

ECHOES OF WAR BUCKING THE TIGER



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ROLE-PLAYING GAME

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• **ROLE-PLAYING GAME** •

ECHOES OF WAR BUCKING THE TIGER

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ABOUT BUCKING THE TIGER

OUT IN THE BLACK, A FRIEND WHO PAYS BACK WHAT THEY OWE IS AS rare as a fresh strawberry. The Crew arrives on Renao just in time to witness the life drain out of **Annie Foy's** body before she could settle up her debt. **Sheriff Leonard Cao** suspects the murderer is taking part in a high-stakes game of cards at the *Shenandoah Rush* casino and needs the Crew's help to crack the case. Was it **Sharklip Shen**, the Triad gangster who controls the casino? Was **Big Cassie Sagira**, the Companion with a secret, responsible? **Butch Guying**, a known killer and Browncoat raider? Or perhaps Annie ran afoul of the mysterious Alliance officer known only as **The Colonel**?

Bucking the Tiger is part of the **ECHOES OF WAR** role-playing adventure series, which is centered on a common theme: the Unification War. **ECHOES OF WAR** adventures include basic rules. Main characters are found in the *Serenity Crew*, which is available separately. All releases in the **ECHOES OF WAR** line are compatible with the **FIREFLY ROLE-PLAYING GAME**, which is based on the television series by Joss Whedon.

DICE AND GEAR

TO PLAY THE FIREFLY ROLE-PLAYING GAME, you'll need to grab a few essentials.

PLAYERS

To play the **FIREFLY RPG**, you need a minimum of two other people to play with. The game works best with a ship's **Crew** of three to five players and one **Gamemaster** (GM). The GM acts as the director, producer, and narrator for your Crew.

TIME

Each time you sit down to play in the 'Verse, you'll be starring in an **Episode**. Most Episodes will last between two to four hours depending upon the number of players involved and the scope of your story. If your storytelling really gets going, you may discover that your Episode is actually a two-parter, ending on a cliffhanger and continuing the next time you play.

Episodes may be strung together to create an entire season that lasts for several weeks or may be played in one evening or afternoon. Stand-alone Episodes, like the ones you'll play in **ECHOES OF WAR**, are also referred to as **adventures** and are broken down into five major acts—just like in the show. All adventures also give you more ideas to create your own Episodes so you can keep playing the game.

DICE

First thing you want to pick up is some dice. If you haven't played an RPG before, these dice may look a mite funny—besides the usual 6-sided dice, you'll need some with 4, 8, 10, and 12 sides. The game will tell you which dice to roll. So, when you see **D4**, that's a single die that has four sides. A **D10** means a die with 10 sides, and so on. When you see a rule that includes **2D8**, you'll need to



roll two eight-sided dice. You'll want a small handful of **D6s** and **D8s** since you'll roll them the most.

You can find these funny dice at game or hobby stores, at game conventions, or through an online store. You can buy a bunch for yourself, or share them with the other members of your Crew. There's no need to make sure your dice are all color coordinated, unless you want them to be. A dice pool made up of the colors of the rainbow is mighty pretty, too.

POKER CHIPS

Plot Points are the currency of your game. To track your Plot Points, which are explained on page 18, you need something you can throw across the table. Beads and pennies work just fine, but poker chips might suit *Firefly* a bit better. Grab a handful and keep them close to you during the game.

Though the colors don't matter much, you might want to pick the same color for all your chips. That makes 'em easier to spot and keep track of.

PENCIL AND NOTECARDS

The last thing you need is a writing utensil of some sort and some extra pieces of paper or note cards and the like to record Assets and Complications during gameplay. Pencils are preferred, but a fancy new pen works, too. The rest of the materials you need are all included in this rulebook.



*SIMON: ...they don't
seem to be playing by any
civilized rules that I know.*

*INARA: Well, we're pretty
far from civilization.*

Basic Rules

THE FIREFLY RPG USES THE CORTEX PLUS SYSTEM.

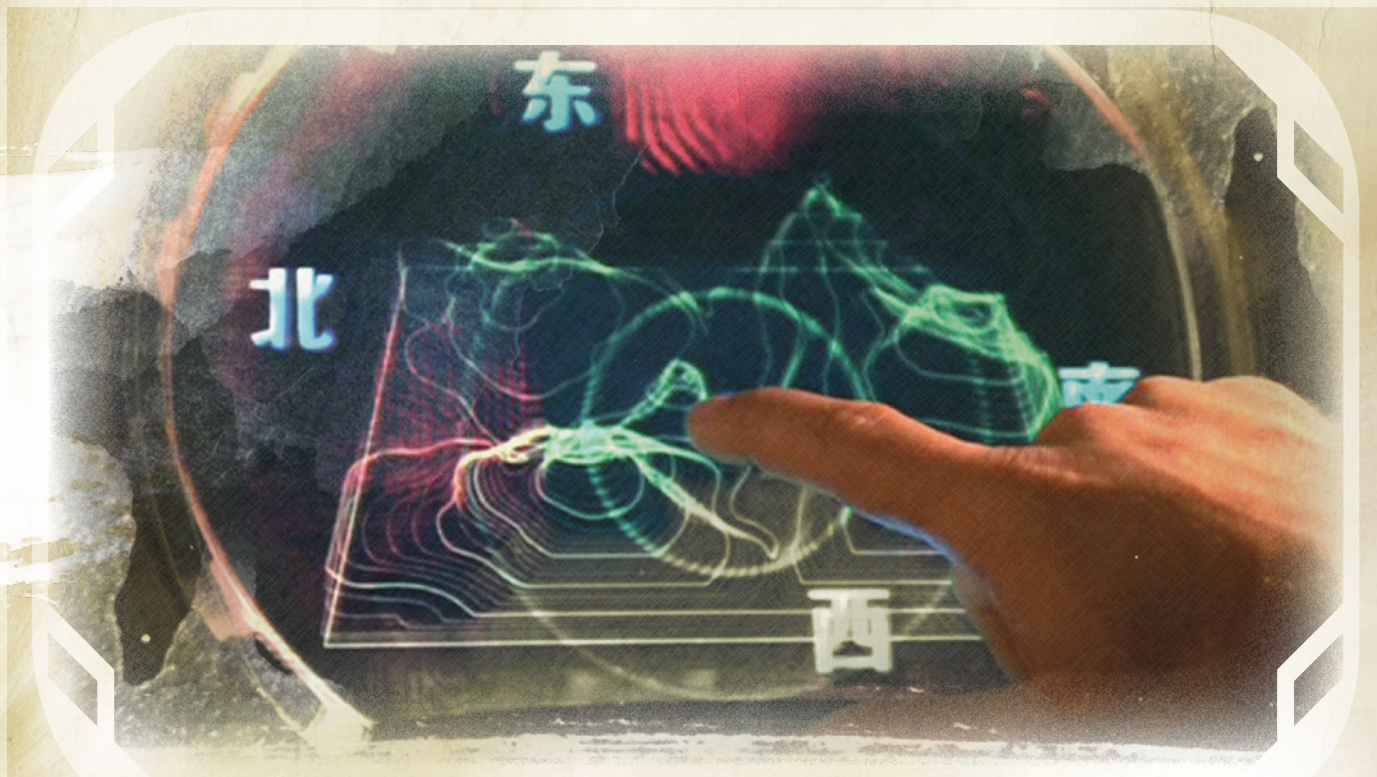
All the details get spelled out in the corebook, but this Episode contains enough rules to play.

If this is your first flight tryin' out a role-playing game, welcome! This section gives you a brief but thorough explanation of how we do things 'round these parts. We wrote these basic rules to get you into the black as quickly as possible, so make sure everyone who wants to play gets a gander at it.

MASTERIN' THE GAME

WHEN TO ROLL DICE

If the Action you're about to undertake is guaranteed to succeed, like Jayne reloading a gun or Inara accessing her personal records, your Gamemaster shouldn't bother with calling for you to take an Action. It's only when there's a chance of failure—and the chance that something interesting might happen in the story—that you'll need to take an Action.



CREWMEMBER BASICS

LET'S GET RIGHT TO THE EXCITING STUFF—ROLLING dice. Whenever you want to take an **Action** that isn't guaranteed to succeed, you assemble a **dice pool** to determine what happens next.

On the sheet of the Crewmember you're playing, there are **Traits** with **die ratings** that determine the size of die you add to your dice pool and how many dice you get to roll. The more dice you have and they bigger they are, the more likely you are to succeed.

Now, you don't just add dice willy-nilly. You can add dice to your pool provided it makes sense to do so.

Your dice pool *will always* have:

- ★ Attribute die
- ★ Skill die

Your dice pool *may also* have:

- ★ Specialty die
- ★ Distinction die
- ★ Signature Asset
- ★ Big Damn Hero Die
- ★ Assets in favor of your Crewmember
- ★ Complications in favor of your Crewmember

After you've put together your dice pool, you roll those dice and add the two highest results together for your **total**. Compare your total to the stakes set by the Gamemaster. If your total is lower, your luck takes a turn for the worse. If your total is higher, you perform some thrillin' heroics. It's that simple.

*Let's take a look at how you'd create a typical dice pool. Say you're playing Jayne and you want to use your fists to teach some sucker a lesson for makin' fun of your cunning hat. You create a dice pool by adding your **Physical d10** die (an Attribute), your **Fight d10** die (a Skill), and your **Family Ties d8** Distinction—because nobody talks about your mother that way! If your total on two dice is higher than the stakes set up by the Gamemaster, you'll knock out that punk with your big fists. If your total is lower, he might just pull the rug out from under you instead.*

ATTRIBUTES

Every Crewmember has three core Traits called **Attributes**. These are **Mental**, **Physical**, and **Social**. All the Actions you take while playing the **FIREFLY RPG** fall into one of these three categories, making your Attribute die the first die you pick up for any Action. You always get to include one of these in your dice pool to represent your Crewmember's base talents.

*Inara, as a Registered Companion, has mastered the arts of social interactions through years of careful training. While she's pretty sharp—**Mental d8**—her strongest Attribute die is her **Social d10**. With such a strong **Social** die, she can run circles around people trying to fool or bully her, and she's usually able to one up Mal when he tries to engage in clever banter, i.e., flirting. Anytime she's engaged in a conflict that centers around her social strengths, she starts building her dice pool with a **d10**.*



SKILLS

The stuff your Crewmember can do is covered by **Skills** (see page 11 in Chapter 4, *Find a Crew*). Everybody has at least a **D4** in each Skill, which represents an untrained level of expertise. If you've got some idea of what you're doing due to talent, training, or experience, your rating's in the range of **D6** to **D12**. A Skill always gets added into your dice pool, just like an Attribute.

SPECIALTIES

If any of your Skills has an additional word or phrase next to it—like **Know** (*Religion*), **Shoot** (*Trick Shots*), or **Perform** (*Courtroom Etiquette*)—your Crewmember has a **specialty** in that area. You get to add an additional **D6** to any dice pool when your specialty can be used in a particular scene. See page 11 for a list of specialties.

*There ain't a better engineer in the 'Verse than Kaylee. While there might be folks who shoot better, run faster, or talk prettier, Kaylee has **Fix D12** with a specialty in **Engines**. That means that anytime Kaylee's trying to get Serenity up and running, she gets to throw a **D12** and a **D6** into her dice pool. Those dice, along with her **Mental D8**, mean that it's pretty tough to keep Serenity down when Kaylee's on the boat.*

DISTINCTIONS

Distinctions are Traits that define your Crewmember's personality, history, and background. Whenever a Distinction applies positively to a roll, you can add a **D8** to your dice pool.

All Distinctions have up to three triggers that you can use to showcase your character's strengths and weaknesses. Some of these triggers allow you to step up or double dice in your dice pool, while others help you gain Plot Points (see page 18) or access other interesting effects.

For example, the first trigger in any Distinction allows you to gain a Plot Point when you add a **D4** to your dice pool instead of addin a **D8**. To use this trigger in your game, you describe your Distinction in a way that shows how that Distinction is acting against your character's interests, making it more difficult to accomplish your character's goals.

*Mal's got the Distinction **Veteran of the Unification War**. Whenever he runs into an old Browncoat buddy, gets in a gunfight or other scrape, or sticks it to someone who was proud to be part of the Alliance, you add a **D8** to your dice pool. When this part of his background gets Mal in trouble, like trusting a soldier he knows he shouldn't, talking with a dandy who never served, or drinking in an Alliance bar on Reunification Day, add a **D4** to your dice pool instead and gain a Plot Point.*

If you're brand new to role-playing games, don't worry about the other triggers on your Crew Sheet for now. Just keep the above example in mind—it's easy to remember and comes in awful handy for grabbing some Plot Points from the Gamemaster.

ASSETS

By spending a Plot Point, you can create **Assets** to help you in your scene. You describe something helpful (maybe a **Handy Crowbar** or **Pile of Crates**) and you get a **D6** to add to your dice pool. If it's something you expect your Crewmember to use a lot, consider making it a **Signature Asset** when you create your character.

*Wash heads into a dusty saloon with Zoe and Mal to talk to some rough characters who might have a job for the Crew. You know Wash isn't so great in a fight, so you decide he'll need a little help getting through if there's any violence. You spend a Plot Point to create an Asset—I'm With Zoe **D6**. If any trouble goes down in the saloon, you'll add that die to your pool since everyone knows Wash is with a lady who's mighty handy with a shotgun. If you wanted this to be a permanent part of Wash's character, you could make this Asset a Signature Asset on Wash's character sheet.*

COMPLICATIONS

Complications are elements that make your Actions more difficult by adding a free die to your opponent's dice pool when they roll against you. Complications typically show up when you roll a 1 on your dice, although there are triggers that might add or step up Complications as well.

Complications are used throughout a particular scene or Episode and disappear when they don't make sense anymore. Once a scene moves to a new location or you've had the chance to clean up the mess, your character no longer suffers the negative effects of most of the Complications you acquired during the scene. The only ones that stick around are the Complications that have a little more stayin' power, the injuries and consequences that will logically follow your character into the next scene. You can also reduce or get rid of Complications by taking an Action against them (see page 17).

*Kaylee is trying to get Serenity up and running to evade a Reaver ship, but she's already made a few rolls that came up with a bunch of 1s. There's an **Oil Spill D8** on the deck and she's nursing a **Broken Arm D10**. The Gamemaster can add a **D8** and **D10** to the opposing dice pool when Kaylee tries to repair the engines! That's tough enough that she might try to deal with one of the Complications—mopping up the **Oil Spill D8**—before she tackles repairing the engines. If Kaylee leaves the engine room in search of help, she'd keep the **Broken Arm D10** Complication for any future rolls, but the **Oil Spill D8** isn't likely to follow her out of the room.*



MASTERIN' THE GAME CREATIN' ASSETS AND COMPLICATIONS

Each adventure in the **ECHOES OF WAR** line, along with the **FIREFLY RPG** corebook, offers suggestions for **Assets** and **Complications** you can use in your game. Since both Assets and Complications may be used over and over again in the course of a scene or Episode, be sure to track the ones you or your Crew create. Notecards and the like work well for that.

By spending Plot Points, both the GM and the players create Assets and Complications over the course of an Episode. If you're stuck, don't be afraid to ask your Crew or GM for help coming up with interesting Assets and Complications. Though you get final say on any Assets or Complications you create, brainstorming together as a group is a great way to tell an awesome story!

DICE POOL TERMINOLOGY

CERTAIN RULES, LIKE DISTINCTION TRIGGERS, FIDDLE with your dice pool in specific ways. Here are a few terms that will help you understand how to use triggers to adjust your Crewmember's dice pool.

Stepping up a die means taking that die out and replacing it with the next highest die type. So, instead of rolling a **D6**, you'd roll a **D8**.

Stepping back a die means taking it out and replacing it with the next smallest die type. So, instead of rolling a **D6**, you'd roll a **D4**.

When you **double** a die, you include an additional die of the same type in your pool. Instead of rolling a **D6**, you'd add a second one for a total of **2D6**.



A BASIC TURN

WHILE YOU'RE CREATING YOUR DICE POOL, THE Gamemaster puts together his own pool to represent the opposition to your Action. The difference between the results from the two pools is what shapes the story. Here's how a basic turn works:

The Gamemaster **sets the stakes** by rolling the opposition dice and adding together the two highest numbers rolled to get one total. The Gamemaster may spend Plot Points to add additional dice to the total after rolling, keeping more than two dice. Any dice that come up 1s, however, don't count toward the total; set them aside for now.

The Crewmember then attempts to raise the stakes by rolling the player's dice pool and adding the two highest numbers rolled. Like the Gamemaster, the Crewmember may add additional dice to the total by spending additional Plot Points. Again, set aside all 1s that come up on any rolled dice.

If the Crewmember exceeds the GM's total, the player **raised the stakes** and the Action succeeds. If the result is a tie or lower than the GM's, then the player failed to raise the stakes and the story changes in an unexpected way.

When Crewmembers succeed at Actions in an Episode, things mostly go according to plan. They manage to convince smugglers to sell the goods they need at cheap prices, they can bluff their way past tough security, and bar fights generally work out in their favor. When the Crew fails, however, things get sticky. The smugglers want more than the Crewmembers have in the bank, the security guards start asking for identification cards, and the bar fight gets way out of control. These twists and turns should drive the story; the Crew has to find new ways to get what they want and save the day.

Some conflicts, however, have more immediate consequences for the characters. If a Crewmember or Gamemaster character is undertaking a dangerous action or is engaged in a high stakes conflict, there's a chance that a character may be **Taken Out** of the conflict and forced to leave the scene. Maybe the loser is knocked out by an opponent's punch, sits

fuming in a corner after an intense debate, marches off in a huff when embarrassed by a perfectly timed insult, or lies bleeding out on a rock from a gunshot wound. Not every conflict results in someone being Taken Out. But whenever the stakes get high, the Gamemaster should note that losing will result in the character leaving the scene.

*Let's go back to Jayne versus the fashion critic. Jayne's basic dice pool included **Physical D10 + Fight D10 + Family Ties D8**. The fashion critic is a **Minor** character (see page 20 for more on Minor characters), so the GM decides that character's dice pool includes a **D6** and a **D8**, which represents an Attribute (**Physical**, because it's a fight) plus a Skill (**Fight** seems like the obvious Skill to use when fighting). Since Jayne is trying to punch the fashion critic in the face, the Gamemaster rules that this conflict will result in the loser being Taken Out.*

*Jayne rolls: **Physical D10 + Fight D10 + Family Ties D8***

*GM rolls: **Physical D6 + Fight D8***

The fashion critic rolls 4 and 3 for a total of 7, setting the stakes. Jayne rolls 6, 3, and 2. Taking the two highest, he gets a 9. Jayne raises the stakes and WHAM! The critic is Taken Out of the fight with a sharp, left hook.

The Gamemaster isn't the only one who can set the stakes of a conflict. If two Crewmembers are tusslin' with each other or maybe some Gamemaster characters are goin' on the offensive, the Crewmember who is defending himself should set the stakes for the Action, gatherin' up a dice pool, rolling it, and keeping the two highest dice rolled. Then the character who is goin' on the offensive should try to raise the stakes, as if the defending character was the Gamemaster for that roll. Most of the time this type of conflict results in one of the characters being Taken Out, as these conflicts are usually high stakes. The **FIREFLY RPG** corebook will have a lot more information about managing conflicts between characters.

STAYING IN THE FIGHT

If you really don't want to be Taken Out of a scene, you can choose to press on and keep fighting by paying a Plot Point and accepting a Complication. Rather than being Taken Out, you immediately receive a Complication equal to the highest rolling die in your opponent's dice pool.

The Complication you create should be related to the conflict that almost knocked you out. Be creative! Did you get a **Broken Arm** or are you a **Wanted Man**? Do you keep fighting with a **Gunshot Wound** or did the force of the gunshot just leave you **Winded and Dazed**? Typically the Gamemaster will tell you what Complication you receive from the conflict, but feel free to suggest ideas that make the story interesting!

The Gamemaster can make use of this rule as well to keep Gamemaster characters (GMCs) in the fight when they are about to get Taken Out by Crewmembers. When the Gamemaster protects a character this way, however, the player who was involved in the conflict gets the Plot Point spent and gets to say what Complication occurs.

BIG DAMN HERO DICE

If the total you rolled exceeds the total your opponent rolled by 5 or more, you rolled an **extraordinary success**. Shiny! Extraordinary successes allow you to bank a die for a future roll called a **Big Damn Hero Die**. The dice you bank as Big Damn Hero dice are equal to the highest rolling die type in the opposing dice pool. When you earn one of these dice, mark it down on your Crew Sheet as a Big Damn Hero Die under the appropriate die type.

Big Damn Hero Dice are special dice that allow you to do some thrillin' heroics. If you ever find that your roll comes up short—either when you set the stakes or when you're trying to raise them—you can spend a Plot Point and roll a Big Damn Hero Die. The result of that roll is added to your total before it's compared against your opposition's total. This uses up the Big Damn Hero Die—which you should mark off your sheet—but it usually results in your side winning the conflict. You might even earn another Big Damn Hero Die from an extraordinary success!

