THE BLACK HOLE SYNDICATE NEEDS SMUGGLERS

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "You know the Black Hole Syndicate, boy. Well, they're lookin' for pilots — without a criminal record — to operate some of their freighters. It's good pay and safe work since the Syndicate has pretty much every cop between here and the Dio Rings taking bribes. I could point you in the right direction . . . for a small price."

If the player characters are interested, and can negotiate a payment for information, the old man continues:

"You want to haul yourselves down to Bay 112. Ask for Rigger Clive and tell him Jacobs sent ya. He'll get you boys working."

Source: Arthur Jacobs **[male human, Strong Ordinary 3, 12 hp]**, a lean, tall man in his fifties. Jacobs' talks in a slow, broken tone — the man's seen better days. He wears a simple jumpsuit and carries a Fusion Age laser pistol. If pressed, Jacobs agrees to lead the player characters to Bay 112 but he'll attempt to sneak away if things turn ugly.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "I couldn't help but overhear Jacobs. If you'd take make advice, friend, I recommend you don't go into that meeting without first arranging some protection. The Black Hole Syndicate, while they do sometimes hire freighter pilots, is better known for snatching people and selling them into slavery. I'd expect the worst, if I were you."

Source: Irina Alekseyevna **[female morphean, Smart Ordinary 2, 9 hp],** an attractive woman with short red hair dressed in a tight, revealing body-suit. Alekseyevna's gene therapy modifications are not apparent visually. She refuses to get involved, stating prior commitments.

Follow Up: If the player characters choose to go to Bay 112 they'll meet Rigger Clive **[male human, Tough Ordinary 5/Charismatic Ordinary 5, 55 hp]** and eight of his thugs. Clive will attempt to lure the player characters into a nearby light freighter — "to show them the ship," he'll say — but once inside he and his men will attempt to capture the player characters. If Rigger Clive and his men succeed the player characters will be bound and gagged and whisked off to an illegal slave market. If the player characters succeed and gain access to the ship they'll quickly determine that it's little more than a hull — the Black Hole Syndicate has used this tactic a *lot* over the last few months.

Customization/Notes:

THE CHIKAKO CONFEDERATION IS HIRING MERCS

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "You look like a tough bunch that can hold your own in a fight. If you're looking around for work you may want to consider heading out to Selfakan VII and signing up with the Chikako's. Last I heard they were in the market for mercs and paying good wages. It's supposed to be easy work."

Source: Black Bailey **[male human, Tough Ordinary 5, 27 hp],** a towering, heavy-set bald man a prosthetic arm. Bailey is wearing a suit of scout armor and has a laser rifle slung over his shoulder and a plasma pistol on his hip. He hires himself out as an enforcer, bodyguard, or thug and has spent several years incarcerated on Devil's Rock, a maximum security prison in the Noah System. Bailey is only repeating what he overheard a few minutes ago.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Yeah, the Chikako Confederation is hiring mercs but the job's no picnic. My brother died working for those Chikako bastards; they sent him and ten others into a battle against several dozen and kept them there until every merc was dead. The Chikako pay well — if you can survive the assignments — but they demand a lot for their credits."

Source: George Argos **[male human, Strong Ordinary 2, 8 hp],** a pale-skinned man wearing gray fatigues and unarmed. Argos is friendly and will do everything he can to persuade the player characters to not seek employment with the Chikako Confederation.

Follow Up: If the player characters go to the trouble of traveling to Selfakan VII they'll be permitted to meet with Chikako Confederation recruiters. The exact way in which the meeting evolves will depend on the type of campaign that you want to run (and that the players want to participate in). It's highly recommended that this particular rumor, more than any other, be used primarily as background chatter and not the basis for adventure. Still, if you want to run a campaign in which the player characters are hired mercenaries this is certainly a good way to get the ball rolling.

Customization/Notes:

THE STARCROSS RACE PRIZE

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "You haven't heard of the Starcross? It's a new race being put on by the Haver Corporation. Each ship in the race has to pay an entrance fee but the prize is big! The team that wins the race is gonna be given a Fusion Age courier ship. Sure, it's not top of the line but a free ship's a free ship. I hear the competition for the race is gonna be pretty intense — hell, I'm thinking about borrowing a ship and entering myself — so I bet there's gonna be some foul play during the run."

