “Skiff” entry on page 133 of the *Serenity Role Playing Game*, and the maps and illustration on pages 134-135.) This particular skiff has been heavily modified to make it spaceworthy for up to 10 days without direct support from its mothership. Its propulsion is extremely limited and it could not give chase to a “real” ship on its own.

Problems:

The Reaver Skiff is attached to air lock 9. The crew can attach their ship to the air lock on the other side of the skiff and deal with the two Reavers in the skiff. The Reaver skiff will attach an explosive trap to the crew’s ship. Anyone who has dealt with Reavers in the past knows that Reavers sometimes sabotage ships they have boarded by placing explosive traps on the ships. These traps will explode when the ship disengages. If the crew thinks to look for such traps before they dock, the trap’s are only of AVERAGE difficulty to detect, but are a FORMIDABLE complex action to remove. Failing to remove it before detaching results in d4 Basic Ship Scale damage to the ship (and any unfortunate crew who are caught in the blast—they’d almost certainly be goners). If the crew space walks, they can enter without problem.

GM Alert! The crew should remember that Reaver ships contain extremely high levels of radiation and they should protect themselves accordingly. Exposed crew must deal with potential radiation damage at every 10 minute increment (see *Serenity Role Playing Game*, page 158 for more information).

Reavers (2)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails (Major), Fightin’ Type (Major), Sadistic (Major)

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/Axes d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10
Weapons/Gear Axe (d6 W), Knife (d4 W)

Reavers suffer no stun effects and never run from melee. Even though horribly wounded, they will continue to fight until they drop down dead.

New Way of Things (Results):

The Reaver skiff is dark. Some systems are working. Others appear to have been shut down. If the crew brings their own light, they will see that the skiff is a wreck, with blood-smeared decks, dangling wires, holes in the bulkheads, and half-chewed body parts strewn about. Someone with a weak stomach ain’t likely to hold down his lunch.

If anyone has the stomach to investigate, it is EASY to discover that the Reaver skiff is almost out of fuel, which is why the Reavers decided to raid the refueler. (The mothership dropped them off to raid the convoy for parts while it went after more “active” targets for food, but may not be back for another couple of days.) The crew could take the skiff with them, but there isn’t a soul in the ‘Verse who would buy it! The crew will find two fuel cells, but the Reavers damaged the fittings while trying to install them. Possible they could be repaired, but it will be a FORMIDABLE complex undertaking.

SCENE 7: ALLIANCE REFUELER

This huge ship may be the biggest source of potential profit in this entire salvage venture. Wish the crew *joo how rin*—they’re gonna need it.

How it is (Setup):

The crew decides to join Todd, Ace, and King on board the refueler. They can either dock their ship with the refueler or space walk. As the crew explores the refueler, they will come

across various clues that will allow them solve the mystery of the disease that affected the crews of these ships and caused them to evacuate. The crew should come to the rather alarming conclusion as they investigate that unless they figure out what this disease was and how it was spread, they could end up catching it!

The Reavers got life support working, as well as the lights in most areas of the ship. The air is breathable, but the crew might want to think twice about removing any protective gear!

Truth is, after all these years, the disease is no longer a threat. For now

Problems:

Air Locks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7

Air lock 6 has a flashbang explosive that is ignited when the air lock is opened. Any Reavers in the vicinity (there are six close by) will hear it and come running. (See *Serenity Role Playing Game*, page 81 for game information on flashbang explosives.)

Air locks 1 and 7 have Reaver explosives that attach themselves to any ship that connects with the air locks.

Air lock 3 has explosives that ignite when the Captain's pinnacle is started up.

Air lock 4 has explosives that go off when the shuttles are started up.

See above for the game effects of the explosives.

Captain's Pinnacle

The pinnacle hasn't been visited by the Reavers and is both fully fueled and ready to fly. It's essentially a big shuttle, with fancier accommodations.

Pinnacle

Agi d8, **Str** d2, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d4, **Int** d4, **Wil** d4; **Init** d8+d2; **LP** 6

Traits Healthy as a Horse, Short Range.

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Shuttle d2, Space Transport Operations/Shuttle d2

See Short-Range Shuttle in the *Serenity Role Playing Game*, page 118 for more information.

Shuttles A and B

The seats on these shuttles have been ripped apart by Reavers. The Reavers have specially programmed both shuttles to send out a nearly undetectable signal that is the Reaver version

of the dinner bell. It will alert any Reaver in the area to the shuttle's presence and draw them to it. Someone with either the Piloting Skill or the Technical Engineering Skill will find it **HARD** to discover this, though it's an **EASY** complex action (5 minute increments) to remove it.

Shuttle

Agi d8, **Str** d2, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d2, **Int** d2, **Wil** d4; **Init** d8+d2, **LP** 6

Traits Healthy as a Horse, Short Range.

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Shuttle d2, Space Transport Operations/Shuttle d2.

See Short-Range Shuttle in the *Serenity Role Playing Game*, pg. 118 for more information.

Reavers (2)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails [Major], Fightin' Type [Major], Sadistic [Major]

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/Axes d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Axe [d6 W], Knife [d4 W]

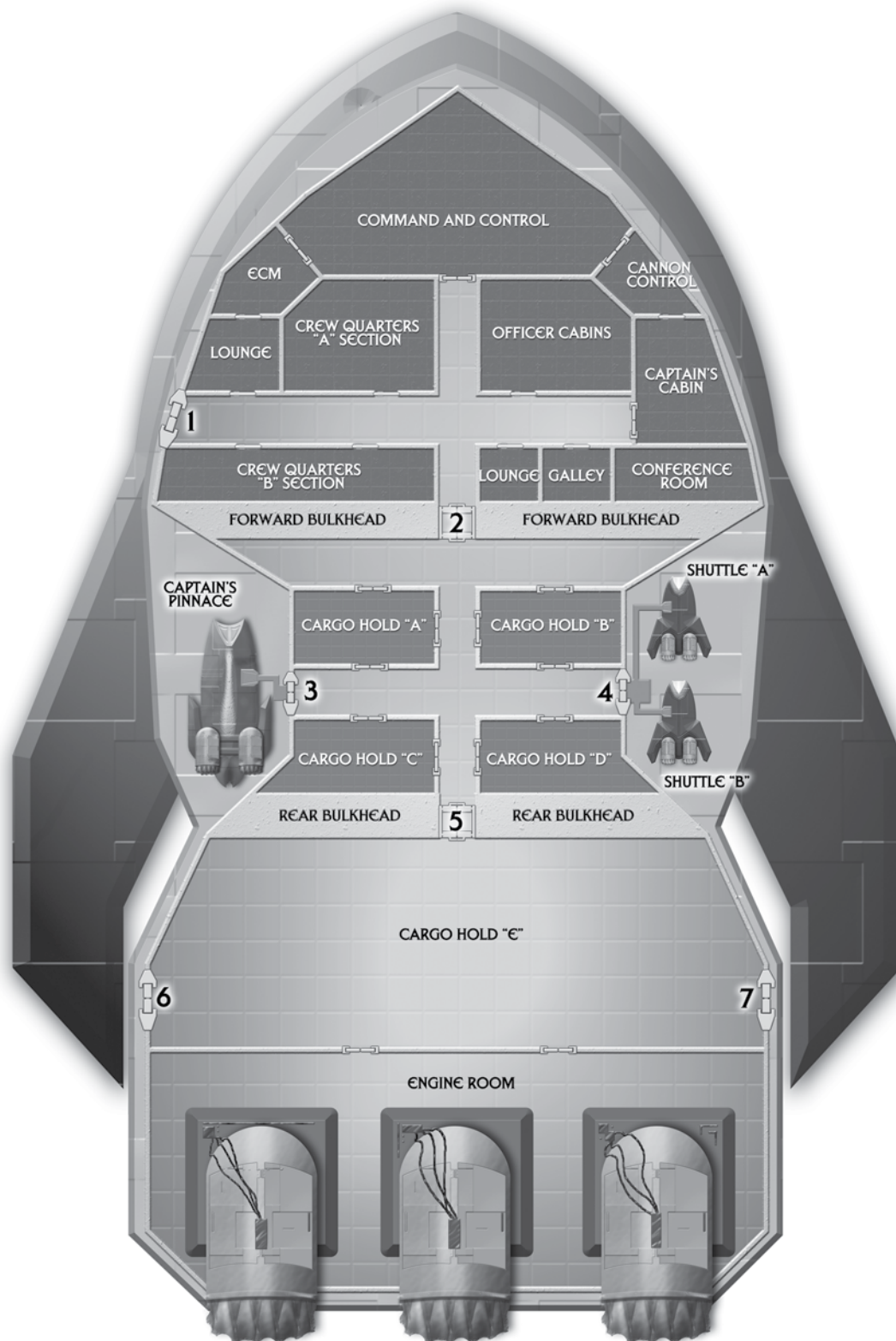
Reavers suffer no Stun effects and never run from melee. Even though horribly wounded, they will continue to fight until they drop down dead.

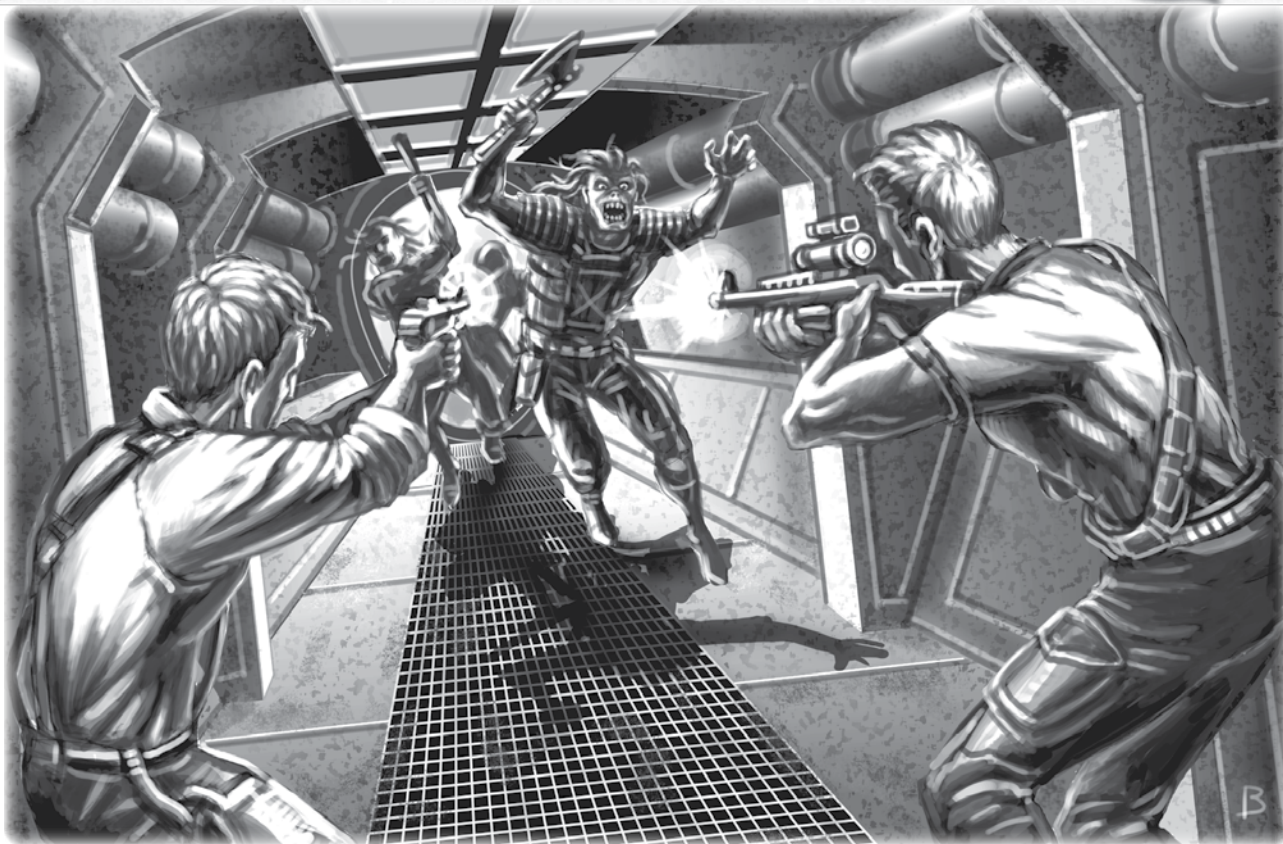
These Reavers are gorging themselves on the food pastes in the galley. They will continue to eat, ignoring any crew members unless attacked. Once the battle begins, the Reavers will not stop fighting until they are dead.

Cargo Hold B

The lights do not work in this hold and it is freezing cold. There is evidence the hold has been visited by Reavers. The hold has space for 1,000 liquid oxygen fuel cells, but there are only 100 left stored in containers marked with Chinese characters. Those who can read Chinese recognize these as saying *Lei Shing* (which literally translates to "Thunder Star"). These fuel cells could still bring in a goodly amount of credit or be used to fuel the ASREVs and the cargo ships. Because of the extreme cold, crew members who venture in here without protective suits will start to suffer from the effects of the cold within minutes,

ALLIANCE REFUELER





suffering 1 Stun damage every turn until they pass out, and then begin suffering 1 Wound damage every minute until they die.

Reavers (2)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails (Major), Fightin' Type (Major), Sadistic (Major)

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/Club d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Reavers suffer no stun effects and never run from melee. Even though horribly wounded, they will continue to fight until they drop down dead.

√Two Reavers are loading fuel cells onto a pallet, intending to haul the cells back to their ship. They will not attack unless they are attacked. The crew might want to think twice about firing their guns, since bullets or laser fire could hit the fuel cells and rupture them. Any crew members not wearing wear space suits, take 1 Stun for every combat turn they remain in this area from the frigid temperatures. Once the battle begins, the Reavers continue to fight until they drop down dead.

Captain's Quarters

The Captain's cabin is locked. Reavers obviously attempted to break in, but were unable to do so. Breaking the lock is INCREDIBLE, though picking the lock is a HARD complex action (one minute increments). The Captain's cabin is neat and spartan, with few comforts. His personal computer is the most valuable object in here. The computer sits on a desk directly opposite the door.

Anyone near the computer will see a sticky note attached to it. The note reads: **7786-45-96687-0009-9**. There is no more information on this series of numbers anywhere.

A crew member with Technical Engineering will find it HARD (11) to hack into the computer, perhaps hoping to find out more about the code. If someone does, the Captain's video log comes up. The crew can see and hear his final entry.

The captain looks extremely ill. What appear to be dark bruises are visible on his chest through the open shirt collar of his uniform. His voice is weak and he has to pause to cough and gasp for air.

"This is the Captain Jennings of the refueler, *Ajax*. We were leading a resupply mission to the Alliance forces on the outer frontier when crew members on all the ships began to show

symptoms of a strange disease. Nine days have passed and every single member of crew has been affected, including myself and my officers. Something on these ships is causing this plague. The hospital ships have arrived. We are going to be evacuated and biohazard teams will come aboard to investigate. The ships will be parked in orbit around this moon until the source of the outbreak is discovered. I have done some investigating on my own and I have come to suspect that—”

The captain is interrupted by a fit of coughing. When he is able to speak, he continues, “I have come to suspect that the source of the disease is—”

At this moment, a lead pipe, thrown like a spear, flies past the crew from the door of the Captain’s quarters and smashes into the computer screen, causing it to explode. Anyone seated near the screen will find it **HARD** to avoid taking d2 Basic damage from flying glass.

The crew is under attack by three Reavers! *GM Alert!* The computer’s external hard drive is not damaged and contains the rest of the Captain’s log, which reveals his secret investigations into the cause of the disease. If the crew thinks to take the hard drive with them, they can plug it into the computer on the bridge or on their own ship and view the remainder of the log. The information about the source of the disease is important and could save their lives! If the crew doesn’t take the hard drive and Todd is with them, he could grab the hard drive.

“I can get at least 100 credits for this baby,” he says.

There is nothing else of value in the quarters.

Reavers (3)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails [Major], Fightin’ Type [Major], Sadistic [Major]

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/Axes d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Axe [d6 W], Knife [d4 W]

Reavers suffer no stun effects and never run from melee. Even though horribly wounded, they will continue to fight until they drop down dead.

The Bridge

The ship’s pilot, navigator, and first officer each have a separate work station. Instrument panels provide all the information each officer needs to know in order to fly the refueler. Any experienced pilot could handle the ship.

The main computer system can be accessed from the bridge. Anyone with Technical Engineering will find it **HARD** to access the First Officer’s computer. If they do, they will see a pop-up on the screen in the lower right-hand corner. The pop up is there for about 30 seconds, then vanishes. It will reappear if the computer is turned off and then turned on again. The pop-up appears to be a reminder from the First Officer to herself, or simply an error: **!@#\$\$%^&*() White**

There is no other information about this odd note in the computer. There is nothing else of value on the bridge.

Engine Room

If fighting breaks out in other parts of the ship, an alarm starts to blare down the ship’s corridors. The alarm warns two Reavers that they are under attack. The Reavers run to the engine room, lock themselves inside, and start work sabotaging the engines. This process will take 15 minutes to accomplish, then the Reavers will leave, first disabling the hatch so that it can’t be opened. The Reavers will head back to their ship. Anyone in the corridor near the engine room would be able to see the Reavers either running into the engine room or running away from it and might ask themselves what the heck Reavers were doing in there.

Crew with the right equipment can either blow the hatches—(an **AVERAGE** task)—or torch their way through the hatches—a **HARD** complex action (1 minute increments) in time to stop the Reavers. Crew entering after the Reavers have departed who investigate will find it **HARD** to discover the sabotage.

GM Alert! It is possible that when the crew reaches the end of the adventure they will try to fly off with the refueler. If the crew did not discover the sabotage, the engines will immediately begin to overheat. Warning lights will flash on the console, letting crew know they have about 30 minutes before the engines blow up. It will be **EASY** for an experienced pilot to figure out what is wrong. Crew members with Mechanical Engineering who head to the engine

room would find it a piece of cake to fix the damage—if they had a couple of hours. Instead, they face a **HARD** complex action with five minute increments and a 30 minute deadline before the big boom.

Reavers (2)

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d10; **LP** 24

Traits Tough as Nails [Major], Fightin' Type [Major], Sadistic [Major]

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10/Axes d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Axe [d6 W], Knife [d4 W]

Reavers suffer no stun effects and never run from melee. Even though horribly wounded, they will continue to fight until they drop down dead.

If the crew kills the Reavers and they have the stomach to search one of the bodies, they will find what might be mistaken for a handheld electronic game. Too bad it isn't. The Reaver has used the device to send out a signal to his fellows that he's found some fresh meat and they should come running. Anyone with technical knowledge could find it **EASY** to figure out what this is. Too bad there's nothing they can do about it.

If the crew hasn't fought Reavers before this, they will now!

Cargo Hold A

The crew will find 100 fission fuel cells in crates in neatly stacked columns. Spread out on the cases are scalps the Reavers have taken in previous battles and placed here, almost like some sort of grisly talisman. If anyone takes time to notice, the crates are marked as coming from Remington Fuel.

Cargo Hold C

The hold is brightly lit and is filled with crates that once contained fuel cells. The hold has been ransacked. All the crates have been broken open. The fuel cells are gone. There is nothing of value here.

Cargo Hold D

With the skiff low on fuel, Reavers made this cargo hold their "meat" locker. The crew will find numerous dead bodies in various stages of dismemberment. Crewmembers opening this

Blue Mystery Juice

It's not likely the crew will discover the nature of this liquid on this adventure. However, if they want, they can take the vials with them. Might be the start of a whole new adventure.

door will be so shocked and sickened by the gruesome sight that, unless they have **Steady Calm** (Major) or a similar Asset, they must be **HEROIC** or be reduced to retching or vomiting, for d4 turns and suffer 1 point of Stun damage.

Cargo Hold E

The huge cargo hold shows evidence of having once contained thousands of fuel cells, but it has been stripped clean by the Reavers. All that remains is a large metal box surrounded by a chain link fence that stands in the center of the hold.

GM Alert! The container and what's inside have no bearing on this adventure. The smartest thing the crew could do at this point would be to ignore the mysterious box and go on about their business. Given human nature, there's probably not much chance of that happenin'! Someone's bound to suspect that the Alliance payroll is in here.

The Deuterium-hardened Chain Link Fence

The fence is 10 feet wide by 10 feet long. It is electrically charged and extends from floor to ceiling. The fence has a large gate with a key pad lock. The pad has rows of keys with numbers on them, ranging from one to 20. The key pad is safe to touch. It is **EASY** to figure out that some sort of numerical code combination will open it.

In game terms, the fence and safe have Ship Scale Armor Rating of 15; any damage capable of destroying it will likely destroy both the contents and everything nearby outside it.

Anyone who has scientific expertise in earth science or metallurgy will find it of **AVERAGE** Difficulty to discover that this fence and probably the box inside are both made out deuterium-hardened-titanium, the process rendering the metal harder than diamond. If none of the crewmembers has such expertise, but they think to closely investigate the fence, they will find a metal plate affixed to fence in the back. The plate reads:

Blue Sun Deuterium-Hardened Fences
Protect what is yours.

Deuterium-hardened titanium is difficult to manufacture and it is extremely expensive. The Alliance must have spent a fortune constructing the cage and the large metal box inside. Those who know something about this treated metal know that the metal can't be cut, not even by a laser. You could drive a truck into the fence and end up with a smashed truck. The amount of explosives needed to blast a hole in the cage would also likely blast a hole in the hull of the ship. A small explosive charge attached to the fence has no effect on it.

The cage is charged with energy. Touching the fence with bare hands causes d12 Basic damage. Crewmembers who touch the fence with a metal tool or some other device will suffer burns on their hands and could be knocked out by the surge of energy flowing through the tool, unless it is wrapped in extremely thick insulation.

The fence is proof against acid, blowtorches, heat or electrical energy, driving a fork lift into it or anything else the crew might think to throw at it.

The series of numbers the Captain wrote down on the sticky note will open the keypad. The number sequence was changed daily, and when the Captain started feeling the debilitating effects of the disease, he was forced to start writing them down. If the crew has searched the Captain's cabin and found the number sequence, the crew could figure out that this could be the code that will open the keypad.

If the crew has not yet searched the Captain's cabin, the crew might wonder if the code could be found there.

If the crew saw the sticky note, but no one thought to take it, they'll have to go back for it (unless someone has a photographic memory!).

The code on the First Officer's computer on the bridge will not work on this keypad.