*Simon is rummaging through some salvage Mal has brought back to Serenity in an attempt to find some useful medical goods. The Gamemaster sets the stakes of the conflict at a 9, rolling a 5 on a **D8**, thanks to a challenging difficulty, and a 4 on a **Messy Salvage D10 Trait**. Simon manages to roll 14 on his **Mental D10 + Know D10 + Medical D6** roll, exceeding the GM's total by 5 or more and earning himself a Big Damn Hero Die. In addition to finding some useful medical gear, he also keeps a **D8 Big Damn Hero Die**—the die that rolled the highest in the opposing pool.*

*Later in the Episode, Simon finds himself pinned down by Alliance agents when the Crew tries to rob an Alliance supply ship. He tries to run down a hallway and tackle an Alliance soldier to get off the boat, but his roll fails to raise the stakes. Unless he spends some Plot Points, he's going to get Taken Out by the Alliance soldier. Simon decides to spend a PP to add a Big Damn Hero Die to his roll, rolling that **D8** he earned when he was looking for medical supplies. The **D8** comes up as an 8 and is added to Simon's total—more than enough to raise the stakes on the Alliance goon. Simon marks off the **D8** from his Crew Sheet.*

If your Big Damn Hero Die comes up a 1, though, it doesn't add anything to the roll and the Gamemaster gets to introduce a Complication, just as if you had rolled a 1 on any other die in your pool. But because your Big Damn Hero Die didn't help you out, you can take it back instead of accepting the usual Plot Point from the GM.

- ★ If the Gamemaster rolls a total that exceeds your total by more than 5, you lose one of your Big Damn Hero Dice that you've banked from previous extraordinary successes. However, the GM can only get rid of Big Damn Hero Dice that are equal to or smaller than the highest rolling die in the Gamemaster's dice pool. You don't lose the largest die you banked just because you caught a bad roll against some Minor opponents.

JINXES AND COMPLICATIONS

If you've watched *Firefly*, you know that the crew's luck ain't always great. If any dice in your pool show a one after you roll them, you've rolled a **jinx**. Your opponent may then spend a Plot Point to create a **Complication** regardless of whether or not you've won the roll. Remember that a Complication is an unhelpful Trait your opponent can use to work against you (see page 12).

The Complication die starts out at a **D6** and increases for each jinx you rolled in your die pool. Jinxes don't count toward your total, so you can pretty much set them aside as soon as you roll them.

'Member when Jayne knocked out that fashion critic by rollin' 8, 7, and 2? If he'd rolled 8, 7, and 1, Jayne still would have Taken Out the critic, but he's now rolled a jinx. The GM can take advantage of Jayne's bad luck by buying a Complication with a Plot Point.

*The GM gives Jayne's player a Plot Point to create a Complication based on the Action Jayne just took. The GM decides the fashion critic is actually the son of a local Sheriff and titles the Complication **Broke the Nose of the Lawman's Son D6**. Anytime that issue comes up in the story—like Jayne tryin' to convince the Law that he shouldn't get pinched for puttin' a dandy in his place—the GM can add a Complication die to his opposing dice pool.*

BOTCHES

If all of Jayne's dice came up jinxes, Jayne would face a far, far worse outcome—a **botch**. Maybe the critic would prove to be an expert brawler (**Fight D10**) who was holdin' back, or the leader of a nasty gang itchin' for a fight. Or maybe that father of his would be on the scene to hold Jayne accountable for lettin' his fists do the talkin'. Either way, Jayne would face a much worse outcome than if he just lost the roll against the Gamemaster and ended up getting Taken Out or with a new Complication.

When you roll a botch, you've earned a big, fat zero on your roll. While this almost certainly means you're going to get beat by the opposition—as you don't even have a total to fight back with—it's also a signal that the Gamemaster should lay on the trouble good and thick. When things go this bad, old foes come lookin' for the Crew and things start to fall apart all around them. A botch isn't just a failure with consequences; it's an invitation for the Gamemaster to spring a whole new world of trouble on the Crew.





OPPORTUNITIES

If any of the dice in the Gamemaster's dice pool come up as 1s, any player may take the Opportunity to spend a Plot Point and step an existing Complication back to a smaller die for each 1 rolled.

Whether they apply to the current situation or not, the players may step back any Complication on the table. Like jinxes, Opportunities don't count toward the total from the dice pool, so the Gamemaster should set them aside immediately after rolling them.

*If you recall, the Gamemaster assigned two dice to the fashion critic's pool. The GM rolls **Physical D6** + **Fight D8** and gets a 6 and a 1. The 1 doesn't count toward the total, so the stakes fall to 6, but the 1 offers the Crewmembers an Opportunity. If there was a Complication titled **Noisy Onlookers D6**, any of the players sitting at the table could spend a Plot Point to step back **Noisy Onlookers** from a **D6** to a **D4**.*

REMOVING COMPLICATIONS

You don't have to wait for the Gamemaster to roll an Opportunity to try to remove a Complication. If you want to get out from under the Complication's negative effects, you (or another Crewmember) can put together a recovery roll with the appropriate Attribute, Skill, etc. against a dice pool featuring the Complication and a difficulty die (see page 24). Of course, not all Complications are

easily dismissed; it's going to be pretty hard for Kaylee to deal with a **Broken Arm** all by herself and Jayne is more likely to talk himself into more trouble after he **Broke the Nose of the Lawman's Son**. It's probably best to leave the medical treatments to Simon and the talkin' to Inara!

If you're successful at your recovery roll, remove the Complication completely. If you fail, step back the Complication die to represent that you've made some progress patching up a broken limb or smoothing things over with the local law enforcement types. There's a few limits on this: you may only attempt to remove a Complication once per scene and the GM may rule that it's impossible for you to actually make a recovery roll at all. It's pretty tough to clean up an **Oil Spill D8** without the proper gear to mop up the mess!

It's also possible that you might roll a jinx on a recovery roll, resulting in the situation worsenin' for you and your Crew. If you roll a jinx on a successful recovery roll, the GM can hand over a Plot Point to introduce a new Complication related to your attempt to improve your situation—your **Broken Arm D8** is now **Splinted Limb D6**. If you roll a jinx on an unsuccessful roll, your Complication gets worse by one step for every jinx you rolled without the GM havin' to pay any Plot Points at all, as your failed attempts to make things better result in you aggravatin' the situation.

PLOT POINTS

Plot Points give your Crewmember more control over what happens in the story, allowing you to improve your dice pool and change the outcome of your rolls. The more Plot Points you have, the more you can do to alter the course of your story.

Players can use a Plot Point to:

- ★ Keep an additional die from your dice pool in a total after your roll
- ★ Activate a Distinction trigger (when required)
- ★ Create an Asset at a **D6** that lasts until the end of the scene
- ★ Make an existing Asset last until the end of the Episode
- ★ Roll a Big Damn Hero Die and add it to your total after you roll

Players begin the Episode with one Plot Point but gain more of them when:

- ★ You activate a Distinction trigger, such as rolling a Distinction as a **D4** instead of a **D8**
- ★ The GM buys a Complication after you've rolled a jinx
- ★ The GM spends a Plot Point on a roll opposing your character
- ★ The GM decides you deserve one for great play, a snappy one-liner, or a scene description that impresses your Crew

ADJUSTING CREWMEMBER DICE POOLS

Crewmembers can adjust their dice pools in a few different ways. To wrap up, here's a list of everything that players can do to try to squeeze a little bit more juice out of their rolls when attemptin' those thrillin' heroics:

- ★ **Spend a Plot Point to create an Asset:** Players can always spend a Plot Point to add a new Asset to the scene, even before they roll. For instance, Jayne might decide that he wants to intimidate anyone who catches him punching the fashion critic. If he creates an Asset by spending a Plot Point before he rolls, like **I've Got Enormous Muscles D6**, he adds a **D6** to his dice pool and writes it down on a notecard for future use. Players can spend a second Plot Point to keep the Asset around for the rest of the Episode.
- ★ **Use existing Assets or Signature Assets:** Signature Assets, like Kaylee's **Serenity D8** or Shepherd Book's **IdentCard D6**, are cued to a particular character and can't be shared. Signature Assets are permanent and can be used from Episode to Episode, while regular Assets are handy for a particular scene. Any Assets on the table, regardless of who created them, are fair game provided they're usable. Using an existing Asset or Signature Asset during a scene doesn't cost a Plot Point.
- ★ **Use Distinction triggers:** Some Distinction triggers let the players adjust their dice pools. In Kaylee's case, she has a Distinction trigger for **Ship's Mechanic D8** called *Miracle Worker* that she can use to get a Big Damn Hero Die. (If she's messing with a derelict ship, for example, it makes sense she'd try to work miracles to get her up and running again.) So, instead of adding an **Operate D10** Skill die, she'd add a **D4** instead and bank the Big Damn Hero Die as a **D10** to use later. Crewmembers can use multiple triggers in a single roll, provided they are willing to meet the requirements of each trigger.

★ **Use a Skill specialty:** All Skill specialties appear in parentheses on a character sheet. Players can add a **D6** to a dice pool when their specialty applies to the Action they are undertaking. If Jayne decided to shoot the fashion critic instead of punch him, Jayne would add his **Shoot D10** and an additional specialty **D6** for *Rifles*. Players can only use the specialty attached to the skill they are currently using in their rolls.

★ **Spend a Plot Point to use a Big Damn Hero Die:** Players may spend a Plot Point to add a Big Damn Hero Die to any roll, even after they've rolled once already. Players can only add a Big Damn Hero Die to a new dice pool if they already had it in their possession. In the earlier example, Simon could only use his Big Damn Hero **D8** to tackle the Alliance soldier because he had earned it in an earlier Action.

SAMPLE DICE POOLS

NOT SURE WHAT TYPES OF DICE TO THROW TOGETHER?

Here are some common situations Crewmembers might get into over the course of an Episode. These are *suggestions* to help you create dice pools—don't be afraid to take these dice pools as inspiration and come up with your own.

Remember to adjust your dice pool before you set the stakes!

If the Crewmember wants to...	The Player rolls...	The GM rolls...
throw a punch at a Major Gamemaster character	Physical + Fight	GMC's Physical + Fight
shoot at a thug	Physical + Shoot	Thug d6 + Easy d6
sneak into a secure area	Physical + Sneak	Guard d6 + Challenging d8
notice a Major Gamemaster character sneaking up on them	Mental + Notice	GMC's Physical + Sneak
remember a Browncoat's military service	Mental + Know	Browncoat d8 + Challenging d8
fix a boat in drydock	Mental + Fix	Hull d6 + the Complication trying to be removed.
sweet talk a saloon gal for info about the town	Social + Influence	Saloon Gal d8 + Easy d6
con a savvy merchant into a lower price	Social + Trick	Savvy Merchant d10 + Challenging d8
impress a Major GMC with dancing	Social + Perform	GMC's Social + Focus



FOR THE GAMEMASTER

IN THE FIREFLY RPG, THE GAMEMASTER STEPS INTO the shoes of a screenwriter, director, sound effects engineer, and executive producer for your group's Crew. When you sit down to play for an evening or afternoon, players star in an **Episode**, a wild adventure in which the players' characters face opposition and create drama while trying to accomplish their goals. It's your job to play the world at large, especially the folks who want to oppose the players.

Episodes are broken down into **scenes**, individual encounters through which the Crewmembers play out the story of the Episode. Scenes are always framed by the GM, which means you describe where the scene takes place, which Crewmembers are present, and who else is there. Crewmembers interact with each other or characters you create to propel the story.

Scenes end when the primary conflict or goal of the scene has been resolved. For example, a bank robbery scene might end when the crew cracks open the safe of a local robber baron. While the chase that follows the robbery might immediately follow the robbery, it's a new scene based around a new conflict. Lots of

rules depend on starting and ending scenes, so make sure you always make it clear to your players that one scene is ending and a new scene is starting.

Gamemaster characters (GMCs) come in three flavors: Major, Minor, and Extra. **Major Gamemaster characters** are characters that are featured in an Episode and are indispensable to the story. They have a full set of Traits just like Crewmembers do. **Minor Gamemaster characters** aren't a significant part of the story, but might still interact with any member of the Crew. They're made up of three Traits of any type. **Extras**, on the other hand, are unnamed characters represented by a single Trait.

The **FIREFLY RPG** corebook explores the differences among these character types in great detail and will also show you how to upgrade these character types, like moving an Extra up to a Minor Gamemaster character or improving Major Gamemaster characters so that they continue to be a threat as the Crew develops their skills.

DIRECTING AN EPISODE

THE ECHOES OF WAR LINE IS STRUCTURED TO help new and veteran GMs anticipate player Actions and create dice pools, Assets, and Complications that'll help shape the story.

Here's what you can expect to find each Episode.

- ★ **Title of the Action:** describes what the Action is and why it's important.
- ★ **Crewmember Pool:** describes possible Trait combinations for a dice pool. Don't forget to add in Assets, Complications, Distinctions, and specialties.
- ★ **GM Pool:** describes possible Trait combinations for the GM to set the stakes with. Don't forget to add in Assets, Complications, Distinctions, and specialties.
- ★ **Possible Assets:** contains suggestions for Assets that can be created or used here.
- ★ **Possible Complications:** contains suggestions for Complications that stem from this roll.

Examples are included throughout all **ECHOES OF WAR** adventures to help you narrate what happens next. They're meant to be reminders to help keep you on track and may be customized to fit your needs.

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **If the player fails to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember doesn't complete the Action as desired. You may help the player figure out what the Crewmember should do next by using suggestions that appear in this box.
- ★ **If the player Raises the Stakes:** The Crewmember completes the Action and the story continues.
- ★ **If the player gets an extraordinary success:** The Crewmember performs the Action so well the player also gets a reward—a Big Damn Hero Die. You may help narrate the Crewmember's luck by using suggestions that appear in this box.



CONFLICT AND ACTIONS

IN EVERY EPISODE, CONFLICT DRIVES THE TWISTS and turns the story takes. If Wash didn't pull off a Crazy Ivan, the Reavers would've caught up with them in the pilot episode. If Simon's tranquilizer didn't work on Jayne in "The Train Job," Jayne could've taken over and left Mal and Zoe behind. The core of a story in the 'Verse is rooted in the outcomes of these kinds of conflicts, and the Actions the Crew takes to overcome the bad guys, save the ship, and win the day.

When the Crew takes Action, you **set the stakes** by creating a dice pool, rolling the dice, and adding the two highest results together. The players then attempt to raise the stakes by creating their own dice pool and rolling the pool in an attempt to exceed the GM's total. This is called an Action or **Basic Action**. The Crew of any ship is used to takin' Actions to keep their ship running and their cargo safe, so expect your Crewmembers to jump into Action quite a bit over the course of a given Episode.

BEATS

All Actions take place in the space of a **beat**, the smallest unit of time in an Episode. Beats don't have a fixed length; they last just long enough for a Crewmember to take a single Action with a single roll. Some beats last for days or weeks—like when Wash pilots *Serenity* across the black while avoidin' Alliance ships—while other beats take just a few seconds to resolve. There's no fixed number of beats in a scene; they're just a useful way of breaking up the goings-on within a scene.

ACTION ORDER

Sometimes, things get a mite hectic—especially when guns are drawn. Any time it's important to know who goes first, you can set an **Action Order**. You don't need to set an Action Order for every conflict, but you'll want to clarify who gets to go next when more than one or two characters want to get involved.

As GM, you initially pick which player goes

first based on the situation. For example, you might decide that Jayne's itchy trigger finger makes him best prepared to shoot first or that Zoe's sharp eyes mean that she sees the Reavers coming before anyone else. It's okay to pick one of your own Gamemaster characters to go first, especially if they have the drop on the players because of an ambush or the Crewmembers' poor planning.

When you declare a player goes first, that person declares an Action, you set the stakes for that Action, then the player makes a roll. Once that Action is resolved, that player gets to pick who goes next—either another Crewmember or a Major, Minor, or Extra GMC you control. The Action continues until the last player has had their turn. After all the characters—including GMCs—have taken one action, the last character to act starts up the next round by picking a new character in the Action Order, perhaps even himself, to go next.

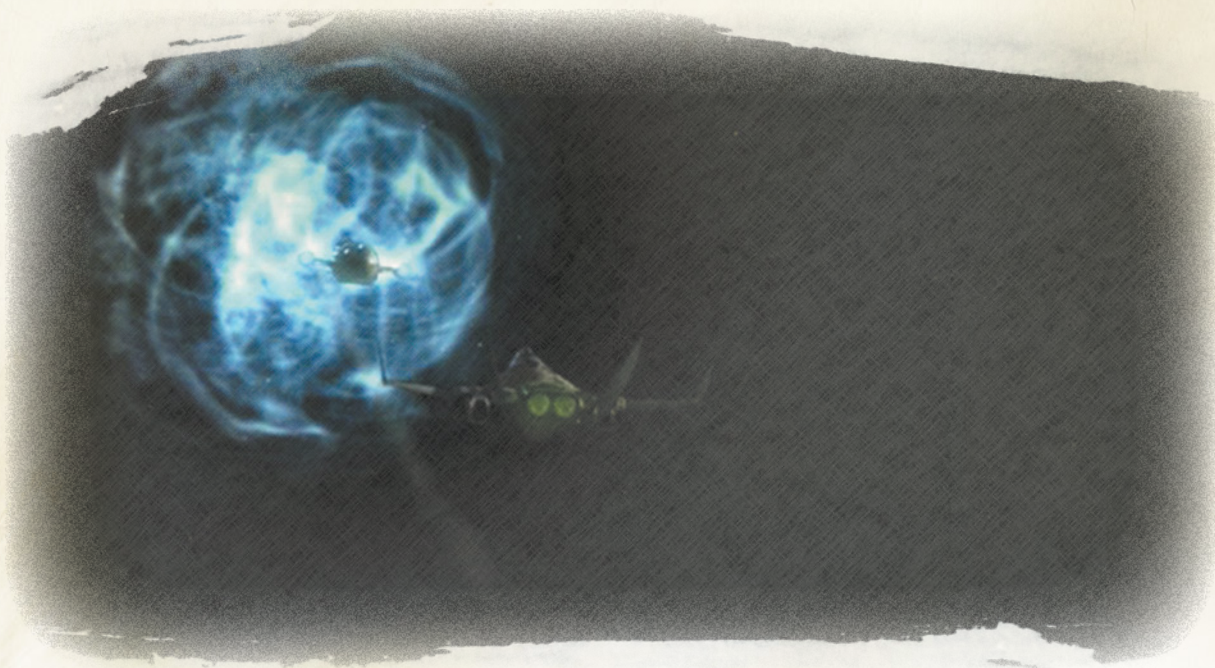
- ★ You can stop an Action Order at any time. Typically, it makes sense to end the Action Order after the scene is over, when a Crewmember or GMC scores a decisive win, or if there are no more GMCs present in a fight because they've been Taken Out (see page 14).

TIMED ACTIONS

When tensions run high and the Crew's lives are on the line, consider using a **Timed Action**. This is a special type of Action used to represent time-sensitive tasks; it's created by stringing a series of Basic Actions together.

In a Timed Action, time is measured and counted down in a specific number of beats—each beat is equivalent to a single roll of the dice. The more beats you provide your players, the more time they have to complete their task. Each time Crewmembers roll the dice, they use one beat. You can use checkboxes or tokens to keep track of beats. You as GM determine when a Timed Action is applicable, how many beats it has, and how many players it involves.

If players beat your total, it only costs them the time



spent, one beat. If they achieve an extraordinary success, it means they found a shortcut and don't lose any time at all—they don't use a beat for that roll. If they fail to raise the stakes, they didn't accomplish what they set out to do, and the beat is still lost. Move on to the next stage of the Timed Action.

Mal and Zoe have run into an old war buddy in a backwater bar, a friend who has fallen on hard times. Unfortunately, the Browncoat has activated a bomb and won't listen to reason. Instead of escaping, Mal and Zoe want to save the patrons in the bar (and their friend!) and deactivate the bomb.

The Gamemaster declares that diffusing the bomb will require three Actions—finding the bomb in the bar, cracking open the bomb case without setting it off, and defusing the bomb itself. Since the old friend has already activated the bomb, the Gamemaster gives Mal and Zoe five beats to clear the bomb before it goes off.

*For the first Action, Mal rolls **Mental + Notice** to find the explosives his old friend stashed away under the bar itself. He's successful, so he spots the bomb wrapped in an old Browncoat jacket that his friend*

used to wear. He uses up one of the beats, but they've still got four beats left.

*Zoe tackles the next Action by rolling **Physical + Labor** to force the bomb casing open far enough for Mal to get a look at the detonator. She creates an extraordinary success and rips open the clumsy casing by forcing apart the metal with her bare hands, earning them an extra beat! Mal and Zoe still have four beats left.*

*Mal rolls **Mental + Know** to see if he remembers anything about disarming this kind of bomb. He fails, and eats up one of their remaining four beats. They only have three beats left!*

Mal makes his roll again and succeeds. He remembers that he's seen this kind of weaponry before, and he shuts down the bomb before anyone gets hurt. Because he's able to finish the Actions before the beats ran out, the bomb doesn't go off.

Timed Actions are an excellent way of creating tension for your players in a variety of contexts.

ROLLING FOR THE OPPOSITION

THOUGH YOU DIRECT THE EPISODE, YOU ALSO interact with the players to help shape the story. The majority of the time, you're fillin' the shoes of a character who's actively opposing a Crewmember. In those cases, your dice pools mirrors the choices the players take to create their own. Be sure refer back to page 9 and re-read the Crewmember Basics section to refresh your memory.

- ★ Dice pools you create on behalf of a Major Gamemaster character always provide you with more dice to roll. These dice pools might include:
 - ★ Attribute
 - ★ Skill
 - ★ Trait die representing the situation or location
 - ★ Distinction or Distinction trigger
 - ★ Signature Asset
 - ★ Complications that work against the player

There are other times, though, when a Crewmember wants to take an Action that isn't opposed by another Major Gamemaster character. Inara wants to send an important wave. Kaylee wants to fix a crucial part to the ship. Mal wants to salvage a derelict. These Actions might fail in interesting ways, so they're worth rolling for. But they don't necessarily have a character opposing the Crewmember's success.