Source: Richard Kubek **[male human, Fast Ordinary 4, 14 hp],** an agile man in his early thirties dressed in an old flight jacket and one-piece black bodysuit. Kubek spent several years as a corporate courier, flying one-man starships between all of the wealthiest worlds, but lost it all when a crash destroyed his legs and left him in a coma for years. Under the bodysuit Kubek is a mix of flesh and cybernetics.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "An old courier? Hardly. The prize is a decommissioned bulk freighter. Old, sure, but a lot more useful to the right group than a courier. If I win I'll take the ship, hire a few men, and start running cargo for a living. It would be nice to get out of the hangar and actually travel the stars."

Source: Jorgen Holm **[male human, Smart Ordinary 6, 16 hp],** a blond-haired man in his late forties dressed in a station engineer's outfit. Holm has spent the past twenty years working in the hangar, performing minor maintenance and repairs on starships. He's managed to convince his boss to loan him an Information Age shuttle that has been heavily customized. Unfortunately for Holm, though, the ship's just too old to compete against the newer model ships that are sure to be entered into the race.

Follow Up: If the player characters choose to enter the race this is a great opportunity to run a session that doesn't rely heavily on combat. Of course, some competitors are going to do everything they can to sabotage the others but actual weapons fire during the race is not allowed — violators will be expelled. Whether or not the player characters win depends completely on whether or not you want them to get their hands on the prize.

Customization/Notes:

THE FREIGHTER ALLIANCE WAS LOST

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "Did you hear? The *Alliance* was completely destroyed in a meteor storm; there were no survivors! She was coming in with a load of food and water and now the station's going to run out of supplies before tomorrow." The woman turns away from the player characters and starts shouting: "We're going to starve!"

Source: Jessica McCutcheon **[female human, Dedicated 1, 4 hp],** an early-twenties woman with long black hair and a long, hooked nose. She grows increasingly louder until she starts screaming and crying in panic, rushing about looking for someone to take her to a place with ample amounts of food and water.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Ignore that woman, she's insane. Yes, the *Alliance* was destroyed in a meteor storm but it wasn't carrying anything more than circuit boards and diagnostic components. Besides, even if the *Alliance* was bringing in food and water the station has a six-month supply on hand and can get fresh supplies in less than twelve hours. There's pretty much no fear that we'll ever run out of food or water."

Source: Adriaen Tappan **[male human, Smart Ordinary 4, 10 hp],** an elderly gentleman that makes his living onboard the station as a traffic control director. Tappan was in the control booth when the report of the *Alliance's* destruction reached the station so he's far more informed about the situation than the screaming woman.

Follow Up: Unless the woman is silenced (or sedated) she'll push several people onboard the station into a panic that, if left alone, grows into a riot. Station security will be overwhelmed in such an event and begin hiring competent men and women to assist in dispersing — and sometimes arresting — the rioters.

Customization/Notes:

PIRATES IN THE ANTARNOX LANE

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "Six times in the past week pirate ships have ambushed freighters traveling along the Antarnox Lane, the most recent ambush taking place just yesterday." The man looks down at his datapad, types a few quick keys, and looks back up to the player characters. "My sources tell me that the pirates are operating out of the Keyes Ring and I've heard rumors that the Shippers' Guild is going to offer a bounty on the pirates no later than next week. An experienced group such as yourselves may want to get out there and try to capture a pirate ship or two before the bounty is posted; there could be some good money in it."

Source: David Weaver **[male human, Fast Ordinary 8, 20 hp],** owner and operator of the *Planet Carrier,* a light freighter. Weaver has been running the Antarnox Lane for a decade now and has never personally encountered pirates (though he's had a few encounters with the law; he sometimes smuggles illegal cargos for the Black Hole Syndicate). Weaver has dark hair, a moustache, wears glasses, and dresses in plain, cheap jumpsuits. If he gets into trouble there are 1d4+1 men in the immediate area that are employed by Weaver; these men will jump to his rescue no matter the conditions.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "I wouldn't set out in search of those pirates without ensuring I've got a combat-ready ship, myself." A short, thin man in red scout armor steps up as soon as the player characters finish talking with David Weaver. "Weaver's right, and he's a trustworthy fellow, but that doesn't make those pirates any less dangerous. I've got a few friends working in station security and they tell me that the pirates are operating with no fewer than a dozen assault fighters, escorts, and one rebuilt cruiser." The man takes a slow drink. "Besides, it's best to leave the problem to the military — they've got the equipment and manpower to handle the situation and should be on the case in less than a week."