Inside the Cage: The Floor Trap

Just inside the cage door is a small control panel mounted on a stand. There are two buttons on this panel. One is marked "Electricity." The other is marked "Gas". Before entering the cage, the person is supposed to reach over and depress both buttons, shutting down the electricity and shutting off the nerve gas. Anyone who sets foot on the deck inside the cage or who drops something on it without first depressing both buttons causes the nerve gas charges to activate.

There is no way to stop the gas from this chamber. However, a warning will sound and a light will flash on the instrument panels on the bridge, alerting the bridge personnel that either unauthorized persons have entered the cage or some durn fool forgot to turn off the gas. Anyone on the bridge has about one minute to switch off the gas once the warning light begins to flash. A character skilled in sabotage or the Covert disabling of electronic security systems might be able to disable this portion of the trap with an INCREDIBLE effort, but they only have enough time for one try, and they can't do it with the thick gloves of a spacesuit on.

If the gas is not turned off, nerve gas floods the hold. The gas causes d12 Stun every turn for five minutes before dissipation, though the gas causes a maximum of 12 shock points to unconscious crew. Those in spacesuits will not be affected by the gas. However, they will retain a residue of the gas on their suits and if they do not think to decontaminate themselves before they take off the suits, they (or anyone coming into contact with them) will fall unconscious for five hours. When the gas is released, the residue covers the hold of the ship and can be picked up on shoes, gloves, or any piece of clothing that brushes against a wall or touches the floor.

If someone touches the floor again after the first gas charge has been released, another gas charge will go off. There are 100 charges of this gas.

The Deuterium-hardened Container

Once the crew enters the chain link fence, they find a large container made of the same kind of specially treated titanium. The container can't be cut with a welding torch. It can't be blasted. It can't be smashed open by ramming a forklift into it. In short, the box is as damage resistant as the fence.

The Container Padlock

The container has a padlock with a keypad marked with 10 symbols known as ding-bats. If the right sequence of ding-bats is entered, the lock will open. The sequence for the ding-bats can be found in the main ship's computer system which can be accessed from the bridge. The Captain was given the code that opened the gate. The first officer knew the code for the ding-bats and it can be found in a pop-up note on her

computer. The codes were changed daily, using numbers and ding-bats randomly generated by the computer.

The Containers Contents

When the container is opened, the crew finds yet another a deuterium-hardened titanium case five feet long by five feet wide, by three feet high. On the side of the chest are three buttons, each a different color: blue, red, white. Any attempt to lift the lid of the case without first dealing with these buttons causes a 3d6 Basic damage explosion that reduces by one die every five feet. The case is not harmed by the blast.

Opening the Chest

Pressing the Red Button: Pressing this button will cause a micro-explosion inside the case. If the crew open the case, all they will find inside is a thick coating of blue dust.

Pressing the Blue Button: Pressing this button causes a loud alarm to blare throughout the ship. An automated voice booms over and over: "Alert! Intruder in Cargo Hold E. Alert! Intruder in Cargo Hold E!" The cage doors swing shut, trapping any crewmembers who are inside. The code that opened the cage door no longer works. Those crew who are stuck inside the cage may figure they're the lucky ones. Reavers all over the ship have heard the announcement and are now racing to the cargo hold.

Pressing the White Button: The chest springs open. Inside are four crystal vials all marked with the Blue Sun logo. Each vial contains some type of blue liquid. Each vial is warm to the touch. There is no information regarding this liquid in the case or on this ship or on any ship in the convoy.

Someone with advanced Scientific Expertise in chemistry who also has access to high-powered equipment (available only in chemical plants or medical facilities) could test the liquid. Even if the person has the knowledge and the right equipment, discovering its chemical make up will be a HEROIC complex action with one hour increments. If someone does manage to come up with the chemical composition, someone else with advanced Medical Expertise in Neurology would find it FORMIDABLE to recognize that this particular combination of chemicals could affect

the human brain, possibly offering temporary stimulation to sections of the brain that normally lay dormant.

Information regarding this liquid can be found, but only by searching through the data banks of the Blue Sun corporation. If the crew does manage to access these highly classified Blue Sun files, they will discover that the liquid is an experimental substance developed as part of their psychic research programs conducted in partnership with the Alliance government.

The crew will also find in the files that when the vials didn't reach their destination, Blue Sun was desperate to find out what had happened to them. The Alliance was just as desperate to keep the truth about what happened to the convoy secret. Security was tight during the war and not even Blue Sun could manage to cut their way through it. Blue Sun had the additional problem in that they hadn't been exactly honest with the Alliance about what the refueler was hauling. Thus Blue Sun couldn't make a huge fuss over the loss, for fear the Alliance would become suspicious.

The Alliance informed Blue Sun that the convoy had been hit by a mysterious illness, that all personnel had been evacuated, and that bio hazard teams were being sent to the area. Blue Sun requested the coordinates of the convoy numerous times, but apparently never received them. Judging by the memos, Blue Sun was handed off from one department to the next until even that giant corporation became so mired in the bureaucracy that they gave up and wrote off the vials as lost.

The captain is right to suspect a corporation was behind this, not the Independents. If the crew gets hold of Blue Sun internal company documents, they will learn that Blue Sun suspected that another corporation had sabotaged the ship in an attempt to obtain the vials for themselves. Blue Sun believed that this group would pose as biohazard inspectors to gain access to the ship. Alliance red tape managed to tie up everyone's plans! Blue Sun had no idea what corporation might be behind this, but they had been the target of this shadowy company before this.

If Blue Sun receives any indication that the vials have resurfaced (such as the crew talking about the lost convoy, asking questions about a mysterious blue liquid, trying to sell parts which could be recognized as coming from the refueler,

Ajax), Blue Sun will become extremely interested. They will immediately endeavor to track down the crew and bring them in for questioning. That other corporation may be out there, as well, watching and waiting to see if the vials they worked so hard to obtain surface. And who knows where their interests lie? Some might think that since they're working against Blue Sun, they must be good guys. There's always the chance they could be worse

GM Alert! Now only an absolute idiot would either decide to drink this blue stuff or inject it into their veins without knowing what it is and what it might do. That being said, there's generally one person with a leaky brain pan on board every ship, so here's what will happen if someone is stupid enough to drink it or shoot it.

The blue liquid is highly toxic if injected orally. If anyone swallows even a small amount of the blue liquid, he will feel queasy for about one minute, then suffer d12 Basic damage every turn for a full hour or until (inevitably) the person is dead. End of story. Likely such a *chwen* won't be missed much anyway.

If the blue liquid is injected, the person will feel extremely dizzy, as unpleasant hot sensations start to course through his body. After about 15 minutes, the person will suddenly be bombarded with strange images, voices, smells, sensations of touch, tastes in his mouth, etc, as mostly unused portions of the brain fire up. If someone had

serious psychic potential (up to the Game Master) then he might actually be experiencing thoughts, emotions, and memories of people close by, though there is no way to translate or filter these things and the person under the influence is pretty much reduced to a quivering lunatic while under the effects of the chemicals.

The person who took the liquid has no way to filter out these thoughts or shut them off. The effect of the drug is only temporary (Blue Sun was trying to find a way to make it permanent) and will last only about 12 hours. Until the drug wears off, the person is completely incapacitated. The only thing he can think about will be to try to make the voices, images, and sensations stop! He may become so frantic he might harm himself or others and may have to be sedated. After 12 hours, the effect wears off and he goes back to normal.

New Way of Things (Results):

The crew has killed all the Reavers. They've found a large supply of fuel cells, which they can now use to power up the ASREVs and the cargo ship. Looks like things do go smooth for a change!

Or maybe not.

If Ace, King, and Todd have been killed or they weren't part of the adventure, go to Scene 9.

The Disease

The disease is no longer on board the ship, except in the contaminated fuel cells, where it has remained in stasis until the fuel cells are activated. If the fuel cells are used, the crew will start to feel symptoms within six days. The disease inflicts d2 Basic damage every day after day nine, until the victim is cured or dies.

After five days of flying the ship, crewmembers start suffering blinding headaches. At night, they are troubled by terrible nightmares.

After nine days, large, black spots that look like dark bruises and are painful to the touch appear on the chest of the victims. They begin suffering damage at this point.

After 21 days, the victims are delirious and can't keep down food or water. Once they reach this stage, those who succumb to the damage will sink into a coma from which they will not recover unless the disease is cured.

Death occurs for most within 24 days of exposure.

Medical facilities found on board most ships have no means to treat the rare disease. If the crew goes to an Alliance hospital, the doctors will have to do some research, but eventually they will find information on this disease, which can be successfully treated with drugs. A doctor among the crew could also discover this information, though he would have to be in an Alliance hospital and obtain access to their files. If he does this, finding the information on the disease will be **HARD**.

The Alliance will be immediately alerted to the fact that people have suddenly turned up with this rare disease. They will come visiting the sick room and they won't be bringing flowers. And if the Alliance knows, it's a safe bet Blue Sun will find out. See the sidebar, Blue Mystery Juice, for more details.

The disease spreads in any environment.

If Ace, King, and Todd are part of the group, everyone will find it only of AVERAGE difficulty to suddenly notice that Ace and King have gone missing. Todd will find this extremely odd and might mention that he thought the two were acting “kinda jumpy.” If everyone fails, either no one notices that Ace and King are gone or no one cares. Ace and King will have the drop on them. If one of the pair is killed, the other will not go through with the plans. He will return to the ship with the crew, surreptitiously remove the explosives, and wait for another chance some day in the future.

SCENE 8: BETRAYED

This is the scene in which Ace and King decide to make their move—assuming they’re both still alive to pull this off.

How it is (Setup):

Those dirty Huhn Duen! Ace and King plan to steal the refueler for themselves. Before they left the crew’s ship, they planted explosive charges in the engine room and the air lock. After the two depart they plan to send transmit a signal that will set off the charges.

Problems:

If Ace, King, and Todd went aboard the refueler alone, the crew will soon see the refueler fire its engines and head for the Black. Attempts to contact Todd will fail. He’s dead. Ace and King will set off the explosive charges on the crew’s ship about half-an-hour after the refueler departs. They will set them off at once if they see the crew chase after them. When the explosives detonate, the ship immediately takes 1 Wound damage, the engines shut off, and the ship is left running on emergency back-up power. Unfortunately, life support was also disabled. Ace is good at his job.

Of course, the heroes of the show aren’t just going to die here. They can fix their ship, if they’re fast. It’ll take a complex action to repair the ship; the Difficulty Threshold is FORMIDABLE, with 20 minute increments, and the crew has four hours before they’re out of air! If they each don a spacesuit and use their internal air supplies, they can extend this time, which may be necessary if their engineer can’t fix it quickly. This will leave some cosmetic damage that will have to be repaired later, but that can add some

character to the ship. At this point, Ace and King have probably escaped, but at least the crew are alive—and they might be able to catch up at some point and put a crimp in the bad guys’ plans.

If the crew are aboard the refueler, Ace and King will join in the battle against the Reavers and they’ll be interested to see what’s in the container if the crew go to the trouble of opening it. At some point, they turn on the heroes and their boss, opening fire with pistols, rifles, and grenades. The two will fight to the death. Might as well, at this point they don’t have much to lose! Todd is stunned and furious. He will join the crew in the battle and do everything he can to save the lives of his friends.

New Way of Things (Results):

If the crew manage to kill Ace and King or take one or both of them prisoner, and they think to search them, they’ll find that King has a transmitter on him. King won’t talk, but anyone with knowledge of explosives should find it EASY to recognize that this is a long-range transmitter meant to set off explosive charges planted some distance away. This should give the crew a clue that their ship is the target. If the crew searches their ship now, knowing that the charges exist, they will find it HEROIC to find the explosives.

SCENE 9: THE MYSTERIOUS DISEASE

How it is (Setup):

When his crew began to suddenly all fall ill, the Captain of the refueler tried to get answers from the Alliance brass about what might be causing the mysterious illness. The doctor aboard the ship believed thought the symptoms looked very much like biological warfare.

When the Alliance refused to provide any answers, the Captain took it upon himself to do his own investigating. He recorded what he’d found out in his last log entry.

The Reaver attack prevented the crew from hearing it, but hopefully someone thought to bring along the external hard drive, which was not

damaged. They can hook up the hard drive to any computer on the bridge of the refueler or they can take it back to their own ship.

If the crew flies off with the refueler or any of the other ships without taking the time to listen to the rest of the Captain's Log, go to The New Way of Things for details of their gruesome demise.

Problems:

The crew finds it EASY to hook up the external drive to listen to the rest of the Captain's log.

The captain looks extremely ill. His voice is weak and he is constantly interrupted by coughing. Occasionally he loses track of what he was saying and has to start again.

"It is my belief and that of the ship's doctor, who has done extensive testing, that the bacteria which has infected my crew has come from contaminated fuel cells. My theory is that as the fuel cells burn, the bacteria is released. It spreads through the engine room and enters the ship's air ducts. This bacteria is airborne and deadly if not treated. We can't find any way to kill it. It appears to be unaffected by either extreme heat or extreme cold.

"The Alliance brass blames the Independents, but I am not so certain. Doc says the bacteria is not like anything he's ever seen. He believes only highly funded scientists with specialized equipment could have developed it. Doesn't seem logical to me that germs this sophisticated could have been cooked up by a bunch of bean farmers and horse thieves.

"I think that this is a case of corporate sabotage. Blue Sun has a rival out there. Whatever it is we're carrying in our cargo hold is something

they want badly enough to kill to obtain it. Only fuel cells which were supplied to us by Remington Fuel appear to be contaminated. Testing on those fuel cells that came from *Lei Shing* reveal that they are safe. Unfortunately, that knowledge came too late.

"I don't suppose I'll live long enough to prove it. I'm leaving this log in the hope that whoever finds this will track down the people who have killed me and my crew"

The log ends here.

New Way of Things (Results):

If the crew has listened to the Captain's Log, they should now come to the unwelcome realization that they're humped. Most of the fuel cells on board the refueler are contaminated and should be immediately destroyed.

If the crew visited Cargo Hold B, they might recall seeing fuel cells in crates marked with Chinese letters. The Captain did mention that fuel cells from the *Lei Shing* company were not contaminated. These fuel cells are not contaminated and can be used safely on any of the ships. The number of fuel cells needed per ship can be found in the information for each of the ships. All fuel cells on board the refueler are contaminated.

If the crew did not listen to the Captain's Log and they fly off with this ship or use the contaminated fuel cells to power their own ship, they will catch the disease within six days.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BEST THINGS GET BETTER WITH AGE

THE WAY IT IS

Here's how things are at the beginning of this tale. A fellow named Baron Otello, well-respected political figure that he is, hosts an annual fundraiser in three weeks time to benefit the hospital on Osiris. Part ball, part feast, and part exhibit, the charity gala takes place at the Alliance History Museum, a veritable trove of treasures retained from Earth-That-Was. The feast is known for supplying the best wine in the 'Verse, shipped in from the vineyard of a gent named Norman Sellers from the planet of Greenleaf. Thing is, Sellers ain't as up front as he seems to be, and Baron Otello is right in the thick beside him. The pair are up to their ears in a diamond smuggling organization—not for pretties and baubles, mind, but scientific-grade diamonds put to use as such. Despite the high profile people involved, the Feds have been working for months—maybe years—to track down just who's responsible for this illegal diamond trade. 'Course, the Tong wants in as well—or just wants it stopped, as Sellers and company are poaching on their territory.

Now this only involves our crew because the regular supply company that runs the wine delivery for the fancy gala all regular like—well, they never showed up. That leaves Sellers in a boat of trouble and in need of a ship, and some dupes willing to carry a perfectly legal shipment of wine to Osiris (along with a whole passel of hidden diamonds in the false bottoms of the casks). How they deal with it when *Yi Qe Bien Cheng Chiguo Na Me Luen De Shi Hou*¹ is up to them.

¹ Literally, "Everything becomes as chaotic as the Chiguo period."—When the crap hits the fan.

ACT I: IN VICTORY AND DEFEAT

"In victory, you deserve Champagne, in defeat, you need it."—Napoleon Bonaparte

Wherein the crew completes one job and takes another.

SCENE 1: THE VINEYARD

Greenleaf: A tropical paradise runs along its equatorial range, and continues right up through both hemispheres. But though you've heard wonders about the island resorts inside that tropical belt, that ain't where you're headed. No, the job has taken you to a coastal town in the northern, more temperate climes of wine country.

Adapting the Adventure

How the crew gets to the planet of Greenleaf and why they're there ain't much discussed in this adventure, main reason being that it depends on who the crew is. Could be that if you've got the crew of *Serenity*, Simon's in need of some pharmaceuticals he can't so much pick up on the regular market, and Greenleaf specializes in black market prescriptions. Could be they've got a legitimate cargo of wobbly-headed toy beagles that need to get unloaded. Any crew might have cargo that's needed on Greenleaf, particularly of the entertainment and high-society sort, as Greenleaf is a fertile land that has plenty of crops and food to spare, as well as some ore and gem mines in the jungles.

crew the details. Some possible conversation notes are provided, giving a feel for Sellers's voice.

- "Ah, forgive my staring, I just thought, well. You appear to be strangers here, and don't have the look of tourists, and I suspect that ship that landed a short time ago was yours. Might you be interested in work? Not in the vineyards of course. Heavens no. As in shipping work. Delivery. That sort of thing."
- "Yes, well, the thing is, I have a shipment that needs to make its way to Osiris in three weeks. It's for a very important gathering, and it wouldn't do—not at all—for the Baron to be without the wine he always orders, yes, yes." It's EASY for a Pilot to calculate that this is the time it would take them to arrive in Osiris if they left today and didn't have any delays.
- "Ah, Baron Otello! A good, good friend of mine. Well, business associate. Long time, yes. He hosts a gala, every year, and he simply must have wine from my vineyard. I've got the shipment all ready, but my usual
- supply company has been negligent—so hard to find good people these days, you know."
- "The pay? Well, since it's rather a rush, hardly giving you any time to enjoy our fair planet at all—very unfair of me, I know—I can offer you 6,000 credits, which should more than cover the tariffs when you arrive, as well as leave you with a hefty profit. And tickets for you and your crew to the gala that evening, of course." (Sellers is willing to increase his offer half-again if the crew refuses his initial offer, though at that point he begins sweating profusely. It's EASY to recognize that Sellers is stressed, but it would be a HEROIC effort to link that to something other than this being a regular deal. In addition, the pay is split into two payments: one up front for half, the other half to be paid to the crew by his contractor—an aide of Baron Otello's—upon their arrival.)
- Sellers can also give the crew any information about the charity gala from the introduction, selling the event as a must-be-at party almost as much as he's trying to convince them to take the job.

TABLE - EVADING THE TONG

Both Succeed	Describe what the crew have done to try to lose Lim. An example might be: "You walk into the busy cheese market and buy a package of something moldy and blue. You feel you and your companions have successfully blended into the crowd, but when you leave the store, sure you've lost your tail, you spot the fellow chatting amiably with a young woman across the street, and you're sure he's seen you." [No effect]
Crew Succeed; Lim Fails	Describe what the crew have done to try to lose Lim. An example might be: "In the chaos caused by your stepping in front of the speeding mule—the spilling of cargo, the rush of citizens hoping that no one was hurt, the snapping shutters of holo-cameras held by tourists, you spot your tail fending off the questions of one of the townsfolk, and it is obvious he has lost sight of you." [The crew receive a +2 Skill step to their next attempt.]
Lim Succeeds; Crew Fail	Describe what the crew have done to try to lose Lim. An example might be: "Your conversation with a group of tourists is horribly dull, and you regret having tried to blend in with them in the first place—particularly since it appears that your tail has gained on you." [Lim receives a +2 Skill step to his next attempt.]
Both fail	Describe what the crew have done to try to lose Lim. An example might be: "At the edge of the space port, you slip into the Port Authority and busy yourself looking at brochures. Your tail wanders by the open doors, apparently stumped as to where you've disappeared, but then he sees you out of the corner of his eye, unable to manage hiding his pleasure at having discovered your location." [No effect]

Evading (Winning): Complex Task with 55 point Threshold
Add all Skill totals toward the Evading Complex Task. Higher score is ahead of the lesser. First to Threshold succeeds in a) evading (crew), b) catching (Lim)

Fact is, as soon as you step out into the air, you can smell it: a sweet scent that you can almost taste, a slight tang in the air. The settlement here is called The Vineyard, and the atmosphere leaves no room for guessing why.

The Way It Is [Setup]

Whatever mission the crew is going about is easily resolved: whatever the money is, they get paid, or whatever they were planning to pick up (so long as it ain't unreasonable), they find it. Things, for once, are going smooth. The spaceport itself has just the barest essentials: a mechanic outpost that seems to mostly serve luxury vessels, a Port Tower for traffic control, and a Port Authority building that has the barest fueling essentials (at three times the normal rate; fuel is one thing Greenleaf doesn't have in large supply). There are plenty of brochures and video terminals showing ways to spend your vacation in Greenleaf's wine country, or, for a small fee on one of many "fine" transport vessels, the equatorial resorts.

There ain't much to the town of The Vineyard. Most folks are grape harvesters, vintners, and other common types who work among the vines or on the other local farms. The town center has a small marketplace with shops that sell breads, meats, and cheeses (you have to go to three or four shops to pick up a full meal) at prices better than can be found on any Rim world. The largest building is an upscale restaurant and inn that boasts baths and massages on a faded sandwich board outside. A small, whitewashed church building, with a steeple and bell that chimes the hour, is the only other structure of note.

Problems

A Man with a Plan: The type of people who normally show up in The Vineyard are either familiar faces doing business with the local vintners or tourists, who are typically easy to spot. The crew don't look like either, and that's bound to get them a little attention. In particular, it catches the eye of Norman Sellers, who, as you know, is in a bit of a bind.

Sellers himself is an EASY man to identify. He is a thin little man, dressed in a light-colored suit that probably helps with the heat of the day, but shows off the wine stains near his collar. Most notable is his handle-bar mustache, which



is lovingly kept in perfect curls and greased into symmetry, accompanied by a pair of small round glasses that sit at the end of his nose.

Before making contact with the crew, he watches them for awhile, trying to identify which one of them is the captain, or the representative most likely to speak for the crew in matters of hiring. It's EASY to notice that he's doing this. However, he seems interested in them rather than any sort of threat.

It takes a HEROIC effort to notice that Sellers himself is being watched. The fellow keeping an eye on Sellers is Howard Lim of the 14K Tong, an unobtrusive man of vaguely Chinese features. Rather than watching openly, however, he appears to be going about his own business, often in the area where Sellers is. But other times, he disappears completely, only to show up again later on. Should the crew "make" him, he'll probably disappear for a bit, having already developed his suspicions as to what Sellers wants from the crew.