All GM dice pools that aren't centered around a Major GMC include at least one die to represent the difficulty of the Action. So, the types of dice you add to a basic GM

dice pool might include:

- ★ Difficulty die
- ★ Trait die representing the situation or location
- ★ Minor GMC or Extra die
- ★ Complications that work against the player

MASTERIN' THE GAME DIFFICULTY DICE RATING

The higher the stakes, the harder it is for Crewmembers to accomplish tasks. Choose dice based on the ratings below to relay how easy (or hard) it'll be for a Crewmember to complete an Action. Remember, you only assign a difficulty die to your dice pool if a Major GMC is *not* involved in the roll.

- ★ d4: Very easy
- ★ d6: Easy
- ★ d8: Challenging
- ★ d10: Hard
- ★ d12: Really hard





BUILDING OPPOSING DICE POOLS

Dice pools are created according to who or what is opposing the Crewmember. A **difficulty die** is assigned for any Action that does *not* involve a Major Gamemaster character. If the Crewmember is opposing a Major GMC with a full set of stats, the Gamemaster assembles a pool based on the Major GMC the same way a Crewmember does. The Gamemaster only gets to add a difficulty die to a roll when there are no Major GMCs opposing the Crew.

In addition to the difficulty die or Major GMC, the Gamemaster builds a dice pool by picking up one or more dice based on appropriate Traits from the location, opposing characters, ship, etc. These Traits can have a variety of ratings—ranging from **D4** to **D12**—each detailing how the Action will be made difficult by the circumstances the characters face. Sometimes these obstacles are small like a **Slippery Floor D6**, but they can be tough, troublesome problems like an **Ambush D10** or a **Warzone Firefight D12**.

Let's say Kaylee is on board an old derelict. Your friendly neighborhood mechanic is hopin' to get the ship's computers up and running again to find out what she can about the cargo and the ship's crew. Now, the ship's busted and there ain't a soul on board. If Kaylee isn't

able to operate the older model's computers, the Crew is going to miss out on vital data that would help them avoid traps and problems on the ship. In this case, an Action is definitely required.

*First thing you do as the Gamemaster is grab a difficulty die. Let's say that the information Kaylee might learn is powerful useful, so you add a **D10** to your dice pool. You decide to improvise a little bit and assign two brand new Traits to the computer systems: **Encrypted D6** and **Outdated D8**. Now, instead of tinkering with an old computer set-up, Kaylee has to break the code to access the derelict's outdated data files. You roll these three dice (**D10**, **D8**, and **D6**) and set the stakes at 11 using your two best dice.*

*In response, Kaylee creates a dice pool. She adds an Attribute, Skill, Distinction, and any relevant Assets she has in her possession, or Complications that might work in her favor. Kaylee builds her dice pool based on her **Mental D8** Attribute and **Operate D10** Skill. She rolls, comes up with a 15, and successfully decrypts the computer to learn that the Alliance is still tapped into the derelict's computers. The derelict is a trap and the Alliance is now on their way!*

GANGING UP ON THE CREWMEMBERS

Often the opposing GMCs will outnumber the Crewmembers; after all, there's safety in numbers when you're tryin' to get by in the 'Verse! When this happens, the Gamemaster doesn't have to roll individually for each thug that happens to be opposing the Crew. Instead, you can rule that the characters are **ganging up** on a Crewmember and treat each additional GMC as a Trait in the opposition roll. No matter how many GMCs are ganging up, however, the GM still only gets to keep two dice for the total.

*Inara is trying to bluff her way past a few Alliance guards to rescue Mal from the clutches of an Alliance prison. When the four **Alliance Guards D8** roll to set the stakes, the Gamemaster rules that they are ganging up on her, all working together to ask her questions and try to poke holes in her story. The Gamemaster rolls **5D8** (a **D8** for each guard and a **D8** for a challenging difficulty), but only keeps the top two dice for the total. Inara has to raise the stakes with her own roll to talk her way into the prison.*

If the Crew tries to Take Out GMCs who are ganging up on them, a success on a roll Takes Out one of the GMCs, eliminating a die from the opposing pool. An extraordinary success, in addition to generating a Big Damn Hero Die, Takes Out two GMCs. If a Major GMC is opposing the characters while using a gang, the Major GMC can opt to have a member of the gang be Taken Out instead of paying a Plot Point and suffering a Complication, allowing the gang to bear the brunt of the fight.

*When Inara breaks Mal out of prison, the security guards she bluffed start shooting. Mal opts to shoot back, and the four **Alliance Guards D8** roll to set the stakes again with a **D8** from a challenging difficulty and **4D8** from their gang. Since both sides are shooting, the Gamemaster notes that the loser of the roll will be Taken Out. If Mal raises the stakes on the **Guards**, he Takes Out one of the **Guards**, leaving the gang with one less **D8** to roll on the next Action.*

CREATING INTERESTING COMPLICATIONS

One of the Gamemaster's primary jobs during an Episode is to create compelling Complications when Crewmembers roll jinxes. Each and every time that the Crewmembers' dice come up with 1s, you've got a chance to make their lives more interestin'. Take advantage of it! Hand over those Plot Points to Crewmembers—which will let them be amazing in a future Action—and throw down a Complication on the table.

The best Complications are problems that snowball into conflicts, leading the Crew to stories that give them a chance to shine. This takes a bit of ingenuity on the part of the GM because it's easy to default to Complications that dead end into boring injuries or lame problems. Great Episodes in the **FIREFLY RPG** are driven by Complications that draw in new Major and Minor GMCs, provide other Crewmembers with opportunities to help the Crew succeed, and show the Crew that their Actions have consequences that echo throughout the 'Verse.

*Say Jayne was the first to break into the derelict's cockpit and rolled a jinx on his first roll in the scene. Because Jayne rolled a jinx, you're now able to buy a Complication that works against the Crew. You hand Jayne a Plot Point and write **Buggy Mainframe D6** on a card, placing it in on the table for everyone to see. He broke into the ship all right, but he managed to damage the ship's computers in the process of crackin' open the derelict. The **Buggy Mainframe** ain't a problem that Jayne's likely to solve, so it's the perfect kind of Complication to draw another Crewmember into the scene.*

USING COMPLICATIONS TO OPPOSE THE CREW

Once you've put Complications into play, you can add them to any roll where they'd make the Crewmembers' lives more difficult. They can apply when a GMC is opposing the Crew or when Crewmembers attempt Actions that are opposed by difficulty dice. You don't need to add in Complications every time players roll dice, but don't shy away from challenging the Crewmembers when they've gotten themselves into trouble.

*Kaylee is now attempting to access the derelict's busted, encrypted, outdated computers—a tough job. You've still got the same three dice: a **D10** for your difficulty, a **D8** because the computers are outdated, and a **D6** to show they're encrypted. Since the **Buggy Mainframe D6** can work to block Kaylee from accessing the information, you can add another **D6** to your dice pool before you roll to set the stakes. However, you still only get to keep two of the dice for the total—unless you're willing to spend a Plot Point from the bank to add additional dice.*

USING PLOT POINTS AS THE GM

THE GM HAS TWO PILES OF PLOT POINTS: AN UNLIMITED pile to give to players and a limited pile—the **bank**—to spend on rolls opposing the Crew. In the first case, GMs give out Plot Points to Crewmembers whenever a Distinction trigger calls for it or when a player says something particularly witty, funny, or dramatic. There's no limit to how many Plot Points GMs can give out to Crewmembers in this fashion.

In contrast, the GM starts each session with a bank of one Plot Point per player. These Plot Points can be used to help the Gamemaster provide a more active resistance to the Crew, and they must be spent by the end of the session

or they're forfeited. GMCs can put more Plot Points in the bank when they use their Distinction triggers and Signature Asset triggers.

GMs can use Plot Points to:

- ★ Include additional dice in the total during an Action
- ★ Activate a Distinction trigger for a Major GMC
- ★ Buy a **D6** Complication (or higher) when a player rolls a jinx
- ★ Upgrade a Complication when a player rolls a jinx
- ★ Reward players for great moments in the Episode



OPTIONAL RULE: MORE ASSETS AND COMPLICATIONS

While there are usually plenty of Complications and Assets generated when the Crewmembers start rollin' dice, sometimes the Gamemaster wants to add Assets and Complications even when the Crewmembers haven't spent Plot Points or rolled jinxes. Here's how you can make them work if you want to include more Assets and Complications in your game:

If the Crew tackles a problem successfully, the Gamemaster can offer them a free **D6** Asset to reward them for thrillin' heroics. As with all other Assets, a Crewmember can spend a Plot Point to make it last for the rest of the Episode.

If the Crew fails at a challenge, the Gamemaster can apply an additional Complication to the Crewmembers who failed to raise the stakes. In addition, the GM can spend a Plot Point from the bank to make this Complication last for the rest of the Episode.

Note that you shouldn't add additional Assets or Complications when the stakes are high enough for characters to be Taken Out. In those cases, Crewmembers already gain mechanical benefits when they win and suffer Complications when they lose and keep fighting.

For example, when Kaylee is trying to crack open the derelict's computer to get information, the Gamemaster might offer the Asset **Ship Manifesto**

D6 if she successfully bypasses the security on the older mainframe. At the same time, if she fails the roll, the GM might introduce the Complication **Alliance Tracking Device** **D6** to represent the trouble the Crew is getting into by trying to salvage the derelict.

All of this is in addition to the Assets she might generate for herself with Plot Points or the Complications that might arise from jinxes she's rolled. Since no characters are going to be Taken Out on this roll, the Gamemaster can add these additional Assets and Complications without overwhelming the Crewmembers.

ADJUSTING THE GM'S DICE POOL

Remember that your dice pools aren't static or boring. Gamemasters can always adjust their dice pools, even if there isn't a Major GMC in the scene. To adjust your dice pool, you:

- ★ **Add a Trait:** In addition to difficulty dice or Major GMC dice, you may also add in additional Traits based on the environment. Players may have to outrun a **Speeding Train D8** or search through a **Crowded Room D6**. Sometimes these dice are directly tied to locations—like **Minefield D10**—but they can also be situational and reflect some of the specific obstacles that the Crew faces when trying to get a job done.
- ★ **Use an existing Complication:** Remember, Complications are created when the players roll a jinx. Since you set the stakes at the beginning of an Action, you can only use Complications that are already in play for that scene, provided they apply to your dice pool. You can add as many Complications as apply without paying additional

Plot Points. A character with a **Broken Arm D10** who is slipping around on an **Oil Spill D8** while dealing with a **Buggy Mainframe D6** is in some real trouble!

- ★ **Use a Distinction trigger:** Major Gamemaster characters are key players in an Episode and are represented by a full set of game rules. Distinction triggers are included for Major GMCs in all **ECHOES OF WAR** adventures.
- ★ **Use a Skill specialty:** All Skill specialties appear in parentheses and add a **D6** to a dice pool when appropriate. Both Major and Minor Gamemaster characters may have Skill specialties that could help them in opposing the Crew.
- ★ **Use a Major Gamemaster character's Signature Asset(s):** Major Gamemaster characters may also have Signature Assets that are part and parcel to their character. While you can't spend Plot Points to create Assets or use any Assets in play, you can use a Major GMC's Signature Asset if it's provided.



"Gambling is nothing more than simple mathematics. I can help with that, not to mention the broken leg you are likely to suffer when you run out of our money."

– SIMON

The Way of Things

THE SOCIAL CIRCLES MOST CREWS FREQUENT ARE full of backbiters, thieves, and carpetbaggers. The only folk you can count on is your surrogate family—your Crew. Everybody else is looking for a leg up. If that means sellin' out the guy that took a bullet in the War for an old friend, that's how the cards play out. Friends outside the Crew that are worth an ounce of trust? You can count 'em on one hand. Loyal friends are a rare treasure in the 'Verse. One such friend calls upon the Crew. Annie Foy struggled for years to make her way as a singer—without falling to the easy vices such a lifestyle encourages. Clean living meant falling in arrears to the Crew for transportin' her from planet to planet. She helped the Crew whenever she was able, getting them small odd jobs whenever she could. She finally made a home on Renao, one of Persephone's moons.

Whenever the Crew visited the area, she'd pay back what she could, usually in a night of drinks on her.

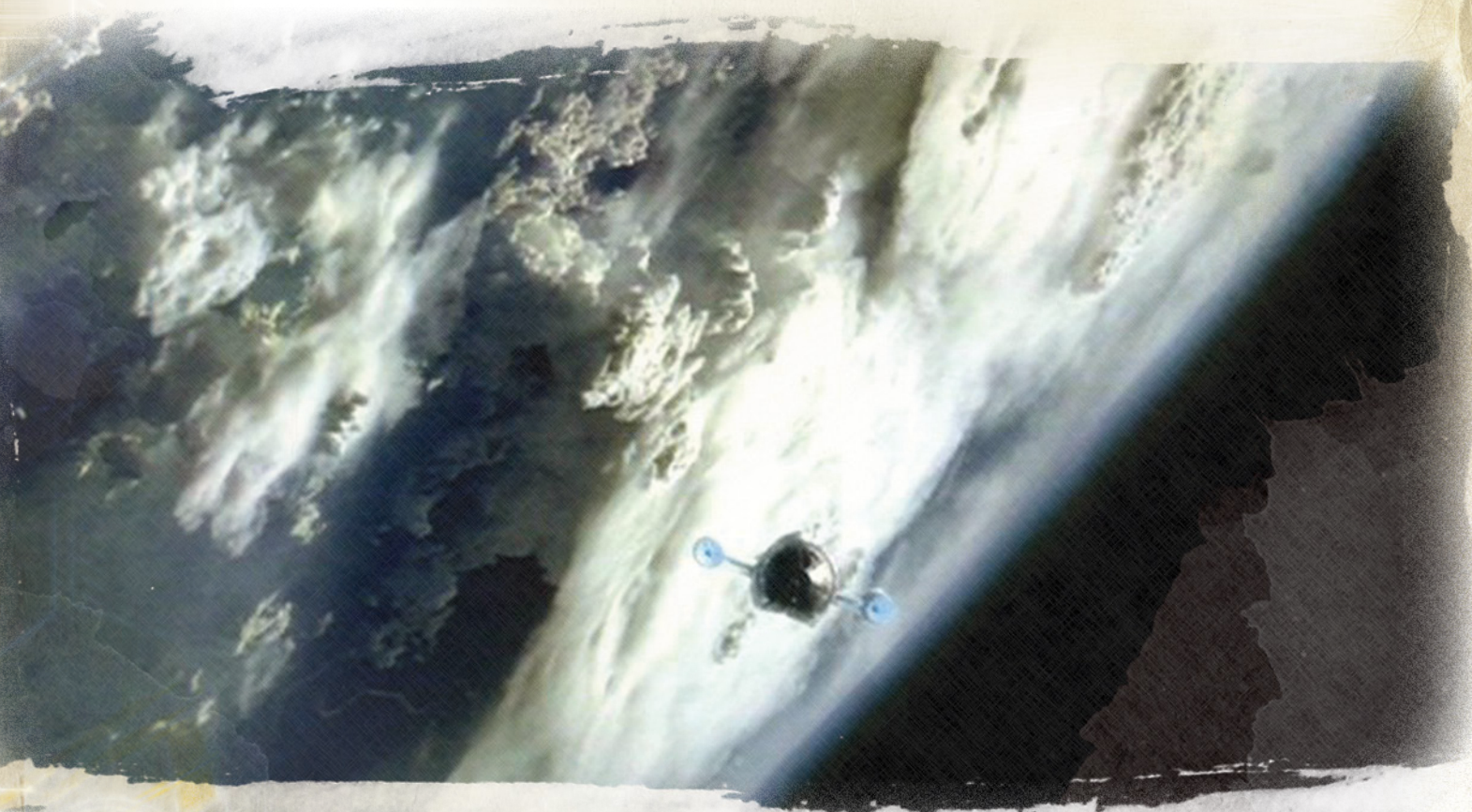
A recent wave from Annie makes it seem like her fortunes have changed. She's been hired as the singer in a casino on Renao. Not only can she pay off her debt, she also offers to put the Crew up for a few days of fun and sun. The *Shenandoah Rush* casino is full of plenty of ways to part the Crew and their new found windfall. It's a themed resort that pays respect to the American Old West from Earth-That-Was through a lens distorted by time and distance. Cooler heads may suggest scoopin' up the cash and headin' back out into space, but there'll likely be a Crewmember or two tempted to make a big score at the casino. A few days feeling like a high roller is just the cure to knock the dust off the boots and ease aching bones.

Unfortunately, Annie never gets the chance to settle up. Shortly before the Crew's arrival, someone mistakes her for a Federal Marshal and murders her in her dressing room. The Crew has a few scant minutes to look for clues before the chief of security, Sheriff Leonard Cao, arrives to catch the Crew in a compromisin' position. Cao seems to be understandin' of the Crew's plight and is willing to let them out on probation while the investigation into Annie's death proceeds.

The Sheriff ain't doing this out of the kindness of his own heart. The owners of the casino have lots of friends in high places, including a red pole of the Sleeping Dog Triad. Sharklip Shen holds a high-stakes faro game in a secure high roller room on the upper floors of the casino. Cao knows Annie was connected to the game and his instincts

tell him that whoever killed her is playin' cards with the Triad boss. At best, sendin' in the Crew as wildcards will root out Annie's killer. At worst, the Crew will disrupt the game and give Cao a little bit of selfish satisfaction.

The Crew soon finds themselves at a table with a few unsavory types—any of them could be responsible for Annie's death. Is it Sharklip Shen, the Triad leader who doesn't like to lose? Is it Butch Guiying, the Independent guerilla fighter now turned savage mercenary? Is it The Colonel, the retired Alliance officer served by a nurse who is anything but? Is it Cassie Sagira, a registered Companion with a secret she's willing to kill for? The Crew will have a big mountain to climb to make it out of the casino with their money intact and their names cleared.





SERENITY CREW PERSONAL SUBPLOTS

The death of an old friend should be enough as an initial hook for the Crew to get involved with the faro game. But more hooks are never a bad idea. Giving a personal stake in seekin' justice will get your Crewmembers on the edge of their seats. If you're playin' with the Serenity Crew, toss out these hooks, or feel free to adapt them to your Crew.

Mal: He and Annie may have been closer than either of them let on. Especially before Inara came around.

Jayne: Whenever Annie would visit, she would love to go shootin' with Jayne and try out whatever new gun he most recently picked up.

Inara: Big Cassie is an old rival from her days training to be a Companion.

Wash: Annie always made him laugh and didn't mind sittin' in the control room to shoot the breeze for long, lonely stretches.

Zoe: She saw Butch in action during the War and stumbled upon a slaughtered civilian transport he took out to get to an Alliance base.

Book: Is an "old friend" of The Colonel and remembers how much he hates playing cards.

Simon: Played some faro during his school days.

River: Whenever she looks at Sarah or The Colonel, she keeps hearing the word "Dobson."

"SHERIFF" LEONARD CAO

Character Type: Chief of Casino Security

Role: Leonard wants to bring Annie's killers to justice. He was sweet on her and he's sick of taking orders from Sharklip Shen.

Acts: I, II, IV

Character Description: The title of "Sheriff" is something of a joke. Thanks to the Wild West theming of the casino, all employees are meant to enhance the experience, so Leonard wears a cowboy hat, a tin star, and carries a replica Colt Peacemaker at his side. Leonard still takes his job very seriously, even if a rumpled Asian man ain't exactly historically accurate. Though he acts as if he's the law in town, Cao tries to put things right before they draw Alliance scrutiny. His office is set up behind the old time jail open to the tourists. His security suite is quite modern, with monitoring cameras set up all around the building.

Leonard's correct title is Chief of Casino Security. He's there to keep an eye out for cheats, settle down flared tempers, and bust up any Crews looking to take a score from the casino. Any large moneymaking

organization attracts a criminal element and whenever Sharklip Shen doesn't get his way, Cao gets called in to clean up the mess. Cao has to smooth things over with high rollers when Shen's goons accuse someone of cheating. Leonard lets the minor members sleep it off in his jail cell. Otherwise, he's the one that has to shrug and look like a rube when the Alliance stumbles over a body of someone who didn't pay up when Shen called in a marker.

Likes and Dislikes: Leonard is frustrated by how much Sharklip Shen gets away with because of his Triad connections. He really liked Annie, maybe even was a little sweet on her, and he's not going to stand by and have her killer go unpunished. He realizes that leanin' on the Crew could blow up in his face in a spectacular fashion, but he's figured everyone's got to take a stand at some point.

Flashbacks and Echoes: Leonard served in the War as Alliance military police on a Regina military base. He didn't do anything of note, but neither did he participate in anything terrible. He saw little action but was proud to have served in the military.

*"I'm here to contend with drunks, cheats, and sore losers.
You ain't any of those, are you, amigos?"*

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

6

PHYSICAL

6

SOCIAL

6

SKILLS

FOCUS

8

MOVE

6

TRICK
(HANDLING DRUNKS)

8

INFLUENCE

8

NOTICE

6

TREAT

6

KNOW
(CASINO SECURITY)

6

SNEAK

6

SURVIVE

6

DISTINCTIONS

EVERYTHING'S SHINY

8

Don't worry. Everything's going to come out shiny in the end.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Lightweight: Gain 1 PP when you choose to get knocked out, drunk, or otherwise affected by incapacitating causes instead of rolling dice.

HARMLESS LOOKING

8

You blend into a crowd like a rock blends into a quarry.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Couldn't Hurt A Fly: Step back your **Physical** die to step up your **Social** die when convincing someone you're not a threat.

HONEST MAN

8

Honest as the day is long.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

SIGNATURE ASSET

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode.

Rodee "Law Dog" D6: When the time comes for Leonard to act as the official chief of security, he replaces the Colt Peacemaker replica on his hip with this real pistol. When casino staff and regulars see this on his person, they know Leonard means business.