Source: Alexander Dane **[male aquan, Smart Ordinary 5/Fast Ordinary 3, 25 hp],** captain of the hauler *Galaxy Whale*. Dane has had encounters with pirates in the past and is keeping his ship in stardock for the next few weeks until this recent pirate situation is dealt with by the military. He's quite friendly and will ask the player characters to have a meal with him. He believes the best thing anyone can do for now is avoid the Antarnox Lane and wait for the military to do their job.

Follow Up: If the player characters foolishly go in search of the pirates they'll find them. Lots of pirates. If they wait around it will be less than a week before the Shippers' Guild offers a bounty on each pirate ship brought in to the station (DC 35 sale value for purposes of determining the effects of claiming a bounty on a player character's Wealth bonus) and a few days after that a military task force begins patrolling the shipping lane. The player characters, if they do not own their own starship, could sign up with a freighter to help provide defense in the event of a pirate attack. If they do own their own starship they may choose to hire themselves out for escort duty during the crisis.

Customization/Notes:

FAISAL ABDO HAS BEEN ARRESTED FOR MURDER

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "Abdo had it coming, the murderous slime. I spent six months serving with that fool on the *FTL Shadow* and he was never anything but a thief and a liar. If it were up to me," the man looks around nervously, "Abdo would be shoved out of an airlock. The law's going to be far, far to lenient on the man." Patting his pistol the man stares hard at your group. "I should have killed him when we were on the *Shadow*. It would have saved us all some trouble."

Source: Paul Martin **[male human, Tough Ordinary 4, 20 hp],** a thick, powerful man with well-defined muscles and a broad smile. Martin is well known to merchants and smugglers in this sector of space — he's served on dozens of different ships over the years — and he's very well liked. Martin's carrying a laser pistol, a dagger, and is wearing a battered spacesuit.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Sure, Abdo Faisal was arrested for murder, but what they're not telling anyone," the woman glances around and then lowers her voice, "What they're not telling anyone is that Faisal escaped last night. Word is he had help from a guard but I'm not sure if that's true or not. Station security is monitoring all ships leaving the station and they're willing to pay a healthy bounty to anyone that can capture Faisal and bring him in. I'd go after him myself but I'm scheduled to make a run to Moreau Station in just a few hours."

The woman motions the player characters closer. "For the right price I could be persuaded to share what I know about Faisal including," she grins, "where he can be found on the station."

If the player characters can give the woman enough to make her happy she hands them a small map of the station with a maintenance closet on the lowest level marked. "Faisal's there, but I'd be careful if I were you."

Source: Ayame Eriksson **[female human, Charismatic Ordinary 6, 22 hp],** an attractive woman of Oriental/European ancestry. She has several friends in station security that told her about the escaped Faisal after she swore to keep her mouth shut until she blasted off. When she saw the player characters, though, she figured she could make some quick cash off of the information and then leave before anyone found out that she had let the secret out.

Follow Up: Though Faisal **[male human, Fast Ordinary 5, Smart Ordinary 5, 48 hp]** is a criminal he did not commit the murder that he's been accused of. In fact, there was no murder — the murder is just a smokescreen station security was using to grab Faisal so that they could ship him off to Devil's Rock, a maximum security prison in the Noah System, and have him as far away from the station as possible.

Faisal will not go down without a fight and when the player characters reach the maintenance closet in which he's hiding they'll also find 2d4+1 men that are waiting with Faisal. All of them are paying the Black Hole Syndicate to smuggle them off of the station. If the player characters alert station security or otherwise thwart Faisal's escape from the station, both Faisal and the Black Hole Syndicate will actively work to harm the player characters for interfering in the operation.

Customization/Notes:

A PIRATE ARMADA IS APPROACHING THE STATION

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: As the player characters enter a new location they see a large crowd breaking-up, please screaming and running for the exits. As a man runs by and the player characters attempt to find out what's going on the man pauses for a moment. "What are you stopping me for fools? They've already destroyed six freetraders that crossed their path and they'll be here in less than three hours. We're doomed!" He then takes off, rushing for the hangar bays.

Source: Carlos Engel [male human, Dedicated Ordinary 2, 7 hp], a heavy, doughy man with short, stubby fingers and legs. Engel wears his black hair close and cropped and is clean-shaven. When the player characters meet him he's wearing a loose two-piece outfit and a heavy jacket.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Relax, my friends, there's nothing to fear. Yes, there's a small armada of pirates headed our way but military vessels have already engaged the pirates and there's absolutely no chance that the pirates will reach the station. Trust me, we're perfectly safe as long as we stay onboard the station until the battle has concluded."