Once Sellers determines whom he wants to speak with (possibly entirely incorrectly, depending on how the crew present themselves) or when the crew approach him, he offers the

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Whose Idea Was This Job, Anyway?

Could be that by now, the crew has an idea that all ain't right with this job. Could be that they're all paranoid and crotchety anyway, and so they ain't got a clue that their current attention is due to the casks of wine bein' crated into their cargo hold. But eventually it stands to reason that someone'll get curious and want to see if the fuss has something to do with the fruit of the vine.

The truth is that the casks the wine is contained in are shaped a little like hour glasses on the inside. They're built of a double layer of wood (the authentic wood casks are part of what's said to give Sellers Vineyard Wine a better flavor), but the inside layer gets a little bendy around the center, which means the casks aren't quite as heavy as similarly built containers would be. In fact, between the two layers of wood is real, home-grown, dried-out vines from the previous year, and hidden in that packing material are the diamonds.

There are any number of ways to go about searching and finding in this case. Perhaps someone with Perception comes to the **FORMIDABLE** conclusion that the weight of the casks ain't shifting right, which could lead to a little Deduction or Investigation tapping along the sides of the casks to discover just where that sound shifts. Could be that someone trained in Disabling Devices notices a tell—a little latch on the outside of the container, hidden in the wood grain so that it would take a **HEROIC** effort to locate it. Someone trained in Mechanical Engineering might see that the shape is just slightly off—which someone could **EASILY** see was just aesthetic, but a more **HEROIC** effort would show that the design was intended to hide something. The crew is sure to come up with innovative solutions not listed here (including just dropping the thing to see if it shatters—though the casks are built to be **RIDICULOUSLY** strong), and the Game Master is encouraged to have them try as many ways as they can think of to see what's in those crates—as long as it ain't too easy!

It's also possible for the crew to never discover the secret in their cargo. Unlikely, but possible.

Sellers is slightly suspicious of his regular supply company having left him in such a jam, but he has a natural distrust of supply companies in general, as he assumes they are all out to cheat him. He doesn't believe that anyone is aware of the diamond smuggling. Only under

torture would he reveal his part in smuggling the diamonds, and as the crew is unlikely to torture a potential employer, he ain't talking.

Friends in High and Low Places: Both the Tong and the Feds are much closer to Sellers's operation than the vintner realizes. They've already identified him as one of the contacts on the Greenleaf end, and the Feds had planned to infiltrate the regular supply company in order to track down the minds at the top of the operation. The 14K Tong, however, put a crimp in those plans, paying off the supply company to keep them away from Greenleaf at the time of delivery. The 14K Tong just wants to end the operation; if there are movers and shakers at the top, those people can come to them. The Alliance wants to make some arrests, though when they discover who needs to be arrested, things might get a little hairy.

Given that the crew is now involved, things *are* about to get hairy. Before they leave The Vineyard, Howard Lim makes a point of contacting them. If the crew have had their ear to the ground, it'd be **HARD** to pick this up, assuming they haven't already noticed Lim watching Sellers. Whispers around The Vineyard that the Tong are moving in on them should at least reach their ears, whether they figure out it's Lim or not.

Now, this could go several ways, depending on whether or not they're friends with any group of Tong. If they're friends with the 14K, Lim is aware of their connection and wants to speak with them peaceably. He explains that there is more to their cargo than they've been told, and gives them a rendezvous point halfway between Greenleaf and Osiris (about a week and a half, for any Speed Class 4 ship), then leaves, assuming the crew will oblige.

If they're friends of some other Tong group, Lim tries to sabotage their ship. Discovering the sabotage using Covert or Mechanical Engineering is **HARD**; once they're off and flying, it's a **FORMIDABLE** task to notice something is wrong. Fixing it is a **HARD** complex action. If they don't find it, the results show up in Act II.

If they're not friends with anyone in the Tong, he resorts to threats and intimidation—or a lucrative business offer, if that looks like it'll work better. He wants them to rendezvous with his employers—he doesn't tell them who—and

assures them it is in their own interest to do so (either the hard way or the easy way). He knows that their actual stated job is not at risk, and if they need that assurance, he can provide it—if just threatening them is ineffective. Threats are backed up by a trio of Tong Thugs, handily placed in the shadows around the place that Lim corners the crew. Lucrative business offers are backed up by a promise of two or three times the offer Sellers is making, assuming the crew hooks up with Lim at the meeting point.

If the crew know about Lim and don't want to cross paths with the Tong at this juncture, it'll be **HARD** complex action to elude him. This should be possible for the crew to accomplish, particularly if they've got an expert in Covert procedures. To reach their ship without ever encountering Lim, they have to reach a Threshold of 55, but they must pass a **HARD** Difficulty on every attempt. Lim is using his Intelligence + Covert/Surveillance (d8+d10) and must also succeed at a **HARD** Difficulty on every attempt until he reaches a Threshold of 55. (The crew can make this harder or easier with their actions, and the Game Master can adjust accordingly.)

If Lim succeeds before the crew does, he's managed to corner them in order to have his conversation.

Howard Lim

Agi d8, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8;
Init d8+d8; **LP** 14

Traits Friends in Low Places (Major), Loyal (Minor), Steady Calm (Minor)

Skills Covert d6/Stealth d8/Surveillance d10, Guns d4, Influence d6/Intimidation d8/Negotiation d10, Mechanical Engineering d6/Sabotage d10, Perception d6/Sight d8, Unarmed Combat d4

Weapons/Gear Pistol (d6 W)

Tong Thug

Agi d6, **Str** d10, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 16

Traits Tough as Nails (Minor), Loyal (Minor)

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Guns d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d6/Clubs d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Knife (d4 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Here Come the Feds: About the time that the crew start to return to their ship, a patrol boat with subtle markings is landing at the port. It's **HARD** to recognize those symbols without a little bit of Military experience or Streetwise, but those who have seen this kind of vehicle before know that its appearance means that there are Federal Marshals on the move. In fact, one of them, Agent Sanders, is in Port Authority just as the crew makes it back to port.

While it is **EASY** enough to avoid the Federal Marshals completely, it is possible that the crew might take an interest in whatever

TABLE - WE'RE RUNNING

Both Succeed	You give the pulse drives a squeeze and then coast between two larger vessels. But just as you're getting comfortable, you see the flare of the Tong vessel's thrusters as it comes into the traffic stream behind you. [No effect]
Crew Succeed; Tong Ship Fails	You coast in and out of the stream of traffic, darting ahead of the cloud of vessels and getting a jump into the clear black. Behind, you hear a crashing sound as the Tong ship crashes into a transport. [Tong Ship takes 3 Wounds damage and 1 Stun.]
Tong Ship Succeeds; Crew Fail	You choke the pulse drive, but not quite soon enough! That freighter was closer than it seemed, and now your buffer panel is scraping against its underbelly with a shriek worse than nails on glass. [Crew's ship takes 3 Wounds and 1 Stun.]
Both Fail	Swerving in and out does you no good—the sky is just too crowded out here! As you make friends with a transport on your left, you see the Tong ship getting entangled with two freighters just behind you. At least you're both feeling the effects of this race. [Both ships take 3 Wounds and 1 Stun.]
Escaping (Winning): Complex Task with 72-point Threshold Add all flying totals toward the Escaping Complex Task. Higher score is ahead of the lesser. First to Threshold succeeds in a) escaping (crew), b) preventing from escaping (Tong)	

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interests the Alliance. If they use Surveillance methods to eavesdrop on the conversation, which is **HARD** given Agent Sanders's soft-spoken voice, they notice that the Federal Marshal is interested in a particular ship—one that was supposed to be leaving Greenleaf for Osiris with some cargo, but appears to have gotten waylaid before ever arriving at Greenleaf. Sanders appears to be asking just to confirm that the ship did not recently dock at Greenleaf in order to sort out his paperwork. It is a **FORMIDABLE** task for the crew to catch Sanders using his name—but could give them a leg up in Act II.

If the crew are in trouble with the Alliance from a previous adventure, or if they're in the mood to cause trouble, then Agent Sanders might be disposed to pay attention to them. If this happens, he'll send some of his men in to arrest the crew; they should, unless they want to land in the brig, make haste their departure. As long as they're intent on evading Sanders and his men, it's an **AVERAGE** effort to keep quiet until Act II.

You Know How Much Trouble You're In? If the crew figure out that the Tong and the Feds are after this shipment, or they're starting to get nervous (or want more money), they might go back to Sellers and tell him what they've found out. Maybe Howard Lim gave them an offer to hand over the cargo for more credits, or Agent Sanders' inquiries reached the crew's ears and they want some additional insurance. At this stage, with the deadline swiftly approaching, Sellers is in no mood to see his operation fall apart. He offers the crew double the starting amount, reassuring them that Baron Otello will make good on this, and that everything will be square once they get to Osiris. Privately, Sellers is hoping the crew just gets the hell off his planet and high tails it to the core without more questions. If he's pressed, it's **EASY** to get the impression from Sellers that this is all about saving face and bein' professional. It's **HEROIC** to get the impression that Sellers is up to his neck in trouble and if the crew know what's good for them, they'll leave before they join him in the hot water.

Agent Sanders

Agi d6, **Str** d6, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d10, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d10; **LP** 16

Traits Military Rank (Minor Asset), Nose for Trouble (Minor), Credo (Minor Complication)

Skills Athletics d4, Covert d6/Surveillance d8, Discipline d6/Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6, Influence d6/Persuasion d8, Perception d6/Empathy d12/Tactics 10

Description: Despite recent events that have made people question the motivations of the Alliance, Sanders believes that the Alliance is the best chance for order in the 'Verse, and works to make that order happen. He has no tolerance for people in positions of power who abuse the law, though he isn't above covert operations—occasionally lawless endeavors—himself, so long as it is for the greater good. Though he does not command a ship, as an intelligence officer, he has a great deal of pull on the *IAV Erikson*, and knows that the crew are the best chance he has to root out corruption someplace high up inside the government—he so dearly wants to be valorous. He finds it preferable to try to convince someone to see things from his point of view than he is to get them to cooperate by force.

New Way of Things [Results]

Unless they're stuck in an Alliance brig for bein' mouthy, the crew should be on their way to Osiris, ready for some smooth sailing. If they made friends with Howard Lim, they'll be expecting a rendezvous and it won't come as a surprise in Act II.

ACT II: COMPROMISES ARE FOR RELATIONSHIPS

"Compromises are for relationships, not wine."
—Sir Robert Scott Caywood

Wherein the crew is on the receiving end of more attention than they want.

SCENE 1: IGNORED AND INTERFERED WITH EQUALLY

Funny thing. As you're leaving orbit around Greenleaf, it looks an awful lot like that Alliance Cruiser in orbit is startin' to head out, too. In pretty much the same direction, come to think. Looks like those zua yi de wang ba² are following you!

The Way It Is [Setup]

The cargo hold is loaded, as far as the crew has been told, with perfectly legal cargo. There could be any number of reasons why the crew doesn't want the Alliance to visit, however—or a number of reasons why they'd prefer to cooperate rather than risk the Alliance coming down on them.

The Alliance doesn't want trouble within view of the planet, however. So that cruiser is just moseying on its merry way, just happening to throw burn at the same time and in the same direction . . .

If the crew stays the course, they're hailed by the Alliance Cruiser, asking for permission to dock. Agent Sanders, the Federal Marshal currently stationed with the *LAV Erikson*³, wants to talk to the crew, not arrest them, as their informant on Greenleaf reported that these are not the usual suppliers. Sanders wants it clear that they are just investigating, not arresting anyone—unless the crew gets belligerent in their negotiations.

Problems

Outgunning: Fight to the death with an Alliance Cruiser? There could be some ships out there that could handle a little head to head. The *LAV Erikson* is a typical Alliance Cruiser (*Serenity Role Playing Game*, page 128). Sanders, however, is shooting to capture rather than to disable, and should the Alliance take the crew into custody, their chances of escaping arrest after opening fire on a Cruiser are slim.

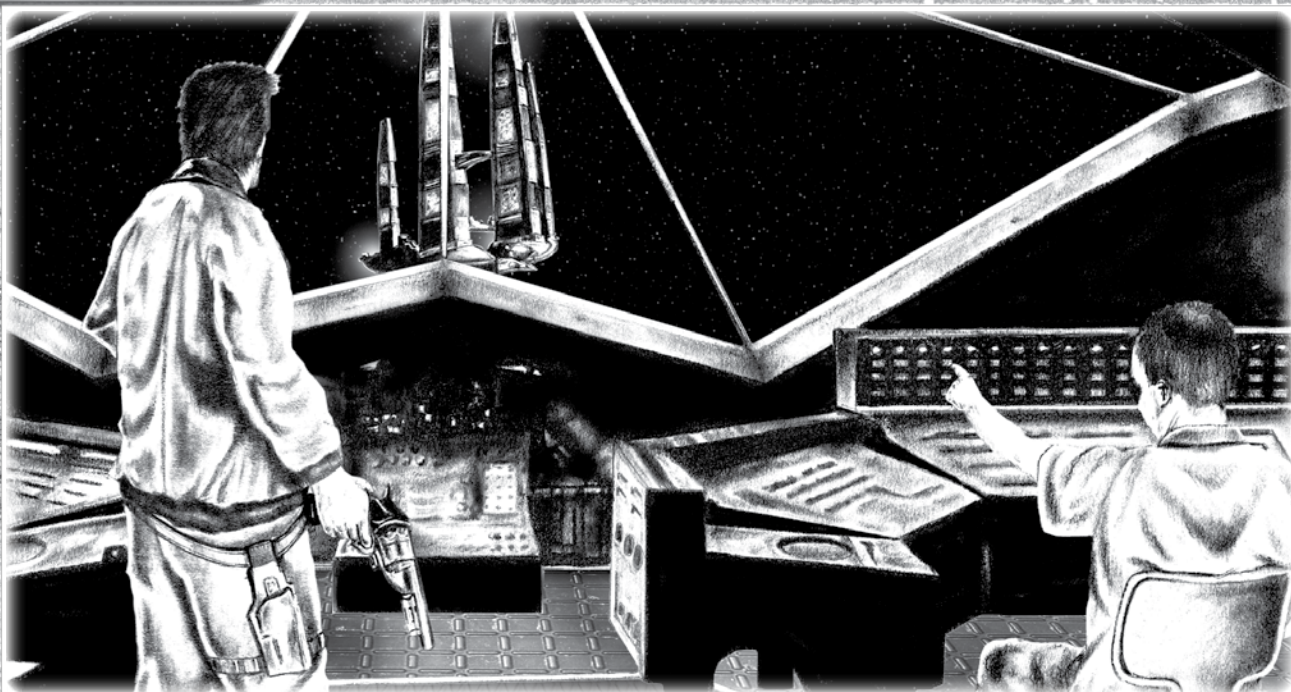
Out-scheming: There are any number of tools in the arsenal when trying to fool an enemy ship. From false distress signals to simply lying over the Wave, some folks are just better at scheming than others are at picking up on the schemes. Unfortunately for the crew, Agent Sanders is no greenhorn, and fooling him will take some effort. Attempts at lying over the wave are attempted in an opposed action against Sanders's Alertness + Perception/Empathy (d10+d12), and attempts at subterfuge are his Alertness + Perception/Tactics (d10+d10). Sanders isn't above scheming back, using his Persuasion to convince the crew that there is no danger in allowing him aboard, and that their cooperation with the Alliance will be rewarded—all of which is most probably true, unless he has reason to act otherwise.

Cooperating: It could be that the crew are all law-abiding citizens with no reason to distrust the Alliance—rare as those crews may be. Or it could be that the crew just know it's in their best interest too cooperate, at least for the moment. In either case, if Sanders and the small group of soldiers accompanying him are allowed on the ship, Sanders is quick to ask to inspect their cargo—informing them that he has reason to believe that they have been swindled into working for a smuggler. He pins all the blame on Sellers in order to gain their trust, then, when allowed to see the cargo, makes quick work of the disguised panel and shows them the diamonds.

What the Alliance wants from the crew is actually very little. Make the delivery as planned. Get paid for the wine, as Sanders is certain that's all they were contracted to deliver. Then, he gives them a bug—an earring if he's speaking to a woman or a pin if he's speaking to a man, some form of jewelry. When they make the delivery, they are to say the phrase "good as gold," which will alert a team of federal agents to their location. If possible, and if they are interested in greater reward and the thanks of the Alliance, they should make small talk with Baron Otello and his companions, expressing their gratitude at being included in the festivities and hoping that Otello is pleased with their performance in delivering the wine. He doesn't expect Otello to give anything away, but any distraction to the Baron while his men are getting into place would be much appreciated.

² Literally, "Interfering bastards."

³ After Leif Erikson, a Viking explorer on Earth—that was who may have been the first man to "discover" the Americas.



If the crew takes this agreement, Sanders is as good as his word: he leaves their ship, expecting to hear from them when they reach Osiris. If they blatantly refuse, Sanders threatens first to take the cargo and deliver it on an undercover Alliance vessel, effectively meaning the crew only gets their up-front wages. If they threaten Sanders in any way, he is quick to place them in the care of his accompanying soldiers, and is more than ready to arrest them for standing in the way of a federal investigation.

Outrunning: The crew could outrun the *LAV Erikson* in hard burn, never picking up any wave the ship sends over. If they decide to run, they need to make a good show of it,

and the race is an AVERAGE complex action. The environment for racing is friendly, which is why getting any sort of jump on the Alliance is an AVERAGE task, rather than an EASY one. Each round, the GM rolls Ship's Agility + crew's Pilot Skill—in this case, d2+d10—against the table; the person piloting the ship should roll for the crew.

New Way of Things [Results]

Whether the crew stopped for the *LAV Erikson* or whether they tried to outrace the ship, they've still lost a little time: in the first case because the process of docking takes awhile, and in the second because trying to

TABLE - WE'RE RUNNING

Both Succeed

The engine hums with life as the pulse drive kicks in, shooting you forward into the black. You catch a glimpse of the flair of the Alliance Cruiser's engine, and you see they're getting the same speed—probably with less effort. [No effect]

Crew Succeeds; Erikson Fails

The pulse drive flares, making you're tail all shiny as you moon the Alliance Cruiser. [The crew receive a +2 Skill step bonus to their next attempt.]

Erikson Succeeds; Crew Fails

A cough and a sputter shows that the pressure on the pulse drive is too much, and for a moment, before you can kick back into a hard burn, you're drifting. The cruiser, on the other hand, seems to be having no such trouble. [The Erikson receives a +2 Skill step bonus to their next attempt.]

Both Fail

The pulse drive can't take the heat, and you've got to kick it back and take the pressure off to keep moving forward. But your ship isn't the only one suffering, and the cruiser seems to have slowed down as well. [No effect]

Escaping (Winning): Complex Task with 80-point Threshold

Add all flying totals toward the Escaping Complex Task. Higher score is ahead of the lesser. First to Threshold succeeds in a) escaping (crew), b) preventing from escaping (Alliance)

He Must Have Attached the Grav Dampener to the Core Thruster...

It could be that the crew had their ship sabotaged and never did find it. If that's the case, rather than the delightful little wave once they hit the border region, their ship just stops. Forward propulsion is an utter failure. Can't go forward, and backwards don't work neither. Liu Bei uses this opportunity, which he's been awaiting, to board the ship, take the diamonds and the wine, and make off with the cargo. Could be this'll cause some fightin'. If so, the folks they're fighting are ready to end them.

outrance the cruiser safely (without running into a moon or some other object in space) puts them far enough off course that they'll have to compensate. They may be able to make up a little of the time with some careful maneuvering or improvements to the ship, but with as tight a schedule as they were given, they're likely to arrive a little bit late.

SCENE 2: CRIME SHOULD BE ORGANIZED

You're back on course, headed for Osiris, and things in the black are quiet enough. But you're not alone out here. The course you've set is reasonably well traveled, particularly now that you're in the border region. And as you're adjusting your course to steer clear of the heavier points of traffic, you get the hail.

The Way It Is [Setup]

If the crew talked to Howard Lim back on Greenleaf, this is the wave they're expecting. Their contact calls himself Liu Bei⁴ and requests for them to come around behind an asteroid, where he can dock and, with several of his men, have a meeting. Unlike the Alliance, Liu Bei is after the diamonds for himself and will happily relieve the crew of that part of their cargo for a delightfully large fee (18,000 credits).

⁴ Liu Bei was the true rags-to-riches story of the Eastern Han Dynasty. He began as a commoner, became a powerful warlord, and, through a series of adventures recounted in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, became the founding emperor of the Shu Han Dynasty.

Problems

Sleeping with the Space Fishes: The Tong are dangerous folks to deal with, but they're fair to people willing to be fair to them. Liu Bei is happy to cut a deal and let the crew go about their business. He just wants to make sure that the diamonds don't get to where they're supposed to go.

Of course, it's never that easy. Liu Bei represents the 14K Tong. They're not the only ones with interests in the diamonds, or in diamond mining on Greenleaf. If the crew is amicable and succeeds at the FORMIDABLE task of gaining Liu Bei's trust, he may warn them that another Tong, who call themselves The Assembly, may be at the charity ball on Osiris.

If the crew has already made a bargain with the Alliance, convincing Liu Bei to let them go with all of the diamonds is RIDICULOUS. However, coming to a compromise, if the crew have all been accommodating and polite and expressed an earnest desire to work with the Tong, is a more HEROIC task. (It is also an option for the crew to make this an opposed action, using Negotiation against Liu Bei.)

Should negotiations break down, it could come to fighting. Liu Bei is accompanied by five Tong Thugs who are just as happy to club someone over the head as they are to make a deal.

Liu Bei

Agi d8, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d10, **Wil** d10; **Init** d8+d6; **LP** 18

Traits Friends in Low Places [Minor], Leadership [Major]

Skills Covert d6/Streetwise d12/Stealth d10, Discipline d6/Interrogation d12/Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6, Influence d6/Negotiation d10/Intimidation d10, Knowledge d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Swords d10/Knives d10, Perception d6/Black-Market Trends d10, Unarmed Combat d6/Tai Chi d12

Weapons/Gear Pistol (d6 W), Sword (d6 W)

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Tong Thug

Agi d6, **Str** d10, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 16

Traits Tough as Nails (Minor), Loyal (Minor)

Skills Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Guns d4, Melee
Weapon Combat d6/Knives d6/Clubs d8,
Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Club (d6 B), Knife (d4 W), Pistol
(d6 W)

Making a Getaway: As with the encounter with the *LAV Erikson*, it is possible to outrun the Tong ship. However, because there is plenty of other traffic in the area, evading the Tong ship is a HARD complex task with a 72 threshold. Each round, the GM rolls Ship's Agility + crew's Pilot Skill—in this case, d2 + d10—against the table; the person piloting the ship should roll for the crew.