Stun Cuffs D6: Leonard is usually more concerned with quickly and quietly gettin' troublesome patrons out of the public eye than actin' like a hero. These restraints are made of a high-grade metal and are only able to be opened by Leonard's thumbprint. He spent a little bit extra to get the deluxe model, which issues a mild electrical charge when he utters the command word, currently set to "Mathilda."

QUOTIN "SHARKLIP" SHEN

Character Type: Triad Gangster

Role: Sharklip is the host of the faro game. He wants to keep things running smooth, no matter what happens.

Acts: Act II, III and IV

Character Description: Sharklip grew up on the nearby planet of Persephone. He spent most of his days as a kid runnin' through Eavesdown Docks, skimming whatever cargo he could from unwatched crates and sellin' the goods to vendors for cheap. He got his name from a run-in with the knife belonging to a member of a less savory transport crew. He worked his way through the Triad organization on Persephone until he was offered a position on Renao. Unsure if this was a promotion or a rival getting him out of the way, Shen took the job. Running a casino fit Sharklip like one of his finely tailored suits.

He soon set about turning *Shenandoah Rush* into a profit center for the Triad. Though he holds no official position with the casino, everyone who works there knows he is the man who gets things done. He's got an extensive line of credit on the floor, but he rarely gambles among the unwashed masses. His clout allows him a private table in his private penthouse. Shen plays cards here but also uses it to discuss business with other syndicates.

This game, however, brought him trouble. The casino invested a considerable amount of time and money in Annie Foy and now they will never see a return. Shen didn't authorize any killin' and he's not a man who likes losing control. He wants the killer in a pine box and if the Crew looks like the kind of people who can get their hands dirty, he may charge them with the task. He's not afraid of playing on their sympathy as Annie's friend, either. They get a little payback and a big payday.

Likes and Dislikes: Sharklip is primarily interested in discussin' business with Big Cassie. He has assets that can help her smuggling operation and her connections can help bring high rollers to the casino. Butch has rubbed Shen the wrong way since he's been here. He wants to clean out the mercenary before he sends him on his way. Shen can't quite figure out how The Colonel has been able to keep coming back to the table. As long as he keeps bringing that nurse to the table as scenery, he doesn't mind taking the old man's money.

Flashbacks and Echoes: Shen used his criminal connections to stay clear of the War. He was far too valuable to his Triad to be sent off to die. The revelation of this fact may cause some veterans to bristle at the thought.

"We can play cards or you can participate in a martial arts demonstration with my associates. Your choice."

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

6

PHYSICAL

6

SOCIAL

6

SKILLS

FIGHT

8

KNOW
(CARD GAMES)

6

SHOOT

6

FOCUS
(STONE FACED)

10

NOTICE

8

TRICK

8

INFLUENCE

6

DISTINCTIONS

GAMBLER

8

The greater the risk, the greater the thrill. You're addicted to the luck of the draw.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



All or Nothing: When you are about to be Taken Out in a scene, spend 1 PP to reroll your dice. If you fail to set or raise the stakes on your second roll, you cannot spend a PP to stay in the fight.

STRONG, SILENT TYPE

8

You're big, strong, and you follow orders. You get trusted with valuable things of all sorts.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

TRIAD RANKING

8

You fought, swindled, and bargained your way to a position of minor leadership in the Triad. Only problem is what to do now that you're here.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Gang Warfare: Gain 1 PP when your criminal background and deadly connections lead to violence against you or your allies.

SIGNATURE ASSETS

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode.

Push Dagger D6: Shen understands the usefulness of blades in close quarters all too personally. Ever since the incident that gave him his scar (and his nickname), he keeps a knife on his person at all times. This T-shaped weapon juts a blade from between the ring and middle finger. He keeps it stashed up his sleeve for a quick, easy draw.

Silver Cigarillo Case D6: Sharklip's a follower of the lost art of smoking. He hand rolls his smokes at the table and lights up without asking. There are two dents in the case. One comes with a story about an old lover and a hidden stiletto. The other, Shen doesn't like to tell anyone who's not a member of the Triad.

TRIAD ENFORCERS

Triad Goons D6: Sharklip's enforcers are there to protect their boss and see that the game stays relatively low key. Sharklip knows that being a sore loser is a quick way to an empty table, so he will refrain from resortin' to violence if he loses. However, if any of the gamblers present evidence of cheatin' at his table, a quick glance is all it takes before the gang members produce cleavers and other blades to teach a valuable lesson.

COLONEL AMBROSE BAINES

Character Type: Stodgy Alliance Officer

Role: The face at the table drawing attention away from Sarah's mission.

Acts: II, III

Character Description: Colonel Ambrose Baines cuts an august figure in his Alliance dress military outfit. That's the extent of his dedication to his rank. The Colonel is here for some free drinks, the chance to play some cards, and win some money. He has no agenda beyond enjoyin' himself while Marshal Burton plays detective. She's holding his pension over his head to cooperate, but he understands the work that she's doing is important. He'd rather be drinkin' his pension away alone, but the booze here is expensive and the company is prettier.

Likes and Dislikes: None of the players at the table impress The Colonel. Shen's a thug. Cassie is a braying prostitute. If The Colonel were 20 years younger, he'd show Butch how a real Alliance soldier fought—unlike all the women and children the raider terrorized during the War. He does enjoy playin' the part of the feeble old man for Marshal Burton. He calls her by a different name every time he addresses her. Whether he does it on purpose or honestly can't keep it straight is a secret The Colonel will take to his grave.

Flashbacks and Echoes: Digging into his history finds an officer who served with distinction during the War. Afterwards, however, his records show cover-up after cover-up and scandal upon scandal. He retired early and has been living on a government pension ever since.

*"I think I'll turn in for the night. Rosemary, dear,
if you would kindly take me back to my room?"*

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

6

PHYSICAL

4

SOCIAL

8

SKILLS

FIGHT

8

KNOW
(WAR STORIES)

6

SHOOT

8

FOCUS

8

NOTICE

6

TRICK
(BLUFFING)

6

INFLUENCE

6

DISTINCTIONS

ALLIANCE OFFICER

8

You proudly wear the uniform of the organization that brought peace to the universe.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

INVALID

8

You can't get much of anywhere without somebody's help.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



I Can't Get Up: Create a **D8** Complication on yourself related to your medical condition. Gain 1 PP.

SORE LOSER

8

They cheated! You weren't ready! The sun was in your eyes! Double or nothing!



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Sulk: Step up a Complication gained in a contest you lost fair and square to gain 1 PP.

SIGNATURE ASSETS

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode.

Antique Wheelchair D6: Sarah pushes The Colonel around in an antique wheelchair. It's an excuse to keep Sarah in the room while he plays cards. It draws sympathy to an alleged war wound, which allows him to win a few more hands than he should. It also projects an illusion of wealth, since many assume it is from Earth-That-Was.

Surveillance Monocle D6: The Colonel's monocle is a bit of stage dressing to help him play the part. It also records a video feed that transmits back to the surveillance suite back in his room. He can also leave it in strategic places to record conversations and then berate Sarah to go and fetch his lost monocle.

SARAH "LULA" BURTON

Character Type: Undercover Federal Marshal

Role: Butch's real target and a serious complication for the Crew should she be discovered.

Acts: II and III, and possibly helping out in IV

Character Description: She may be dressed like a floozie answerin' to the name Lula, but Sarah Burton worked hard to get where she is. A Federal Marshal is not an easy position to hold. Doubly so for an undercover Marshal. Undercover Marshals know that one false move could send 'em out an airlock or leave them dirtside for the Reavers. Sarah doesn't like to think about what would happen to her if anyone at the table found out who she really is.

Burton got wind of Sharklip's game and found a way in, but she didn't have time to set up her own cover. Instead, she found someone with enough money to buy into the game and a few skeletons in the closet. The Colonel just wants to keep the stories Burton's dug up off the Cortex. So he plays the game slowly, while Sarah keeps her eyes peeled and her ears open. She'll often give him signals to help him stay in the game.

Should the Crew discover her secret, her bubblehead act will drop the second she has a moment of privacy away from the table. She's got no time for a dingy group of smugglers bumblin' around the table. She's invested two years of her life getting into the game, and their presence is jeopardizin' a major criminal intelligence gathering operation.

Likes and Dislikes: Sarah wishes she could arrest everyone at the table right now, but she knows that gatherin' information will help larger busts down the line. She respects Shen as a challenge and looks forward to seeing if the charges will stick. Butch gives her the creeps. Big Cassie is likely next on her list once this operation is complete. She'll be upset if she feels the Crew is interferin' with her operation, but she'll feel conflicted if she finds out Annie was killed mistakenly in her place.

Flashbacks and Echoes: Sarah never made it much past fresh-faced recruit before the War ended. An unsatisfied thirst for action is what prompted her to sign up for the Marshals.

"Keeping track of all these numbers and everything just makes me so dizzy."

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

8

PHYSICAL

6

SOCIAL

4

SKILLS

INFLUENCE

8

SHOOT

8

TRICK
(PLAYING DUMB)

10

PERFORM

8

SNEAK

8

TREAT

6

DISTINCTIONS

ALLIANCE SPY

8

You've got your orders. What you do with them now is up to you.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Alliance Agenda: When you're interacting with any Alliance personnel, spend 1 PP to reveal that you outrank them or function at a more important level than they do.

ALLURING

8

You're easy on the eyes and cunning enough to use those good looks to your advantage.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Turn Heads: When you're using your good looks as a distraction to help an ally, spend 1 PP to give that ally a die equal to your **Influence** die rating for the ally's next Action.

UNDERCOVER

8

Is this who you really are? Or are you working for someone else?



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

SIGNATURE ASSET

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode.

Medkit D6: A properly stocked medical kit not only helps Sarah maintain her cover as The Colonel's nurse, but it also can come in handy in her duties as Marshal. A variety of sedatives can be used to dull the senses (or knock out) security guards. And, if anything goes wrong, she can patch herself up.

Micro Transmitter D6: Sarah has a few of these at her disposal. She's very practiced at putting them on people without their notice. She's also got the main room and the room adjacent to the private table wired for sound. To cut down on the chance of a transmission being noticed, she keeps the recording device on her person, in a small cylinder disguised as lipstick.

CASSIEOPIA "BIG CASSIE" SAGIRA

Character Type: Registered Companion with a lucrative side business.

Role: Part red herring, part future villain.

Acts: II, III

Character Description: Everything about Cassie is big. Big hair, big laugh, big corset. She cuts an imposin', glamorous figure whenever she sails into a room. Cassie ain't the typical image you'd see when you think of an alluring Companion. But five minutes with her destroys any doubts, thanks to her vibrant personality and her ability to put anyone at ease. Cassie has an impressive client list that spans the Core, Border, and Rim planets.

Cassie is here on Renao lookin' to expand that client list. The Shenandoah Rush is a good base of operations since it caters to clients from all economic backgrounds. The invite to Sharklip's game was polite, and she has money to burn. She's less interested in winnin' than she is meeting interesting and dangerous people.

Though she is a Registered Companion, Cassie makes a fair bit of money promisin' "special training" to potential Companions. Once she squeezes the suckers for all they are worth, she sells them off as common prostitutes to a criminal syndicate, never to

be seen or heard from again. She uses her travels to mask this side business, which threatens to eclipse the money she makes as a Companion. Should the Crew uncover her secret, she'll ask one question: how much money will it take for them to keep their mouths shut?

Likes and Dislikes: Cassie likes being wined and dined by Sharklip. She's made arrangements with another organization to quietly ship her boys and girls throughout the 'Verse, but the presentation here has her on the fence. If Shen is a good boy and lets her win at cards, he might just seal the deal. Butch keeps trying to convince her to take him on as a client, but she doesn't need to look him up on the Companion Registry to know that's a terrible idea. The Colonel might make a good client, but it looks like he's already paying his "nurse" for companionship. Cassie recognizes that girl has had some kind of trainin'. His nurse plays dumb, but not dumb enough to fool Cassie.

Flashbacks and Echoes: Cassie trained as a Companion during the War. She stayed out of the fighting, but she knows that complimenting a solider on how they look in uniform is a sure way to put a client at ease.

"When you're good to Cassie, Cassie's good to you."

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

6

PHYSICAL

4

SOCIAL

8

SKILLS

FIGHT

6

KNOW
(SCANDALOUS RUMORS)

8

PERFORM
(SLIGHT OF HAND)

8

FOCUS

8

OPERATE

6

TRICK

8

INFLUENCE

10

DISTINCTIONS

BIG 'UN

8

Sure, you've packed on a few pounds, but there's no gravity out in the black.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

HERE FOR THE PARTY

8

Let the good times roll. Life is too short to be serious all the time.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Enabler: Double your **Social** die when you try to convince another Crewmember to blow off responsibilities in favor of good times.

REGISTERED COMPANION

8

You have an active license in the Companion Registry, which opens doors and brings you business.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



I Know Your Ways: Spend 1 PP to step up or double **Influence** when you are attempting to follow proper etiquette or put someone at ease.

SIGNATURE ASSET

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode.

Bejeweled War Fan D6: Cassie talks a lot with her hands. She also wears some heavy jewels and flashy clothes. This fan does a lot to keep her cool and helps her stay the center of attention in any social situation. It also allows her to stay armed in civilized places. A hidden switch extends a set of three-inch blades from each spoke of the fan.

Poison Ring D6: There's a ring on every one of Cassie's fingers. The third finger on her left hand, where you'd wear a wedding band, has a ring featuring a hidden compartment. The compartment is filled with a sedative that can be carefully added to food or drink. She got the ring on her fifth anniversary as a Registered Companion.

CASSIE'S ENTOURAGE

Hangers On D6: Cassie's people are there to puff up her ego. They'll fawn over good plays and whisper whenever she gets a bad hand. They know very little about the game being played, but they are an excellent source of information about the various gamblers at the table. A round of drinks and a compliment on a fashionable hat is a good way to pick up information on the competition.

MAJOR BEAUREGARD "BUTCH" GUIYING

Character Type: Browncoat raider turned criminal warlord

Role: Butch kills Annie, thinking she's a Federal Marshal gathering evidence on him.

Acts: III and IV

Character Description: Butch Guiying is one of the reasons folk still look down on Browncoats so long after the War ended. He quickly rose through the ranks of the Independents thanks to a nasty mix of tactical genius and zero sympathy for anyone directly connected to the Alliance. His guerilla raids helped Independents win a handful of battles throughout the War. Some armchair historians wonder if his presence on Hera could have turned the tide of battle at Serenity Valley, but Butch was deep behind enemy lines during the Battle of Serenity Valley. He preferred it that way. His unit was never up for much of a straight up fight, preferring to rob, burn, and ambush their way through peaceful Alliance-held worlds.

The end of the War didn't mean Butch was ready to beat his bloody blade into a plowshare. He still claims he fights for the undying Independent cause, but in reality he's set himself up as a mercenary warlord. He'll hire himself out to whoever meets his price. If nobody is hirin', he'll plan a job on his own and take what he wants. Many of the members of his unit are now part of his gang. They do the

same things they've been doing since the War—now they just get to keep the spoils rather than deliver supplies to other units.

Butch is at the game hoping to make some serious connections with larger syndicates. He gets wind that there's an undercover Federal Marshal monitoring the game and takes it upon himself to kill her, hoping to get in good with Sharklip Shen's Triad. Unfortunately, he misidentifies the target and kills Annie Foy instead of the real Marshal. Far as he knows, he got the real Marshal, though it doesn't matter much to him if finds out Annie was innocent.

Likes and Dislikes: Butch is not a very good card player. He's here to get in with one of the other players at the table. If he has to lose some money to do so, that's the price of doin' business. He respects Shen the most and sees him as a ticket into a higher level of criminal empire. Cassie gets on his nerves, but her human traffickin' is right up his alley. The Colonel's Alliance connections make him bristle, but if the old *hun dan* pays him enough, he'll consider taking a job from the purplebelly.

Flashbacks and Echoes: It's very possible that a Crewmember came across Butch's unit during the War. Alliance soldiers whispered of Butch's ability to hit a target and fade into thin air. Browncoats were uncomfortable with his tactics, but couldn't argue with his results.

"The end of the War was just more Alliance propaganda."

ATTRIBUTES

MENTAL

8

PHYSICAL

8

SOCIAL

8

SKILLS

DRIVE

8

MOVE

8

SNEAK
(AMBUSH)

8

FIGHT
(KNIVES)

10

NOTICE

8

SURVIVE
(HORSE RIDING)

6

FOCUS

8

10

SHOOT

DISTINCTIONS

MERCENARY

8

They don't pay you to look pretty. They pay you to shoot things.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Highest Bidder: Gain 1 PP when you try to get a better deal than your current contract from the side you're not currently fightin' for.

ON THE RUN

8

Someone's after you—Alliance, the Triads, the Guilds, maybe all three. You're a fugitive and you're trouble.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.

SHADOWS OF THE WAR

8

Not everyone serves their side on the front lines. Not everyone left what they did behind.



Gain 1 Plot Point when you roll a **D4** instead of a **D8**.



Operational Flexibility: Double your **Focus** when you are working to reconfigure a plan on the fly.

SIGNATURE ASSET

Pick one Signature Asset to use in this Episode. Whichever Asset is chosen will also be the main piece of evidence that links him to the murder.

Alliance Rank Pins D8: Butch is well known for strippin' the rank pins of any Alliance officer he killed. He wears them on the lapels of his brown coat to intimidate Alliance loyalists and to score sympathy and free drinks from Independents. Annie pulled a couple of pins off of his coat during their struggle, which tumbled underneath her makeup table unnoticed.

Bowie Knife D8: Butch used a knife just like this one to end Annie's life. He quietly switched out the real murder weapon with a knife from a subordinate. This knife looks shiny and new, which seems out of place with his otherwise worn demeanor.

BUTCH'S BROWNCOATS

Butch's Mercenaries D8: Butch's mercenaries are rough and ready to fight. They look the part of classic outlaws, with grimy faces and well-worn brown coats. They don't have much investment in who wins or loses in the game, but if Butch sends them after someone to take back his money one kick to the ribs at a time, they will be more than happy to oblige.

SCENES AND LOCATIONS

"It's a damn shame, sir. All these people being legally robbed and us not allowed to help."

– ZOE

WHILE MANY CREWS ARE FAMILIAR WITH PERSEPHONE

thanks to the Eavesdown Docks, its moons are less well known. Persephone has two moons, Hades and Renao, each of which serve a different purpose for the settlers of Persephone. Much like Persephone is divided between the haves and the have-nots, each moon caters to a different type of person in the 'Verse.

Hades is mostly unsettled and crews too rough for Eavesdown set up shop there. It has somethin' of a reputation as a smuggler's haven. It's a great place to wait for a fence to come back with the money for selling hot items. That is, if'n you can keep one of the other crews from hijackin' your cargo while you wait. There's not much law here, and the officers here are usually in someone's pocket from the moment the badge goes on in the morning.

The other moon, Renao, is a vacation spot for the idle rich on Persephone. Far enough from home to count as a getaway, close enough that it doesn't take days of idling in

MASTERIN' THE GAME ARCHETYPE JACKPOT

Bucking the Tiger is a murder mystery at heart. Its structure matches the *Firefly* television show. Most episodes feature two plots. The *A-plot* is the main problem the Crew must overcome. The *B-plot* is a complication to the main plot that showcase character growth and lets long-term story elements develop. The more B-plots in a show, the more dramatic and soap-opera-like the Episode will feel.

Below we've included subplots for each of the archetypes that can be directly lifted in Crews using the Archetypes or adapted for original Crewmembers.

Academy Dropout: The dropout recognizes The Colonel from his days at the Academy.

Alliance Agent: The agent has an old cover identity he used to use here...and someone's checked in using it.

Asteroid Miner: The miner recognizes Sarah Burton as a Marshal from one of her other undercover operations out on the Rim.

Battle-Worn Bounty Hunter: You've worked with Sheriff Cao before. He's a good man, once you get him to trust you.

Border Planet Farmer: Cassie visited his homeworld and took a couple girls with her. Where are they now?

Cortex Hacker: The big game lets the hacker shine. The table is run by computer so a good hacker could control who wins and who loses, provided said hacker has access to the room where the game is going down.

Derelict Salvager: Butch is rumored to be the mastermind behind the scuttling of the *Kallisto*, a ship whose salvage rights would let the salvager wipe away any money troubles for a long time.

Dishonored Politician: Big Cassie has the politician on her list. This character knows her price for information.

Dock Foreman: The foreman knew Shen back when he was a Triad enforcer on the Eavesdown Docks.

High-Stakes Gambler: The gambler has a marker on Shen and could get more than one Crewmember in the game by cashing in.

Small-Time Trader: An important Guild fee is coming due soon. A run of hot luck during the stay at the casino could pay off in a few days what a month of hard work across the 'Verse could take.

Triad Enforcer: The enforcer is connected with a rival gang looking for weaknesses in Shen's casino.

the black to get there. The landscape is dotted with resorts catering to all types, so long as you've got the money to pay for it all. Many of the resorts are themed to offer the folk with money a chance to experience the one thing they can't buy: the past.

Shenandoah Rush Casino is located on the moon of Renao. It blends high-end living with the look and feel of a cow town from the American West. All the workers are dressed in period costumes, the food is prepared like it was in those days, and the gambling lets guests burn their money in rooms that look just like the ones in the ancient history of Earth-That-Was. Not everything is completely accurate, this being an expensive resort. In the case of convenience versus accuracy, convenience wins every time. Renao is close enough to Persephone to attract gamblers doing business on the planet, but far enough away to feel like a bit of a vacation.

SHENANDOAH RUSH CASINO

Shenandoah Rush casino is built on a wide, rolling plain. The building consists of two towers separated by a wide, dirt street. The casino was built to look and feel like an Old Western town in the public areas and a well-appointed luxury hotel in the guest rooms. The building is twenty stories high, with rooms becoming larger and more elaborate the higher up the tower you go.