Source: Irina Alekseyevna **[female morphean, Smart Ordinary 2, 9 hp],** an attractive woman with short red hair dressed in a tight, revealing bodysuit. Alekseyevna's gene therapy modifications are not apparent visually. She leans back and invites the player characters to join her for a drink.

Follow Up: Alekseyevna is correct, the military is in the middle of a combat with the pirate ships at this exact instant. Unfortunately for everyone fleeing the station, most the independent ships blunder into the battle and confuse things for the military craft, unwittingly leading to a pirate victory. About an hour after the player characters first hear of the "danger," a trio of pirate cruisers drop into the system and begin making attack runs against the station. Will the player characters join in the defense of the station or run and hide?

Customization/Notes:

THE BLACK HOLE SYNDICATE IS BUYING HOT STARSHIPS

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "It's not like it's news or anything. Hell, they're always buying stolen starships." The man motions to a darker corner of the room and if the player characters follow him he continues, "They don't pay much for starships but the Black Hole Syndicate asks no questions and pays on delivery. Last I heard they're looking for bulk freighters, haulers, and escorts and are paying better rates for those than any other type of ship. You need to talk to Christopher Koenraad in Bay 87 if you've got a ship to sell."

Source: William Seaborn **[male desert crawler, Charismatic Ordinary 9, 36 hp],** a tall, sandy-complexioned man dressed in thick, heavy clothing (he spent so many years on a world of intense heat that most climate-controlled locations feel cool to him). Seaborn has never actually sold a ship to the Black Hole Syndicate and has no connection to the criminal group, he's just repeating information he was given the day before.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Buying starships? Yeah, they're always buying starships, but never from random guys they've never met before. If you're foolish enough to attempt to contact the Black Hole Syndicate I bet you'll end up sold as a slave."

Source: Gregor Skulsky [male human, Smart Ordinary 6, 20 hp], a chaming, friendly man that maintains eye contact while talking and offers to buy drinks for the player characters. Skulsky is tall, attractive, and works on the station as a medic.

Follow Up: If the player characters have already encountered Rigger Clive (see *The Black Hole Syndicate Needs Smugglers*) they'll recognize him immediately — Clive and Koenraad are the same man. Otherwise, events will play out much like as described in the *Black Hole Syndicate Needs Smugglers* rumor. With work a GM could easily blend these two rumors into one — the Black Hole Syndicate will load a stolen starship with cargo and then pay the player characters after they deliver the ship and cargo to a distant world. Of course, this variant is also an elaborate trap designed to capture the player characters and place them into slavery.

Customization/Notes:

A DISCOVERED ALIEN ARTIFACT IS A WEAPON

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "They say that if activated it's powerful enough to completely destroy a planet. My friend, well he asked that I keep his name out of it, showed me video of the artifact and it is as large as a starcarrier. The techs found it beneath one of Craxa'de's oceans and pulled it into orbit with grav tethers and booster rockets. The military's supposed to take possession of the artifact next week but until then it's sitting in orbit over Craxa'de IV, protected by just a couple of science vessels and an escort ship. I bet someone with the right equipment could steal that thing and make a fortune."

Source: Gavin Corrigan **[male eclipse chaser, Strong Ordinary 5, 25 hp],** a thin, tall man that's constantly looking around. Corrigan, like most eclipse chasers, is nervous and paranoid and constantly trying to be sure that his back is to the wall. Corrigan's wearing a heavy jacket and a bodysuit and keeps his hand on his holstered sidearm both to warn others away and to reassure himself that it's still there.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Sure, I've heard about the artifact found on Craxa'de IV, it's an ancient alien starship that the military is planning on stripping down and examining. A weapon? Well, it's probably equipped with weapons but the techs that discovered the ship have already determined that the ship is thousands of years old and every system is ruined from so many years underwater. If you ask me, they'll eventually end up parking the ship in orbit over some resort world and running tourists through it. Initial reports indicate that there's absolutely nothing of technological value to be gained from the wreck. It sounds as if the aliens that built it weren't quite as advanced as we are today."

Source: George Argos **[male human, Strong Ordinary 2, 8 hp],** a pale-skinned man wearing gray fatigues and unarmed. Argos is well-connected and likes to keep up with the latest news in alien artifacts and archeological discoveries.

Follow Up: If the player characters take Corrigan's advice and attempt to steal the "weapon" they find it in orbit over Craxa'de IV, though it's a worthless wreck and not a single onboard system is operational. A battleship, two corvettes, and a dozen fighters have been assigned to defend the wreck until a tow ship can arrive and transport the alien craft to a military research facility.