New Way of Things [Results]

Could be that the crew is free and clear and on their way to Osiris. But again, the interactions with the Tong have set them back in their schedule, and it's going to take some finessing to make up the time. Even with a little bit of effort, the gala will have already started by the time they arrive.

ACT III: EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY

"A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry."—Ecclesiastes 8:15
In which a fight breaks out at a museum.

SCENE 1: SUPPLYING THE SHINDIG

Osiris. Everything the Core is supposed to be: a mass of buildings and people, planned parks and no wild spaces. You dock, pay your tariffs, and get your cargo loaded up and to the museum. The front door is, as should be expected, locked for a private event. Looks like you'll have to go in the back way.

The Way It Is [Setup]

If the crew made successful efforts, at the GM's discretion, after both of their en route encounters, they are only about 15 minutes late. If they only succeeded at one, they're a half hour past when the party started. If they either made no efforts or were unsuccessful at both, they are a full hour beyond the beginning of the party, and Baron Otello is really beginning to sweat. This may seem remarkably tight given that the travel time was around three weeks, but it helps to keep the game cinematic. Thus, regardless of what happened on the way to Osiris, the window's anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour wide.

There are two entrances to the building on the ground floor level. The first is the front door, which has numerous security devices and alarms attached to it. During the day when the museum is open, it's meant to keep folk from bringing in their weaponry, as well as keeping folk from walking out with something that's tagged as belonging to the museum. At night, the security gets tougher. Luckily, there's a gala on, which means that the doors do open on occasion with people already leaving the party. A pair of guards stand on the inside, and if the crew are dressed pretty enough and remember to flash their invites, well, goin' in the front may just be the easiest way to avoid trouble.

The second door is in the back, the area where deliveries are supposed to come through. It's only natural that the wine be brought back to this area, as the caterers will have to move it from there to get it to the dining preparation area on the second floor. Problem is, no one is waiting for the crew at this point—they're expecting the regular delivery folk, who should have been here hours ago. Breaking into the back door is no easy trick, as it's got security codes programmed in as well. The plus to the back door is that there's nothing keeping folk from bringing weapons in this way.

Clever crew mates might be able to convince the guards at the front to meet them around in the back, bypassing both the need to relinquish their weapons and the need to break in. But there are many ways to solve this dilemma, and the crew are sure to come up with one.

A. Floor 1: The first floor of the Alliance History Museum is dedicated primarily to the staff offices and a series of rooms filled with

Earth-That-Was artifacts. While the Anglo-Sino Alliance began as a union between Londonium and Sihnon, the pieces of Earth-that-Was history housed in the first floor exhibits come from all over the world. England and the United States (depicted as a single nation in the hodge-podge of history present) and China are given particular focus, and presented as long-time allies long before humanity left their home world for the stars. An Egyptian mummy is situated near a Grecian marble statue. Statues of Hindu gods are huddled near Pacific Northwest Natives totem poles. The artifacts are all labeled, most of them with trivia and aspects of Earth-That-Was history, but the exhibit itself gives little sense of structure or organization. In the six rooms of artifacts, though some Earth-That-Was nations are mentioned, the planet is given a sense of unified history and government, as though all of these artifacts came from one singular culture simply at different times in the planet's development. At any point when the crew enters this area, there are 18 to 25 gala guests, all dressed in their finest, who chat about the novelty of the artifacts and how glad they are that their contributions are benefiting not only the children's hospital, but the museum itself.

The staff area is also an office area, complete with computer terminals, freight elevators, libraries on disk after disk, and restoration tools and brushes.

B. Stairs: A set of stairs (next to an elevator for patrons) ascend to the second floor. Each step is associated with a different tone and color of light, so that a musical scale plays as a person walks from one step up to the next, and the steps light up when there is pressure on them. Along with this traditional wonder of museums everywhere, there is also a timeline. It begins with the exodus from Earth-that-Was (showing accounts of both the myths that have evolved around mankind's time there and coupling them with factual information about the planet's atmospheric conditions, the land pollution it suffered, etc.). Higher up the steps is the pilgrimage through the heavens in a series of arks, celebrating the generation of travelers who lived and died aboard those vessels. The beginning periods of terraforming comprise

most of the upper third of the stairs, and the formation of the Alliance is the peak of the steps as they reach the second floor.

The stairs continue from the second floor to the third floor, showing the expansion of the Alliance, the extension of welcome to the Border planets and the Rim into the unified government, and the rejection of that offer. The Unification War is given its due—almost a third of the steps is devoted to that struggle, and victories from both sides are mentioned, though Browncoat victories are termed “devastating losses” for the Allied forces, and Alliance victories are seen as causes for celebration. The last portion of the stairs moves from post-war restructuring and advancements that are bringing prosperity to even the most distant of Rim Worlds and into the bright future the Alliance promises all nations.

C. Floor 2: The second floor has a much smaller staff area, which mostly contains room for food preparation. Fifteen to 20 staff members of the catering company responsible for the gala's refreshments are in this room at any given time (at least three of them belong to the Tong group The Assembly, and at least one is a federal agent undercover).

At the top of the stairs is an exhibit about the history of space flight, mostly in the open space between the two large rooms that dominate the floor. Models of ships from ages past dominate every open space and display, and a life-size model of Leonardo da Vinci's original flying machine, as constructed from his notes, hangs overhead, suspended from the ceiling.

To one side of the stairs is the entrance to the ballroom. The doors to this room are wide open, and the flow of companions, philanthropists, society elites, and other people dressed in clothing that they probably had to get stitched into, is constant. There are hundreds of people inside the ballroom as well, half mingling around the edges as caterers and their slaves/indentured servants carry platters of fancy foods and generally act like moving furniture. In the center of the room is a band playing classical music, but rather than dancing, people are wandering through easel after easel of displayed art by some of the most prominent fine artists in the Verse. Some of the art are traditional watercolors, some are oils, and others are fine examples of mixed media art, displaying

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holograms atop textured backgrounds. This is all part of a silent auction being conducted by a well-dressed woman Elspeth Wynn, who is continuing the efforts to raise money on behalf of the children's hospital and the museum.

On the other side of the stairs is the entrance to the planetarium. Instead of showing a regular star show, however, the display has been set to an ongoing show of fireworks, greeted with "oohs" and "ahs" from the viewers who gaze over their heads as if they're seeing actual bursts of chemical combustion rather than a holographic image. The dark atmosphere in this room makes it difficult to tell how many people are actually inside, and the fact that most people are standing rather than sitting continues to complicate matters, but there could be well over a 100 people inside. The doors to the planetarium are open, but curtains hang between the doors and the room, blocking off the outside light from the display within.

Baron Otello wanders between the ballroom and the planetarium, making conversation and generally hobnobbing, thanking everyone who is in attendance for their generous contributions. Several members of Parliament and a few high-ranking military officials are also in attendance, and Baron Otello speaks personally with every one of them. However, he is not above greeting unknown guests, assuming that they, like the others in attendance, paid quite a bit of money to attend this charity gala, and should be shown some appreciation if they're to return next year. Among these guests are four other members of The Assembly Tong, three members of the 14K Tong, and another federal agent.

D. Floor 3: This section of the museum is the Natural History wing. It is much smaller than the lower floors, and is stuffed to the gills with displays. Along with the usual cases full of taxonomy of various birds, reptiles, and small and large mammals, a large portion of the floor is dedicated to hands-on learning tools showing how terraforming works. From the water cycle to seed-storage in space, the whole process is covered. Models of prehistoric creatures from Earth-That-Was take up large spaces of the room, though some are stuffed into corners as though they've been forgotten. A large skeleton of a whale is suspended from the ceiling, spanning nearly the entire length of the room.

Problems

Water into Wine: The first task that needs doing is delivering the wine. The caterers are happy to take it off the crews' hands. But given that there are both Tong and Feds among the caterers (which the crew may be suspicious of), and that no one with the caterer is able to confirm their second half of the payment, they may have to seek out Baron Otello before any wine can be shared among the people.

Finding Baron Otello is a **HARD** task in this kind of crowd, but once he is located, getting him to confirm the payment and come look at the shipment himself is quite **EASY**. Thing is, not everyone wants the crew to find him before they get a shot at the wine ...

As long as the crew leave the wine in the staff area downstairs with someone, it won't be bothered. Heck, all the interested parties probably don't even know it has arrived until the crew bring it on up in the freight elevator. (It is worthwhile to note that while the freight elevator is in perfect repair, it is the perfect tool for enhancing player paranoia. Let's just say it's not well oiled, and it moves very slowly, giving them plenty of time to sweat as they bring the wine up to the second floor.) As soon as they get to the second floor, the fun begins.

Assuming that the group splits up, while half of the crew is off looking for Otello, the other half is approached by anyone they've tried to make a deal with, along with a representative from the Tong group The Assembly. Everyone is interested in making a deal—but if a deal can't be made, then trouble could start. Depending on how the crew are handling themselves and their cargo, a fight could break out right in the catering area, featuring any of the three involved groups: the 14K Tong, the Tong group The Assembly, and the federal agents.

If the crew play it smart, however, and generally act calm and defer any questions or conversation that they haven't already set up in advance, they could get paid before things go south.

Oh, You Mean Those Diamonds! If the crew made a deal with the 14K Tong, then they don't have to worry about one set of Tong agents lurking throughout the gala. The 14K does their best to keep The Assembly busy while the crew drop off the wine. The Feds, on

the other hand, absolutely confront the crew; convincing them that there aren't any diamonds is a **FORMIDABLE** task—convincing them that there never were any diamonds is **HEROIC**.

On the off chance that the federal agents honestly believe their leads were wrong and they've been duped into believing that the shipment was coming here (or believe that the diamonds were stolen back on Greenleaf), they up and leave—meaning it's just the right time for a Tong brawl to break out. Since it's three 14K against seven Assemblers, the 14K sure could use the help of the crew—and if they don't help end the violence, they might as well kiss their good will with the 14K goodbye.

Hey, Big Brother! Now is the time, if the crew made the deal with the Feds, to start saying their cues into the bug planted on them. In a successful scenario here, they hand off responsibility for the diamonds to the federal agent disguised as a caterer and make their way into the fancy-dress ball. The encounter here becomes more of a role play situation—they need to keep Baron Otello from suspecting that anything is wrong before the full federal task squad arrives. The federal agent gives one of them a micro transmitter so they can stay in contact with the task squad at all times.

To make matters more complicated, the 14K and The Assembly are quick to get the sense that not all is well with their situation. They attempt attacks on both the cargo and the Baron himself—putting the crew in the position of having to defend both the cargo and the Baron before the federal agents can come back to arrest them! The following brawl could be epic (or could be shadowy and take place in the fireworks display in the planetarium). In either case, it sure ain't going to be pretty. All the crew have to do, though, is hold down the fort—which is exactly what they're instructed to do through that trusty micro transmitter.

If the crew managed to try to play both sides, all they need to do is make sure some portion of the diamonds are there when the Alliance task squad arrives. Finagling it so that they steal the diamonds after the agents arrive is practically **RIDICULOUS**, but a combination of stealth and sabotage could work—after all, if all those wealthy folks upstairs suddenly find themselves with a whale skeleton crashing

through the floor on top of them, what are the federal agents going to focus on? The artifacts in the museum are priceless and irreplaceable, and anything in the museum coming to harm would look very bad on the resumes of the task force handling the bust.

The Steal: It could be that the crew decided to take neither deal, or managed to avoid coming in contact with the Feds or the Tong, and still managed to figure out what was so damned important about that wine. Could be that they managed to find the diamonds and keep them for themselves. If they did, they've got some options ahead of them.

The obvious person to try to make the sale to is Baron Otello himself. Otello has no idea that the Feds are onto him, but he suspects the Tong of trickery and would much rather deal with straightforward smugglers. If the crew want a deal, Otello is willing to hear them out. He instructs them to meet him on the third floor.

Of course, they're not the only ones who are there. No one wants to make a scene in front of the whole gala—even the Tong are more discreet. So the Natural History section, where no one is gathering, is a perfect meeting place for clandestine dealings. Now, things could be perfectly civilized. If everyone sides against the two federal agents, well, those agents are in a world of trouble. When it comes down to the arguing and the fighting, Otello tries to stay neutral and quiet until someone threatens to arrest or harm him. Then he encourages (via bribe) elimination of that one group.

The Feds are actually willing to offer Otello amnesty if he tells them who else has been involved in the smuggling—but if he appears belligerent, they're going to arrest him straight away, if they can.

All four factions are involved in this scenario: the 14K Tong, the Feds, the Tong group The Assembly, and Otello. If the crew double-crossed any of those four, they are in a world of trouble now, as the crossed group is no longer interested in negotiating. If they didn't double-cross anyone, then they have some options: They can sell to the highest bidder, or they can side with the Feds and hope that pans out for them with a reward or some sort of nice notice. (Not likely: If they knew they were smuggling

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diamonds, the best they can hope for is not getting arrested and not getting a black mark on their record from this little episode.)

Though guns are an option here, both Tong groups prefer unarmed combat to using their weapons if they can subdue their foes. The federal agents use nonlethal weapons to disable anyone standing against them.

Now There's Wine on My Dress! It is possible that the crew never clearly gets an idea of what's going on, and they think they're just delivering wine to a fancy-dress ball. Should they go about getting all dolled up to attend the gala, that's all well and good, but it don't mean a fight won't break out.

If the crew drop off the wine and goods with the caterers and go about their business (or avoided fighting before getting paid for the wine), then the fighting doesn't break out until they're already partaking of the festivities. Once the crew get out of the way of the four factions all trying to get the diamonds, they can enjoy the party right up until the slugging match starts. Then they've got some choices to make. They could just mosey on out of the party and leave all the rich folk to their fate. They could try to be heroes and break up the violence. They could listen to the folks who claim to be federal agents and help out the law. Or maybe they're looking to get in good with the Tong. In any case, they have a chance to make themselves shine, or, heck, get involved in the brawl just for the fun of it. In this scenario, the fighting starts out with the Tong all using improvised weapons: clubs, unarmed combat, brawling, etc. The federal agents use nonlethal weapons to disable anyone standing against them.

14K Tong Agents

Agi d8, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d10, **Wil** d10;
Init d8+d6; **LP** 18

Traits Friends in Low Places (Minor Asset), Nose for Trouble (Major Asset)

Skills Covert d6/Streetwise d12/Stealth d10/Infiltration d12, Discipline d6/ Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6, Influence d6/ Negotiation d10/Intimidation d10, Knowledge

d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d10, Perception d6/Sight d10/Empathy d10, Unarmed Combat d6/Tai Chi d12

Weapons/Gear Club (d6 B), Knife (d4 W), Pistol (d6 W)

The Assembly Tong Agents

Agi d8, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d10, **Wil** d10;
Init d8+d6; **LP** 18

Traits Friends in Low Places (Minor Asset), Two-Fisted (Major Asset)

Skills Covert d6/Surveillance d12/Stealth d10/Infiltration d12, Discipline d6/Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6, Influence d6/ Negotiation d10/Intimidation d10, Knowledge d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Clubs d10/ Knives d10, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d6/Judo d10/Tai Chi d12

Weapons/Gear Club (d6 B), Knife (d4 W), Pistol (d6 W)

Federal Agents

Agi d6, **Str** d6, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d10, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d10; **LP** 16

Traits Military Rank (Minor Asset), Steady Calm (Minor Asset), Prejudice (Minor, Tong)

Skills Athletics d4, Covert d6/Infiltration d8/Stealth d10, Discipline d6/Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6/Sonic Rifle d10, Influence d4, Perception d6/Empathy d12

Weapons/Gear Sonic Rifle (d8 S)

Baron Otello

Agi d8, **Str** d4, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d8, **Wil** d10;
Init d8+d8; **LP** 16

Traits Friends in High Places (Minor Asset), Highly Educated (Minor Asset), Leadership (Major Asset)

Skills Discipline d6/Leadership d12/Morale d10, Guns d6, Influence d6/ Administration d12/Barter d10/Negotiation d10/ Marketing d10/Persuasion d10/Politics d10, Knowledge d6/History d10/Law d8, Perception d6/Empathy d10

Weapons/Gear Derringer (d4 W)

New Way of Things [Results]

Could be that from these events, the crew find themselves locked away in a Core world prison, boat locked down, sky taken away. Hopefully, that ain't so, and they got away free and maybe with a bit of profit to boot!

If the crew sided with the 14K and got away without being noticed by the Feds, they've solidified their friendship with the 14K Tong. They've also made enemies of The Assembly, which could be dangerous for them if they're planning to do business on the black market in the Core worlds. Now it may have happened in the exact opposite fashion: The Assembly turned out to be the winning party, and the 14K went home with the dirty end of the stick. In that case, the 14K are none too pleased with the crew and will be sure to give them trouble out on the Rim, but in the Core worlds, where the Tong are more undercover and far more quiet, they'll have a welcome contact.

If the crew sided with the Feds from the start, there are good and bad parts. One is that they're rewarded (depending on the deal they made). That's the good part. It's not as much as they would have made selling the diamonds on the black market, but hey, there's money in the plus column, so who's to complain? The bad part, however, is that the crew have now been noticed by the Feds. If they've been in trouble before, this new bit of information may get them in trouble that's deeper still. (Of course, if they've been in trouble before, they may have bartered for their record being wiped clean as part of the deal.)

Could be that the crew managed to make a deal with Otello straight away, and now they've got more cash in their hands than they'd know what to do with. Time to make those long-awaited repairs! But spending all that cash could get someone's attention, and the Feds know that their investigation was spoiled. Staying under the wire for awhile is a very good plan, and a crew that isn't careful may find themselves facing more than a little scrutiny whenever they have a run in with the law.

Or, if they were clever and more than a little sneaky in their dealings (or just plain lucky!), they got away without any trouble at all—out ran all their foes, figured out how to keep the diamonds for themselves, or just plain got



clueless and did the job and got paid. If so, it's just another day that the ship is still flying, and maybe that's enough.

SCENE 2: EPILOGUE

Nice as it would be to take a vacation on a Core world, with nice spas and restaurants and relaxing locales (but not all as boring as it sounds), you get the feeling that sticking around Osiris could very quickly make life more complicated than it needs to be. Besides, you've got money to spend.

Funny how that money came about, now that you think on it. When it comes down to it, wine is grapes that got old. They matured, so to speak, into something someone thought was worth payin' that kind of money for. And diamonds, well, folks say the ones that make it to where they can be mined could be as much as a billion and more years old. They say age is relative, and most times ain't relevant, but sometimes, those thing that get old—well, they're worth having waited for.

CHAPTER FIVE

SEVEN ARKS OF CIBOLA

THE WAY IT IS

When folks are scrabbling for a living on a quirk-filled rock that barely took to terraformin', they can be forgiven if they don't pay too much attention to history, other than which crops failed last year. But folks still like to make up stories to while away the long hours. People in the 'Verse usually know better than to put much stock into tales of lost treasure, but there is something about the Seven Arks of Cibola that makes them lose all sense. The story goes that several governments back on Earth-That-Was launched Arks into the Black. And when you were out in the cold dark as long as the Arks were, well, accidents were bound to happen. Seems that seven Arks lost internal atmo or suffered some other calamity, and all aboard perished. The Arks—now flying coffins—were set on autopilot and managed to finish the Exodus. They're out in the Black somewhere, waitin' for someone to stumble across them and their load of Newtech and wealth, all meant to start a new life for those on board who will never have the chance to use it.

The crew may know better than to be sucked in by this load of *mi tian gohn*, but when they bump into Lou Cabeza and his family, and they see he's carryin' a piece of Newtech dating back to the Arks it's sure a powerful incentive to believe he may be on the level. Add to it the fact that goons trying to snatch the Newtech sourcebox and it seems Lou may have a bit of something real here. The hunt leads the crew to a played-out asteroid mine called Quivira around Newhall. The crew may be in a hurry to find the treasure, but Lou insists on being thorough. He doesn't want to miss a clue, and as the Seven Arks have been waitin' for a while already, they can keep for a few more days. Truth is, Lou is waiting for his Syndicate buddies to show up and hoist him out of a jam before the crew discovers he's a liar and the

Black Bag gang of the Alliance Parliamentarian, Samuel Longhaven, catches up with him. Sure the sourcebox is stolen, but could it actually be the real deal, salvaged from one of the fabled lost Seven Arks of Cibola?

I hate to be the one to tell you, but none of your crew will ever lay eyes on one of the Seven Arks in this adventure. Heck, I'm not sure that the Arks are anything more than tales to be told around the campfire, meant to keep dreams of easy money alive for those forced to grub all the day in the dirt. Still, who knows, maybe the Seven Arks of Cibola are really out there in the Black, and the crew will find that dreams really do come true.

Just not in this adventure.

HERE'S THE STORY

Many of the tall tales of the 'Verse revolve around Earth-That-Was, and how good life was there until it got screwed up. Folk loyal to the cause of the Independents might not think kindly on the cooperating American and Chinese governments that launched the great Exodus—specially how it was them as formed the Alliance much later after the first worlds were terraformed. The history programmed by the victors says it was this cooperation that saved the human race by rescuing folk from a dying world. But the stories say it was more than the American and Chinese governments who launched Arks into space. Those with a mind for conspiratorial thinkin' believe the fact that only the American-Chinese Arks survived the journey across the Black is the result of the proto-Alliance showing its villainous colors and taking care of the competition. Some say the Seven Arks were from Europe or from one of the southern powers. But people say a lot of things, some sayin' that Cibola was the flagship Ark of the Seven, or that it was the name of Admiral of the Seven Arks.

One thing that people do know that the Arks were designed to be as idjit-proof as possible, so when something happened in that long voyage across the Deep Black that killed their crew and passengers, the Arks kept on flying. What tragedy occurred to them isn't rightly known. Some stories say that the Seven lost atmo, but it's kind of odd that they would all lose atmo at once. Others say there was a plague, bad food supplies, or that folk on board all went crazy after years of staring out into the Black. The stories go on to say that the Arks finished the Exodus, but there was no one abroad to tell them what to do next, so they just parked themselves. Or crashed. Or got covered in ice so they look just another bit of flotsam in the Black. So the story goes that they they're out there, waiting for someone to find them.