A state of the art holographic projector canopies the street. The canopy serves two purposes. To folk down on Mainstreet, it blocks out the looming glass towers and keeps a sunny, desert sky overlooking the illusion. To folk looking out of their hotel room, the canopy is a marquee for events on the grounds, including a chance to see Annie's face and name up in lights. The canopy exists at the fifth level of the hotel, which is where the first level of guest rooms begins.

The rooms themselves maintain rustic charm, though they skew modern in feel. Guests can configure the décor, and the holographics can adjust from authentic frontier to stark and modern. Room service, alcohol delivery, and accounts for the casino are all handled through a Cortex interface in the room.

The casino has no landing facilities of its own, though the penthouse suites do offer shuttle landing pads for those able to afford such luxury. Instead, guests of the *Shenandoah Rush* land on the edge of the property and take a train into the station, which also serves as the main entrance to the facility.

Here are a few notable locations in the casino. Note that all of them feature some form of gambling, whether its holographic slot machines or poker tables run by dealers in period dress.

NORTH TOWER

"I'll have a steak sandwich...and a steak sandwich."

– WASH

The North Tower stands as the gateway to the casino. Most of the regular tourists stay in this building because of its direct access to the maglev train. A comprehensive experience can be had just by staying in this building, between the train, the restaurants, the shows, and the gambling. The Crew's rooms are booked in the North Tower.

- ★ **Shenandoah Station:** This is where the illusion truly begins. The **Maglev Train D6** that brings tourists into the casino looks like a grand old steam train, down to decorative wheels on the side that move even though they don't touch the ground. The station is done up to look like a grand old station from the American West. Massive steam generators pump in obscuring fog when the train comes into the station since the train itself can't. All guests check in here and those with rooms in the North Tower can go directly upstairs.
- ★ **Mainstreet:** A dusty street that stretches between the two towers. This is the main thoroughfare of the casino and how guests travel from one location to another. Even when it rains on Renao, the canopy over Mainstreet keeps it sunny and warm. Every two hours or so, a crew of six **Trained Stuntmen D8** come rip roaring through

Mainstreet, shooting blanks into the air. The **Casino Employees D6** on the street do their best to keep folk out of harm's way.

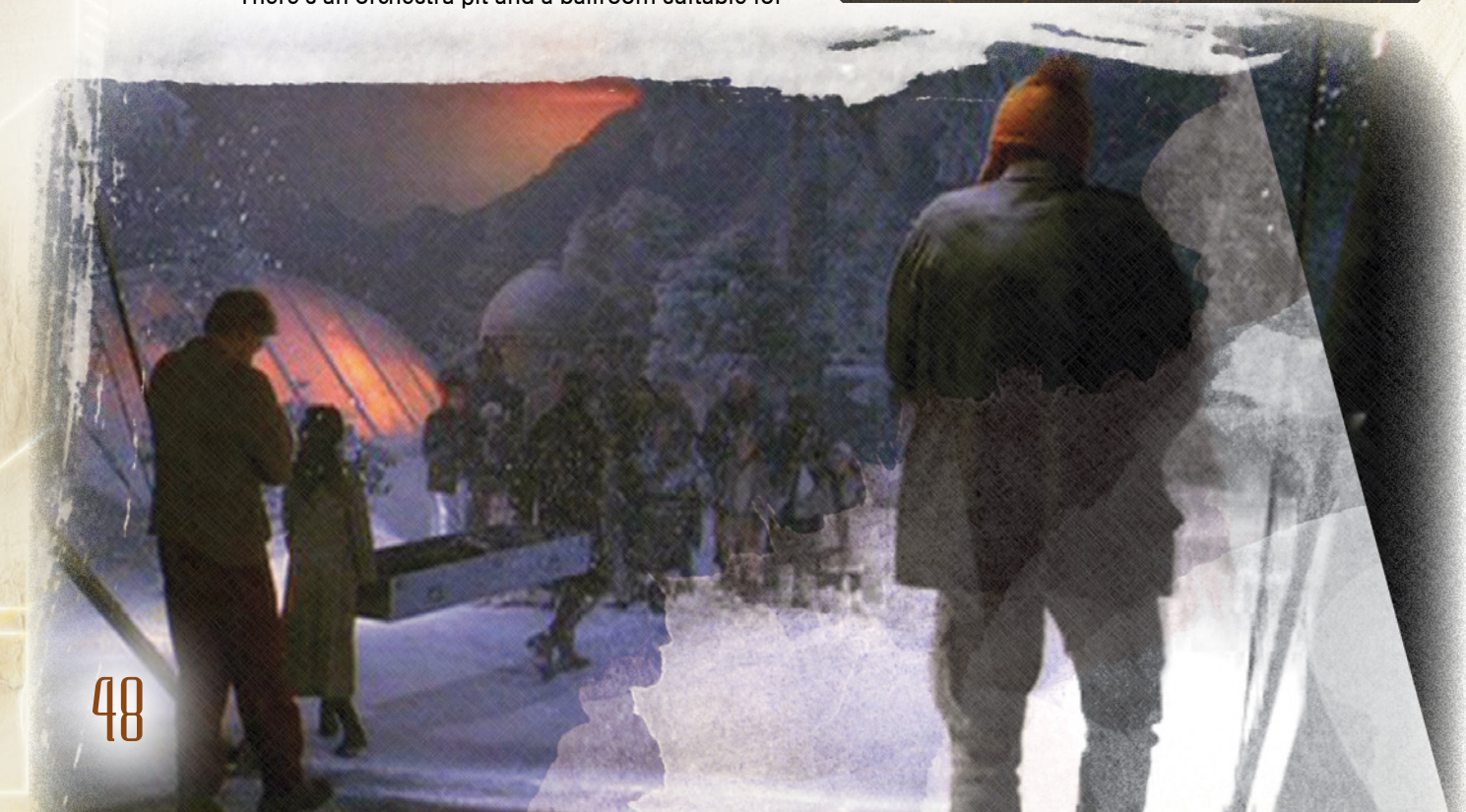
- ★ **Bunkhouse Vittles:** Every casino needs a good buffet, and Shenandoah Rush is no exception. The buffet is set up like a mining encampment, with tin silverware, blue plates, and an all-you-can-eat buffet. **Tourists D6** looking to prove their intestinal fortitude can make a run at being a Bunkhouse Bear by eating a plate full of every food type in under an hour. Victory gets a T-shirt, a capture on the wall, and some house money to play with. Most of the **Casino Employees D6** take their meals here while on the job. The Colonel takes his meals in his room, but sends Marshal Burton down here to pick up food for the two of them.
- ★ **The Columbia Gem:** Fine dining doesn't get much finer. Annie swings the first night at the Columbia Gem for the Crew, giving them a chance to feel like all the other **High Rollers D8**. The wine is chilled, the silverware real, and the steak imported directly from Fairchild Farms' best stock. Annie is the main attraction at the Columbia Gem, which features a stage on one side covered by a red velvet curtain. There's an orchestra pit and a ballroom suitable for

dancing in the center of the room, under a gigantic crystal chandelier. Cassie Sagira dines here nightly, usually on the dime of one of her clients.

- ★ **True Tall Tales of the West:** One of the newest attractions at the casino. It was built to lure whole families of **Tourists D6** to the Shenandoah Rush. This area offers a chance to get dressed up in period dress, pantomime some action in a blank room, and then get inserted via Cortex magic into a variety of old westerns. For an extra fee, the western is an original tale and package thought up by the casino itself, complete with fake wanted posters to hang up back home.

MASTERIN' THE GAME THE PARTY BEFORE THE SHINDIG

Renao is one of the two moons of Persephone. That makes this Episode an excellent fit for leading into the events of "Shindig." The Crew just got away from a close call with the Alliance. Annie's wave comes at a perfect time to tempt the Crew to a few days of R&R. Not to mention that Annie's money will ease the pain of losing the salvage that Harken confiscated.



SOUTH TOWER

*"Now these deputies I wouldn't mind
getting bound by law with."*

– JAYNE

The South Tower houses most of the regulars and high rollers. Shen's guests all have rooms in this tower, with Shen himself occupying one of the penthouses. Though technically identical to the North Tower, the employees consider it slightly more upscale than the North Tower because of the clientele. Anyone can get a room in the North Tower with enough money. Management holds rooms in the South Tower for guests they want to impress.

- ★ **The Livery:** This is the main lobby for the South Tower hotel, located directly across Mainstreet. It features live animals, like horses and cows, as well as table games with gruff actors dressed as **Ranch Hands D6**. This area is for those rich folks who want to feel like they are "roughing it," which will likely get a huge belly laugh from anyone who spends time out on the Rim. The livery also is the largest dedicated gambling space in the casino, featuring space for all the games the casino deems worthy to run. Butch G-uaying likes to spend his time among the horses kept here for rental. His mercenaries live it up in his room upstairs.
- ★ **Doc's Hardware:** The casino does not want for places to part a fool from their money. But for those looking to take a little piece of history home, Doc's is the place for the deadshot shopper. Rather than selling saws or nails, the hardware store sells T-shirts, posters, paperweights, replica Peacemakers, and anything they can slap a logo on. The hardware store also features a small area for card games that are invite-only, for more of a backroom game kind of feel. The **Cardsharps D8** here are more skilled than the random suckers off the street, but not good enough (or, perhaps, too good) to be invited to a private game upstairs.

- ★ **Robber Baron's:** This restaurant offers a middle ground between the cheap buffet and the upscale meals of the Columbia Gem. The restaurant comprises several dining cars featuring modern cuisine with an experience of riding the rails. As a special attraction for a birthday or bachelor party, an arrangement can be made for the train car to be "robbed" by some **Casino Employees D6** dressed as outlaws, only to be defeated by the birthday girl or the doomed bachelor. Sharklip Shen prefers to eat here out of all the restaurants at the casino.
- ★ **Sheriff's Office:** Leonard Cao spends most of his days here. There is a tourist element to it: you can get a capture taken in an authentic jail cell and pick up a set of badges for your bachelor party. Most of the illusion is handled by **Sexy Deputies D8** dressed in skimpy clothes and looking tan, buff, and beautiful. Behind the façade lives Cao's security office, where he watches the action on the gaming floor. Cao coordinates with **Casino Employees D6** to keep things on the level throughout the casino. Entry to the real security office is through a hidden door in the back of a permanently locked jail cell.
- ★ **Sheila the Blacksmith:** This space is the closest thing the casino has to a living museum. Sheila Locash (**Historian D8**) studied American History at university and is doing her part to counteract the loud, off-kilter version pushed by the rest of the casino. The blacksmith offers live demonstrations of iron working, saddlemaking, and fabric spinning. Because of its educational content, this shop is one of the quietest parts of the casino. Few folks like book learnin' when there's gamblin' to be done. Sheila knows her job is on the line. She's heard rumors that her spot will be replaced with a "Dirty Deputies" review. She's an excellent source of gossip about the goings on at the casino.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

"It was a quick kill. Quiet. Very little pain. The exact opposite of all the things I'm gonna do to the yan guo de hun dan who did this to Annie."

– JAYNE

Bucking the Tiger begins with the **Prelude**. The Crew gets a wave from an old friend inviting them to take a load off. Annie Foy makes the call. She's owed the Crew money for a while and according to her, her ship has come in. The Crew gets paid back and, in interest, gets a few days at the famous *Shenandoah Rush* casino.

Upon landing on Persephone's moon Renao, they get a visit from the "Sheriff" of the casino. Leonard Cao wants to make sure the Crew don't cause no trouble. He's not a true lawman, but he's got access to their resources and can dig up any secrets that the Crew might want buried. Even if the Crew is squeaky clean, having the Chief of Casino Security looking over their shoulder will throw a wet blanket over any excitement. The Crew needs to shake, placate, or intimidate Cao.

Act I offers a lot of excitement in an unexpected direction. Annie no-shows her big dinner with her old friends. Tracking her back to her dressing room, the Crewmembers stumble across her mortally wounded body. She dies before she can give much in the way of clues, but a quick search turns up a few. Unfortunately, Sheriff Cao shows up, potentially to catch the Crew red handed. They've got to hide the evidence, come clean, or maybe even bolt for the nearest exit.

Sheriff Cao returns in **Act II** ready to cut a deal with the Crew. Cao isn't ready to turn things over to the Alliance just yet for a murder investigation. His personal investigation links Annie's murder to one of the high rollers involved in a private faro game. Getting into the game isn't easy. The Crewmembers have to prove themselves to the host of the game, local Triad boss Sharklip Shen. Not only that, the killer doesn't want the Crew in the game either. A few mercenaries show up at a Crewmember's room to dampen their enthusiasm with a few swollen eyes and broken noses.

Act III drops a Crewmember at a faro table surrounded by killers, thieves, and desperadoes. The faro player has to stay in the game long enough for the other Crewmembers to figure out who killed Annie. Butch Guiying is the culprit, though it's likely the Crewmembers will get wrapped up in the business of one of the other players while rooting Butch out. Sharklip wants the killer revealed and is willing to pay handsomely for the murderer to wind up dead. Cassie wants to find a Crew willing to move her very illegal cargo. The Colonel is a front for an undercover investigation and the Crew will have to convince the Marshal to help them bring Annie's killer to justice. Once they know Butch killed Annie, the Crewmembers have to get him to confess.

Act IV brings the drama home. Now they've got to catch Butch and make him pay for his crime. But they've also got to resolve whatever secrets they uncovered in the last Act. Butch is a tough man to bring down, and dealing with other drama won't make it any easier. But once he's Taken Out, the Crew can finally put their friend Annie to rest and claim their reward.

A GAME OF FARO

Picture a table with the thirteen cards of a single suit laid out. This where you place your bets, on the value of the card. In front of the dealer is a box filled with a standard deck of cards. After the first card is discarded, two cards are dealt at a time—one for the dealer and one for the player. Say you bet on six. If the dealer's card comes up a six, you lose. If the player's card comes up a six, you win. If both cards come up six, the dealer wins half the bets. You can also bet that your card will lose (reversing the win conditions) or simply bet that the player's card will be higher than the dealer's card. Bets are settled after each two cards drawn. At the end of the round, the dealer can "call the turn"—the players that correctly guess the order of the last three cards get a better return on their bets.

Everything is run via Cortex in a fancy casino like *Shenandoah Rush*. Cards, chip stacks, and the like are displayed on a huge holographic table. Betting features tapping on the card and then raising the hand to create a virtual stack to signify the amount bet. A full game usually lasts as long as it takes for each player to be the banker once, with small five-minute breaks in between rounds for drinks and trips to the bathroom.





PRELUDE: BOUND FOR NOWHERE

The Crew gets a wave from Annie Foy, an old friend who owes them a lot of money. She's got good news: her ship has come in and she's going to pay off what she owes with interest.

SERENITY COCKPIT – INT.

WASH, ZOE and KAYLEE are seated around the communication console. They share a big laugh as MAL enters. Mal looks a little confused and a lot annoyed.

MAL: What are you three witches up to now?

KAYLEE: Hush, Cap'n. Annie's on the wave and she just told us the funniest joke.

MAL: Sweet little Annie Foy? Ask her when she's going have all that adorable money she owes me.

THE LOWDOWN: THE MARKER CALLS IN

THE CREW IS IN BETWEEN JOBS AT THE MOMENT and making their way through the 'Verse. Set the scene by asking what the Crew does on a long journey to pass the time. Do they work out? Do they practice their skills? Do they play cards? There's a lot of downtime in between all the thrillin' heroics. For the most part, life in the black itself is boring. It only gets interesting once people get involved.

A wave comes in over the Cortex. It's a message from Annie Foy, an old friend of the Crew. Annie is friendly and funny, and it should be quick to see why she's made such a valuable ally in the past. It's also easy to see why the Crew has forgiven her a major flaw: she owes the Crew a lot of money. Flying around the 'Verse isn't cheap. She's done what she could to pay back and help out, but in pursuit of her singing career, she's racked up quite a few trips paid for with nothing but promises of future considerations. Promises from a loyal friend are worth something, but they don't satisfy hunger or pay for a new compression coil.

But that's about to change, because Annie's call tells the Crew she's finally hit it big. She landed a gig as a singer at the *Shenandoah Rush* casino. She's been working hard, saving up, and finally has enough to pay off what she owes the Crew in one fell swoop.

There are several reasons the Crew might take Annie up on her offer. Any GMC Crewmembers might offer these up to convince the rest, but it's likely everyone at the table will make use of at least one of them to get everyone on board with headin' to Renao. Let the Crewmembers talk about what they will do with their share of the windfall. One Crewmember might buy some parts to keep the ship flyin'.

Another might plan on blowing it all at the casino tables.

A few days off the boat will refresh spirits and diffuse tension between Crewmembers. The cramped quarters of a ship cause a lot of friction between Crewmembers. Time away on a planet is welcome relief from the day-to-day drudgery of life aboard a ship. A week without worrying about fuel, or pirates, or pieces of the ship falling off can do wonders for morale.

Renao's proximity to Persephone means that work from the Eavesdown Docks is just a short hop away. The respite is only temporary, but even then, there's the prospect of new work just a few hours away. Crewmembers such as Ship's Captains and Registered Companions might also use their hotel room to entertain potential clients. A swank room at the casino is far more impressive than a dingy cargo bay.

Annie can't get free of her responsibilities to meet the Crew, but she does add something to sweeten the pot. She's secured rooms for the entire Crew at the casino. They can stay up to a week on her dime. Any gambling they do is out of their pocket, but everything else, like the room, the food, and the services available to guests, are covered on Annie's tab.

Getting to Renao is the easy part. It's one of the moons of Persephone and, as a tourist destination, has a lot of traffic that any Crew should be able to blend with. The Crew is directed to land at the central hub and take the mag-lev train to the resort. The train they need to take is easily found. It's the only one that looks like a classic steam engine.

MASTERIN' THE GAME THE DEARLY DEPARTED

GMs may wish to introduce Annie in an earlier game session. Doing so makes her connection with the Crew stronger than introducing her at the beginning of the Episode just to kill her off by the end of the first Act. Maybe she helps the Crew out of a jam. Maybe she gets them into a jam. Either way, if Annie and the Crew have real history from a previous story, her death has more meaning, and the Crew will be very motivated to find out who killed her.

TROUBLE: GENTLEMAN CALLER

IT'S LIKELY THE CREW DOESN'T WANT ANY SCRUTINY from a lawman to come down on them. Even on a trip like this where they have no criminal intentions, the law breathing down their necks will make them uncomfortable. Those Crewmembers with Distinctions featuring checkered pasts should feel exceptionally jumpy, especially if Sheriff Cao asks a pointed question or two about their history. How they react to the Sheriff here will determine how Sheriff Cao handles them once Annie ends up dead in the next Act.

Annie's told Leonard about some of her adventures with the Crew. He has a crush on her and doesn't like the shady things they've asked her to do in the past. He thinks the Crew is a bad influence and wants to keep an eye on them as much as possible during their stay. Even Crewmembers who might want to just spend their days here ordering room service will find having Cao checking up on them as a real thorn in their sides.

MASTERIN' THE GAME GOIN' OFF HALF-COCKED

Crews that start shooting right away or escalate into a gunfight can end up cooling their heels in Cao's holding cell if they get Taken Out. A gunfight means that the sheriff is unlikely to ask for their help, which means it's Sharklip who comes to the Crew looking to find out who killed Annie and brought unwanted attention to his game. This meeting might take place in the jail or it might take place with the Crew being surrounded by enforcers and asked to dinner with Mr. Shen. Sharklip's involvement raises the stakes for the Crew immensely. If they don't figure out who killed Annie, Sharklip will blame them and have them killed. If they do discover the culprit, Sharklip forgives their transgressions with one final request: they kill the *hun dan* that killed Annie.

THE SHOWDOWN: SHENANDOAH BOUND

SHERIFF CAO MAKES HIS PRESENCE WELL KNOWN. His uniform has a bit of a theatrical quality to it, since the casino owners don't want folk to get alarmed when he has to do his job. He looks like a white-hatted hero of an old cowboy movie, right down to the embroidered satin shirt and fancy boots. That look hides a keen mind showing genuine concern for Annie Foy. The weapon he has on his person is also real.

If the Crew doesn't give him the slip right away, Cao will follow them around the casino. He has a knack for showing up at the most inopportune time. He's lookin' out for Annie but he also wants to make sure they don't cause any trouble. If he's stickin' to them like glue, he might even blame them for Annie's death because he wasn't there to protect her. Even if the evidence clears them, it might take

him some time to get over the idea the Crew caused her death indirectly.

While he's not a lawman, Cao knows plenty of them. If he decides he doesn't like the Crew, he can make life for them very difficult in the White Sun system. Jobs tend to dry up for Crews who have the law hangin' around. That reputation might hang around even if the Crew heads out into the Border Planets. Persephone is on the edge of the system, and the stink of the law dissipates slowly.

TALKING TO SHERIFF CAO

The Sheriff is a likeable sort, preferring to get information through honey rather than vinegar. He doesn't want any trouble from the Crew, but he also wants to know what type of folk that are going to be spending time at his place.

Shen brings in enough unsavory types as is, but Cao trusts that the Triad leader can clean up his own messes. If the Crew gets into trouble, it will be on him, or worse, Annie, to clean up their mess.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Mental + Know, Social + Influence, Social + Perform

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Mental D6 + Focus D8 + Honest Man D8

Possible Assets: Let's Buy You a Drink, The Right Joke at the Right Time, Annie's Told Us All About You

Possible Complications: Cao Sets a Tail, Security Cameras in the Suite, Ship's Registry Tagged

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember fails to ease Cao's suspicions. When dealing with Sheriff Cao, the Crew gains a **Suspicious D6** Complication.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember lays Cao's fears to rest. He starts to think of them as decent folk.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember makes fast friends with the Sheriff. Create a **You Seem Like Fine Folk D6** Asset for the Crew to use against Cao. If they spend a Plot Point, the Asset lasts until the end of the Episode.