Attempting to steal the alien ship would be a suicide mission.

Customization/Notes:

THE HEAKAE STARPORT HAS BEEN DESTROYED

PL #

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "It's true, I just heard it over the Shippers' Guild's radio frequency. Heakae Base was completely destroyed by an unidentified fleet of starships. The transmission warned all Shippers' Guild members to avoid the Heakae system until the military can close in and deal with the situation." The man shakes his head. "And me stuck with this cargo that has to be at Heakae Downstation in three days. I pray this gets dealt with quick or else I'm gonna miss a delivery — and I've never missed a scheduled delivery in almost twenty years as owner of the Midnight Flare."

The man looks around the room. "You guys wouldn't happen to know anyone with a ship that would be willing to attempt the run?"

Source: Julian Rabadan **[male human, Fast Ordinary 5, 24 hp],** a hispanic gentleman in his early forties with long, thick hair and a finely-trimmed beard. Rabadan is willing to give up the cargo (see box) to anyone that convinces him they are trustworthy and will deliver the cargo to Heakae Downstation.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Destroyed? Not likely. Sure Heakae Base took some damage recently but it was from an orbital hazard and it didn't destroy the station. From what I hear all travel to the orbital station itself is restricted for the next few weeks while they repair the damage but Heakae Downstation is still open for business. Why do you ask?"

Source: Adriaen Tappan **[male human, Smart Ordinary 4, 10 hp],** an elderly gentleman that makes his living onboard the station as a traffic control director. Tappan has friends living on Heakae Base and has talked to them since the accident — three people were killed in the accident but the station's still in excellent condition and repairs will be completed fairly quickly.

Follow Up: This is a good opportunity for the player characters to make some quick money. The run to Heakae Downstation from their current location should take less than 10 hours for most starships so delivering the cargo should be no problem at all. If they elect to steal the cargo, though, their future might get a little more complicated as Rabadan reports them to the Shippers' Guild.

Customization/Notes:

Cargo: Case of HydroDyn Seahawk Parts (PL 7)

This 15-foot square metal case features one heavy, electronically locked door on one side. Opening the case requires the proper access code (or successful DC 35 Disable Device check).

Inside the case are spare parts for the HydroDyn Seahawk, including new water-tight seals, engine casings, and control circuits.

Case Hardness/Hit Points: 8/80.

Cargo Space Requirements: 15-foot square, 3,500 lb.

Cargo Value/Purchase DC: 25 (as separate components the case has a purchase DC of 23 and the parts have a purchase DC of 23).

Restriction: Licensed (+1).

THERE'S A BOUNTY ON HIS HEAD

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "That fellow there, in the blue combat armor, is Ogre Craft; he's wanted in seven systems. There's a bounty on his head that would make any one of us rich. What do you say, guys, should we work together and grab him? I bet that together he'd be easy to take down."

Source: Dean Verdruss **[male human, Strong Ordinary 5, 21 hp],** an arrogant, take-charge guy that constantly bullies others into doing what he wants. If the player characters agree to work with him Verdruss is sure to live up to his name. Verdruss knows exactly what he's doing (keep reading).

Successful *Gather Information* Check: As the player characters move to get a closer look at Ogre Craft one of them feels a hand on his arm. Turning quickly the player characters see a thin, attractive woman who beckons them to follow her to a booth on the other side of the room. Once seated she leans over and whispers to the player characters: "Are you idiots? Don't you know who that is?" If the player characters answer her she shakes her head and looks around at each one of them. "You are idiots. That's not Ogre Craft, that's Major Fyodor Popov, station security. He's working undercover trying to grab that fool you were talking to a few minutes ago. Best watch your backs, boys." With that she gets up and leaves quickly, doing her best to avoid being seen by Popov or Verdruss.

Source: Sabrina Espinoza **[female human, Charismatic Ordinary 5, 20 hp],** a beautiful starship engineer that works in the station's upper hangars. When off-duty Espinoza dresses in very revealing clothes — she's always used her beauty to fluster men and get her way. She's decided to help the player characters out because she finds one of them attractive. What Espinoza will do to display her interest is better left to each individual GM's style.

Follow Up: If the player characters assist Dean Verdruss they're suddenly surrounded by off-duty, undercover, and in uniform station security and whisked away with Verdruss and charged as his accomplices. Verdruss is a hired killer sent to the station to kill Popov — Verdruss knows Ogre Craft personally and knows that the villain is in a completely different system when this goes down. He selected the player characters to assist him since he figured they looked like they would be useful but easy to shake once Popov was killed.