One thing on which all the tales agree is that the Arks are untouched, still loaded with their original cargo of colonization supplies and terraforming equipment. The ships themselves are easily worth billions of credits, and large enough to dwarf Alliance cruisers. The supplies are what are truly valuable, enough to build up colonies to rival Londonium or terraform the dreariest rock and turn it into a paradise. Dreamers dreamin' that findin' the Seven Arks would make their problems go away have always been on the hunt for them. Unfortunately, that sort of dreamin' has made sure that the only folk who have benefited from the Seven Arks thus far are the con men.

These are tried and true treasure-map scams. There's connin' folk into investin' their hard-earned in a salvage company that has "found" the Seven Arks. There's those that sell "true" Seven Ark treasure and more. But despite the fact that almost everyone hears of someone who has been ripped off by a Seven Arks scam, people still keep on falling for it, especially out on the Rim. The lure of easy money is a mite hard to resist.

Lou Cabeza works for the Santo Syndicate. He traveled to Persephone with his family (wife and kid—the best cover that there is) to fulfill a commissioned heist for the Syndicate. A collector of Ark-era artifacts hired the Santo Syndicate to steal an Exodus-era sourcebox from another collector, Samuel Longhaven. Lou pulled off the theft, never supposin' he'd be chased, since he didn't figure Longhaven would

want to bring in the Feds. Unfortunately for Lou, Longhaven happens to be a local Alliance Parliamentarian and he has a rather generous amount of pull on Persephone. Despite the fact that the Exodus-era sourcebox Lou stole was in private hands illegally, the planetary police agreed to investigate, usin' a fuzzy image of Lou that was snapped during the break-in. Longhaven didn't stop there. He sent his own Black Bag crew after the thief.

Lou had arranged transportation for himself and the sourcebox, but now he was afraid his ride would sell him out. Fearin' the law was getting' a mite too close, he fled to the Eavesdown Docks, leavin' the sourcebox in the safe care of his wife. Now Lou is roaming the Eavesdown Docks trying to find out a way off Persephone for himself, his family, and the sourcebox. Lots of ships lookin' to take on passengers, but Lou don't like the looks of most of them. He hears about the crew's ship and thinks it might do.

Now, ship could be *Serenity* and the crew of our friends Mal and company. In which case the crew are undoubtedly down on their luck and in need of credits and would be open to this job, though some who have been around (such as Zoe) are skeptical regarding his tale of the Seven Arks, while those who are well-educated (like doctor) are downright disbelievin'. Then there are those in the crew (Jayne), who believe whole-heartedly in the story of lost treasure.

Now it could be that the crew is one of your group's own concocting. Maybe they're livin' hand-to-mouth on the Rim, dodgin' the Alliance, and lookin' for fuel money. Or maybe they're law-abidin' citizens travelin' the Black for their health. If so, even the most honest person can get sucked in by the dream of fabulous wealth just lyin' around waitin' to be picked up.

No matter who the crew are or what their allegiances, Lou figures he can trust them up to a point. He will not, of course, tell them the truth—which is that he's a thief and a member of the Santo Syndicate. Lou spins a good yarn and he happens to know of an old shuttle hidden on Quivira and so he cooks up a succulent tale the crew will most likely swallow. He starts off by spreadin' rumors among the Eavesdown Docks that someone has found the lost Seven Arks of Cibola.

CHAPTER 5

ACT I: START FROM THE BEGINNING

FLASHBACKS

All flashbacks should occur the moment anyone mentions the Seven Arks. The mention triggers a vivid memory. Run the flashback as though it was actually occurring.

School Daze

This flashback takes place in the equivalent of an elementary class, though ages can be adjusted if it would make more dramatic sense for the crew. It is appropriate for someone with a background based around the Central planets. With a bit of adjustment you could make it work for other types of characters as well.

The time is during the annual celebration of Exodus Day, when the first Ark made landfall on Londonium, bringing humanity and civilization to the Verse. The teacher is either a man or a woman, depending on the sexual inclinations of the character, who had a head-over-heels-in-love crush on him or her. Mr. or Miss Carleton is talking about how arks were created back on Earth-That-Was to bring people to a new life. (See the quote on page 198 of the *Serenity Role Playing Game* for some ideas.) In the midst of this lesson, Aaron, a new kid who recently immigrated from one of the Border planets, interrupts the teacher. The player character can tell Aaron is new because he actually asks a question.

"What about the Seven Arks of Cibola?"

"I beg your pardon, Aaron?"

"The Seven Arks of Cibola. You know, the famous ghost ships!"

Since anyone not from the Central planets is considered an uneducated yokel, Aaron's classmates all laugh at him and jeer. The player character can either take pity on the poor kid and ask a follow-up question or keep his mouth shut.

If the player character does not help out poor Aaron, the teacher ignores the kid and he shrivels up with shame. If the player character asks some follow-up questions about the Seven Arks, the teacher tells the class that the legend of the Seven Arks is just that—a legend. However, the teacher, who is a bit of a romantic, has always thought it possible that the Seven Arks are out there somewhere; ghost ships filled with treasure wanderin' the Black. The teacher invites Aaron to talk more about what he knows and adds whatever the teacher knows, as well. (See the "The Seven Arks of Cibola" sidebar.)

The GM can reveal as much or as little as he wants. Aaron might be repeating outlandish tales he heard from his big brother, the teacher might be recounting stories from a favorite novel, or they may both have interesting information.

If the player character jumped in to help out Aaron, reward him with a Plot Point. Since the player character was smitten with the teacher, he tends to believe anything the teacher said. The player character has forgotten this incident until someone mentions the Seven Arks, when it comes back to him. This player character is likely a true believer—enthusiastic about searching for the Seven Arks and persuasive in his arguments to go along with Lou's plan.

THE LABOR CAMP

This flashback is for any character that was out on the Rim after the Unification War. The crew members could have fought on either side, because the Alliance demobilized their draftees as soon as the War was over, leaving rebels and veterans alike desperate for work. This could have happened to several characters if they were together after the war and should be related in front of the group.

Things have been downright chaotic ever since peace was declared and everyone was told to go home. What few factories that weren't bombed are defense oriented and have been shut down by the Alliance, meanin' no work for anyone. A crowd's gathered at the worker's yard and they're in an ugly mood. A couple of food-sellers have been circulating through the crowd. Four or five men are splitting a kebab when a woman's shout grabs everyone's attention.

"You yi dwei da buen chuo roh! I finally found you!"

The characters are lookin' for work and not having much luck. The labor camp is filled with people desperate to feed their families, and tempers are runnin' high. Enter Captain Ella, who lost everything—including her ship—in a chase after the Seven Arks. She has been on the search for a Major Taffat, who was the one who sold her up the river and she's just found him. Seems that during the war, Taffat had stumbled across an "authentic" map as to the whereabouts of the Seven Arks of Cibola. Bein' in desperate need himself and also a bit suspicious of this map, Taffat sold the info to Captain Ella. Taffat didn't exactly lie to her, but he didn't stress the dubious nature of the map either, and Captain Ella was not asking too closely back then. Ella discovered the map was worthless and she is more than a mite sore. She confronts Taffat to demand her money back. He refuses and Ella slugs him.

Once one punch is thrown, all the workers jump in. Even if the characters do nothing, everyone around them is scrappin', taking out their frustration and anger in a good brawl. The characters can wade in, busting heads randomly, or they can try to help either Captain Ella or Major Taffat. Neither one has any buddies with them, so if the characters step in to assist, their help is crucial. They could actually help both Ella and Taffat, since after the first couple of punches are thrown, the situation is so chaotic that they are separated in the fight and could end up fighting each other.

Either because of injuries sustained in the war or the lack of food, all of the crew who were at the labor camp suffer a -1 Attribute step. As for their opponents, use the following statistics.

Captain Ella and Major Taffat

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d8, **Int** d8, **Wil** d8;
Init d6 + d8; **LP** 18

Traits Tough as Nails (Minor Asset), Military Rank (Minor Asset)

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d4, Discipline d6/
Mental Resistance d10, Guns d6/Pistol
d10/Assault Rifle d8, Knowledge d6/Military
History d10, Perception d6/Tactics d12

Workers

Agi d6, **Str** d8, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 14

Traits Superstitious (Minor Complication), Tough
as Nails (Minor Asset)

Skills Animal Handling d6, Athletics d4, Guns d4,
Survival d6.

If the characters help either Captain Ella or Major Taffat, everyone manages to escape before the law comes down on them. Grateful for the help, either Ella, Taffat or both share some of the tales they've heard of the Seven Arks of Cibola. Ella impresses upon the crew that anything involving the Seven Arks is a scam. Taffat isn't so sure. Just because Captain Ella couldn't make heads nor tails of the map he sold her doesn't mean it was phony. In fact, he'd like to have it back.

After this incident, the characters lost track of both Captain Ella and Major Taffat. The flashback ends with the crew who were involved on the side of Captain Ella skeptical about the Seven Arks. Those who assisted Taffat might tend to think more favorably of the tales.

SCENE 1: RUMORS AND INNUENDO

How It Is (Setup):

The crew recently finished up their latest adventure and are in the process of mendin' their hurts. They are in the Eavesdown Docks, either lookin' for work or perhaps making good any debts they incurred, when they start hearing excited rumors that someone on the Docks has discovered the legendary Seven Arks of Cibola.

Problems:

How the crew hears about the Seven Arks depends on what they're doing on the docks. They might be in a bar or a supply store and overhear excited talk. They may learn of the rumor from their old pal—the middlin' crime boss, Badger. If they're concludin' business with him and all has gone well, he might toss the info in for free or he may even hire the crew to do some investigating. If the crew have their own tales to tell about the Seven Arks, swapping information might lead to all sorts of polite

conversation. If they're here to rob the bank and they're lyin' low, they could hear it from an underworld connection. With all the rumors circulating, feel free to increase or decrease the steps of any action in any way that amuses you and keeps the crew on their toes.

Whoever tells the crew the rumor believes in it and should impress on the crew that whatever they may each think personally about the truth of the Seven Arks of Cibola, a lot of people take the story seriously. Just the mere mention of the Seven Arks could cause some of the crew to remember incidents regarding the Seven Arks from their past (See the "Flashbacks" sidebar on page 106).

The Black Bag teams are working the Eavesdown Docks, trying to locate Lou from information they've received that he's holed up here. The members of the Black Bag blend into the crowd, though many of the locals recognize them as being Longhaven's "hired hands." The Black Bag won't pay attention to the crew unless they spot Lou or someone they have identified as a member of the Santo Syndicate talking to them. Then the Black Bags are *very* interested in them. Probably won't do anything violent, but they'll definitely check out the crew and find anything "untoward" about them that is available on the Cortex. (Such as warrants, bounties, etc.) The crew can learn that the Black Bag works for Longhaven with a few EASY questions put to the locals. Otherwise it is HARD to determine who these boys are. They look hard and professional, not to be taken advantage of.

New Way of Things (Results):

Hopefully the crew are extremely curious about the Seven Arks and may already be trolling for the truth of things with the help of their Companion or any other socially adept member of the crew. The Companion or anyone with Friends in High Places finds it EASY to learn that Alliance Parliamentarian Samuel Longhaven is a well-known collector of Exodus-era artifacts, that he's been in a really bad mood recently, and that his "hired guns," known as the Black Bag, are scouring the Eavesdown Docks, trying to track down the source of the Seven Arks rumors.

SCENE 2: DEALS IN MOTION

How It Is (Setup):

Lou waits for a time when the socially adept crew are off to themselves, out of the view of the public. Lou knows the Black Bag is after him and he needs to keep a low profile. He first approaches the Captain or the person who looks to be the leader. Lou Cabeza quietly introduces himself as a man in desperate need of help. He has checked out the crew on the Cortex or perhaps with his Syndicate associates and he knows something about them. He claims he had a relative who benefited from some past contact with the crew, and he knows the crew are as honest and straightforward as they need to be. Depending on what the crew do to earn their daily protein, the GM could choose a cargo run that, for a change, didn't put them in *f'n zee*. If the crew don't usually do cargo runs (perhaps they're bounty hunters or professional gamblers), select an incident that would favorably impress people.

Because of that past experience, Lou would like to talk to the captain and one other person in the crew privately. Since this is not an unusual request, the crew should agree to see what he needs and how much he's likely to pay. Lou starts off by saying:

"You've all heard the rumors circulating about the Seven Arks of Cibola? Well, they're all because of me. Not that I started spreading the stories, but because I trusted the wrong people. I grew up on Santo where my parents were farmers. I was always hearing stories about the Seven Arks from my crazy uncle. He claimed he found them, but he went soft in the head after the War and no one ever believed him. He just passed, so I brought my family here to take care of his affairs and the small inheritance he left me."

"In his apartment I found a sourcebox the like of which I had never seen before. With it were some codes. I was curious, so I took a pic of it and showed it to a collector of old tech. His name is Longhaven and when I showed him the pic he tried to play it cool,

tellin' me it was worthless. But he got the look of a wolf sniffin' lamb chops, so I left. Turns out he recognized the sourcebox as bein' from one of the Seven Arks and he sent some of his goons to steal it from me. Before I got wise to what was happenin', I showed the pic to mechanic and he said it confirmed that it was such an old design that it could have come off one of the Seven Arks. By the time I figured out what I had, Longhaven had a bounty on me and men huntin' for me and my family.

I left the sourcebox back with my wife at the rented rooms. I memorized the entry codes and then destroyed them. I'm not sure what the codes do, though my guess is that they will lead people to the Seven Arks. I haven't had a chance to enter them, because I don't dare go back to where my wife has the box hidden. I destroyed the codes because if they were found on me, well, I figure Longhaven would figure he wouldn't need me or my family. As I long as I have those codes in my noggin', no one can hurt us too bad.

I guess you see where this is headed. I need passage and protection for me and my family. You help us get away and I will help you use the sourcebox. We'll see what is on the other end of the trail. Even if the trail has nothing at the end of it but dust, the sourcebox is still worth a fair amount of credits and I'll split the money with you."

Problems:

Lou knows enough about the crew that he tailors his story to best entice them. He reminds the crew that the Exodus-era technology aboard the Seven Arks is worth millions of credits to collectors.

Lou's story holds up to questioning because the important details are true. Lou has spent most of his life out on Border worlds. He grew up on a farm and he knows enough about Santo to be able to bluff his way through questions regarding it. Unless one of the crew is from Santo's farming regions, the crew won't be able to catch him in a lie. (Not even by spending Plot Points!)

Lou did his research before he stole the sourcebox, and he knows that it is an exogeology database. Since it hasn't been connected to the Cortex for a while, it is out of date by decades. It is a true Exodus-era piece of technology, so the frequencies it uses to connect with the Cortex and the ports to connect it with other devices are obsolete. Hooking it to something and getting it working is a challenge. Lous has seen and held the sourcebox, so he can describe it accurately. (He has not, as he claims, found any codes!) It is EASY for any Mechanic to know that Lou is describing an Exodus-era piece, including the fact that the ports are out of date. Searching on the Cortex for information regarding the sourcebox won't turn up anything on this particular sourcebox, but confirms Lou's description and everything Lou has said about Exodus-era sourceboxes in general.

Lou has no idea how his uncle came across the sourcebox. He could not find any information about it among his uncle's things. Lou is smart enough to know that if he knows too much, it will look suspicious. He refuses to even speculate on how his uncle might have come by it. ("What's the point? We're just wasting time!") The crazy uncle had no friends, so there was no one Lou could ask.

If the crew search the Cortex for information about Lou, they might find minor complaints and arrests from his teenage years. The fact that they can't find any current records on him is not unusual. The Santo Syndicate makes sure their operatives are *not* in the system. If the crew ask their Friends in High Places, they learn now (if they haven't before) that Longhaven *is* a collector of Exodus-era artifacts and he's been in a really bad mood recently. Only a handful of people have actually seen his collection. Because the sourcebox was stolen, Longhaven has not let it be known he owned it. Friends in Low Places know that Longhaven's Black Bag hired guns are sniffing about the Eavesdown Docks searching for information on a guy named Lou Cabeza or his wife, Xue.

Crew who are greedy or gullible (Jayne) or who had flashback experiences which lead them to believe the stories of the Seven Arks are hooked by Lou's tale and eager to set off in search of the treasure.

If the crew isn't caught up in the adventure of a treasure hunt, Lou plays up the danger to his family. Maybe he fears Longhaven will snatch his kid or his wife or maybe Longhaven has threatened to hurt them. Lou begs the crew to help save his wife and toddler, and he promises to pay them well. Crew who have family of their own, who are altruistic and law-abiding (Shepherd Book), or soft-hearted (Kaylee), should find this argument persuasive. If there is a doctor on board, Lou adds that his baby daughter is ill and he would be grateful if the doctor could treat her. (This is true, though Lou exaggerates the severity of the child's illness.) Customize the way you present this story to the backgrounds and personalities of the crew, and they'll be ready to jump on this adventure *ma shong*.

New Way of Things (Results):

The crew have hopefully signed on with Lou, and should now be tryin' to figure out how to get Lou's family out of the Eavesdown shantytown without attracting unwanted attention. Lou stays quiet while the crew figure out how to save his family and smuggle them back to their ship without the Black Bag finding them. Lou insists that he has to go with them, otherwise his wife won't come willingly. (This is true. Xue is not the trusting kind!) Lou strongly suggests that the crew should go armed. The Black Bag boys mean business.

SCENE 3: RESCUE

How It Is (Setup):

The next move is to rescue Lou's wife Xue, his toddler daughter, Phillipa, and the sourcebox. His family is holed up in one of the shantytowns that surround the Eavesdown Docks. Most of the homes and shacks here are made from discarded shipping containers.

Lou admits that he doesn't completely trust the crew, pointing out that the last time he trusted someone, he was betrayed. Rather than telling the crew where to find his wife and kid, Lou reveals only the general location in the Eavesdown shantytown. Once there, Lou guides them to the location. If the crew do recon before pulling off the job, they have no luck

finding the Cabeza family, but they are able to familiarize themselves with the area. It is EASY to discover that strangers have been asking questions about Lou Cabeza and his family.

Lou is not armed so he asks the crew for the loan of a pistol. He claims to be an okay shot, having hunted varmints and the like back on the farm. Truth is he is only a middlin' shot, so if the players are lookin' for him to be skilled, his story holds.

Problems:

The Black Bag team is desperate to find Lou Cabeza and his family. In addition to the agents combing the Eavesdown Docks searching for Lou, other agents are looking for his wife, Xue.

The Black Bag agents have learned that Lou took lodgings in the shantytown area of the Eavesdown Docks. There are three to five two-man teams searching the shantytown, asking people for information. Another Black Bag team is waiting to respond if Lou and/or his wife are spotted. This response team requires a certain amount of time to reach the area. The search team waits for the response team, all the while doing what they can to prevent any rescue. The exact number of teams the crew face is dependent on how many of the crew go in and what kind of strategy they've developed. The action heats up if the crew decide to use a vehicle. While vehicles make getting in and out of the shantytown with Lou and his family easier, vehicles are not a very common sight in the Eavesdown shantytowns and certainly invite attention.

While Lou has been talking to the crew, the Black Bag search team has received a tip that sends them to the street on which Xue and her daughter are living. The Black Bag members don't know the exact address, and so they're lurkin' about, hopin' either Lou or his wife show. They have a fair description of Lou, but none of his wife. Xue knows people are asking about her and she has brains enough to keep herself hidden. She has also been housebound due to her daughter's illness.

Black Bag Search Team

Agi d6, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6;
Init d6 + d6; **LP** 20

Traits Tough as Nails (Major Asset)

Skills Athletics d4, Guns d4, Melee Weapon
Combat d6/Knives d8/Clubs d8, Unarmed
Combat d6/Brawling d10

Weapons/Gear Club (d6 B), Micro Transmitter,
Pistol (d6 W)

Black Bag Response Team

Agi d8, **Str** d8, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d6, **Wil** d6;
Init d8 + d6; **LP** 14

Traits Chip on the Shoulder (Minor Complication)

Skills Athletics d6, Discipline d4, Guns d6/Pistol
d8/SMG d8, Knowledge d4, Perception d4.

Weapons/Gear Ballistic Mesh (1 W, converts
bullet W to S), Micro Transmitter, Pistol (d6
W), Rifle (d8 W) Large Mule P d6, M -. Seats
2, Speed 40 mph

Either the crew figure out that Lou should wear a disguise or he disguises himself. He insists that they don't have time for anything elaborate, so this may be nothing more than dark glasses and a cunning hat. If you want to play up the urgency of the situation, Lou is in contact with his wife, who tells him that she sees suspicious-looking people lounging around outside the dwelling. She's terrified and pleads with Lou to come quickly.

The Black Baggers have been searching this area for a while, but they haven't had much joy because this is a neighborhood that values its privacy. However, once Lou shows his face, someone is bound to recognize him and sell him out, tipping off the Black Bag search team.

Depending on the crew's numbers, at least one Search team is waiting on the street outside Lou's rented rooms. The moment they spot Lou, they call for backup from the response team and any other search teams that are in the area. The response team arrives after only a few minutes.

Now it could be that the crew's old friend, Badger, just happens to run this area of Shantytown. Or it could be some other King of the Dung Heap that the crew have dealt with before. He is resentful because the Black Bag hired guns haven't been the least bit respectful to him. Bein' more'n a mite paranoid, Badger (or the "King") suspects "high falutin" Sam Longhaven of wanting to muscle in on his

business. He doesn't want to cross the powerful Longhaven, however, and so he's just keeping an eye on things. His boys are watchin' the Black Bag teams and if lead starts flyin', they may take a couple of potshots at the Black Bag team, then dash off to inform Badger and ask for instructions.

If this is the case, Badger pokes his head out to see what's goin' on. Depending on how you want to play this, he either determines that this altercation has nothing to do with him and tells his boys to pull back and let the crew and Black Baggers work out their issues by themselves or he decides to get in on the action. If Badger has worked with the crew before, he recognizes them, and currently has friendly feelings toward them. He and his men join in on their side (on the understandin' that he'll be well-compensated for his trouble). If Badger doesn't know the crew or he has a grudge against them, he could still be glad to have help removing the threat of the Black Bag and teaching Longhaven to keep away from the Eavesdown Docks.

King of the Dung Heap

Agi d6, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d10, **Int** d10, **Wil** d8;
Init d6 + d10 **LP** 14

Traits Friends in Low Place (Minor Asset),
Greedy (Minor Complication).

Skills Covert d6/Streetwise d12, Guns d6,
Influence d6/Negotiation d8/Intimidation d10,
Knowledge d6, Perception d6/Black-Market
Trends d10.

Note: These are not official stats for Badger, but will do in a pinch if you decide to use him in this story.

Bully Boy

Agi d6, **Str** d10, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6;
Init d6 + d6 **LP** 20

Traits Tough as Nails (Major Asset).

Skills Athletics d4, Guns d4, Melee Weapon
Combat d6/Knife d8/Clubs d8, Unarmed
Combat d6/Brawling d10.

Weapons/Gear Club (d6 B), Combat Knife (d4
W), Pistol (d6 W)

Mrs. Xue Cabeza and her daughter Phillipa are staying in rented rooms made out of a shipping container, stashed in with a stack of other shipping containers being used as homes. They live in one half of a container that has been cut open to form a door at both ends.

Two small shacks built around the entrances at either end form small entryways. Holes cut into the sides of the container serve as windows. A wooden partition wall in the middle of the shipping container separates the Cabeza's dwelling from their neighbors. There being no opening in the wall between the two rooms, it takes a HEROIC effort to knock down the wall and create a way out.

Xue has either been in contact with Lou or she has made preparations for leaving in advance, 'cause she is ready to go. Xue is keeping watch on the street (both front and back) from windows. She can see the Black Bag people on the street in front of the house. They are not around the back, so if the crew think to come in from the back, they have an extra moment or two before someone spots Lou and points him out. She is on the lookout for trouble and unless Lou is with the crew when they enter the building, Xue is ready for it. Anyone looking in the window sees her seated in a chair by the bed. What looks to be a small child lies huddled beneath the blankets.

In truth, Xue has a kitchen knife hidden in her dress. The child-sized lump beneath the covers is actually a pile of clothes. Her daughter, Phillipa, is hiding, bundled up and warm, in a trunk on the opposite side of the shipping container out of harm's way. The suitcase containing the sourcebox is near the door along with several other suitcases.

If someone other than Lou knocks on the door, Xue refuses to open it. If they try to force it open, Xue draws her knife and tries to stab the closest person, planning to go for their gun. If Lou is with the crew, he greets his wife and assures her all is well. After confirming that he is not there under duress, Xue quickly organizes things. Phillipa crawls out of her makeshift bed/hidey-hole to hug her daddy. She is still feverish and if there is a doctor present, he can take a look at her. It is EASY to determine that the child has the chicken pox and that she's on the mend. A botch here would be unfortunate, leading the doctor to believe the child has Eavesdown Spotted Fever—which is highly contagious and sometimes fatal. Lou picks up his daughter and holds her tight, telling her to be good and play "the quiet game." He helps her put on her jacket, while Xue puts on her own jacket and grabs the suitcase containing the

sourcebox. All this takes only a few moments (depending on the length of the doctor's examination of the child).

The crew should keep in mind that they are now responsible for the life of a mother and her small child and they should avoid gunplay if at all possible. Or they should make sure mother and child make it out before the action starts. If the crew don't think of it, Lou could suggest that he and his family, accompanied by a crewmember (perhaps the doctor), should hustle out the back way, while the crew provide either a diversion or covering fire. If this happens, Xue takes the sourcebox in its special case with her. The crew could insist that Lou stay, but Xue won't leave without him. Lou needs the crew and the ship so there's no chance he'll split on them. Note also that Lou truly loves his family and if all hell breaks loose and things get really ugly (such as he and the crew and his family are trapped in the house with bullets flyin' everywhere), he exchanges the sourcebox for the safe release of his wife and child.

The sourcebox is hidden inside what looks to be a piece of cheap luggage. If the crew happen to open the suitcase, they discover that it has a bullet resistant casing, while a cushion of foam protects the sourcebox, keeping it safe and secure. If the crew think to ask Lou, he says that this was the way he found it. He has no idea how his uncle came by this fancy piece of luggage. (The truth is that the Syndicate had the luggage specially made to carry the sourcebox and gave it Lou. The luggage has a beacon concealed inside that even Lou doesn't know about!)

If the crew escapes by vehicle, the Black Bag has its own vehicles parked nearby and they give chase.

Medium Hovercraft

P d8, **M** -; **LP** 16; **Init** d8+d8.

Features Seats 4 capable of speeds up to 150 mph.

Make this chase as exciting as you like, with mules crashing into hot dog stands and whizzing around corners, all the while bullets are flyin'.

Cibola Sourcebox

The Cibola sourcebox is a Newtech sourcebox of exogeology dating back to the Exodus. As such, its database has information on planets, moons, and most asteroids, but is dated. The sourcebox's assessments and descriptions are from before the settlement of the 'Verse, so what the sourcebox may list as viable site for mining may have already been played out. In addition to the exogeology database, there is a large assortment of construction plans and blueprints for subterranean facilities, ranging from cold food storage to hollow asteroid bases.

The building database is indexed with the known exogeology of the 'Verse, so that for any particular location, one can use the Cibola Sourcebox to determine what kind of subterranean structures could be built and what kind of foundations can be supported. The database is designed to automatically update itself via open sources on the Cortex, but that function has been locked out. If and when updating is permitted, the Cibola sourcebox retains a "picture" of the previous database for reference. The exogeology database was as complete as possible for the time, and may contain information that has been forgotten, such as unexamined potential mine locations.

The Cibola sourcebox is designed for the rigors of colonizing the 'Verse. As such, it requires very little power to function and has embedded solar cells in its casing to power it. If and when it is connected to another system, the Cibola sourcebox can draw power from that system and charge itself. The Cibola can function in complete darkness for up to 50 hours without requiring a recharge, and can function indefinitely in natural sunlight. However, due to its construction and low power requirements, it would be an INCREDIBLY difficult task to use the Cibola sourcebox to power another item. It is designed to take a lot of punishment, with an Armor of 4W and 10 LP. The Cibola sourcebox is made of a smart, self-healing plastic so that it can recover up to 5 LP, one per day, as long it does not go below 5 LP. After the Cibola sourcebox has healed itself a total of 5 LP or has been reduced to below 5 LP, it must be bathed in a specialized mixture of Newtech smart plastics to complete repairs, the acquisition and cost of which is outside the scope of this adventure.

The Cibola sourcebox could serve as a communicator, but was designed to tap the Cortex and waves using frequencies that are no longer in common use. The sourcebox has to be modified to do so, either physically or by using a plug in module.

Physically, the sourcebox is larger than it has to be, roughly 18 inches by 24 inches with two handles. It is about four inches thick with a touchscreen that makes up most of one its largest flat surfaces. Recessed on one side are several port connections of a type that have not been used in decades.

The Cibola sourcebox begins to power on when the screen is touched for five seconds, taking about thirty seconds. When it is done, the screen display states that the touchscreen options have been locked out and to plug the sourcebox into a Cortex Terminal or Data Library. This is not as easy as it would seem, because of the previously stated problem with incompatible ports, but an INCREDIBLE effort on the part of somebody with a Technical Engineering background could patch a workaround.

If the crew decide to try to steal the sourcebox, leaving the Cabeza family to the tender mercies of the Black Baggers, they find themselves in a heap of trouble. If Badger or the equivalent is involved, he'll see the crew trying to make off with a suitcase and he'll figure they're aimin' to do him out of something profitable. He and his boys do their best to try to stop them. If they do manage to escape, Lou immediately points them out to the Black Bag teams. Since the Black Bag are more interested in recovering the valuable sourcebox, they chase after the crew, allowing Lou and his family time to escape. All the Black Bag teams converge on the crew as they try to flee shantytown.

If the crew manage to escape, the Black Bag and the Santo Syndicate is keeping an eye on all the collectors of Exodus-era technology, figurin' that the crew will likely try to sell it to one of them. (There's not much else they can do with it, since they don't have the non-existent codes.) To add to the crew's difficulty, the moment Lou tells the Santo Syndicate that someone has made off with the goods, the Syndicate activates the small beacon hidden inside the carrying case. It is INCREDIBLE for anyone to locate the beacon or even know it is there. The beacon sends out a signal that the Syndicate can use to track the sourcebox. This is standard procedure for the Syndicate, who have learned never to trust their own operatives.

CHAPTER 5

New Way of Things (Results):

With a bit of luck and resourcefulness on the part of the crew, they should be leaving the Eavesdown Docks at a quick pace with the Cabeza family and the sourcebox in tow. Once they reach the ship, they need to make a quick getaway. If they have given the Black Bag the slip, then the ship can safely escape without the Black Bag ever findin' out the identity of the ship or the crew. (Unless the crew have somehow managed to get on Badger's bad side, in which case he would be happy to tell what he knows. If they don't, he won't likely be keen on doin' Longhaven any favors.)

If crew escaped the Eavesdown Docks in a vehicle, the Black Bag is hot on their heels. Though they may not be able to prevent the ship from taking off, they get a good look at the name and number. Longhaven does not have enough influence to make the crew the subject of an Alliance-wide dragnet, but he persuades the authorities to pass along any useful information they discover about where the ship is bound.

Unless something breaks or goes really wrong during launch (if Things Don't Go Smooth, for instance), the crew should be able to get away before Longhaven has time to set bounty hunters on the crew's trail. If the crew already has a bounty hunter or some other kind of nemesis tracking them, that person quickly hears of the crew's actions. If you want to spice things up a bit, have the crew's enemy turn up toward the end of the adventure, just when the crew think they've gotten away with the goods (or their lives).

ACT II: BITS AND PIECES

SCENE 1: FIDDLY BITS

How It Is (Setup):

The ship now safely headed into the Black, things have calmed down some. It might occur to the crew that they could find out if Lou is being honest with them by questioning his wife and child. Couple problems with that. Both

parents are very protective of their daughter and will not leave her alone with any of the crewmembers, including the doctor. Phillipa is only three and there's not much she could tell them anyway. Lou has taught her to play "the quiet game" which means she clams up around strangers.

As for Xue, she knows to keep her mouth shut. Lou finds a chance at some point to explain their cover story to her. Until then, she's too worried about her sick child to answer questions or talk to anyone.

Once Lou is certain that his family is okay, and their hurts and the chicken pox are tended to, he opens up the suitcase. Either Xue or Lou keeps a eye on the suitcase at all times, refusing to let it out of their sight, so it is difficult for the crew to get a look at it without Lou being around.

When the suitcase is opened, the sourcebox can be lifted out and examined. It is large, measuring 18 inches feet by two feet. It is four inches thick with a screen that takes up most of a flat surface. On the back are several port connections of a type that have not been used in decades. The sourcebox will power on when the screen is touched, showing a booting-up screen for about 30 seconds. When it is done, the screen will display that the touchscreen options have been turned off and to plug the sourcebox into a Cortex Terminal or Data Library. Needless to say, the crew will not have the necessary port connectors. They won't be able to easily jury rig this. The sourcebox does not appear to have active wireless Cortex connection.

It is possible that once the crew heard Lou's story about the sourcebox they might have thought to stock up on old Exodus-era connectors, etc. If the crew did find parts for the sourcebox, they might merit a few Plot Points for cleverness, but that's it. Since they hadn't seen the sourcebox, they could only guess what parts to buy and they'll find out that these don't fit. If the crew insist on trying to make them fit, they won't succeed and screwing around with the useless parts will delay them at least six hours (keeping them from the next scene) until the mechanic realizes that the parts won't work. It's also likely that since the crew were buyin' parts for Exodus-era equipment, the Black Bag heard about this, began askin'

questions, and by now has a pretty good idea who they are. Let them make rolls and perform complex actions, but the result is still the same.

If someone has the bright idea of ripping apart the sourcebox to see what makes it tick or to try to hotwire it, Lou strenuously objects. If anything happens to the information inside the sourcebox they're *wan dubn lub*. And with the casing damaged, it is harder to sell the sourcebox if they discover it doesn't contain any useful information as to the whereabouts of the Seven Arks.

Lou suggests that they fly to the junkyard planet, Boros. They'll almost certainly find parts there. If the crew go for that, this furthers Lou's plan. The delay of this side-trip is enough that the Santo Syndicate is waiting for the crew when they arrive at Quivira. The Santo Syndicate has left their ship nearby, and is lying in wait inside the tunnels of Quivira, with Lou knowing that the Syndicate would have had plenty of time to beat them there. He tries his best to capitalize on his foreknowledge so that he, his family, and the Cibola sourcebox are somehow separated from the rest of the crew soon after getting to Quivira.

But it is AVERAGE for any mechanically inclined player to realize that almost any junkyard will do now that they know what to look for, and while the Eavesdown Docks are way too hot for them to dare return at the moment, there are several other smaller ports on Persephone that will probably have the parts, or any of the closer moons. Unless the crew suggest a specific junkyard or another facility that they have used before, the closest and best location to find the parts they need is the Antillia Junk Emporium.

As for Lou, he claims to be not mechanically inclined (only somewhat true) and while he has no choice if the crew take the whole ship into Antillia junkyard or to any other junkyard, if they just take a shuttle Lou tries to argue that he may as well stay behind since he would be of no use there.

Problems:

The first problem is that the crew need to find the parts. If the crew think of doing some checking around on the Cortex, they find a junkyard that has the parts as EASY as pie, and is more than willing to sell them to the crew for

20 credits since it is mostly old electrical systems and would be considered scrapware if the crew hadn't specifically asked for it. If the crew doesn't bother looking around on the Cortex, they'll have to check out several different junkyards until they find one that has the parts, which makes it a HARD search.

Every time the crew searches, there is a chance that the Black Baggers catch up with them. If you want to give the crew hints, let there be signs that others are looking for them. This can be as simple as junkyards that they have just waved suddenly waving them back, looking all shifty-eyed and saying that they just found the parts that the crew were looking for, but someone else is looking for them, so the crew had better get there lickety-split. Friendly junkyard owners may warn them that some folks are sending some waves around lookin' for the same set of parts that the crew are looking for and the like. But unless the crew stop to try to take a stand or go into a trap that they've decided that they want to trip, the Black Baggers only catch up with the crew at the Antillia Junk Emporium. And quite frankly, if the crew want to go elsewhere, you can probably switch some stuff around so that the next scene takes place at someplace identical to Antillia in all but name.

Unless you have a junkyard in mind that the crew purposefully select or one that better fits your campaign, the nearest junkyard that has the parts they need is the Antillia Junk Emporium. It's an orbital junkyard at one of the LaGrange points of Persephone. LaGrange points are where the gravitational influences of a planet and its moons cancel each other out, and objects that are left there stay there basically forever. In other words, the perfect place to place dozens of old ships that would never survive planetfall in a barely organized mess that only by asking (and by asking, we mean paying) the Antillia's custodian that you would even begin to find anything of use.

Once at Antillia, there is the problem of getting to the ship with the parts. Once the junkyard's custodian has received payment and waved over the location, the crew need to get to the junked ship, which of course is in the middle of the junkyard. The crew need to take their ship in, unless they have a shuttle with an airlock so the crew can go into the junked ship

to get the parts they need (none of the junked ships are pressurized) or if their shuttle does not have an airlock, be willing to go through the junkyard in their pressure suits. Whether or not they use a shuttle (if they have one) or their ship has an influence on their opposition in the next scene, since the Black Baggers catch up and have a hopefully exciting chase with the crew in and amongst the junkyard.

The crew can't use a pulse drive in the junkyard; everything is far too closely packed together, and if they turned it on for a second they'd be out of junkyard. The crew must instead inch their way through the junkyard with reaction drives. There are some clear paths through it, but they aren't well marked. Unless the crew specifically say that they are rushing things, simply have the pilot make two or three rolls, hemm and haw back and forth a bit, and say that a loose panel scratched the ship's side but other than that, there were not any problems. If the crew insist on flying quickly through here, it will take a **HARD** piloting action. If the crew fails, check the damage inflicted to their ship by consulting the guidelines in the next scene. If the crew are piloting a shuttle, feel free to trash it for them. If the crew are using their ship, if necessary, fudge it so they merely do a good whack of damage to it, enough that they wish they had the parts to repair it. Oh wait, the crew are surrounded by spare parts. Still, they were being a mite bit silly so let the junkyard custodian freely overcharge them since it is not like the crew can go anywhere else. Though let them get their ship repaired enough so that chase sequence in the next scene is fun.

Once the crew have reached the junked ship, the crew will have to use their pressure suits to bridge the gap to it (an old Homestead Transport) that is hanging in space in its landed mode. There is no airlock left on the Homestead, but it's exterior panels have been removed. While the ship or shuttle that the players have used cannot dock with the Homestead, the crew should be able to get close enough to one of the gaps in the hull that it would be just a gentle push off from the crew's ship. The inside of the Homestead on the other hand is anything but gentle for it is a horrible mess of ripped-up wiring, removed bulkheads and signs that this ship

has either been through a battle or a very careless reclamation crew. There are abundant physical dangers in the environment, with all the characters having to take an **Agility** action that is **HARD** to make sure that they don't snag their suits on something sharp and nasty. If they do, use the standard actions for both patching the suits (if they remembered to bring the patch kits) and the brief exposure to vacuum. The crew have been told that the pilot station on the Homestead has the parts that they need, according to Antillia's inventory. The mechanic (or someone with a good grasp of the mechanical skill set) has to get to the control compartment, and with a **HEROIC** realization note that the inventory was wrong and the parts are actually part of the communications console. Once the parts have been pulled from the correct place and the crew exit the Homestead, repeat the **Agility** action to make sure that don't damage their suits. It is a simple jump back to the crew's ship when the crew are finished.

If the crew think they can get away with not payin' because they are so fierce looking and all, the custodian will simply wait until the crew's ship and/or shuttle is in the junkyard and then wave-detonate the explosives that are hidden in some of the wrecks. This will turn the whole Junk Emporium into a giant buzzsaw with results similar to what happens in the next scene.

If the crew decide to go to a surface-located junkyard, this scene and the next will have to be altered to include interesting chase sequences. One of the problems of having a planetary ship chase is that if it doesn't have canyons or the like there isn't much opportunity for fancy flying. Jetting a ship around rock formations might seem over-used so one way to make it a different is to have it in the middle of an tropical storm that's heavily ionizing their sensors, essentially blinding them. That way a chase can be in a blustery storm, with the ship dropping and trying to buck from the high winds as the pilot fights the control and all the other crew peering out the windows shouting out when they spot something. Having the storm start to move in as the crew begins picking through the junkyard foreshadows this eventuality.

New Way of Things (Results):

If things have gone well, the crew are now safe and sound on their ship or shuttle, outside of the Homestead with the parts they need. If things have not gone well, their ship or shuttle might be worse for wear, along with the crew needing some doctorin' for vacuum exposure, though they should still have the parts to connect the Cibola sourcebox to something that can read the information that is locked in it. The crew should have just begun to work their way out of Antillia, or hooking up the Cibola sourcebox immediately before moving, in case they need more parts, another ship approaches them inside Antillia. There have been one or two other ships moving around in the junkyard, getting their own parts but none of them having gotten close to the crew. But this ship is directly approaching the crew's ship. If the players have sensors better than Alertness d4, the crew can tell their ship is being eyeballed by something that is attached to a gun or missile of some kind. And if they don't, hopefully one of them notices that the approaching ship blows off hidden panels (which knocks into debris in the Emporium, beginning a chain reaction of detritus hitting each other, making it more difficult to maneuver in Antillia) with the appropriate weapons now protruding from the previously hidden bays.

Crackling over the speakers is a tightband wave demanding the sourcebox.

SCENE 2: SUNDAY DRIVIN'

How It Is (Setup):

The Black Baggers have managed to find the crew, just in time too, otherwise the players could have gotten plumb clean away, and we couldn't have that. However, the ship that the Black Baggers are using is not an ASREV or some other heavily armed ship, but a modified Wren. That was the only ship they had that was in position to check out Antillia which means that this is not a dedicated warbird, but it does have several weapon systems hidden away. You should decide just what kind of weaponry is installed within the concealed bays to make the

Black Bagger's ship a more even match with whatever the crew is flyin'. If the crew have no weapons, just give the Black Baggers a single rapid fire autocannon (something that can spit out 10 pound warheads with burst fire) but with limited ammo (there is only so much room in hidden weapon bays, after all.) If somehow the crew fly around in something like an ASREV, feel free to boost the Black Bagger courier to a military-level ship, with multiple weapon mounts and an integral cannon.

And do you remember that part in the last scene where you were told to fly about a nice safe speed? Someone forgot to give the Black Baggers that bit of information about the speed limit as they dive through the debris field right at the crew!

Problems:

The problems here seem rather straightforward, but there are some tweaks to it.

First of all, the Black Baggers were given the information about the crew's location from one of the custodian's assistants. The Black Baggers's Wren approached Antillia from a different direction than the crew—so if the crew left their ship outside Antillia, it's still right where they left it. The problem with that is unless the crew left their best pilot with the ship, the chain reaction of colliding debris escalates and soon only the very best pilots will have half a chance at maneuvering into the yard to help. But if the crew didn't bring their best pilot into the junkyard, where the merest misstep could have killed them, then they deserve the cruel fate that awaits them.

If the crew think about just fleeing, the Black Baggers let them. After all, the crew have just one ship, it is a lot easier to capture another ship when you outnumber them. What the Black Baggers do is just trail the crew's ship for six hours or so until two more ships arrive, both of them ASREVs with full weapon loads along with heavily armed boarders. The Black Baggers' Wren has been modified so that it has enough speed that unless the crew's ship wins orbital races or whose mechanic used to design pulse drives for a living, there is no way that the crew outruns them. And yes, whatever kind of sensor rig the crew's ship has, the Wren has one

that is better, so that the crew have a very hard time escaping it. Unless of course, the crew deal with it at Antillia.

The Wren is fairly small, just a small crew compartment, engines, and some space on the exterior for the hidden weapons bays, so it cannot take a lot of damage. That way even if the players don't have a lot of weapons, they can easily disable the Black Baggers ship by causing it to crash by skimming close to the ships and wreckage in Antillia. The trick is to avoid disabling your own ship in the process. Or if you want to shoot at the other guy with your own weapons, but the wreckage in the junkyard makes it difficult, both pilots can realize this and use the wreckage as cover.

Just flying around in the junkyard can be hazardous, as the wreckage snowballs and makes it harder to maneuver. The base target number just to move in Antillia is determined by the current speed of the ship and adding it to the fact that it is **HARD** just to pilot a ship in it. The pilot that fails the **HARD** action with the additional difficulty of the debris, the crew's ship takes the equivalent of ram with a Strength d8 object. If the pilot would have succeeded at the action without the debris modifier the crew's ship takes the equivalent of ram with a Strength d4 object.

Feel free to modify this as necessary in order to give both ships a decent chance in the Antillia junkyard, otherwise if the first hit finishes things it may not be shiny at all for the crew so they may as well sweat as long as it is amusing.

If the players insist on making a run for it, they have to make at least three piloting actions using the above rules.

Shootin' Stuff

There is a lot of debris running around, and the speed that the ships are moving means that the characters' are twisting and turning through it to make sure their ships don't smash up. It is assumed that all the ships have at least light cover from all the pieces moving around. If a ship takes a shot that would have missed without the light cover, the shot goes wide. The next time that the attacking ship makes a piloting action, lower their Pilot skill by -1 step as the debris near the firing ship got stirred up because of the miss. If the shot would have hit without the light cover, lower the Pilot skill of

the targeted ships next action -1 step, because the weapon hit something near enough to the target to stir things up. And if the Shooting action succeeded, what you are even lookin' at these fancy words for, you know what happens when something gets shot!

Bein' Clever

It won't take long for the crew to realize that by shootin' stuff and missing, debris is stirring around and making Piloting more difficult so imagine how much worse it could be if the crew were deliberately trying to create a mess. In this case, accuracy is more important than damage, since pieces have to be nudged into the other ship's path. Spotting the right piece to hit in order to start a cascade is **HARD**. Once a piece is found, it takes a **HEROIC** effort to hit it.

The Black Baggers won't start Bein' Clever until at least two combat turns after the crew have started Bein' Clever.

Bein' Really Clever with Fancy Flyin'

Since most ships a crew could have won't exactly be brimming over with weapons, the best chance for the crew to take care of the Black Baggers is to do some fancy flying. The pilot can voluntarily increase the Difficulty of his Piloting by any amount of steps. That is considered the new Difficulty for his Piloting for that turn. If the pilot fails the Piloting action, the result is as if the player failed normally with the result of a hit on the ship's hull. If the action is a success, the additional steps are added to their opponent's next Piloting action. This represents the pilot cutting things fine, just barely missing wreckage as they fly around Antillia.

The Black Baggers won't do any Fancy Flyin' 'cause their pilot doesn't have that much confidence in his skills, so this represents the crew's best chance to disable their opponent's ship. The crew should be guided into trying this, not given it outright. For instance, mention that how the Black Baggers's Wren is avoiding some of the bigger pieces of junk in the Emporium but still follows closely behind the crew, sometimes even clipping parts of the Wren on the smaller bits of junk with the Wren's pilot overcorrecting for those mishaps.

Modified Wren

Agi d4, **Str** d4, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d4, **Int** d2, **Wil** d4; **Init** d4+d4, **LP** 8

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Transport d2, Space Transport Operations/Transport d2.

Specifications

Speed Class 3 cruise/5 hard burn

Crew Two

Crew Quarters Bridge doubles as cabin and living space for two.

Fuel Capacity 15 tons (4,500 hours).

Cargo Capacity One standardized 40-foot container (25 tons) in external frame. Currently fitted with an extended cabin, extra fuel, and hidden autocannon.

Armament 1 Autocannon (10 lb warheads with burst fire) 30 rounds

Note Assume that any required pilot's skills are d8.

New Way of Things (Results):

Hopefully, the scene ends with the crew have disabling or destroying the Black Bagger's Wren. If the crew's ship gets disabled, the Black Bagger's will think that the crew's ship has been damaged much worse than it was and will attempt to board the crew's ship. There are three Black Baggers, all equipped with pressure suits and otherwise equipped like the Search teams from Act I, Scene 3. They will look for the Cibola sourcebox, believing that the crew are dead or unconscious. It is up to the crew to correct those mistaken impressions.

If the crew want to check out the Black Bagger's ship, they can but won't learn much. The ship has been stripped of normal identification marks so unless the characters feel like pulling serial numbers off the ship's parts to track down who owns it, they won't find a thing. The Wren's terminals have just basic navigation and the like, nothing that will tell the players more than what they know already. If the crew are lingering, or if you think that things just need to be hurried along, have a wave come over the Wren's Cortex Terminal while the players are poking around saying that Teams 3 and 7 have vectored in on their wave. Those Teams are burning hard and fast to the Antillia Junk Emporium where the Wren's last wave

had pinpointed the targets. ETA is some time that gets the crew moving. If any of the Black Baggers are alive, they either try to ambush the crew if few enough crew approach them or jet off into the debris field. Unlike their piloting, the Black Baggers are very good at fighting in Zero-G. So unless the crew are willing to spend hours looking, the crew won't be able to catch them. And let's face it, after all the fussin' and cussin', Antillia's custodian has probably called for help from the big guns to stick the bill on someone for putting the junk back into it's proper place. If the crew seem like reasonable folks (or not that heavily armed) the custodian goes out and harangues them himself, asking for money or their ship's paper so his lienholder can go get after the crew himself. All this should encourage the crew not to stick around too long or, more importantly, find out anything to poke holes in Lou Cabeza's story.

At the end of things, the crew should be on their ship, making mad for any place other than here. There is probably a little bit of repair work to be done, and some doctorin' from being banged up a bit, but the crew should have all the gear they need to access the Cibola sourcebox.

SCENE 3: QUIVIRA, HO!

How It Is (Setup):

After hooking up the sourcebox, everyone turns to Lou Cabeza to make the next move. Lou said he had the set of commands memorized that hopefully give them a clue to where the treasure of the Seven Arks of Cibola could be found. Sitting in front of the sourcebox, Lou begins slowly typing commands into the sourcebox, occasionally stopping, muttering under his breath as he counts off steps in his head. If any of the crew mess with Lou's concentration, he shushes them as he struggles to remember the steps. After a few minutes he picks up speed but still uses hunt and peck typing, until he finishes with a grin and a flourish.

"See, it leads here!" He points to the screen, as on the Cibola sourcebox's display forms the image of Quivira, an asteroid marked for mining in the old exogeology database.

Lou Cabeza also shows how the entry is crosslinked to an old plan on how to construct hangers in asteroids taking into account its geology. Structural requirements, parts, time needed, and that sort of thing. "So I guess that means that there is a shuttle hanger somewhere on Quivira."

After a couple of seconds, a warning comes onto the screen, saying that the sourcebox detects an active Cortex link. The database has not been updated for more than 10,000 hours, would you like to update the files? Lou turns off the sourcebox at this point, saying that he doesn't want to mess with the settings, the sourcebox may have to be checked again.

Problems:

The first problem for the scene is to finally make the connection to the sourcebox so the crew can find the information they think they need to begin to track the Seven Arks of Cibola. Once the crew have the parts, putting them together so that the sourcebox can be consulted is an AVERAGE complex action. Important for later, during this process the mechanic has to be told that the sourcebox cannot be isolated from the Cortex because the programs translating its old programming needs a live Cortex connection. This sets up the last scene of the adventure, so if the crew decide they absolutely will not connect the sourcebox to the Cortex, make it a HEROIC effort to adjust the sourcebox.

If the crew watch Lou enter information, it takes a FORMIDABLE Alertness action to copy it themselves later or a HEROIC Intelligence action to notice anything unusual about it. No matter what they roll, the sequence of commands that Lou used to call up the information on Quivira seems patternless. Attempts to replicate the command sequence ends up at the same place that Lou Cabeza did, the entry for Quivira, though it is named in the database as Asteroid Survey #2184. The plan for the hanger hewn out of an asteroid is Version 3.72 of a sequence of construction plans. That being said, there is a lot of repetitive action in the procedure to reach the entries. If a character was familiar with sourceboxes or

even most kinds of terminals, it would seem that it took twice as many steps as was needed to reach the entries. If Lou is confronted with that, he admits he is not that familiar with sourceboxes and the like and that he was just following the directions as he remembered them. Lou is positive that he entered the instructions correctly though for obvious reasons (such as the fact he made up the "procedure" of commands he followed as he did it) Lou refuses to write down or share the procedure he "memorized" until he sits down at the sourcebox and enters it. His reasoning when asked is that he wants to make sure that he remains indispensable as long as possible.

For a really clever crew, they can ask Lou to repeat the procedure which is FORMIDABLE for him to do because he wasn't really paying close attention to what he was doing when he did it. Lou spent far more of his mental effort in "selling" it to the crew than keeping exact track of what he was doing. Unless Lou rolls an Extraordinary Success, the second time Lou goes through the procedure he takes longer than the first time he did it. If Lou fails he still ends up at the same entries as before, but something feels off. The crew will not be able to pin it down unless they successfully memorized the procedure. If the crew manage to poke enough holes into Lou's story, he will finally break down and say he made up the procedure but only because he wanted to make sure the crew would keep his family safe and sound. Lou will "admit" that he was afraid that if he just said to the crew that they needed to go Quivira they would leave him and his family behind. Lou plays to the crew's egos here, in that he knew that the crew could rescue his family and get them off world but also the crew were a rough sort and didn't know how decent they were deep down. Hopefully, this will get the crew and the story back on track.

Locating Quivira on navigational charts from the information in the sourcebox is only an AVERAGE action. Basic information on the Cortex was that the mine was worked by wildcatters until it was eventually "bought" by the Corrone Mining Consortium, like so many of them are. The economically extracted ore was taken and the mine was shut down and abandoned before the Unification War. All of this is available on the Cortex with just a

few minutes of searching with an AVERAGE action. Considering its age, if the crew is willing to undertake a FORMIDABLE complex action they will find a mostly correct map of the Quivira mine. The crew can take a test once everyday (this is assuming that the crew look in their spare time). If a player dedicates all of their time to the search, they automatically find a map (similar to one that is shown in Act 3, Scene 1) but instead of the deadfalls (which happened after the map was finished) there is a slight continuation of the tunnels beyond the deadfalls. Since those tunnels continue and there are at least two of them that seem to come close to Quivira's surface, making them good candidates for having hangers. If a player commits all of his time to the search, choose one item or task that the player normally would do on the ship and have something go wrong since the player was not doing it. It can be as simple as if the player is supposed to be the cook, he screws up a recipe, giving the crew a -1 step to their Vitality actions for the next few days as their stomachs rebel or a minor part wears out, meaning that the ship suffers -1 step to Agility-based actions.

The trip to Quivira takes less than a week and for most of that time Lou and his family stay in their quarters, using the cover that Phillipa still hasn't recovered from her chicken pox. The only time that the players see Lou is at mealtimes as he picks up his family's meals and tries to stay out of everyone's way.

If the crew have a doctor and offer his services to take a look at Phillipa, Xue takes them up on it with more enthusiasm than Lou. Xue is with Phillipa the entire time that she is examined; check back in Act I, Scene 3 for information on Phillipa's chicken pox. Some simple meds will take of any lingering symptoms. The crew's demeanor in this sequence determines whether or not they learn or gain anything of interest from it. If the player does not want to role play the scene, has a very low Influence skill, or acts in a gruff or brusque manner, then the player does not make a favorable impression on either Xue or Phillipa, and they go right back to their cabin and stay there for the rest of the trip.

If the crew are charming or show some vulnerability, Xue or Phillipa may thaw toward them. Phillipa may forget that she is supposed

to be playing the quiet game and may speak with the characters, letting loose some relevant information. Such as the fact that Phillipa lives in an apartment where she plays with her dolls, rather than on a farmhouse. Nothing that can't be explained away by Lou with some fancy footwork. In this case, he admits he is the younger son and so didn't inherit the family farm. Lou has to live in an apartment in a nearby town and works odd jobs with several different farms to make ends meet. After all, if Lou worked a family farm, he couldn't be sent off to take care of his uncle's affairs. It was the fact that Lou was not required to run the family farm (something he pretends to be a little bit bitter about to sell the story to the characters) was why he could take the weeks off to travel to Persephone and take care of his uncle's estate. If pressed, Lou "admits" that he was planning to share some of the resulting good fortune with his (fictitious) older brother that inherited the farm. That is all part of the "sell" to the crew so it seems that his resentment for cutting him out of the family farm means he is likely to return the favor with the rewards from the Cibola sourcebox.

Xue, on the other hand, loves her family and has been able to turn a blind eye to how Lou made his living. But now Xue has to see Lou cheating and lying to folk who have been somewhat decent to her and Phillipa. Lou has impressed on her the importance of keeping the lie going because if the crew knew the truth they would keep the sourcebox and toss him, her, and Phillipa out of the airlock (and to all fairness to Lou, that is what the vast majority of the folks he deals with in the Santo Syndicate would gladly do). If Xue sees a more generous side of the crew, she may leave clues or a note after she leaves the ship for the final time—such as a timed message on a particular player Cortex Terminal. Nothing to put her family in danger, but enough that any crewmember that she thinks doesn't deserve to die at the hands of Syndicate has a decent chance.

New Way of Things (Results):

At the end of the voyage, the ship should be approaching Quivira. Read the following:

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The exterior of the Quivira is craggy, but it is beginning to smooth because of its close orbit around Newhall and its faint traces of atmo wearing away at it. It is in a polar orbit and thus out of the way of most of the orbital traffic and isolated. There is a docking pylon that extends 20 to 30 feet from Quivira with the airlock at the end of it. Quivira itself has a slight spin, which should give it some gravity, but there are heavy cables on the pylon of the type that are used to power G-fields. There is another airlock at the base of the pylon arm, for folks to use if they want to check out Quivira's exterior without having to go all the way out to the end of the docking pylon and coming back down.

For the moment, unless the crew's been eating everyone else's dust, there should be no one else there. If they have been taking their time, there are some folks waiting inside, with their ships in nearby orbit around Newhall, far enough out of the way that it doesn't really deserve much attention, for at any time there is around a half dozen tramp freighters in orbit, entering or exiting Newhall's atmo. This is normal for a planet this size. Those ships will wait until the crew have committed to entering Quivira, and are hopefully split between the asteroid and the ship. Beyond that, you will have to run things by ear if anything else happens using Act 3, Scene 2 as a guide.

ACT III: THE SMELL OF TREASURE AND FAILURE

SCENE 1: DIG A HOLE

How It Is (Setup):

Despite Quivira's spin, docking with it only takes an AVERAGE feat from the ship's pilot. There is still some atmo inside the mines but it is thin, much like one would expect to find on top of a mountain. The crew should bring their own air supply, though a vacuum suit is not required. Any attempt to do physical labor

of any sort will suffer from a -2 Skill step if done without an air supply (yes, this includes shooting stuff!) There are lights and a G-field, but they can only be activated by connecting the crew's ship to the power cables that run along the docking pylon, using the crew's ship as a power supply.

Quivira is an old mine with lots of twists and turns. If the crew have a map they can easily tell this, but even a brief inspection of the interior of the mine shows that it was worked in near Zero-G. As a result, the passages are seemingly haphazard, following the seams of ore. When the gravity is turned on, there are ladders and other guide lines used to ease travel throughout the asteroid.

Because there is still atmo and some spin gravity, there were some rock falls near the surface of the mine, where the spin gravity would be strongest. That is also where any hidden hangers would be, near Quivira's surface.

If the crew take a look at the exterior of Quivira, it is a RIDICULOUS action to spot the hanger. The craggy of the asteroid hides where the hanger's opening could be. Worse yet, according to the plan in the Cibola sourcebox the hanger is hewn out of the rock to minimize the refined metal used, which would be a concern for pioneers trying to stretch their resources. It also makes it IMPOSSIBLE to find without specialized mining equipment that most crews do not have.

Inside the mine entrance there are piles of some basic mining equipment that were left behind. No explosives, robotics, or the like, but an assortment of picks and other tools, enough to equip all of the crew. Also at the base of the docking pylon are the G-field controls for the mine.

Problems:

Lou knows which one of the two rock falls the shuttle is behind but he won't offer an opinion either way. Lou knows that by this time the crew have to be suspicious and by not picking one he will show that he is not trying to railroad them. Lou would like to prolong the excavation long enough for the Santo Syndicate to show up and get him, his family, and the Cibola sourcebox out of here. That said, if that does not seem possible (the crew have gotten here quickly and/or they are digging like



maniacs) he will try to make sure that he, his family, and the Cibola sourcebox all end up on the Quivira shuttle at the same time so they can try to make a break for it. Knowing that it is hard to arrange, the first thing Lou does is have Xue and Phillipa visit him a couple times while the crew and him are working on clearing the rock falls. That way when the characters finally clear the rock fall it will not seem to unusual for Xue and Phillipa to be there. When the characters clear a rock fall and determine that they have found the right way to the hanger but before they enter, Lou will want to make sure that they have the Cibola sourcebox with them, so that the sourcebox is handy if they need it for anything. He can come up with such reasons as needing to connect it to the shuttle that is presumably in the hanger to have it reveal the location of the Seven Arks or the location of the next clue.

The inside of Quivira is twisted and not consistently oriented in any one direction, so traveling within it is confusing. If the G-field is off, there is no difficulty in moving inside Quivira. If the G-field is on, travel within the asteroid will take twice as long as otherwise and if the crew are burdened with anything substantial (such as mining tools) they need to

make an Agility action; any result other than a botch is fine (there are a lot of guide lines and ladders to make moving within Quivira easier). If they do botch, make it the equivalent of falling d4 x 10 feet. If the crew wonder why, if it is so dangerous, Xue and Phillipa are making the trip, it's because they're bringing the equivalent of a picnic lunch, which does not count as being encumbered. This, of course, changes if the crew engage in combat inside Quivira. If that happens consult the guidelines in the next scene.

There is the problem of just digging their way through the rock falls without having the whole thing collapse around their ears. The safest way to do so is to turn off the G-field so that removing the rock becomes merely a problem of muscle. If the G-field is off, up to three of the crew may work on the rock falls at a time. It's an INCREDIBLE complex action to shove the rocks out of the way. Only a botch results in anything negative happening. When that happens the amount of successes achieved is reduced by the full amount of the botching crew's Strength. No amount of botches can reduce the successes below zero. (*Example:* Toshi has rolled a 1. His Strength is d6. The accumulated successes are 4. The full amount

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of his Strength die is 6, but the accumulated success is only 4, so it is reduced to just 0 rather -2. Still, Toshi is lucky to get gruel tonight as everyone else has dig out his mistake.)

The downside of this is that there is a -2 step to clearing the rock falls unless the character has a Zero-G skill and succeeds at an AVERAGE action with it. Without gravity, once the rocks are dislodged they move all unusual and if the characters use their full strength they may find themselves floating off the ground and the like. There is also the problem that the rock fall will slide back into place if the G-field is turned on and they will lose all accumulated successes.

If the crew actually have someone with mining or similar Scientific Expertise, it may be worth it to leave the G-field on. In that case, only two of the crew can work on a rock fall at a time, but only one of them has to have the relevant Scientific Expertise. In that case, the player without the Scientific Expertise uses his Strength to add successes to the INCREDIBLE complex effort. If either fails, decrease the accumulated successes by the maximum of the smallest die that the characters use. If there is a botch by either player, decrease the accumulated successes by the maximum of the largest die that player used in the roll. In addition, on a botch the resulting collapse has a chance of harming one of the crew. Randomly select one, and make an attack on the player with a Strength attack equal to number of successes lost. The advantage of doing this is that no matter what happened with the gravity, the rock fall will not collapse unless the crew do something unusual, like use grenades or knock down the supports. The result of such foolishness is left to your imagination.

If characters with mining experience want to work in Zero-G, they can actually use Strength + Scientific Expertise and give up to two others in the crew working on the same rock fall a +1 step to their rock moving. The characters can't brace the passageway since without gravity they have no idea whether the bracing can take the weight.

You may use the clearance methods for Zero-G after you have used the mining method, but not vice versa. If the G-field is turned on after clearing some of the debris in Zero-G, because someone skilled in mining has not

properly braced the rock fall, the rocks will tumble and fill in any cleared spaces resetting the accumulated successes necessary to zero. This may turn out to be a problem in the following scene when turning on and off of the G-field turns out to be a tactical advantage. Anyone who is in the area of the cleared rock fall when the G-field is turned back on has to do a HEROIC Agility action to resist being crushed to death.

Shifting rock, even in Zero-G, is exhausting work, and so a player can only put in his maximum Vitality number of hours of useful work at clearing the rock falls a day. The player can do other work during the day but if he works more hours than at the rock fall, they get a -1 Attribute step per additional hour spent.

No matter what the clearance method, the tools they need to accomplish it can be found in the piles by the airlock, including bracing timbers.

Lou offers to help move rocks, but whether or not he is helpful depends on long it has been since the adventure began. The faster that the crew have moved and the fewer blind alleys they have checked out, the more likely he is to try to slow things down because he wants to stay on Quivira as long as possible to increase the chances of his rescue by the Santo Syndicate. On the other hand, if the crew have dawdled Lou is worried if the Santo Syndicate was not prepared for them when they finally reached Quivira and perhaps his wave to them to pick him up on Quivira and be prepared to deal with the crew never made it. If so, Lou wants to get through to the shuttle as fast as possible to get off Quivira maybe even taking the risk of trying to point the crew to one tunnel over the other.

New Way of Things (Results):

It probably takes a couple of days of hard work of moving rock back and even perhaps even switching passageways after clearing one rock fall but the crew eventually gains access to the hanger. The sole remaining barrier is an airlock door. If the crew are still thinking that the Cibola sourcebox is what led them to Quivira, Lou will ask for it saying they may need it for what is on the other side of the door. If needed, Lou claims that the Cibola sourcebox is necessary for entering a code on the airlock electronic lock.

Not that it is so, the electronic lock on the door has been blanked, and any four-digit number will open it. (It was assumed by the Santo Syndicate that the rock falls, which were purposefully pulled down, would discourage casual discovery.) Lou also makes sure that his family is close by, saying that he doesn't want them too far from him in case the crew change their minds or that he wants them to be there when they become rich, whichever of the two the crew are more likely to believe. Worse comes to worst, Lou has them wait at the base of the docking pylon, with the plan that he will get into the shuttle first, grab the hidden pistol and force any crew off the shuttle, blow the hangers doors, and then bring the shuttle around to pick up his family before the crew can scramble back through Quivira and stop him.

If Xue is going to leave any hints or clues for any friendly crew, this is when she is going to do it.

If there are problems, or the crew have moved too fast, or if Lou needs it, punching in 0001 into the electronic lock keypad engages the code locks and randomly resets them. No one is able to open the door, unless they happen to guess the right code or use IMPOSSIBLE brute force to open it. Since it is a random code, Lou does not even know it.

And so the door opens onto the final scene...

SCENE 2: AND CRAWLIN' OUT OF IT

How It Is (Setup):

The crew open the airlock door, and see the following:

The hanger is small and very tight, barely larger than the old shuttle that takes up most of it. The hanger has been hewn right out the rock of Quivira. The nose of the shuttle only a few feet from the light blast curtain intended to hold back any stray rocks from when the hanger doors are blown with the directional charges which are on the door's corners. There is barely any room behind the short-range shuttle so it would have to inch its way out of the bay using reaction drives. There is some junk around the edges of the hanger and even

underneath the shuttle, empty fuel cans, cargo straps, and some mining tools. Right by the airlock door there are some controls for the hanger, but they are very basic.

From here, things have to be played by ear. How the crew enter the shuttle bay and how much Lou Cabeza has been able to push it in getting his family there (or to the base of the docking pylon) determines some of the following action.

The shuttle has a pistol hidden under the control console, something that Lou knows. (it's standard for Syndicate ships to have weapons secreted about, something that the crew would know if one of them has Friends In Low Places—but don't really have a reason to connect with Lou unless they suspect Syndicate involvement.) The shuttle itself is fairly small, seating only four and that is a tight fit, so Lou suggests just one or two crew enter the shuttle with him. His plan from there once he gets into the shuttle is to find and pull out the pistol, force whomever else entered the shuttle (other than his family) out, warn the crew that he intends to blow the doors (via radio command), and fly. He either goes down to Newhall or swings around Quivira to the airlock at the base of the pylon to pick up Xue and Phillipa. They are waiting inside the airlock, so if Lou blows the doors they still have atmo. Xue has locked herself and Phillipa in, but if the crew are Mechanically or Technically inclined it will be HARD to override the lock since Xue is not an expert. Lou's plan is to lose themselves in the population of one of the major islands of Newhall and wait for the Syndicate to pick him up. Unless the crew are very good and Friends in Low Places on Newhall, they probably will not find him before they are picked up.

There are two different factions that are heading towards Quivira. The first is the Santo Syndicate, who are under the impression that Lou has gotten some patsies to get him to Quivira and that the Syndicate may need to do some convincing to get Lou and the Cibola sourcebox back. The Syndicate's priority is retrieving the Cibola sourcebox, which hopefully explains some of Lou's actions since he knows that whoever the Syndicate sends they are more concerned with the Cibola sourcebox than anything else. The Syndicate bravos are flying a modified Firefly, one that has a concealed missile. There are at least six

Syndicate bravos, and maybe more depending on how many are needed to give the crew a challenge. The bravos have rifles, machetes, and pistols, so that no matter what happens with the G-field inside Quivira they will have an appropriate weapon. If the crew haven't thought of it, the Syndicate bravos attach a remote to the G-field controls so they can turn it on and off to gain advantages over the crew. This can also serve as a way to balance the adventure if things go badly for the crew, by wresting the remote away from the Syndicate bravo who has it or by having Syndicate bravos who were not expecting the G-field changes to fall and be taken out of play.

On the other hand, the Black Baggers have gotten a tip from one of the tramp freighters that were in Newhall's orbit that a ship matching the descriptions that were circulating could be found at Quivira. After the debacle at the Antillia Junk Emporium, Longhaven and his Black Baggers decided that they needed something a mite bit more intimidating. This time they are using a Unification War surplus ACIV (or something even more heavily armed if the crew need it to feel threatened.) The Black Baggers also has some more heavily armed folks, borrowed from the Persephone planetary militia under the order of Longhaven. The Black Baggers arrive after the Syndicate, coming directly at Quivira from the Black, rather than sneaking up from another orbit. By that time the crew and even the Syndicate bravos are too busy to see them approaching. When the Black Baggers arrive, it's the final straw on the crew's back.

Problems:

A mechanically inclined player can get a good look at the shuttle. It's HARD to tell by one look that something is wrong with the shuttle. They realize that the shuttle, while old, was manufactured after the Exodus and has visible components made either during or right after the Unification War. This shuttle can't have been there as long as the sourcebox was "supposedly" lost in Lou's uncle's dwelling. In other words, the shuttle is a plant. Whether or not the crew realize this in time depends on their actions, but if they do not by when Lou pulls out the pistol, let crew outside the shuttle start to put it together.

Any crew left on their own ship and keeping an eye on their sensors knows that as Quivira is about to cross the equator a ship has broken

equatorial orbit and is headed toward Quivira. A player is needed to determine this because at first it will like an orbit change and Quivira's shadow obscures most of the incoming track. It is only until the Syndicate's Firefly is almost on top of Quivira that the ship's Intelligence has a chance to determine it is approaching. Unless the crew move their ship or make contact with the Syndicate's Firefly, the Syndicate bravos assume that the crew's ship is empty and dock at the airlock at the pylon's base. The Syndicate won't shoot at the crew's ship unless they know for certain that the Cibola sourcebox is not on it (or the crew make themselves really annoying). If Xue and Phillipa are in the airlock at the pylon's base, there are a few turns of delay as the Syndicate bravos figure out who they are. Tragic misunderstandings only happen if it makes the remaining bits of the adventure more interesting. The Syndicate bravos won't start shooting indiscriminately since they are looking for the Cibola sourcebox and if they start randomly shooting they may damage it. But they take Xue and Phillipa on board to possibly use them as leverage to get the Cibola sourcebox (not that it will, but the Syndicate bravos don't know that yet). The bravos know the layout of Quivira and head toward the hanger send one or two bravos to secure the crew's ship for leverage if necessary.

Once the Syndicate ship has unloaded its bravos and taken Xue and Phillipa on board if they were in the airlock, the Firefly undocks from Quivira and orbits it, not wanting to risk the crew managing to board it and leave the Syndicate bravos stranded. This also leaves the airlock clear for the Black Bagger's ACIV, a ship that the Syndicate Firefly's crew has no intention of challenging, though it will try to stay in the area.

If a firefight begins inside Quivira, there are several complications to make it more challenging. One is that the firefight may happen while Quivira is at zero-G. In that case the rules for the Zero-G are in force. While the gravity is on, this presents a different set of problems since in the interior of Quivira to rely on a guide line or a ladder to keep your footing. If the person has one or more hands free they can use one hand to keep their balance. Otherwise they are considered on unstable terrain. If they botch any actions, they fall d4 x 10 feet and possibly take damage from that.

Whenever any character is hit, in addition to taking damage, he has to see if he keeps his footing. This is treated like a sudden lurch with the character needing to succeed at an Agility + Alertness action with a Difficulty equal to the total number of Wounds and Stun he's received, prior to any armor deductions. The character may have to roll even if he takes no damage. If the targeted character is using both hands to help keep his footing, increase his Agility by +2 steps; if he just has one free (and the other hand filled with a pistol spittin' out lead) he can increase his Agility by +1 step. If he fails, he is considered on unstable terrain, with penalties stacking on each other if he is hit multiple times.

What is interesting, of course, is when the gravity is switched on and off. When the G-field is turned on, everyone falls to the ground hard. Unless the character knows that the gravity change is coming (which the Syndicate members know thanks to micro transmitters) it is treated as if it was sudden lurch requiring an AVERAGE action. If only one hand was being used to hold on it is a -2 step penalty to Agility and if neither hand was being used it is a -4 step penalty to Agility. Even if the character was prepared or succeeds at their action it is treated as if the character was in unstable terrain. If the character fails in the action they fall d4 x 10 feet and possibly take damage from that.

When the G-field is turned off, the results are minor in comparison. When the gravity is turned off only the characters that were unprepared must treat it as a sudden lurch with failure resulting in the character being treated as in unstable terrain for the rest of that turn.

If the G-field changes at all, it automatically ruins any character's attempts to aim at someone, and they must begin aiming all over.

Talkin'

The Syndicate bravos are perfectly willing to do some talkin' before letting things rip. That gives them more time to set up good fire lanes. They are of the opinion that the Santo Syndicate stole the Cibola sourcebox fair and square and it belongs to them. They are also willing to pool their pocket change and throw it at the crew to get them to give up and go away. But the chances that the crew would be satisfied with 34 credits and change is probably pretty small. This is one

of the ways that the crew can learn what the real story is about the Cibola sourcebox and how Lou fits in with it.

The Black Baggers

This is the last hurrah for the Black Baggers. Samuel Longhaven has doled out some serious cash, lost a few men, and probably the Wren that was sent after the crew in the previous Act. The Black Baggers were used to dirty tricks and some quiet underhanded blackmail. The crew's willingness to go straight to the ultra-violence was something that were not prepared for and it is only after Longhaven spent big bucks to "borrow" the ACIV and its load of heavily armed folks that the remaining Black Baggers decided to go after the crew. The Black Baggers have been authorized to offer up to 1,000 credits in platinum coins for the Cibola sourcebox. The thinking is that they would try some honey since all the salt the Black Baggers offered the crew ended up being poured on their own wounds. That said, the Black Baggers are fairly sore at all the whuppin's the crew have handed out to them so they are not above stabbin' the crew in the back once they have the Cibola sourcebox. Now whether or not the Black Baggers have a chance of success is whether or not the crew can challenge an ACIV. That may not be as difficult as it first appears, since the Black Baggers are reluctant to risk it. Bringing it back in pieces would be difficult to explain, so the Black Baggers would prefer to use it as a threat than use its big sticks. Scratch more than the paint on the ACIV and the Black Baggers decide that this has turned into *jub shi sub mo go dohng shee* and show their back to it.

There are a couple of ways to run the arrival of the Black Baggers. If the crew are having trouble handling the Syndicate bravos, then the Black Baggers could show up behind the Syndicate bravos cutting them down to get to the crew and equalizing the odds. This can either reduce the number of shooters aimed at the crew or convince one or the other to temporarily ally with the crew to survive. This is with the understanding that as soon as it is possible they double-cross the crew to grab the Cibola sourcebox for themselves.

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There's no more than four Black Baggers (use the previous stat block for Black Bagger Search teams from Act 1 Scene 3 for them) and eight Persephone Planetary Militia, though feel free to modify their numbers to keep things shiny.

The best time to bring in the Black Baggers is just when the tide seems to be turning, not right before one side or another has it all sewn up. If you let things go too far, it'll seem like you are cheatin', taking away their victory or giving them a hand at the last minute. And gosh, we wouldn't want the crew to think that could happen.

The truth is that Lou *will* trade the sourcebox—which is worth a great deal of platinum—for his family. The crew don't even have to blackmail him; if Lou has the sourcebox and doesn't have his family, he offers a trade, explaining what has really gone on. Lou tells the crew that the only thing of value is the Cibola sourcebox, what it's rough value is and some brokers that he knows of that would be willing to move it.

Santo Syndicate Bravos

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6; **Init** d6 + d6; **LP** 14

Traits Overconfident (Minor Complication)

Skills Athletics d6/Zero-G Movement d8, Guns d6/Pistol d10, Influence d2, Perception d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4.

Weapons/Gear Ballistic Mesh (1W, converts bullet W to S), Combat Knife (d4 W), Micro Transmitter, Pistol (d6 W)

Persephone Planetary Militia

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d8; **Init** d6 + d6; **LP** 16

Traits Military Rank (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication).

Skills Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6/Assault Rifle d8, Perception d6, Melee Weapon Combat d4.

Equipment: Assault Rifle (d8 W), Combat Knife (d4 W), Micro Transmitter, Riot Gear (3W, converts bullet W to S, -1 Agi/-1 Ale)

Alliance Customs and Inspection Vehicle (ACIV)

Agi d10 **Str** d2 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4; **Init** d10+d6, **LP** 6

Traits Memorable (Everyone knows all inspection boats on sight)

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Gunship d4, Perception/Search d4, Space Transport Operations/Gunship d4

Specifications

Tonnage 40 tons.

Speed Class 4 cruise/6 hard burn

Crew Command Pilot, Weapons Officer, up to 8 additional troopers.

Crew Quarters 4-seat cockpit, with 10 cramped bunks located behind.

Fuel Capacity 1 ton (500 hours).

Cargo Capacity 4 tons of external weapons.

Armament 1-pound autocannon with 200 rounds. Up to 8,000 pounds of missiles.

Complexity Average.

This ship was designed to board and inspect merchants, and was vital in closing the smuggling routes that supplied the Independent Movement during the Unification War. Not designed for pitched battles, post-Unification War the Alliance Military sold off the majority of them to planetary governors or magistrates.

Santo Syndicate Firefly Fly'

Agi d8 **Str** d6 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d2 **Int** d2 **Wil** d2; **Init** d8+d2; **LP** 8

Traits Everybody Has One, Healthy as a Horse

Skills Aerial Transport Operations/Transport d2, Space Transport Operations/Transport d2

Specifications

Tonnage 2,400 tons

Speed Class 4 cruise/6 hard burn

Crew Quarters 2 double, 3 single cabins

Fuel Capacity 60 tons (600 hours)

Cargo Capacity/Max Deck Load 400/460 tons in hold #1

Passenger Capacity 16 double cabins instead of #2 hold

Armament Up to 4,000 pounds of missiles in hidden launch bays. Armor (1 S)

Gear Two 20-ton shuttles

Complexity Very Low

A Firefly that was modified to be a blockade runner during the Unification War, the Santo Syndicate took ownership after the war, and they have used it to quickly and quietly move gangs

and small cargo around the 'Verse. It has changed names so many times most Santo Syndicate member simply call it *Fh*.

New Way of Things (Results):

The shiniest climax for this adventure is for the crew to get away, burning down into the atmo of Newhall to dodge pursuit with the crew in possession of the Cibola sourcebox. Needless to say, with everyone else in the adventure working just as hard to make sure that the crew go away empty handed that just may not happen. Either way, the crew may be wondering where the Seven Arks of Cibola are, figuring that they would at least get a glimpse of them. The Cibola sourcebox does not lead the crew to them and even its exogeology database is decades out of date, dating back to the Exodus. Many of the locations in the sourcebox have already been dug up or have been determined to be not worth exploiting. Though it may be possible that there are forgotten mining locations that were never exploited in the Cibola sourcebox and tracking them down could be more adventures for the crew.

It's entirely possible that the crew walk away from the adventure with nothing but their lives (most of them at least), which is no mean feat. In order to for them to break even, the crew may try to grab everything that is not nailed down on Quivira, but since so much of it is old, they only get 1d4x10 credits for the lot. If they are going to break even, it has to be on items that the other groups brought to Quivira such as discarded weapons and gear. If either one of the other two ships that came to Quivira is left unclaimed, the crew can take them but need to sell off quickly. Both of the ships' registries are so hot they could be radioactive and have characteristics making them easy to identify and are hard to remove. They have to be sold to the equivalent of a chop shop. Good thing the crew knows a disreputable junkyard that they may need to smooth over relations with after making a mess in it. Yes, I mean the Antillia Junk Emporium. They won't get top platinum, but the crew is able to quickly dispose of the ships and smooth things out with Antillia Junk Emporium so that the crew is able to use it in later adventures.

If by the end of the adventure Lou or any other members of his family are still in the "clutches" of the crew, they try to get out of the crew's hands as quickly as possible. The Cabeza family comes away as clean as they can and offers the crew a verified credit account (which can be verified by wave) to just take them down to Newhall and drop them off. Depending on how the adventure resolved itself, if the crew were friendly to Xue and Phillipa and treated Lou as just another guy who had a job that made their lives difficult, the crew may be able to hire him for jobs that need his unique skill set in the future. But Lou has learned his lesson; he never again puts his family anywhere near a situation like this one, no matter how safe it may seem.

The Santo Syndicate is a business and once the issue with the sourcebox is resolved, that particular branch of the Syndicate is no longer be interested in the crew (much). If the crew manages to keep the Cibola sourcebox at the end of the adventure, the Syndicate organizes another attempt to grab it but more carefully since this hastily organized grab did not do the job. If the crew quickly sells the Cibola sourcebox, the Syndicate learns of it hitting the black market and focuses on that rather than worrying about the crew. While not feeling particularly warm and fuzzy toward the crew, the Santo Syndicate considers the matter closed. If the crew don't sell off the Cibola sourcebox, well, several adventures down the line the crew may have to worry about the Santo Syndicate popping up again like a bad credit. The Santo Syndicate also starts pulling in markers with other Syndicate branches to make the crew's lives difficult, such as making it harder to unload goods on the black market. Nothing major since these are just minor favors and the Santo Syndicate doesn't want to focus too much attention onto the crew. Of course, not all of the Syndicate branches get along, never mind the conflicts the Syndicate has with the Tongs, so others in conflict with the Santo Syndicate may decide that the crew must be natural allies against them. The crew may find themselves pulled into all sorts of schemes as a result.

As for Parliamentarian Samuel Longhaven and his Black Baggers, as was mentioned earlier, this was their last hurrah. Longhaven has already expended a lot of resources and if the ACIV or the majority of the planetary militia did not make it back in one piece, the next year or so

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Longhaven is busy spinning his opponents and covering up the losses by using the remaining Black Baggers. They are also busy fighting off any political challenges to Longhaven's power that are mounted when others realize his weakness. So Longhaven is unable to pursue revenge for a while and quite frankly he is more likely to go after the Santo Syndicate and Lou Cabeza, since they were the ones that actually lifted the Cibola sourcebox. In addition, Longhaven is more interested in retrieving the Cibola sourcebox than revenge, so if he tracks them down, he may just want to know who the crew sold it to. The problem that he gives the crew is that he drags the crew's name through Persephone's mud, so whenever they interact with Persephone's officials things don't go well for them. They take anywhere from a -1 to -3 Skill step to Influence actions, with botches creating serious legal problems for the crew. This lasts until the crew has done something else to make officials think they are *buhn dahn*. No need to pile it on them more than you already have.

SCENE 3: IT'S NOT OVER 'TILL IT'S OVER

How It Is (Setup):

This happens after the adventure's end, either directly afterward or when there is a suitable lull in the beginning of the crew's next adventure. It can happen even if the Cibola sourcebox is no longer in the crew possession, although it's harder to arrange if they don't have it. If they no longer have it, this scene occurs when they dismantle or otherwise take care of the port interface that the crew constructed for the Cibola sourcebox to locate Quivira.

Problems:

The next time the sourcebook is activated, it will detect a live Cortex connection and offer to perform an update since it's been more than 10,000 hours since the last time new information was available. Lou was worried that if it updated, the original database would be altered and the value would be affected. A Technical Engineer character with only an AVERAGE effort can keep the original database while receiving a new one. Regardless, if the crew do nothing, the

sourcebox times out and goes to the Sourcebox Information Display (SID). If the crew update the database, an upload bar appears and the sourcebox resets to its original programs as it loads the new database. If the crew don't update the sourcebox, the program puts up the SID that shows the last database update was decades ago.

Earlier when the characters were building the new port connections for the Cibola sourcebox, it was mentioned that the new ports required a live Cortex connection. The ship's Cortex Terminal kept the software "handshake" information and once the crew remove or otherwise dismantle the Cibola sourcebox's connections, the ship's Cortex notices the missing device. After an appropriate period of time (100 hours or a week seems reasonable) the Cortex Terminal on the crew's ship spits out a query asking about the missing device. To help identify said missing device, it puts up the SID. For full ironic effect, this could happen after the crew sells it.

The SID has the basic program information such as version number and other high-falutin' technobabble, but the entries are in Spanish (the Cibola sourcebox's default language) with the option to display the information in a dozen other languages, including English and Chinese. It also says the sourcebox was manufactured for and assigned to the Amazonia Region Exodus Fleet, Ship 6 of 7.

If the crew don't realize what the SID is hinting at, it is EASY to figure out from the SID that the Amazonia region on Earth-That-Was was not under English or Chinese control. But, they were the only two powers in the "official" history that sent Arks ...

New Way of Things (Results):

To a dealer or some other antiquities broker, the value of the Cibola sourcebox starts at a price of 5,000 credits. The Cibola sourcebox has no other information about its manufacture or transport during the Exodus. Period. Whether or not the Seven Arks of Cibola are anything more than legend is for the Game Master to decide, or to dangle in front of the crew.

THE CABEZA FAMILY

Louis Cabeza

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d10 **Wil** d8;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 14

Traits Greedy (Minor Complication)

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6/Infiltration d8/
Disable Locks d8, Guns d4, Influence d6/
Persuasion d10, Knowledge d6/Appraisal d8,
Perception d6

Description Louis Cabeza is a male of Slavic ancestry in his mid-20's. He is dark, but not swarthy. Medium in both height and build, he has a bushy mustache but close cut dark hair with no sideburns. He has the appearance of a marginally successful farmer but not in homespun clothes. Reasonably friendly looking and open.

Xue Cabeza

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6;
Init d6+d8; **LP** 12

Traits Steady Calm (Minor Asset)

Skills Planetary Vehicles d2, Craft d6, Guns d2,
Perception d4, Survival d6

Description Despite her name, Xue is of South Asian (Indian) ancestry. She is as tall as Louis, but definitely has a slighter build. She also has dark hair but keeps it relatively short. Despite being also in her mid-20s her eyesight has prematurely deteriorated so that she needs reading glasses. She is equally comfortable in pants and shirts as in dresses and may be found in either. She tends to spend most her time sewing clothes, using machine rather than homespun cloth, since Phillipa has undergone a recent growth spurt and does not have a lot of clothes at the moment. She may be willing to sew simple clothes for characters if they have cloth. Her demeanor steady but guarded



Phillipa Cabeza

Agi d6 **Str** d4 **Vit** d4 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d4;
Init d6+d6; **LP** 8

Traits Sweet and Cheerful (Minor Asset)

Skills Craft d2, Perception d4, Survival d2

Description Phillipa is tall for a toddler, being at the very end of that stage. Her hair is lighter than one would expect from her parents, but otherwise Phillipa looks very much like them. Her personality seems awfully restrained, one moment being very forward with others then suddenly turning very shy. This is partially due to do the "quiet game" she is playing but is really part of personality.

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You can't take the sky from me...

You've got yourself a ship and a crew . . . now you need a job. When your boat's out in the Black there are just as many ways to earn coin as there are to get riddled with holes. Trick is to do more of the former and less of the gettin' shot. Some jobs are about hauling passengers, others are about shippin' cargo—some legitimate, some not so much—and then there's downright thievin'. Dodge Alliance patrols, avoid pirates, and pray that the Reavers never get wind of you.

Serenity Adventures is a collection of tales that come to life using the Serenity Role Playing Game and the Cortex System game rules. You can play the Big Damn Heroes from the film or a crew of your own creation. Use these tales as-is, or customize them to fit the story you want to tell. All you need's the rules, this book, game dice, a group of friends, and your imagination.

Get your crew, find a job, and keep flyin'.

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Parental Advisory: A Note to Parents: Serenity is rated PG-13. Consult www.filmratings.com for further information.