BYPASSING SHERIFF CAO

The Crew may decide that getting hassled by anyone officially connected to the casino at this point would put them off to a bad start. They might distract Cao to look the other way. They might talk one of the other passengers to speak to the Sheriff. Or they could just straight up sneak past him in the hubbub of the crowd.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Mental + Trick, Social + Influence, Physical + Sneak

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Mental D6 + Notice D6 + Honest Man D8

Possible Assets: A Pack of Tourists, Paged Over Loudspeaker, Chaos on Purpose

Possible Complications: Cao Expected That Trick, Angry Tourist, Caught on Security Camera

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember's deception isn't enough. Sheriff Cao notices them and starts talking.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets by the Sheriff without notice.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember's trick works so well the entire Crew gets by the Sheriff.



ASSAULTING AN OFFICER OF THE LAW

A Crewmember might not take Cao seriously because of his fancy uniform and might decide to teach the sheriff a lesson to get him to back off. This could be a desperate attempt, if the other ways to get by Cao didn't work. This is the least subtle of ways to deal with Leonard sniffing around, but some Crewmembers find playing nice with others to not be worth the effort.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Physical + Fight

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Physical D6 + Fight D4 + Harmless Looking D4

Possible Assets: Sucker Punch, Clipped the Knee, Jumped Off a Crate

Possible Complications: Deputies Nearby, All on Camera, My Parents Have a Room There

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out. If the Crewmember spends a Plot Point to stay in the fight, the GM inflicts a Complication equal to Cao's highest rolling die or steps up an existing Complication.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember Takes Out Cao. The GM may spend a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die to keep Cao in the fight. Either way, Cao's deputies will be on the scene soon.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember Takes Out Cao. The GM may spend a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die to keep Cao in the fight. Somehow, the Crewmember evades immediate detection by Cao's security forces.





ACT I: THE NIGHT GOT DEATHLY QUIET

DRESSING ROOM – INT.

The main dressing room of the Shenandoah Rush is appointed in deep reds and soft lighting. KAYLEE makes a beeline for the vintage vanity circled by a carved dragon and hungrily eyes the rack of scarves, wraps, and ruanas on the wall next to the mirror. INARA follows behind, taking it in and looking suitably impressed. As KAYLEE tries on the wraps, INARA sees something in the mirror that stops her cold. A hand jutting out from the closet near the door, with a stream of blood running down the wrist.

INARA: I need you to give me one of those scarves.

KAYLEE: Which one?

INARA: Cashmere.

KAYLEE: Are those the softest?

INARA: Yes. And they absorb the most blood.

THE LOWDOWN: TOO HUNGRY FOR DINNER AT EIGHT

WHEN THE CREW GETS SETTLED IN AND IS READY to visit Annie, she arranges to meet them for dinner at the Columbia Gem in an hour. This gives the Crewmembers to unwind, settle in, play a hand or two, and soak up some of the luxury. They are staying on the tenth floor of the North Tower.

The Columbia Gem is the finest restaurant at the casino and, quite possibly, on the entire resort moon. The Gem is on the second floor and it's the kind of place where fancy duds are required to even walk in the door. Anyone

without such clothes can obtain nicer attire from the hotel staff, with the bill being sent to Annie. Even dressed up, the Crew is likely to stick out like a cow in a chicken coop.

Annie never shows. The Crew might end up eating dinner without her or they may leave to track her down immediately. Their delay gives Butch his opening. He's snuck into her room and attacked her. The Crew's reunion with Annie will be short lived. She'll die in a Crewmember's arms in her dressing room.

TROUBLE: LOVES THE THEATER BUT NEVER COMES LATE

ANNIE SEEMS TO BE OUT OF THE DRESSING ROOM for a moment, though much of her personal belongings are in the room. The dressing room features a large vanity, a closet stuffed with various costumes, and several well-padded couches. The Crew may pass a few moments checking out Annie's make-up in front of the vanity, or the captures she's taken with various celebrities and Alliance officials. Soon five minutes turns to ten, then to fifteen. Something seems off.

DISCOVERING ANNIE

Crewmembers could find her by moving furniture or looking around the area. If the Crew spends more than fifteen minutes waiting for Annie, her body slumps out of the closet and she starts bleeding out onto the floor.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Physical + Move, Mental + Notice

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Easy Difficulty D6 + Dead Friend D8

Possible Assets: Sees Her in the Mirror, Trail of Blood, Detective's Eye

Possible Complications: Missing Money, Left a Fingerprint, Stepped in a Pool of Blood

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember stumbles across Annie bleeding to death. Create a **Blood on My Hands D6** Complication for that Crewmember. Annie says one word before dying—"Faro."
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember discovers Annie without getting stained with blood. Annie says one word before dying—"Faro."
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember discovers Annie without getting stained with blood. Annie is able to confirm one of the faro players did this, but before she can reveal the culprit, she dies.



EXAMINING THE BODY

Once Annie's body is found, curious Crewmembers may try to discern her cause of death on their own. Dealing with the body of a dead friend can be a very traumatic experience. It's generally best handled by someone with medical experience, though an observant or knowledgeable Crewmember might also suffice.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Mental + Know, Mental + Notice, Mental + Treat

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Challenging Difficulty D8 + Dead Friend D8

Possible Assets: Medical Kit, Dealt with Corpses Before, Don't Touch Anything

Possible Complications: Surprised Scream, Blood on Me, I Touched Something

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the scene, overwhelmed by emotion. Spend a Plot Point to shake off the shock, either by stepping up a Complication or taking a **Blood on My Hands D6** Complication.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember noticed that the weapon used is likely a large blade, something like a kitchen knife.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember noticed that the weapon used is likely a large blade, something like a kitchen knife. Her body also showed signs of a struggle, so the killer should have marks, too.

No sooner does the Crewmember finish examining the body than there's a knock on the door.

THE SHOWDOWN: EARLY EXIT

BEING FOUND WITH A DEAD BODY WILL MAKE THINGS complicated for the Crew. Having the chief of casino security standing outside the door makes things even trickier to deal with. Sheriff Cao came by to hang out with Annie while she got ready for her show this evening. He has a bit of a crush on her, so he stops by to visit whenever he has a free moment.

The Crew might decide to play it straight and let Cao in, insisting they had nothing to do with Annie's murder. Cao handles it well, and appreciates the Crew shooting straight with him. He'll still want them to come down to the jail and ask questions, but unless they do anything obviously suspicious, he believes that they are innocent. Cao already suspects Shen's involvement with the killing, and he knows he might be able to leverage the Crew's guilt into helping him out in the next act.

Other Crews might decide that being discovered with a dead body is bad for business and decide to cover things up. Some common strategies are detailed below.

PULL ONE OVER

The Crew might decide the time is not right for Leonard to launch into a murder investigation. This option includes sneaking out of the dressing room and hiding the body, or somehow getting it past Sheriff Cao. Cao will still investigate Annie's death, but Crews going this route will have less evidence connecting them to being at the scene of the crime.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Trick, Mental + Sneak, Mental + Notice, Mental + Focus

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Mental D6 + Notice D6 + Everything's Shiny D4

Possible Assets: Wrapped in a Carpet, Back in the Closet, Unlocked Stage Door

Possible Complications: Security Cameras Caught Everything, Left the Door Open, Awkwardly Hidden

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is caught red-handed near Annie's body. Sheriff Cao draws his weapon and immediately tells the Crewmember to surrender.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets out of the room without Cao any the wiser. Cao knows someone was at the crime scene, but doesn't have any hard evidence.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets out of the room without Cao any the wiser. As far as Cao is concerned, the scene is completely undisturbed.

TALK CAO'S EAR OFF

The Crew might try to convince Cao to go away and come back later. Doing so raises Cao's suspicions, but a successful roll means he leaves for now to let the Crew handle things their own way. Crewmembers might try to convince him Annie just stepped away, that she told them she's meet him elsewhere, or even pretend to be her.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Social + Perform

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Mental D6 + Notice D6 + Everything's Shiny D4

Possible Assets: Blocked the Door, You Just Missed Her, "I'm in the Shower!"

Possible Complications: I Didn't See Her Leave, Did You Hear That?, I'll Wait Here Then

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to convince Cao to leave. A different Action must be taken or the truth must come out.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Cao to come back later.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Cao to come back later. If he does and discovers Annie's body, he does not become suspicious of the Crew.

RUN AND GUN

Leonard Cao is only one man. He's not expecting an ambush. He was hoping to spend some time with Annie before the show tonight, since he can't afford to see her on his pay. Hard Crews may decide to take the lawman down right now and make a run for their ship. This will make the Crew look extremely guilty and Cao will play hardball when he offers his deal in the next Act. If the Crew Takes him Out and insists on killing Cao, Sharklip takes point on future interactions, since the Triad leader wants to keep things quiet at the casino as much as possible.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot, Physical + Move

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Physical D6 + Move D6 + Harmless Looking D4

Possible Assets: Got the Drop, Distracted by the Body, Kicked Open the Door

Possible Complications: Bound by Law, Wounded Knee, Be on the Look Out

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out by Sheriff Cao. The Crewmember can spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember Takes Out Sheriff Cao. Cao may spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool. If he confronts them later, he will throw the book at the Crew.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember Takes Out Sheriff Cao. Cao may spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool. If he confronts them later, he will be willing to let them explain themselves.



ACT II: TIME ENOUGH FOR COUNTING

The Crew discovers that in order to walk away with their money, they have to approach Sharklip Shen and win it back from him.

ROBBER BARON'S RESTAURANT – INT.

BOOK and JAYNE stand in the doorway of the dining car. The ceiling fan lazily cuts through the dust. Seated at the back are a half-dozen Triad gangsters dressed in black with tattoos peeking out from underneath their formal clothes.

JAYNE: How come you know so much about gangsters, Preacher?

BOOK: Can you keep a secret?

JAYNE: Yeah?

BOOK: So can I.

THE LOWDOWN: FOLLOW THE MONEY

THE WAY THIS ACT OPENS DEPENDS GREATLY ON how the Crew handled the discovery of Annie's body. They may have already made contact with Sheriff Cao, or elected to deceive him in the heat of the moment. They'll have to talk to Cao at some point, since he's got their money and their ship. Here's what's keeping the Crew from just getting back on board their ship and hightailing it out of atmo.

- ★ The Crew's ship is under heavy guard at the main station at Renao. While the Crew might be able to overcome some of Cao's men, the Alliance soldiers garrisoned at the space port are another matter entirely. The Alliance takes Renao's security very seriously because of the amount of money the tourists bring in.
- ★ Options are limited with their ship land locked. They may barricade themselves in their hotel room. They may head out of the casino and hole up away from civilization. If Cao thinks the Crew's given him the slip, he'll call in the Alliance to make some real trouble. If the Crew clears themselves, Cao won't involve the Alliance. But if he does, the fact the Crew was brought in for questioning will cause trouble for them when they need it the least.

A Crewmember may have gone directly to the authorities to report the crime. This may have been Cao at the scene, or they may have thought he was a performer and went to the jail to talk to real security. This is the best way to get on Cao's good side. He wants to find Annie's killer as quickly as possible, and having some outside helps allay his suspicions.

The Crew may talk to Cao later to first get their stories straight and let him discover the body. He's more suspicious of the Crew's intent this way, but willing to work with them, since there's no way he can get into the faro game. He needs the Crew as much as they need him.


Here are the details that Cao lays out for the Crew. If the Crew decides to do a little investigation before (or instead of) meeting with Leonard, they may come with the info on their own.

- ★ The Crew's money was in Annie's dressing room. She hid it in one of the trunks full of costumes. The killer didn't find it, but Cao did. All of Annie's other accounts are with the casino, so a bag full of cash struck him as odd. Especially since the killer didn't stick around to search for it. While he's suspicious of the Crew, it's the big thing in

MASTERIN' THE GAME EASY READER

It seems like having a potential psychic on board would kill any sense of mystery in this adventure. River can use her abilities to help, but Cao will need hard evidence to back up any claims. Cao will eventually have to turn over the killer to the Alliance authorities on Renao for trial. Fugitives make for awful witnesses. Cao is not above using the Tam's status as fugitives as leverage. He might even be willing to file a false report and send the authorities looking another way entirely if the Crew helps him. And that's if she doesn't roll any jinxes while close enough to read someone. River's abilities can be used to solve the mystery, but the direct clues they give to the Crew are vague at best. Some examples of the clues she can get follow.

- "Pinsandneedlespinsandneedlespinsandneedles"
- "She was killed as a sacrifice for Ramses the II."
- "A butcher's block for a shapely shark."



the case that doesn't fit. If Annie was killed for money, why didn't the killer toss the place looking for the cash?

- ★ A few things don't add up about their involvement in Annie's murder. The Crew didn't take their money, nor did they toss the place looking for it. The security cameras in Annie's room were disabled, but the Crew was caught on cameras going into and leaving the room. There's enough reasonable doubt that keeps Cao from straight up arresting the Crew, but he realizes their value as a tool in cracking the case.
- ★ He suspects the murder has something to do with Sharklip Shen's private faro game. As a member of casino staff, he's not going to get very far with an investigation involving anyone in the game. The Crew, on the other hand, is an unknown entity. They can get into the game without tipping off the murderer that someone is on the case.

Cao offers them a deal. If they can get into the game and bring back evidence of the killer, he'll release their ship and give them their money. There's a risk, of course: the money that Annie gave them needs to be used to buy in to the game. Cao can't guarantee they'll get paid if they lose it all at the game, but buying into the game is their only chance of clearing their names.

The Crew can refuse Cao's deal, of course, but he'll quickly point out that the investigation will likely drag on for days. He'll have to hold Annie's body as evidence, as well as their cash. He'll also have to call in proper Alliance

PREVIOUSLY ON FIREFLY SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MR. BLACKBALL

Crews who have played the **ECHOES OF WAR** adventure *Wedding Planners* may have taken part in a case of mistaken identity on board the luxury cruiser *The Rim's Dream*. That adventure featured a subplot where a Crewmember is mistaken for Blacky the Blackball, a 'Verse renowned cardsharp. That Crewmember might try to make a callback to the previous episode and assume Blacky's identity again to get into Sharklip's game. The more seats they have at the table, the longer they have to get a read on the other players and discover the murderer.

Sharklip has heard of Blacky and will be very excited to play such a legendary gambler. This also means Sharklip will do his best to take Blacky to the cleaners. If Sharklip ever discovers he's been hoodwinked, the Crew best never set down on Renao ever again.

authorities. A murder investigation, even one where the Crew is eventually cleared, is the kind of mark on a record that patrol boats love to use as a justification for a stop and search protocol. Even if they aren't suspects, they are part of the investigation because they discovered Annie's body. The Crew will have to make arrangements to stay on world, and if they can't afford to make them, he happily offers them a stay in his cell. Cao isn't above threatening the Crew, but he'll always do it in the most upbeat and smiling way possible. After all, "everything's shiny."

TROUBLE: YOU CAN'T WIN IF YOU DON'T PLAY

THE TRICKY PART IS APPROACHING SHARKLIP SHEN to join the game. A man like Shen doesn't open his game to strangers, even ones willing to pony up. Cao doesn't know where Shen is, but he knows he's on the grounds, so this is an opportunity for the Crew to explore the different casino areas.

This scene is also an opportunity to introduce the other gamblers to the Crew. Each location they visit outside of Robber Baron's offers a chance to meet Butch, Cassie, or The Colonel. If the Crew doesn't find Shen on their own, one of the other gamblers directs them to the Triad boss.

Sharklip Shen is taking a meal at Robber Baron's with four of his enforcers. He's made the dining car private by stationing the two most intimidatin' goons at the entry to the car. He's not taking any visitors, so the Crew will likely have to insist.

Here are some ways the Crew can get a seat at Shen's table.

LET US IN...OR ELSE

A show of force is a direct route to Shen's table. If the Crew decides they can intimidate Shen by beatin' up his goons, they can give it a try. Shen will allow them to play for their money, but he will also quietly offer a private bounty to whichever gambler pushes the Crew out of the game.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot, Physical + Influence

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Shen's Physical D6 + Fight D8 + Strong, Silent Type D8 + Triad Goon D6 + Triad Goon D6 + Triad Goon D6 + Triad Goon D6

Possible Assets: Fighting in a Doorway, Deadly Kitchen Knife, Came in Through the Window

Possible Complications: Busted Jaw, Billed for the Destruction, Sprained Wrist

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the fight. The Crewmember can spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by

stepping up a Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.

- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember Takes Out one of Shen's goons. Once all of the **Triad Goons D6** are dispatched, Shen gives the Crew the time and place for the game. Up to three Crewmembers are allowed inside the room.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember Takes Out two of Shen's goons. Once all of the **Triad Goons D6** are dispatched, Shen gives the Crew the time and place for the game. If the Crew Takes Out the last goon with an Extraordinary Success, the entire Crew is allowed inside the room.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND ANNIE

Spin a tale by sending in the most charismatic Crewmember to talk to Shen. The Crewmember convinces Shen that Annie was acting as their agent, because they are high rollers looking for some real action.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Social + Perform

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Shen's Mental D6 + Focus D10 + Gambler D4 + Stone Faced D6

Possible Assets: Flashing Cash, Well-Dressed, Flirtatious

Possible Complications: Check Up on Her, Don't Like Strangers, How Do You Know Annie?

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to convince Shen to let any of them play. A different Action must be taken to get in.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Shen to let them into the game. Up to three Crewmembers are allowed in the room.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Shen to let them into the game. The entire Crew is allowed in the room.

THE HONEST APPROACH

Rather than pussyfooting around, the Crew might decide to tell Shen everything that's going on. Sharklip appreciates honesty, but is still uncomfortable that his game now harbors a killer.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Social + Perform

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Shen's Mental D6 + Focus D10 + Triad Ranking D8

Possible Assets: Pictures of Annie, A Tearful Display, Don't Care About the Money

Possible Complications: Triad Justice, Bound by Honor, Shen Is Fuming

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to convince Shen to let any of them play. A different Action must be taken to get in.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Shen to let them into the game. Up to three Crewmembers are allowed in the room.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Shen to let them into the game. The entire Crew is allowed in the room.



THE SHOWDOWN: FOUR OF A KIND

WORD SPREADS QUICKLY THAT THERE IS A NEW player at the table and Butch doesn't like it one bit. He's suspicious of the Crew and a bit jumpy after killing Annie. For all he knows, the Feds just brought in some reinforcements. He doesn't want anyone else in the game, so he's going to send some his mercenaries to rough up the competition.

Butch sends four of his best to the Crew's hotel room. They bust in the door, trash the joint, and wreck anyone hiding out in the room. The mercenaries are smart enough not to wear anything that identify them as part of Butch's unit.

FIGHTING THE MERCENARIES

There are four **Butch's Mercenaries D8** sent to intimidate the Crew. They fight as a well-coordinated unit. This isn't the first time they've been sent to rough up someone for Butch.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Hard Difficulty D10 + Crowded Hotel Room D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8

Possible Assets: Jumped Out of the Bathroom, Bulletproof Refrigerator, Makeshift Silencer

Possible Complications: **Over the Balcony, Busted Finger, Smashed Window**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the fight. The Crewmember can spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember eliminates one of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember eliminates two of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**.

DEFENDING AGAINST THE MERCENARIES

The mercenaries are here to send a message. They've been told to scare the new players into droppin' out and the quickest way to do that is to beat them up. If they give anyone in the scene a physical or mental Complication, the mercenaries will withdraw on their next Action with a final message: drop out of the game.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot, Physical + Move**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: **Hard Difficulty D10 + Crowded Hotel Room D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8**

Possible Assets: **Ducked Behind the Bed, Slammed the Door Fast, Real Marble Endtable**

Possible Complications: **Gun to Your Head, Held at Knifepoint, Busted Jaw**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out. If the Crewmember spends a Plot Point to stay in the fight, the GM inflicts a Complication equal to the opponent's highest rolling die or steps up an existing one.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember avoids the blow and Takes Out one of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**

- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember avoids the blow and Takes Out two of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**.

WHO SENT YA?

The Crew will likely want to know who sent some goons to mess up their lovely hotel room. Butch's mercenaries will try to keep their mouths shut, but Crewmembers can be awful persuasive. They might intimidate the prisoner, trick them into talking, or notice something about the unconscious ones lying on the floor.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Influence, Social + Trick, Mental + Notice**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: **Challenging Difficulty D8 + Butch's Mercenary D8**

Possible Assets: **Dangling from the Balcony, Tied Up, I Punch You for Every Answer You Get Wrong**

Possible Complications: **Code of Silence, Still Woozy, You'll Never Get Me to Talk**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to discover who sent the goons.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember discovers they are Butch's mercenaries, but can't confirm who hired them.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crew discovers they are Butch's mercenaries and that he sent them personally.

MASTERIN' THE GAME JUMP CUTS

The Crew may not decide to go all together to talk to Shen. If that's the case, running the attack from Butch's mercenaries is a fine way to keep those Crewmembers involved in the story. TV shows often use a technique where they cut from one scene to another. Using this technique here for split Crews will keep everyone involved with what's going on. In fact, when the GM calls for an Action Order, make sure that the whole Crew is included, so the Crew can decide when to cut from dealing with Shen to dealing with the brawl.



ACT III: BY THE WAY THEY HELD THEIR EYES

The Crew gets inside Sharklip Shen's private faro game. They have to stay in the game long enough to discover who was responsible for the murder of Annie Foy. And they also have to avoid getting wrapped up in the intrigues of the other players.

Shen's Private Salon INT.

The room looks and feels like a smoky old gambling parlor. The only hints of inauthenticity are the occasional flicker of the stacks on the main faro table and the strange mix of Triad gangsters, fashionistas, and Browncoat mercenaries scattered around the room. SIMON sits at the table, focused on the game at hand. MAL and INARA lean on the bar, surveying the scene.

INARA: You surprised me when you picked Simon to play for us. That shows a lot of trust.

MAL: Anything he wins, we'll apply to his tab. Anything he loses...why did you mention this now instead of an hour ago?

THE LOWDOWN: ANTE UP, DOUBLE DOWN

IT'S A LONG, SLOW ELEVATOR RIDE TO SHEN'S penthouse. The penthouse occupies the entire twentieth floor of the North Tower. In addition to whatever Crewmembers go into the room, there are four Triad guards who frisk them. Personal weapons like knives and brass knuckles are allowed, but firearms are held behind the bar until the gambler leaves. Shen is fine with a good brawl now and again, but guns and gambling never mix.

The doors open directly into Shen's penthouse. While the rooms below feature holographic touches and cheap attempts to look vintage, Shen's place is the real deal. High backed chairs, a mirrored bar, and plenty of mood lighting make the place feel like the Crew didn't step out of the elevator so much as a gorramn time machine. The table is in the center of the parlor, with plenty of chairs and tables around for the various entourages.

Crewmembers lookin' for a little privacy can step out of the game room to the balcony overlooking the canopy. Annie's face, of course, stares back up.

Any Crewmembers not directly involved in the game still have plenty of things to do. They can drink, eat, or chat with the other spectators, as well as size up the other gamblers—either as competitors or suspects. Shen arrives after the Crewmembers do. He sits down and activates the faro table. He will be dealing first. The other gamblers take their seats, the holographic stacks and decks blur to life, and the first round starts.

Shen's made a modification or two for his private game. The biggest is the lack of a dealer counting aid. Players have to keep count of the deck on their own or hope one of their associates is doing so from outside the table. Others may pop up as Complications. Crewmembers hoping for a pure or historically accurate strain of faro will be disappointed.

TROUBLE: CLOSE TO YOUR VEST

THIS IS A PIVOTAL SCENE OF THE EPISODE. NOT ONLY will one Crewmember be playing to keep the Crew in the game, but the other Crewmembers will be trying to deduce who killed Annie Foy. Everyone's a suspect and the Crew will only discover the culprit through careful observation and subtle questioning.

Each GMC gambler starts this act with a **Suspicious D10** Complication. Players may attempt to remove each gambler's **Suspicious** Complication once per round of cards. Removing a **Suspicious D10** Complication triggers a short scene between the Crewmember who eliminated the Complication and the gambler during the next break in the faro game. The scene either reveals the secret they are keeping or their alibi during Annie's murder.

Why is everyone so **Suspicious D10**? Everyone at the table has secrets to keep. The murderer is hiding here, but each faro player has something to hide. That secret serves as the Trouble of the final act. The Crew has to resolve

whatever secret they revealed in addition to making sure Butch gets his just deserts.

REVEALING SECRETS

Every GMC at the table has a subplot meant to interfere with the Crew in the later acts. Not only must they bring Annie's killer to justice, they also have to deal with the faro player's problem.

Let the Crewmembers decide which GMC they want to clear. Whoever has their **Suspicious D10** Complication revealed first triggers a subplot that must be resolved in addition to solving the murder. The GM should introduce the subplot whenever it most makes sense, but the character's alibi is revealed right away. Once the first subplot is triggered, anyone else who loses their Complication simply reveals their alibi, or, in the case of the killer, their guilt. No additional subplots are put into play.

MASTERIN' THE GAME DEALER'S CHOICE

Each of the faro players has a secret waiting to be uncovered. Once the first secret is revealed, removing any additional Complications merely confirms the suspect's innocence by revealing their alibi at the time of the murder. Subsequent secrets don't trigger additional subplots.

If the Crew reveals Butch as the killer first, the GM chooses which other gambler's secret is revealed. Revealing Sarah as Butch's target gives the Crew a fuller picture of the plot. Revealing Sharklip's desire for vengeance gives the Crew a tough choice between bringing Annie's killer to justice or getting revenge for her death. Revealing Cassie's proposal sets her up as a recurring contact and villain, especially if the Crew refuses her deal.

If you want this Episode to play out over a few sessions, mixing in more than one secret can extend the life of the adventure. But that will also throw more wrenches in the way of the Crew clearing their names and getting back out into the black. The Episode might drag if the Crew has to resolve multiple subplots in addition to bringing Annie's killer to justice.

- ★ **Sharklip Shen:** If Sharklip's Complication is revealed, he invites the Crewmember out onto the balcony. He knows one of the other gamblers killed Annie and wants the matter handled internally. Rather than turning the killer over to Sheriff Cao, he wants the Crewmember to finger the killer and let Shen take care of it. *Alibi:* Sharklip was in the middle of a wave with his superiors on Persephone.
- ★ **The Colonel:** If The Colonel's Complication is revealed, The Colonel's injury seems inconsistent. Perhaps a doctor questions him about it and gets wrong answers. Maybe someone notices the old soldier tapping his foot after a winning streak. If confronted, The Colonel will suddenly claim to be very tired and insist "Lula" take him back to his room. Should the Crew chase after him, he'll claim the wheelchair is an act to garner sympathy at the table. He's still injured, but he can get around without the chair if he has to. If they keep quiet about it, they'll split his winnings. *Alibi:* The Colonel took his meal in his room, a story Sarah confirms.
- ★ **Sarah Burton:** If Sarah's Complication is stepped back completely, she gets the Crewmember in private and reveals her status as a Federal Marshal. She does her best to try and intimidate the Crewmember into silence, citing how long she's worked on the case. Mentionin' Annie's death gets her to stop her tough cop act. She's conflicted about the long-term elements of her case versus stopping a known killer. She'll help the Crew out as much as she can, but can't blow her cover without some compelling reason. *Alibi:* Sarah went to get food from the Bunkhouse Vittles restaurant, a story the restaurant staff confirms. She also has a tracker that she put on The Colonel without his knowledge.
- ★ **Cassie Sagira:** If Cassie's Complication is stepped back completely, Cassie approaches the Crewmember about shuttling some girls for her. The money is easily double what Annie owes, and the deal will likely be rescinded if anything strange goes down. Cassie might even offer a free Companion session to tempt the Crewmember to say yes. Anything that might happen in such a session is recorded for blackmail purposes to keep the Crewmember honest. If the Crewmember says no, Cassie casually mentions how someone might end up on the Companion Guild's blacklist and offers the Crewmember some time to reconsider. *Alibi:* Cassie was in the company of a pair of married **High Rollers D6** by the name of Anthony and Lynn Nilles. They took her out to dinner at the Columbia Gem, and Cassie remarks on how dejected the Crew looked at their table.

MASTERIN' THE GAME ANTAGONIST APPETIZER

When the Crew arrives at the faro table to discover the murderer, there will be quite a few characters to introduce. We've noted in the description of the hotel where the players spend their time outside of the game. Some GMs will want to spread out the character introduction through the earlier acts, to give the Crew more time to consider suspects. The Columbia Gem, for example, is an excellent place to introduce Cassie Sagira, with her love of high living and Companion's Guild connections.

Each approach has advantages. Introducing characters ahead of time feels more naturally like a TV show. Saving them for the faro scene focuses the Crew on investigating the murder.

- ★ **Butch Guiyang:** Butch is revealed as the killer when his Complication is stepped back completely, but the GM chooses which secret subplot also triggers, which the Crew must deal with before bringing him to justice. He has no alibi. He reveals himself to be the killer by bringing the Crewmember's attention to either his **Bowie Knife D8** or **Alliance Rank Pins D8**. Unless the Crewmember calls attention to the evidence, Butch will keep right on playing unless the Crewmember brings it up, in which case he'll admit to killing Annie (and threatening the Crewmember who brought it up with more violence).

GMs may wish to run the faro game in an Action Order to keep the tension up. Once per Action Order, at least one Crewmember must play in the round of faro. Others may take Actions to reduce Complications or get information to help the other Crewmembers get a read on the suspects.

There are five-minute breaks in between each round for drink orders, bathroom breaks, and a chance to stretch legs. The game lasts until only one gambler remains at the table or the truth about the Crew's motives come to light.

DEDUCING THE SUSPECT

Removing the **Suspicious D10** Complication from each of the other gamblers triggers a short scene where the gambler reveals the secret they've been hiding. The Crew gets the truth about the character, but not necessarily the one they may want. The Crewmember has several methods of deduction available, such as chatting up the target, telling a tall tale, or trying to notice something about the gambler.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Mental + Notice**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Gambler's **Mental + Focus**
+ **Suspicious D10**

Possible Assets: **Freudian Slip, A Run Of Good Luck, Another Round on Me**

Possible Complications: **Getting too Close, Heightened Suspicions, Plead the Fifth**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember steps back the **Suspicious D10** Complication rather than removing it.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember removes the **Suspicious D10** Complication and reveals the faro player's secret or alibi.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember removes the **Suspicious D10** Complication and reveals the faro player's secret or alibi. A **Distracted D6** Asset is created; the gambling Crewmember may use it on the next roll.



PLAYING A ROUND OF FARO

This roll simulates an entire round of faro in one roll. The Crewmember at the table faces off against the dealer's dice pool. Everyone gets a chance to deal once around the table. The last dealer picks who is the next dealer. As the dealer, the Crewmember chooses which remaining gambler's dice pool to go up against. The Crewmember has several methods of playing the game, such as chatting up the table, distracting a player with a flash of skin, trying to count cards, or staying focused on the game.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Mental + Notice, Mental + Focus**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Dealer's **Mental + Focus + Smoke-Filled Room D8**

Possible Assets: **Beginner's Luck, Flirting with the Dealer, A Little Too Much to Drink**

Possible Complications: **Shrinking Stack, Suspicions of Cheating, The Ship's Pink Slip**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the faro game. The Crewmember can spend a Plot Point to stay in the game, either by taking a **Chips Running Low** Complication equal to the highest rolling dice in the opponent's pool or stepping up an existing Complication.

MASTERIN' THE GAME CHEATIN' TO WIN

In theory, the move to a holographic game reduces cheating, which was rampant thanks to boxes rigged for dealers. In practice, cheating has moved into the electronic realm, with Cortex programs allowing manipulation of cards. A favorite device called a hummingbird, strapped to a cheater's wrist, vibrates a Morse-code like signal to the player to let them know what card is coming. Rigged tables sometimes let someone input a series of innocent looking touches (like, say, nervously drumming fingers on a table) to program which cards come up next.

Shen's faro table is not crooked, but Complications acquired in play may make it that way. A Crew with a Cortex Hacker might also want to even the odds by creating an Asset like **The Next Four Draws D6** either by spending a Plot Point or rolling to create it. Shen and The Colonel are unlikely to cheat. Cassie and Butch are more flexible on the subject.

- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember stays in the game for this round.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember stays in for this round. Create a **Got Them Talking D6** Asset an observing Crewmember may use on the next roll.



VERIFYING ALIBIS

In a room full of gamblers, thieves, and at least one murderer, taking people at their word that they were in a certain place at a certain time is lazy at best and naive at worst. Crewmembers in the game aren't allowed to return once they've cashed out, but those members of the Crew on the sidelines can certainly double check information revealed by the other faro players. They might ask around wherever the faro player claimed to be, keep the player talking to trip them up in a lie, or secretly contact Sheriff Cao to run down the lead.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Mental + Sneak

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Hard Difficulty **d10** + Pressed for Time **d10** + Smoke-Filled Room **d8**

Possible Assets: Camera Footage, Slipped the Bartender Some Cash, Jog His Memory—But Not Too Hard

Possible Complications: They're on to Us, Reluctant Witness, The Sheriff Is Busy

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember verifies the alibi after the next two rounds of the faro game.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember verifies the alibi after the next round of the faro game.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember verifies the alibi immediately.

MASTERIN' THE GAME ON THE BENCH

There's a chance that not every member of the Crew will be inside the penthouse watching the game. Rather than have these Crewmembers sit quietly or run to get more snacks, take the opportunity to involve them with the investigation outside. If the Crew needs people to verify the alibis, let the Crewmembers outside the game have first crack. When the Crew reveals a secret, involve the Crewmembers least involved in the game. If all else fails, maybe some of **Butch's Mercenaries d8** come around to get their revenge, or try to **Take Out** one of the Crewmembers outside the game to force the Crewmembers inside the game to leave.

THE SHOWDOWN: CARDS ON THE TABLE

THE CREW DEDUCED BUTCH IS THEIR GOOD FRIEND'S killer. But that won't be enough for the raider to be bound by law. He needs to confess. The Crew has to push him to admit his crime. The Crew is likely to make their move shortly after they realize Butch is the killer, while still in the game. Once Butch has confessed, Sharklip Shen breaks up the game for the rest of the night. Even if they wait till later, word spreads to the rest of the faro players.

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR BROWNCOAT

With all the suspects in the same room, a Crewmember might get the idea to reveal Butch's crime in front of all the players. This is likely an appeal to Shen and the crowd in the room rather than interacting with Butch directly. Revealing how Butch did it might trigger him to 'fess up or it might convince Shen to insist upon the truth. The Crewmember might appeal directly to Shen, lay out how Butch committed the crime, or convince Shen that they are law enforcement officers on Butch's case and that he should cooperate.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Influence, Mental + Know, Mental + Trick**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Sharklip's **Mental D6 + Focus D10 + Triad Ranking D4**

Possible Assets: **Evidence in Hand, Best for Business, Everybody Loved Annie**

Possible Complications: **Unhappy Sharklip, In Butch's Sights, Suspicious Companion**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to convince Butch to confess. Unless quick action is taken, the Crewmember is likely to be thrown out of the game.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember convinces Shen to press the issue with Butch. After a few tense moments, Butch says he killed Annie.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember convinces Butch to confess directly after a quick glance from Shen.

POKIN' THE HORNET'S NEST

Butch is not exactly known for keeping calm. The Crew might discover this and go after him directly. Riling him up is easy enough, but getting him to confess this way is a sure way to spark a confrontation after the game. The Crew might taunt him, question his loyalty to the Browncoat cause, or even challenge him to a gunfight if they are fans of the classics.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Influence, Social + Trick, Mental + Trick**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Butch's **Mental D8 + Focus D8 + Shadows of the War D4**

Possible Assets: **Wounded in Battle, Missing Pin, A Little Too Much to Drink**

Possible Complications: **Angry Browncoats, Suspicions of Cheating, Them's Fightin' Words**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets

Butch to confess, but then he immediately begins a fistfight. Run an Action Order until someone is Taken Out. At that point, Shen takes control of the situation. The GM creates a **Sucker Punch D6** Complication on the Crewmember who failed, for Butch and his gang to use.

- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Butch to confess, but then he immediately begins a fistfight. Run an Action Order until someone is Taken Out. At that point, Shen takes control of the situation.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Butch to confess. Things stay orderly until everyone leaves the penthouse.

MY LIBERTY HAMMER BEATS FOUR ACES

The most direct route is to flip the table and start swinging. Butch likes to let his mouth run while he fights. He'll confess during the dust up and tell anyone fighting he'll do worse to them. Shen will let a fistfight play out until someone major is Taken Out, but he'll take control of things to stop a gunfight before it begins if guns come into the room. Butch has a number of mercenaries in the room equal to the number of Crewmembers.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Butch's **Physical D8 + Fight D10 + Mercenary D8 + Knives D6 + Butch's Mercenaries XD8**

Possible Assets: **Bar Stool, I Fights Better Drunk, Take the Ugly One**

Possible Complications: **Smashed Jaw, Tougher Than He Looks, Hit the Wrong Guy**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out by Butch Guiying. The Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to fight on by stepping up or taking a Complication equal to Guiying's highest rolling die.

- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** One of Butch's mercenaries is Taken Out to protect him. If his mercenaries are gone, Butch must either pay a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die or be Taken Out.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** Two of Butch's mercenaries are Taken Out to protect him. If his mercenaries are gone, Butch must either pay a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die or be Taken Out.

Butch's motive comes across when he confesses. He had reason to believe there was a Federal Marshal gathering information on the faro players. Annie was the best fit based on his information and he killed her because he thought Shen would be grateful he took care of the rat. For a moment or two, things get awful tense between Shen and Butch.

Sharklip Shen is mighty unhappy that Butch caused such a ruckus and needs some time to decide what to do. News of the undercover Federal Marshal is troubling. But a murder in his casino without his say so is more troubling. He needs to make sure his bosses don't find out before he can handle it. A screw up like this leaves openings for rivals to knock him down a peg or two.

Cassie is shocked by the revelation. She realizes she's a little out of her depth here and makes arrangements to leave as quickly as possible. If she's revealed her secret, she approaches the Crew to be her ride off of Renao.

Sarah wheels The Colonel back to their room. They are very close to being blown, but if they leave town now, Butch will surely know she's a Fed. But if they stay, Butch might come back to finish the job. Or Shen might send some of his boys to rough her and The Colonel up. Sarah needs help, and, if she revealed her secret to the Crew, they will have to do until she can call in the cavalry.





ACT IV: OUT OF ACES

The Crew discovers who killed their good friend Annie. Now they have to make sure Butch doesn't escape the law while dealing with whatever other secrets they discovered in the faro game.

CASINO GROUNDS EXT.

BUTCH performs a magnificent jump with his horse, clearing a ravine with feet to spare. ZOE and WASH chase after him on their horse. Wash tightens his grip on his wife's waist.

WASH: There's no way we're gonna make that!

ZOE: Let me drive for once, baby?

THE LOWDOWN: BOUND BY LAW

THIS IS THE POINT IN THE ADVENTURE WHERE BUTCH must answer for his crime. This may happen as soon as the Crew gets wise to Butch in the faro game. It also might

happen if the Crew isn't very subtle about its inquiries into Butch's activities. The action in this act is primed to move very quickly after the careful setup of the previous three.



TROUBLE: SETTling THE SCORE

BUTCH ISN'T THE ONLY BUSINESS THE CREW HAS to settle up after the faro game. Whatever secrets the Crew exposed must be dealt with before or during their pursuit of Butch.

Though your Crew might not have officially revealed all the secrets, don't let that stop you from using the information provided to help fill out your plot. The other gamblers all have their own motivations and issues to deal with. We've included several options for how each subplot might play out, as well as suggested rolls to help determine how to resolve what your Crew decides to do.

SHARKLIP SHEN

To say that Sharklip is unhappy with Butch's actions is to say a desert might have a sandy patch or two. Shen is no stranger to using violence to solve his problems, but killing one of his prized employees is a serious affront to his face. For Shen, only Butch's blood will settle the matter. He'll get it one way or the other. The Crew offers him a chance to make things right without dirtying the hands of his own men. If they get arrested for Butch's murder, so be it.

Sharklip will likely stay unaware of the Crew's deal with Cao unless they reveal it to him. Cao is barely worth Shen's

notice. The Sheriff is a figurehead dealing with cheats and deadbeats. Even if Cao were to put Butch in a cell, Shen would be mighty tempted to stop by, backed up by his enforcers, and play one-man judge, jury, and executioner.

A Crew filled with mercenaries, bounty hunters, and the sorts of folk with financially flexible morality might get called into Shen's office to talk about the offer made on his balcony. He's looking to sweeten the deal. He wants the Crew to kill Butch and he's willing to pay handsomely for it. A Crew that has a few Complications thanks to how the faro game played out might consider taking a turn as bounty killers and collect a price on Butch's head.

If the Crew refuses to kill Butch on Shen's behalf, or if you need to hustle your Crew along, Shen is forced send his own enforcers to handle the matter. Butch dying off-screen might be a little anti-climactic for some Crews, but the Crew wandering into a battle between the Triad and the Browncoat raiders offers a chance to cut loose with some action in the casino setting.

LET THE LAW HANDLE IT

Shen's blood is up, but the Crew might want to hold firm to their deal with Cao. They may want to err on the side of the law, they may want to make sure they don't lose their ship, or they may be scared of being roped into Triad business. They can try to calm Shen down, or they might convince him that with the Feds involved, letting Cao have the collar is the quickest way back to normal.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Mental + Trick

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Sharklip's Mental D6 + Focus D10 + Triad Ranking D8

Possible Assets: Triad Connections, Stop and Think About This, Speaking in Mandarin

Possible Complications: Angry Sharklip, Cao on Thin Ice, Triad Goons Flooding the Streets

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to convince Shen to calm down. Shen vows that Butch will not leave Renao alive and if the Crew doesn't leave soon, they will join him.



- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember convinces Shen to ease off Butch's death sentence. Shen is open to collaborating with the Crew to bring Butch in.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember convinces Shen to ease off Butch's death sentence. Shen is open to collaborating with the Crew to bring Butch in, as well as even working with Marshal Burton if he must.

SMUGGLING A DEAD MAN OFF WORLD

A gunfight with Butch is handled elsewhere in this act, but even if Butch dies by someone else's hand, the Crew might be contacted by Shen for one final job. The easiest way to get rid of Butch's body is by breaking atmo and spacing it into orbit. Of course, if the Crew agrees to do this, they'll have to get by Cao one last time, who visits the boat to say his goodbyes. They might talk him off the boat, change the manifest to reflect some innocent cargo, or hide the body in a smuggling space.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Mental + Operate, Physical + Labor

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's Mental D6 + Focus D8 + Honest Man D8

Possible Assets: Kind Words About Annie, Shen Promises a Promotion, Our Favorite Sheriff

Possible Complications: Cao Gets Fired, Guilty Conscience, Butch Ain't Dead Yet

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to snow the sheriff. The sheriff will have to be Taken Out in order for the Crew to leave.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Cao to back off his investigation into Butch's disappearance. Cao may resurface in a later episode.

- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Cao to buy their story completely. He's glad the Crew was able to do what they could.

CASSIE SAGIRA

Cassie is a bit in over her head after the game. She's lived large and hoped to hook up with a syndicate that could bank roll her scheme, but now she's just looking to get off Renao before things get any worse.

The Crew might want to frame Cassie as the Federal agent. They may know Sarah is the real Fed and want her to survive. They might decide that framin' someone who admitted to human traffickin' is a bloody way to resolve the case. Butch kills a Fed, Shen's bloodlust is sated, and a slaver dies in the process.

Turning her over to the law provides Cao with another pawn for him to use to bring Butch down. He might convince her to pretend to be the Fed to lure out Butch one last time. Threatening her Companion status is a great way to get her to get on board with such a plan. A successful plot like this lets the Crew nail two bad guys with one shot, with grateful allies in both Sheriff Cao and Sharklip Shen.

Agreeing to her deal might be the Crew's ticket out of here. They may want to wash their hands of Renao and get back to making some coin, or they may be looking for protection from Butch and Shen by finding a third party for Cassie to sell her wares. They might leave a lot of enemies on Renao, but they have a new friend on their boat with some big plans and rich friends.

SELLING OUT BIG CASSIE

Getting Cassie involved in the murder plot means selling her out to someone, either Butch or Sheriff Cao. The Crew might convince her they are interested in getting her off Renao and then radio ahead to Butch, or they might convince her to come clean to the Sheriff and ask for leniency due to her cooperation.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Mental + Trick, Social + Influence



Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cassie's **Mental d6 + Focus d8 + Registered Companion d8**

Possible Assets: **Blackmail, We Can Offer You a Deal, Mixing Business and Pleasure**

Possible Complications: **Double Cross, Cassie Cut Another Deal, We're Being Watched**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember doesn't quite convince Cassie to trust the Crew. Step up or create an **Untrustworthy d6** Complication to use until the Crew makes their move.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember convinces Cassie the Crew is on her side.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember convinces Cassie the Crew is on her side. Create a **Hoodwinked d6** Asset. A Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to make it last for the rest of the Episode.

A DISCREET EXIT FOR BIG CASSIE

Getting Cassie off Renao is harder than it looks. She doesn't exactly travel light, nor is sneaking part of

her vocabulary. Leaving so soon after the game tips off Sheriff Cao to something suspicious and he'll drop by the Crew's ship to see what's amiss. The Crew might lie to him, smuggle Cassie on board, or use their ship to mess with any scanning equipment he brings

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Trick, Mental + Sneak, Systems + Operate**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's **Mental d6 + Focus d8 + Honest Man d8**

Possible Assets: **A Goodbye Present, Our Dear Old Auntie, Been Meaning to Fix That**

Possible Complications: **Human Cargo, Cao Waves the Alliance, Sharklip's Mark**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember get Cassie off planet, but either Shen, Cao, or Sarah pulls strings for a warrant on the Crew's ship.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Cassie off planet, but Shen, Cao, or Sarah holds a grudge until the next time they meet.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember gets Cassie off planet.

THE COLONEL

The Colonel's offer will ease the pain of any financial loss in the card game. Or it might come on top as a lovely bonus to the money owed to the Crew. The Crew should know by now that collecting debts ain't easy, and The Colonel's windfall is no different.

If Butch made it out of the faro game, he suspects The Colonel had something to do with figuring out his role in Annie's murder. He sends some of his mercenaries to take care of the old man. They catch The Colonel in his room while Sarah is out running errands for him. The Colonel asked the Crew to collect their cash while his nurse is away. They come across the door open, the room busted up, and some of Butch's worst dangling the old man off the balcony. If he rescue him, he'll gladly give them what he owes and, if Marshal Burton revealed herself, keep their names out of her report.

If the Crew put Butch in jail or the ground and are picking up their extra cash on the way out, The Colonel has an attack of pride. He won't pay up. If the Crew threatens him, he'll push back, saying he's got friends in high places if they lay a hand on him.

EXPRESS ELEVATOR DOWN

The Colonel is in a bad place. He's hanging over the balcony being held by some of Butch's worst and one false move could send him plummeting to the ground. They've got to Take Out these mercenaries quick.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Fight, Physical + Shoot**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: **Challenging D8 + Small Balcony D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8 + Butch's Mercenaries D8**

Possible Assets: **Sturdy Wheelchair, Backs to the Door, I Told You This Rope Would Come in Handy**

Possible Complications: **Torn Pants Leg, Sprained Wrist, Slipping Grip**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out. If the Crewmember spends a Plot Point to stay in the fight, the GM inflicts a **We'll Drop the Old Man** Complication equal to the highest rolling die in the opponent's pool or steps up an existing Complication.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember eliminates one of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember eliminates two of **Butch's Mercenaries D8**.

PAID IN FULL

Getting money out of the old man will take a little bit of action. They could try to convince him, trick him, or maybe wheel him out on the balcony to scare him.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Influence, Mental + Trick, Physical + Labor**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Colonel's **Social D8 + Focus D8 + Sore Loser D8**

Possible Assets: **You're a Hero, Fond of Annie, We're Both Soldiers**

Possible Complications: **Sarah Walks in, Hidden Pistol, No Money to Give**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is unable to get the money out of The Colonel and will have to find some other way to get the cash.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember convinces The Colonel to pay what he owes. Create a **Colonel's Bequest D6** Asset that may last to the end of the Episode if the Crewmember spends a Plot Point. The Crew will get a visit from Marshal Burton asking for the money back. She'll imply if they don't give it back, she'll keep an eye on them.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember convinces The Colonel to pay what he owes. Create a **Colonel's Bequest D6** Asset that may last to the end of the Episode if the Crewmember spends a

Plot Point. The Crew will get a visit from Marshal Burton asking for the money back. If they don't, she'll laugh and say the old buzzard deserves it.

MARSHALL SARAH BURTON

Marshal Burton is in a tough bind. She feels responsible for Annie's death, since Butch came after her and took out Annie instead. But she's invested a lot of time in this surveillance operation and bustin' it wide open over Butch seems like going after small fish. She hoped to nail Shen after all this, but she's not sure what her next step should be.

The Crew might lobby for her to arrest Butch or call in backup from the Feds, but she's reluctant to do so because of the effect it will have on her larger operation. She's not sure she can get Shen or any of the other players at the game if she settles for Butch. She's sorry Annie's dead, but it might take some pushing from the Crew to help her let her big notion go.

Sarah could also decide to cut and run. Her safety is important to the case, so she may turn to the Crew to

help her get off Renao. She might strike a deal, keeping their names out of her report, but whether or not this deal is honored depends on the Crew's standing as good citizens. The Alliance might send in the cavalry or Sarah might come back, hat in hand, furious that she's off the case and reprimanded.

CALL IN THE FEDS

Marshal Burton needs a little prodding to help the Crew in their predicament. The Crew needs to sweet talk her, show off a little knowledge of the law, or shame her into providing assistance.

Crewmember Dice Pool: Social + Influence, Mental + Know, Social + Trick

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Sarah's Mental D8 + Focus D4 + Alliance Spy D8

Possible Assets: Annie Meant the World to Us, Do Your Duty, We Will Sell You Out if You Don't

Possible Complications: Burton Pulled Your Warrant, The Ship Is Flagged, You Need to Be a Witness at the Trial

MASTERIN' THE GAME THE DIRTY PAIR

The Crew might have pegged Butch as the guilty party right away, or the climactic chase ended before it began thanks to a spectacular roll of the dice. Butch is Taken Out and everything feels a little anti-climactic. The solution? Butch was acting under orders from one of the other gamblers. This revelation might come from the lips of a broken, beaten Butch or from a last-minute surprise arrival with gun in hand and Evil Speech of Evil at the ready.

Sharklip: Sharklip knew there was a Marshal and decided Butch could prove himself by taking out the Fed. In this twist, he sent Butch after Annie rather than Butch taking his own initiative. As a recent employee, she was the most likely candidate to be the informant and Sharklip guessed wrong.

Big Cassie: Annie discovered Cassie's smuggling operation. Cassie cozied up to the big brute and asked him to do a favor so that she could do him several.

The Colonel: Sick and tired of being pushed around by Marshal Burton, The Colonel leaked the idea to Butch during a late night post-game drinking contest. Butch acted before The Colonel could tell him who the Marshal; The Colonel hopes that Burton will protect him from any backlash.

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember doesn't get help from Sarah or the Feds. The Crew is on their own to bring Butch to justice.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember gets Sarah to agree to help. She agrees to do so if she helps the Crew catch Butch on her own.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember get Sarah to agree to help and call in backup. Create a **Here Come the Feds D6** Asset for the battle with Butch. The Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to make it stick for the rest of the Episode.

A FEDERAL EXTRACTION

Getting Sarah off the planet means getting out without tipping off Cao or Shen. The Crew might cut a deal that once they get Sarah to safety, she forgets they exist when she comes back with Alliance soldiers in tow. This means sweet talking Cao, getting past Shen's men, or a discreet launch late at night.

THE SHOWDOWN: PAID IN FULL

THE CREW'S FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH BUTCH brings the act to a close. It's very likely that Butch will end up in jail, dead, or worse because of what he did to Annie. He could be in Shen's clutches, Sarah's cuffs, or the Crew might have played judge, jury, and executioner on their own. He might escape, too, but he'll likely sacrifice most of his mercenaries to do so.

Crews looking for action can kick off into a running battle throughout the casino, mixing chase beats with shootouts. This is a chance to go back to any parts the Crew might have missed during their first exploration of the casino. Or, if they generated any related Complications, a call back to the trouble they got in before that might help Butch get away.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Social + Trick, Mental + Sneak, Systems + Operate**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Cao's **Mental D6 + Focus D8 + Honest Man D8**

Possible Assets: **Cao Is in on It, Federal Escort, The Colonel Fakes His Death**

Possible Complications: **Butch Hides on Board, The Colonel's Betrayal, Sarah Stashes a Tracker on Board**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crew's deception is revealed. Cao must be convinced to let them go.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crew gets either Sarah or The Colonel off Renao. The other must create a last minute distraction for the plan to work.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crew gets Sarah and The Colonel off-world.

If your Episode is pressed for time, a tense face-off in the faro room with everyone pointin' guns at everyone else brings everything to a boil. The Crew might be interested in bringin' the mercenaries to justice for Sheriff Cao, or they might be lookin' to kill them for Sharklip Shen. Let everything come out: the confession, the motive, the payback and, most importantly, the fists.

If you're looking for a twist ending, there's a stand-off on or near the Crew's ship, with Butch tryin' to seize their vessel to get off the planet. This option works if the Crew Takes Out Butch too quickly after his confession. If the Crew doesn't want to deal with Butch after the game, this is a good tactic to make sure this loose end is tied up before they put the casino behind them.

GIVING CHASE

This roll is for those Crewmembers who want to chase down Butch. The Crewmember may be on horseback, on foot, or riding a vehicle.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Survive, Physical + Drive, Physical + Move**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Butch's **Mental D8 + Survive D6 + On The Run D8**

Possible Assets: **Burst of Speed, Intercept Angle, Fastest Horse on Renao**

Possible Complications: **Butch Has a Lead, A Mercenary Jumps Aboard,**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the chase. The Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to stay in the hunt, either by stepping up a Complication or taking a Complication equal to the highest rolling dice in the opponent's pool.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** Butch is Taken Out of the chase. He may stay in the chase by removing one of his **Butch's Mercenary D8** dice or spending a Plot Point to stay in the chase, either by stepping up a

Complication or creating one equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.

- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** Butch is Taken Out of the chase. He may stay in the chase by removing two of his **Butch's Mercenary D8** dice or by spending a Plot Point, either by stepping up a Complication or taking a Complication equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE

The Crew will likely shoot, punch, and otherwise attack to remove **Butch's Mercenaries D8** from protecting their boss. Whether or not Butch dies when he's Taken Out depends on if the Crew is fighting for Cao or for Shen.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Shoot, Physical + Fight**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Butch's **Physical D8 + Fight D10 + Mercenary D8 + Knives D6 + Butch's Mercenaries XD8**

Possible Assets: **Hail of Bullets, Death from Above, Sniper Position**

Possible Complications: **Out of Ammo, Sun in My Eyes, Jammed Gun**



EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the fight. The Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or taking a Complication equal to the highest rolling dice in their opponent's pool.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** One of Butch's mercenaries is Taken Out to protect him. If his mercenaries are gone, Butch must either pay a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die or be Taken Out.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** Two of Butch's mercenaries are Taken Out to protect him. If his mercenaries are gone, Butch must either pay a Plot Point and take a Complication equal to the Crewmember's highest rolling die or be Taken Out.

MASTERIN' THE GAME THEY DON'T PAY ME ENOUGH FOR THIS!

The exact number of Butch's Mercenaries D8 is left up for the GM to determine. Two or three times the number of Crewmembers at the table is a good guideline. A few have likely been Taken Out during the course of the adventure. Whether or not they stay that way depends on the type of finale the GM has in mind. A big shootout or grand action sequence means Butch has access to his whole complement, giving the Crew plenty of bad guys to shoot, punch, and take down. Butch with only a few men left shows the effect the Crew has had on the situation and might drive Butch to more desperate, dramatic to stay free.

BUTCH COMES CALLING

When it's time for Butch and his crew to return fire, here's what the Crewmember being attacked rolls to defend. Don't forget to factor in Butch's *Ambush* Specialty if he surprises them at their ship. Or his *Knives* Specialty if he's got a blade. He might make a move against them first if he knows they suspect him for Annie's murder.

Crewmember Dice Pool: **Physical + Shoot, Physical + Fight**

Gamemaster Dice Pool: Butch's **Physical D8 + Fight D10 + Mercenary D8 + Knives D6 + Butch's Mercenaries XD8**

Possible Assets: **Cloud of Dust, Last Minute Swerve, Not Afraid of a Little Small Arms Fire**

Possible Complications: **Deep Cut, Damaged the Ship, Here Comes the Law**

EXAMPLE RESULTS:

- ★ **Failure to Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember is Taken Out of the fight. The Crewmember may spend a Plot Point to stay in the fight, either by stepping up a Complication or creating a Complication equal to the highest rolling dice in the opponent's pool.
- ★ **Raise the Stakes:** The Crewmember avoids getting hit.
- ★ **Extraordinary Success:** The Crewmember avoids getting hit and disarms Butch. Create a **Disarmed D6** Asset to use against Butch.

Cao will be the happiest with Butch behind bars and Annie's murder solved. The dirtier the Crew's hands are, the less happy he will be. As long as Butch is dealt with, he will honor his word and give back the Crew's money and their ship. They are free to go, but if they killed Butch instead of arresting him, Cao quietly mentions they should never come back.

Shen's opinion of the Crew depends on how professionally they handled dealing with Butch. If they took care of him quickly and quietly, Shen stays happy with the Crew. If they caused a ruckus, shot up the place, and disrupted business, Shen is much less happy. An unhappy Shen means Renao might be someplace the Crew stays clear from for a nice, long while.

ROLL CREDITS

THE CREW IS HEADED OUT OF ATMO WITH A COMBINATION OF A FRESH STACK OF CASH, A FEW FRIENDS, and more than likely someone that wants some sweet revenge. Here are some suggestions for further Episodes featuring the people, places, and things that the Crew dealt with while *Bucking the Tiger*.

SHARKLIP'S SEVEN

One of Sharklip's rivals back on Persephone decides to make a power play and muscles the Triad leader out of his hard-earned business. Shen calls on the Crew to break into his old casino to prove to his superiors that his rival is incompetent. Shen wants an isolated Cortex tablet full of incriminating data. The Crew can take as much cash as they can carry. But to make the new boss look bad, will Shen sell out the Crew to seal the deal with his superiors?

REVENGE OF THE RAIDERS

Butch Guiying ended this adventure either fleeing to Hades or rotting in a jail cell. Regardless of what happened, the rest of his mercenaries aren't going to just disappear. They'll either try to break him out or come after the purplebellies that got him arrested in the first place. They'll also try to make it look like the Crew busted Butch out to set the law on Crew so they can make a getaway to the Rim.

SHIP OF FOOLS

The Companion's Guild hires the Crew to track down the girls that Big Cassie was shipping away. Unfortunately, the ship Cassie hired instead of the Crew was lost just outside of Reaver Space. When Cassie turns up as the only survivor on an isolated outpost, the Crew must get her to tell the tale so the families can find peace. Or is Cassie there to lead the Reavers to their next meal?

ALL IS FORGIVEN

Marshal Burton needs a Crew for her next undercover assignment. She needs to pull out another deep cover Marshal that is in too deep with a pirate gang. Burton is going undercover as a captain who wishes to join the Browncoat Brotherhood, a collection of Independents working together as a pirate fleet. If the Crew agrees to play their part, their records will be scrubbed clean. But when she's injured in an attempt to seize a prize, how will the Crew get back out of the Brotherhood?

BUT NOW AM FOUND

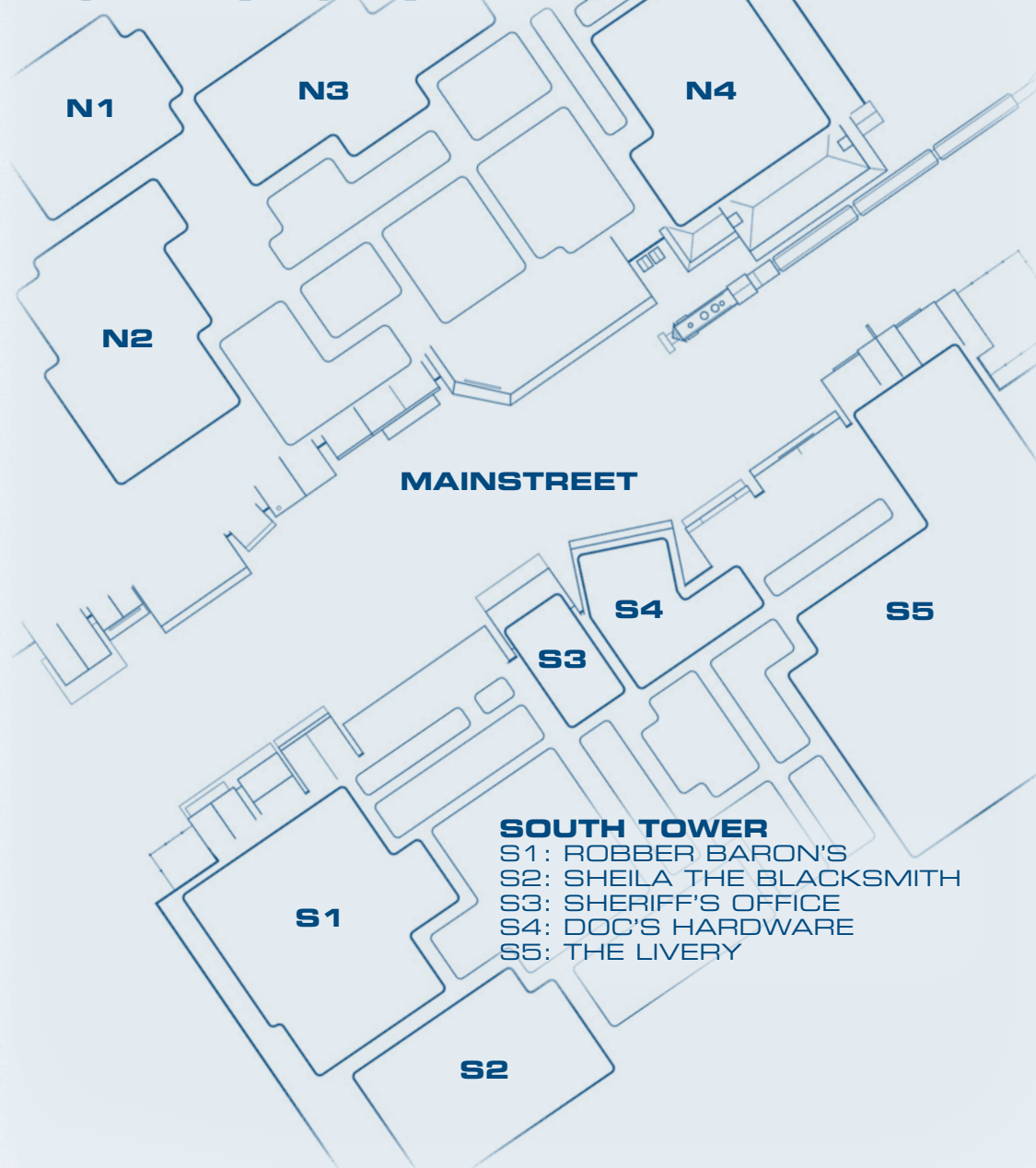
Annie's last wishes were for her remains to be taken back home to be buried alongside her parents. If the Crew decides to take up the pall and deliver the body to Annie's parents on Greenleaf, they may discover some other folk that Annie never quite paid back. These bad people look to collect from the Crew's recent windfall. They are also willing to take it out on good people, like Annie's still living family.

ADVENTURE MAP

THE SHENANDOAH RUSH GROUNDS

NORTH TOWER

N1: THE COLUMBIA GEM
N2: BUNKHOUSE VITTLES
N3: TRUE TALL TALES OF THE WEST
N4: SHENANDOAH STATION

**SOUTH TOWER**

S1: ROBBER BARON'S
S2: SHEILA THE BLACKSMITH
S3: SHERIFF'S OFFICE
S4: DOC'S HARDWARE
S5: THE LIVERY