Customization/Notes:

THE STATION'S BIOCORT SUPPLY HAS BEEN CONTAMINATED

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "Contaminated? Not a chance. The medical center is a secure area — no one gets in or out of the pharmacy without passing through two checkpoints. It's impossible for anyone to tamper with the medical center's supplies, including the biocort."

Source: Paul Martin **[male human, Tough Ordinary 4, 20 hp],** a thick, powerful man with well-defined muscles and a broad smile. Martin is well known to merchants and smugglers in this sector of space — he's served on dozens of different ships over the years — and he's very well liked. Martin's carrying a laser pistol, a dagger, and is wearing a battered spacesuit.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Station security and medical personnel have been working at keeping it quiet but every last ounce of biocort on the station — including the individual injectors kept in the security offices — has been contaminated. After reviewing security cameras station security forces have determined that a robot entered the secure areas and injected a poison into each separate biocort container. Even as we speak the contaminated biocort is being jettisoned into space and replacement biocort is enroute to the station. The only reason the authorities are attempting to keep the contamination a secret is to avoid starting a panic — the new shipment should arrive in less than six hours."

Source: Victor Ivanovich **[male greenhouse dweller, Tough Ordinary 3, 15 hp],** a cargo lifter operator on break. Ivanovich is short, stocky, and wears his black hair in a ponytail. His thick, scraggly mustache and beard makes the man appear crazed though anyone that spends time with him quickly realizes the Ivanovich is an intelligent, resourceful man.

Follow Up: As long as the contaminated biocort story remains a whispered rumor and is not proven before the new biocort arrives everything should be fine. If proof of the crime reaches the public before the new shipment arrives, though, the medical center is forced to deal with dozens of angry people that are demanding immediate medical attention. In only a matter of hours over half of the people on the station find themselves "desperately ill."

Station security forces may just look to hire someone to investigate the situation. Sounds like a perfect job for the player characters.

Customization/Notes:

ILLEGAL GENETICS LAB KIDNAPPING SUBJECTS

PL 7

Failed *Gather Information* Check: "I've heard whispers of people being sold into slavery by the Black Hole Syndicate but I haven't heard a word about some "secret genetics laboratory." The woman stands from her table and moves to leave the player characters. "I think you boys have spent too many years in space; you're getting space happy."

Source: Katina Steinbach **[female human, Fast Ordinary 3, 12 hp],** a plain-looking woman in her late thirties. Steinbach is gunner on a military escort that has docked with the station for a day of R&R. She ignores the player characters and if they refuse to leave her alone all she has to do is shout and several crewmates will rush over and ask her if she needs any assistance.

Successful *Gather Information* Check: "Yes, it's true, the Black Hole Syndicate is capturing people and selling them into slavery but there's another group of kidnappers operating on the station." The elderly gentleman asks the player characters to buy him a drink. If they do he continues. "I saw them on the lower levels, weird genetically-engineered men that looked more like animals than men. They were grabbing anyone that walked through Sector Eight – the only reason I managed to escape was that they grabbed Fritz and he put up a struggle." The man begins crying into his drink. "I shouldn't have run. I should have stayed and helped Fritz. Now he's going to become one of the animal men."

Source: Regis Esercito **[male human, Strong Ordinary 4, 18 hp],** a frail-looking man in his late fifties. Esercito is a customs agent onboard the station and is close to retirement. He feels guilty for his friend's capture but not so guilty that he'll report the incident to station security.

Follow Up: If the player characters descend to the lower levels to look for the kidnappers it doesn't take long for them to find their quarry – 4d6 toughs come out of the shadows and attempt to capture the player characters alive. Each is obviously a man but has animal features. The instant one of their number is killed the group scatters. Any that are caught can't speak – they've been surgically-altered and stripped of their voice – and only a few moments after being captured an internal bomb detonates killing anyone that was captured. For now, it seems, the player characters cannot uncover the source of this group or their goals.

Any player characters that are captured are knocked unconscious and transported to a secret orbital station in the Setrix Prime system. This could evolve into either a rescue mission – as any player characters that managed to avoid capture work to free their companions – or a prison break. If the GM decides to run the campaign through a prison break he'll need to create his own map of the research station (though Ronin Arts' ***Future: Installation 1*** would certainly work in a pinch).

Customization/Notes: