The Metabarons™

COMPANION BOOK 1

TO THE METABARONS RPG: GAME MASTER SCREEN

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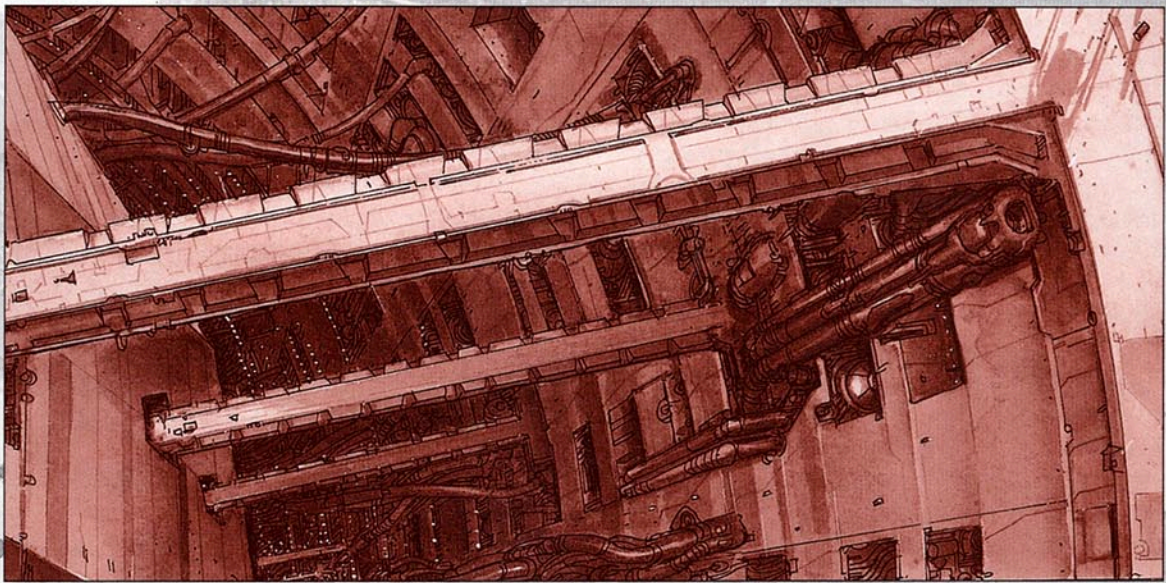www.westendgames.com • www.enteryeti.com

COMPANION BOOK I
TO THE METABARONS RPG: GAME MASTER SCREEN

GM'ING
THE HONOR CODE

Most roleplaying experiences require a constant exercise of will. You have to constantly remember that you are in fact the character, not just yourself with dice stats and a funny name. All games tell you to get into the experience of really being someone else. Our Honor Code system interacts with Amarax points and Necro-Dream points to actively reward true roleplay and drastically penalize 'acting out of character'.

1. WHY: HONOR v THE NECRO-DREAM

In the Jodoverse, the vast bulk of the population are slaves of the Necro-Dream. That is to say that they are slaves to base desires cultivated by the media and society (there are deeper, darker forces at work also but follow the comics and graphic novels as those unfold). The PC's and key NPC's are among the handful that are not following the societal script.

The PC's biggest weapon against this is their Code of Honor.

This may be hard for you and your players to fully grasp. Our actual world of the early XXIst century distrusts strongly held beliefs. We are taught that there are multiple sides to every issue. We

are taught to investigate , to examine the issue carefully and arrive at our own opinion. We are taught to be tolerant of 'difference' in others. 'Everybody's entitled to their opinion' is the current order of the day.

Gaming is NOT real life. The world of the Jodoverse frequently requires that you take rigid positions and hold to them, however inconvenient they may later become.

However, it is more complex than that. Many other games have universes with crystal clear definitions of right and wrong, good and evil, light and dark. The Jodoverse provides no such easy division.

Your Honor makes you strong enough to resist temptation and apathy. However, your Honor is what you choose. You simultaneously must have a Code of Honor and can equally well have any possible such code.
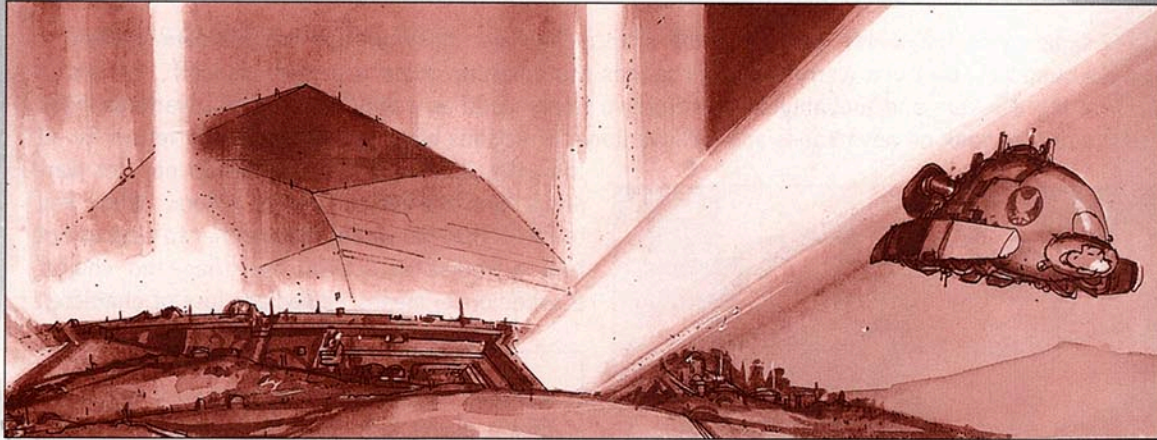
THE BEGINNING:

Lets us start with the basic Honor Codes from the Rulebook (p.38 in the First Edition, ©2001):

BUSHITAKA :

The Way of the Warrior. Taken to its extremes and without the powers of a Metabaron, a pure Bushitaka could be construed as a Zen Kamikaze. However, even most Samurai had more depth to them than a berserker. Must the Warrior always fight regardless of odds? Can victory tomorrow be more Honorable than glorious but certain defeat today? Try to make a Busitaka inspired player give that depth to her character by fleshing out the code to put some limits on the victory at any price ethos. Try to get in some of the martial arts, Eastern philosophy views of balance and thought as being equal to action in a warrior's powers and prowess.

Examples of this are the ancient Spartans who were told to come home with their shields or on them (dead).

GM NOTE:

We are not saying that you cannot play a pure Bushitaka as a Samurai Kamikaze berserker, only that there are more options than a surface reading of the Code would appear to show. So what do you do if you have one or more player's who insist on playing said berserker?

First, it is your choice as GM to approve the choice. Berserkers work far better in novels or in disconnected adventures than in RPG campaigns. If you are not comfortable to have one player in effect be a succession of similar characters as she kills them off night by night, tell your player that. There is a great deal of work involved in being a GM. Most people do the work because there is also a great deal of fun in melding multiple peoples' stories into one larger, longer tale. That fun works best when you are telling stories that fascinate you enough to make the work seem a challenge instead of a chore.

Second, you may look at your PC berserker as a challenge. This involves working with him to

create a superwarrior character who has some chance, however slim, of surviving his own version of Honorable conduct. Lest you worry that this sounds too enticing, there is a clear tradeoff. We are in effect treating a severe and probably self-destructive Honor Code as a very extreme disadvantage (see the article in this book on advantages and disadvantages). Actions have consequences. In return for all the extra dice, Honor situations do not get warnings from the GM. They get orders. When you tell a PC that her Honor requires her to take or not take a course of action, they have no choice. Disobedience, means immediate loss of character.

We keep talking about playing with the number of dice a player gets as both reward and punishment. Part of this is simply an extension of the advantages and disadvantages article in this book. Part of it is a sense that fully playing the Honor Code will work better with characters who have progressed beyond the initial dice levels. This does not mean you give them dice up to the level of the various Metabarons, who have powers approaching those of demigods.

Now again, when applying this, remember that we are trying to tell a collective story here. Your order works best when applied as a course of action, with the player and party left free to devise appropriate tactics and actual actions.

Note that we said party. This all interacts with mutuality. Party members who are not berserkers may get Honor warnings through failing mutuality to the berserker in their party. This is one of the tricky and fun things with this system. If your party's mutuality puts party ahead of self you have an Honor situation. If you have a party that puts mission ahead of self you MAY have one. Dishonorable people cannot have Amarax and will lose their characters over time to the NecroDream. Dead characters ARE lost. These conundrums provide dramatic tension. Dramatic tension makes for exciting adventure stories.

FURTHER GM NOTE:

None of the above is easy. It will undoubtedly take time for a new party to get into the intricacies. When GM'ing new parties or new players, reward the proper spirit. Fudge the dice if you have to. Give them multiple Honorable ways out of the trap where possible. Keep your mind on the underlying spirit of the type of cinematic adventure stories these rules are intended to create and ignore the literal wording where ever there is a conflict.

FUGA:

The Fuga is more someone that puts Mission above anything else, except self. Examples of this would be a Ninja Assassin, a guerilla warrior like Che Guevara. This code demands a particular primary life mission that gives perspective to everything else. The key rule being, he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day. Othon, the first Metabaron, is slightly Fuga. He was a pirate before marriage. He shows Fuga traits by not attacking the Endoguard directly at the battle of Marmola. His wife, pure Bushitaka, does and is killed honorably by her code. Othon shows a Rayah trait when he breaks his son's legs

so that he will not fight. He was Bushitaka when he accepted the sacrifice of himself to let the secret of the Epiphyte be kept, though his wife and son voted Rayah, by letting the secret go in order to save their husband and father. It's when people break their codes that tragedy happens in the Metabarons. They get victory and freedom by following their personal codes. There is a mixture of the Othon Fuga, to his son's Rayah.

This does not mean that a Fuga is easily accepted in a group... A pure Fuga will let everyone else die, if the end goal can be accomplished surely. But they will not let themselves die, because the missions that they are playing are only small steps to their overall goal. If they can easily see that keeping the group alive is in their best interests, then they will help. Therefore a Fuga should be played as being physically with the group or party but not a member. Rather, she is a separate party of one along on the same adventure.

Examples of FUGA are the classic Eastern peasant bandits of the medieval Chinese martial arts dramas or Japanese Samurai plays who pursue some deep life goal or mission guiding their attacks.

EXAMPLE:

Lin is a pure Fuga. He will always run from dangers, rather than risk himself, unless physically constrained by his group and circumstances. Breaking his word, going back on her commitments, abandoning comrades or mission, nothing means more than life and safety. His Honorable reason is that he must live to exact vengence on the Magnates and Pirate Warlords who destroyed his space complex. He's killed nine. She has twelve more to go. So why does the group haul him along? He has hands of pure gold when it comes to machines. He can repair complicated equipment with a pocket knife, get past computer guarded locks with a toothpick, and insert seemingly valid and untraceable files into supposedly secure systems. All that is necessary is keeping him more afraid of his 'mates' than of his other possible enemies. So you haul her along and drop her into situations where her fastest line of retreat means doing what you want.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME:

You as reader will see frequent reference in this article to the "spirit of the game" or the "spirit of the rules". This is an attempt by us as designers to give you the full flavor of the world of the Metabarons as a roleplaying experience.

Your group has the option of ignoring this spirit in part or whole at anytime. The intended purpose of the Metabarons RPG line is to provide you with an entertainment experience. If your group finds it more "fun" to play Metabarons as a literal set of dice and rules, a puzzle to "crack" as it were, that is your privilege. It is not wrong. It is just a different way of using these materials. If you are having fun and no one is getting "real world" hurt, then any way you use these are fine.

However, we as a design house would feel we have failed in our duty to you if we did not give every possible help to get you into the spirit of the world of the Metabarons. Alexandro Jodorowsky and a lot of very wonderful people at Humanoids and Yeti have created a wonderful, baroque, decadent far future with a host of subtle flavors and undertones. It can be used as a card board screen set backdrop to run a stock space opera campaign. Used to its full depth, it is a world so far beyond such a stock space opera as to be comparing fast food to five star cooking. Same ingredients often, but a radically different result. We are trying to help those who want it to bring out these flavors in their campaigns. The rest of you are free to follow that as much or little as

feels comfortable and fun to your group. Power gaming like fast food is a matter of taste. It is neither better nor worse but rather something different. Let one hundred flowers bloom and let each campaign follow the spirits of its members.

Thus, this is a decision best made by the group as a group. You can always vary the mix from session to session. You will get best results if, within a given session or night, you try to be consistent.

DECADENCE:

We stress in many places that this is a highly decadent universe. The comics and the forthcoming novels will deal with this in far greater depth. From an RPG prospective, the NecroDream system will mitigate against attempting to roleplay decadent behavior. Our best advice is to treat it as backdrop. Make sure your PC's note it is there, then tell them they did well to avoid it when they do so. You can work in the difference by having major NPC's engage in decadent behavior, be driven by degenerate desires, etc.
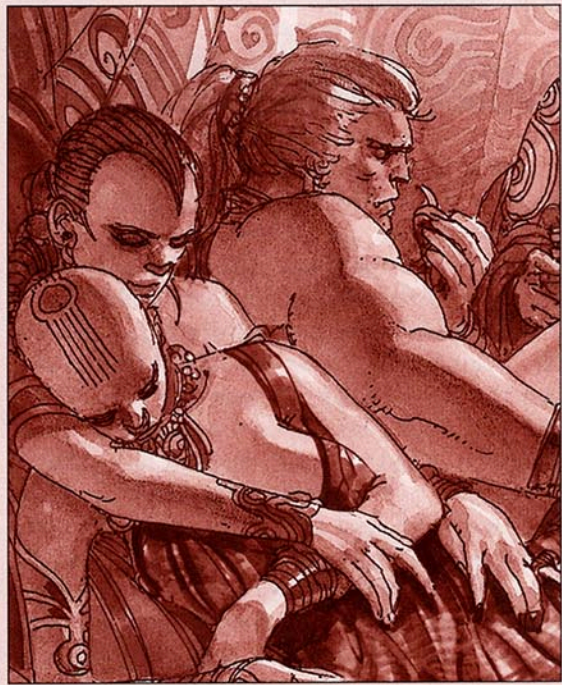
PALEO-NOBLIS:

This is the European Christian derived Warrior Code. Minstrels, tournaments, knights in shining armor, romantic love proclaimed but never consummated, a lady's favor worn into battle. It is also an ethos of warrior monks, crusades, great quests, and endless court intrigue. It is not so much opposed to Bushitaka as different. We use the world feudalism to describe VERY different systems in Japan and Europe. The surface similarities should not blind you to the vastly different ethos involved.

When we use the word Christian, think the ethics of Medieval Catholicism at its most noble rather than any particular sectarian vision. You will be loyal to hierarchy (THAT YOU DEEM NOBLE whether real or legendary), a defender of the helpless, a true warrior of grace and humility. This should be an easy code for your PC to visualize as Western culture descends from the civilization that created this. Try to pin her down as to whether we are talking the true nobility of the sword of the High Middle Ages or the Court Nobility of the Lace Ages of early modern times or what. (Note, especially for US GM's – if your PC's views are more Hollywood than historical, this is NOT a problem. All your PC must be is clear and consistent). Try to get an them to choose an exemplar: Arthur, Lancelot, Richard the Lion Hearted, Robin Hood, Barbarossa, Saladin.

METABARONS AND MEDIA:

The mythos of the Jodoverse provides a perfect cover for inserting exemplars and Honor Codes based on modern or earlier media. Remember – supposedly the Metabarons timeline is our own world taken into the far future. So it's a world that has in its potentially useable past our TV, movies, novels, comics, music, etc. For reasons of intellectual property law, I will not give current examples. It is a world where one PC can take as his Honor Code exemplar the dime novel version of Jesse James while another can be modeled on Sherlock Holmes (and thank God for public domain). For this to work, the fictional exemplar must not be used as comedy relief, but rather as a real model or upholder of a particular code of Honorable behavior. This can extend to being forced to use period weapons as a 'point of Honor'. Example: In the first Metabarons comic, Edna, wife of Othan, charges the Endoguard with an archaic sword as the only Honorable thing for her to do, under the circumstances
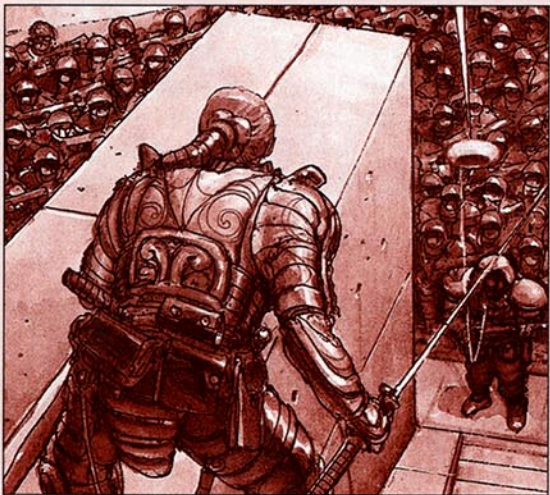
See the upcoming Weapons and Tech Handbook for the integration of archaic weapons into far future combat in the Jodoverse.

VERITAS:

This is a quite modern, media oriented viewpoint. It will be a difficult Code for an individual PC (note: see the Incal for a counterexample but remember that the Incal group included some extremely powerful characters such as the proto Metabaron). Veritas might work well as a theme for a campaign if an entire group has versions of this code. Remember that it is the truth about the rich and powerful , not ratting out everyone in the group every time they lie, exaggerate, brag or generally act human. If you have a PC wishing this Code, he better have some immense other worth. Example: Mac feels the need to never let slide a chance to expose ANYTHING about the great and corrupt. The rest of the group tolerates him because he's the current lover of the best weapons broker in the quadrant and they get huge discounts, custom designs, free samples of prototype advanced gadgets and expedited deliveries by being with the broker's 'little love angel'.

Examples of this are a great many of the classic film noir private detectives and journalists that stop working for money at one point and time and head for the truth. We look at it as definitely more great truth scandals as opposed as an "Honest Abe" characterization. Even Sherlock Holmes could be considered a Veritas, though he is slightly Bushitaka in his ever driving methods. Again this code works best if the Character has an underlying overall mission, such as exposing the truth about particular enemies, conditions, places, or classes.

SKATAWAH :

Do not let appearances fool you. Even action-oriented PC's can have an inner philosophy of

harmony. Both Bushitaka with Zen and Paleo-Noblis with Christianity have such a potential philosophical / religious core. Unless this is the Honor Code of the entire group, the limits and details of this Code are best handled under the outline described under "Decisions, decisions" below. When GM'ing this impart an American Indian and Native African philosophical flavor or tone on this one. Examples are Tecumseh or Geronimo. These guys can fight to kill, for death in nature is not something new. What they are looking for is balance and the overall increase of life in all of its forms. A background overall quest or tragedy is important to put the person's individual interpretation of this code into perspective. Skatawah is an abbreviation of Tenskwatawah, the nick name for the Red Prophet, Tecumseh's brother, who preached going back to the basics because White man's technology was killing America. The word also means, the true path. Whether their methods are pacifistic or guerilla doesn't matter. They try to stop anything that endangers the environmental ecologies.

The way this develops, you can more easily see a Skatawah teamed up with a Fuga and a Veritas who share the same overall goal. Imagine a great Ekonomat scandal: they are killing luscious worlds for Aqua-Kublars. The Veritas is working to bring the scandal to light, the Skatawah because it's obviously wrong, and the Fuga because her family was killed on one of the worlds and she will not stop until the Ekonomat leaders are dead and buried. Paleo-Noblis, Bushitaka and Rayah's can be along for the ride.

RAYAH :

This one can be really fun. The group's loyalty is to the group. The key is to get them to define who the group is. Just the players at the table or all members of the unit? Just some of the players at the table? Just one? Who is the us on which this all hinges? As with Veritas this works best as a group Code and worst as that of one lone PC in a mixed group.

Examples of Rayah are Rob Roy of the McGregors, William Wallace as seen in the movie Braveheart, Othon's twin Pirate friends in the 1st Metabarons comics, and the Legendary Musketeers – one for all and all for one.

GM Note:

The only true limits on a player's Code of Honor come from you. A player may think it is really awesome to pretend to be a pirate whose Code of Honor requires that he proves his domination of the outer universe through necrophile cannibalism. That does not in any way mean that you are obligated to run adventures for a group with such a member. As conflicts in this universe revolve to a large extent around maintaining one's Code of Honor, you have got to set boundaries beyond which it just ceases to be comfortable for you to maintain the story setting. Light, dark, heroic, depraved – you will run MUCH better campaigns if your PCs' Code of Honor does not inspire revulsion in you.

2. WHAT:
ESTABLISHING YOUR HONOR CODE

If your Honor Code can be anything, why make such a big deal out of it? Actions have consequences and nowhere more so than in the interactions of Code and play.

Your Code will at times compel certain behavior or forbid other behavior. Sounds easy doesn't it? However, presume you choose to play an action-oriented character – merc, pirate, soldier, assassin, thief, spy, criminal, someone who uses force to take what is not freely given.

SEEMS TO BE AN EASY SITUATION:

Give me what I want or I'll take it from you anyway! Except that in RPG's and much of life, people tend to act in groups. This should not be surprising. We are descended from pack primates. Our strength comes from using cooperation, tools and intelligence. Many other animals were stronger, fiercer, faster than we were individually. As a rule, we do not fight individually except when forced to. We fight as cooperative groups.

Honor is different within the group. The hardest moral definition is whom do I owe Honorable behavior to? Only myself? An interesting philosophical position but hardly one that others will willingly form a group with. So your Moral Code is both yours alone and must be one acceptable to your fellow players. It is in theory possible to have a group composed only of self-loving egotists who feel they owe nothing to each other. Frankly, it will make a better novel than an RPG campaign.

So does this mean all goods are to be held in common and each will die before even allowing the other to be injured? Not hardly – even the legendary Three Musketeers each had their own sword, clothes and other possessions. However, it does mean that certain parts of the Code have to be worked with when your group forms. Again, there is no correct answer to any of this. Part of the fun of roleplaying is to try out roles, positions, beliefs that you would never do in real life. You can switch gender, lifestyle, profession, point of view at much less cost in an RPG campaign than in real life where such decisions normally have very real and immediate consequences.

So the first component your Honor Code must contain is mutuality. Some soldiers will die to bring back their comrades dead bodies. Will you? Will you carry them if wounded? Provide covering fire? Come in with the rescue shuttle even if the plan has obviously gone wrong and all the guns of a pirate fleet are banging away at you? Action oriented Honor Codes would be expected to cover all of these points. Note: 'it depends' is an answer. It means the decision is not a point of Honor

If your are looking for standards - thieves, assassins, hitmen, pirates will tend to display less intragroup loyalty. Military and mercenaries will tend to display more with elite and special operations groups normally showing unbreakable bonds.

Loyalties are often reinforced by training, by long service together and by specific unit traditions often with ceremonies. New members may have specific initiations to perform before they are deemed worthy of true brotherhood.

Also intragroup loyalties may be specific to part of the group. Two or three players may regard themselves as bonded specially and distinct from the group. An example can be found in the adventure in this book where the party consists of members of two different mercenary units bonded together for this adventure. It would be perfectly natural for the members of each of the former units to feel they have a higher loyalty to each other than to the other members of the party. Other possible such bonds are lovers, PC's who have saved each other's lives, or PC´A who have served together for a long time.

Honor in combat also relates to division of loot. What is your Code? 'Finders Keepers'? 'Equal Shares?' Again, 'it all depends' is an answer but it may not be a very satisfying one. If each party / unit member is out only for his or her own gain, the motivation to show courage and group solidarity in the face of extreme danger gets harder to sustain. Players making off with small items may want to slip the GM a note to mimic the secrecy of real life.

Putting this into perspective within the Metabaron's universe, remember that your Character Player's have adopted an honor code because without one, they lose their free will, and are absorbed by the Necro-Dream.

A Fuga adopted her code the day that she lost her family to a Techno-Techno raid.

She had two choices that day: embrace despair and allow the Necro-Dream to finish off the rest of her life, or adopt a code that would allow her to keep a spark of free will in her soul. A vague idea of the Fuga code embraced her and her spiritual heart started to beat. In game terms, she earned her first point of Amarax. In order to keep that spark, she concentrated on developing her abilities of dissimulation, evasiveness, and persuasion. She let the mission of vengeance become her North Star. She escaped her planet and proceeded to accomplish her life mission. In her perspective, risking her life to bring back a fallen comrade from the field of battle is not just a question of form. It is a question of life or death, freedom or intellectual slavery. Her Fuga code does not allow her to risk her life for a lump of possibly dead flesh. Making compromises to her code for the friendship she may have kindled with that comrade would be to her the first step leading her back into the arms of the Necro-Dream. Her soul survived through strict adherence to her code, her soul is more important than anything. Without it, she is a pawn, prone to depression.

GM NOTE:

Mutuality if properly played can often require risk taking verging on suicidal behavior. Thus a dangerous Honor Code is in a sense a form of disadvantage. GM's may use additional dice for attributes or skills in the negotiation of individual and group Honor Codes. There are two reasons for this:

FIRST:

Players need to be visibly reassured that roleplaying characters with complicated Moral Codes has its rewards in game terms.
A few more dice, judiciously distributed to players who take on strict, understandable Codes can save hours of argument and improve play. In reverse, players who state a Code then try to hide behind 'it depends' as the advance answer to every potential moral dilemma can be penalized dice as a way of showing the game consequences of trying to avoid and evade one of the key mechanics of play.

SECOND :

The purpose of the Honor Code system is to simulate a key part of the underlying mythos of the Jodoverse. Players who try to avoid the difficulties of this by creating a toothless Honor Code that tries answering every dilemma with the modernistic 'it depends' in any of variations of that concept are within the letter of the rules, but have violated their spirit. You will be playing a game which has some of the places, things and people of the world of the Metabarons. You will not be playing in that world. Again, as both an aid to negotiation and to more adequately simulate this, take away a few dice. However, unlike adding dice this should only be done in extreme situations. There are other solutions to terminally vague codes (see below under "Decisions, decisions")

PLAYER NOTE:

In addition to a general description as noted in the templates in the adventure in this book, a proper Honor Code should have as a minimum
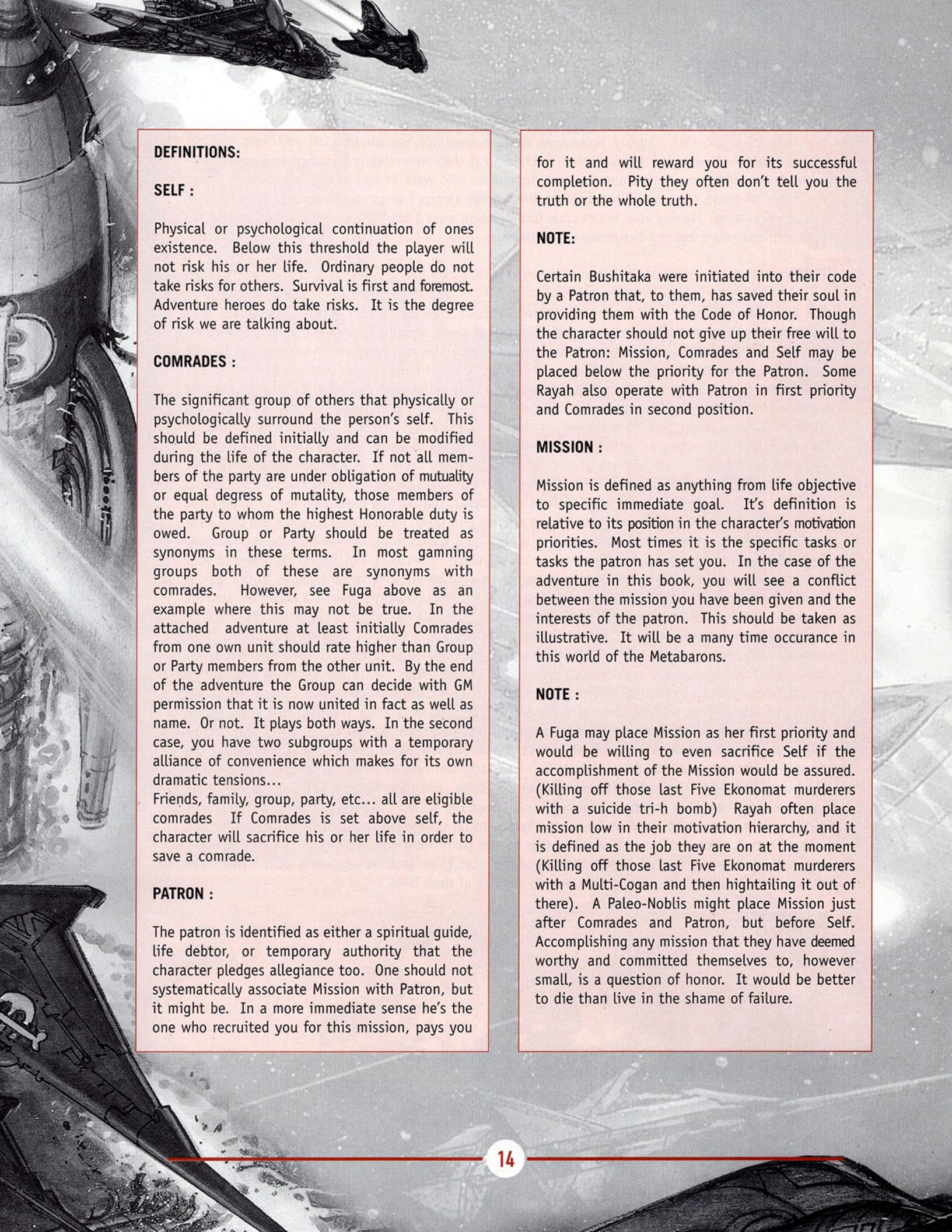
three things that Honor either requires you to do or forbids you from doing. For example, the cow-boy hero of a mid-XXth Century Hollywood Western wouldn't 'backshoot' (kill you from ambush without warning), wouldn't harm women or children if they were clearly unarmed and noncombatants, and would only use weapons against opponents who were in fact armed. The spirit, if not the letter, of these rules would require that these three things have some reasonable likelihood of actually occurring. Having your Honor Code forbid you to wear a black Stetson Hat would be absurd. It should not count against the minimum of three.

THIRD :

The Four-way question – self, comrades, patron, mission. Do all count? Which comes first? The adventure in this book will point out the difficulties of these seemingly innocent words. One could say that this is just the mutuality issue discussed above. The four together constitute the core of mutuality. However, it is more than that. In combat or other situations of extreme danger, people depend on each other. Part of that dependence is a firm belief that you know each other's Honor on these four points. Again, there is no particular right answer. Each answer is a device to tell very different stories. Ninja will leave their dead and wounded behind. Modern Rangers will not willing do so. Honor is a variable when setting it up but an absolute when living it. A Ninja feels no dishonor as mission is the highest priority with self coming second. A Ranger would agree that mission is #1 but take as a point of Honor that #2 is comrades or party. Using each Code, certain stories work best. Certain types of characters work best. That is why exemplars are so important. What would the exemplar do in a situation is a quick and often reliable key to what the character would find is Honorable. When playing and GM'ing also try to think in real time terms. Action, combat, adventure is often in the real world taking place in seconds, not hours. A player should not have minutes to debate a reaction that would have to be virtually instantaneous in the real or even legendary worlds. A handy device for this is a chess clock. Give the players a maximum amount of time to complete the scene. If they dawdle over particular decisions or actions, they will be forced to rush themselves later. Other devices are a quick egg timer or tapping the table a fixed number of times between 5 and 10. Using these devices, if the party cannot agree on what to do the NPC's / bad guys keep moving and doing. All of this helps create the tensions and feel of cinematic or legendary realism. Hollywood thrillers do not include slow discussion during the action scenes of alternatives with research of exact odds of success or failure. The hero just keeps doing things. As in an amusement park ride, the speed gives it a realistic feel all its own. Our sort of roleplaying will never match the speed of first person shooter video games. However, that is the dramatic effect you should all be working for. The party can talk all it wants. It can have training sessions where they compare different courses of action, roll dice against different possibilities, whatever prepares them for the action sequence. Once the action has begun, proper GM'ing means pushing your party as fast and as far as your group social conventions will allow towards a cinematic rate of action. You will want to explain this to the party from the beginning. Give them what advance intelligence they could reasonably acquire. Let them practice against a plan. Then take them on the roller coaster ride or first person shooter of their lives.
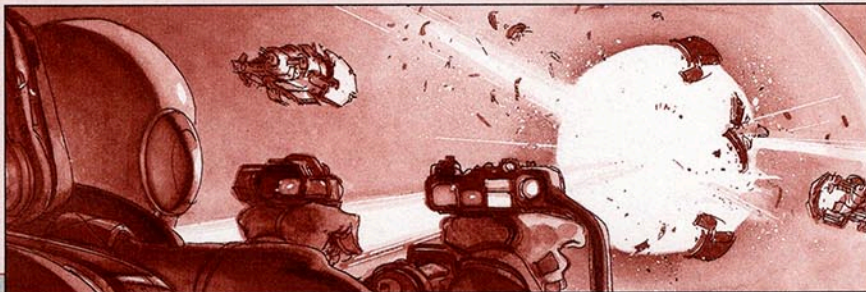
DEFINITIONS:

SELF :

Physical or psychological continuation of ones existence. Below this threshold the player will not risk his or her life. Ordinary people do not take risks for others. Survival is first and foremost. Adventure heroes do take risks. It is the degree of risk we are talking about.

COMRADES :

The significant group of others that physically or psychologically surround the person's self. This should be defined initially and can be modified during the life of the character. If not all members of the party are under obligation of mutuality or equal degress of mutality, those members of the party to whom the highest Honorable duty is owed. Group or Party should be treated as synonyms in these terms. In most gamning groups both of these are synonyms with comrades. However, see Fuga above as an example where this may not be true. In the attached adventure at least initially Comrades from one own unit should rate higher than Group or Party members from the other unit. By the end of the adventure the Group can decide with GM permission that it is now united in fact as well as name. Or not. It plays both ways. In the second case, you have two subgroups with a temporary alliance of convenience which makes for its own dramatic tensions...
Friends, family, group, party, etc... all are eligible comrades If Comrades is set above self, the character will sacrifice his or her life in order to save a comrade.

PATRON :

The patron is identified as either a spiritual guide, life debtor, or temporary authority that the character pledges allegiance too. One should not systematically associate Mission with Patron, but it might be. In a more immediate sense he's the one who recruited you for this mission, pays you for it and will reward you for its successful completion. Pity they often don't tell you the truth or the whole truth.

NOTE:

Certain Bushitaka were initiated into their code by a Patron that, to them, has saved their soul in providing them with the Code of Honor. Though the character should not give up their free will to the Patron: Mission, Comrades and Self may be placed below the priority for the Patron. Some Rayah also operate with Patron in first priority and Comrades in second position.

MISSION :

Mission is defined as anything from life objective to specific immediate goal. It's definition is relative to its position in the character's motivation priorities. Most times it is the specific tasks or tasks the patron has set you. In the case of the adventure in this book, you will see a conflict between the mission you have been given and the interests of the patron. This should be taken as illustrative. It will be a many time occurance in this world of the Metabarons.

NOTE :

A Fuga may place Mission as her first priority and would be willing to even sacrifice Self if the accomplishment of the Mission would be assured. (Killing off those last Five Ekonomat murderers with a suicide tri-h bomb) Rayah often place mission low in their motivation hierarchy, and it is defined as the job they are on at the moment (Killing off those last Five Ekonomat murderers with a Multi-Cogan and then hightailing it out of there). A Paleo-Noblis might place Mission just after Comrades and Patron, but before Self. Accomplishing any mission that they have deemed worthy and committed themselves to, however small, is a question of honor. It would be better to die than live in the shame of failure.

OPEN v SECRET CODES:

The world of the Metabarons is a world of treachery, deceit, and every kind of depravity. In keeping with this dark mood, players should feel free to show the party one Honor Code on their character sheet and slip the GM a second different one as their real Code. However, allowing fake rolls for nonexistent breaches of the Code would only be at GM discretion. If not, both PC and GM get to practice real life fast talk to explain any discrepancies. For best use of this do not pick a Code at radical odds with your public Code. However, a few crucial twists on mutuality or the order of responses to the four way question can have extreme and dramatic effect.

Example: Ace lists her Code as mission, party, patron, self. Her actual code is patron, self, party, mission. Applied to the adventure in this book, she would abandon the party to save her patron and herself. In effect she's the patron's spy within the group. The mere threat that there could be such a player should make interactions ever so much more tinged with real tension.

Also note that the secret Code may vary in any and every aspect from your official or public Code as long as the GM approves. Secret Codes are a person to person, PC and GM, negotiation. Your party does not participate. This is best set up in advance of the first session or very shortly thereafter by a private phone call or email.

DEFAULT SETTING :

This may all be very confusing to players not used to these sorts of decisions. Modern Western action heroes mostly use a Code of party, mission, self, patron. Your classic hero, especially martial arts or Samurai would have a default setting of

patron, mission, party, self. The first is for fans of Hollywood. The second works best for fans of Hong Kong action movies. Either works. It just gives you two very different styles. They are used to tell very different stories. The first are mock heroic in the style West End has long called cinematic realism. The second can be called legendary heroic and requires leaving realism far behind.

CINEMATIC REALISM:

You use the rules to tell stories with a surface veneer of realism. Your actions are highly improbable but it is more a question of an endless string of such improbabilities. In the traditional Western movie or novel, the hero never misses a shot in a gun that magically never runs out of bullets. His horse is always a little bit faster than the bad guy's. Running a game where a hero can keep achieving successes in this manner is what we call cinematic realism. It facilitates telling stories in the manner of Hollywood thrillers or modern best selling action novels. An easy action is one that such heroes make easily. A difficult action is one they usually fail at. Difficulty is different for heroes and key villains than for ordinary NPC's.

LEGENDARY HEROISM:

Hong Kong style movies and many legendary stories have sequences that while dramatically thrilling are physically impossible. Protagonists bat bullets with swords, do ballet style reorientations in midair, walk up walls, things that defy physics, sense, logic. To GM legendary heroism, you assign difficulty levels based purely on the needs of the story. Reality is not merely different from real life. It varies from scene to scene and action to action. The universe of the Metabarons can be successfully experienced using either of these formats as it is itself a cross between Western and Eastern forms of storytelling, between science fantasy and Magic Realism. Please remember that for

either of these techniques to have proper effect, it must be saved for key dramatic moments in the story. A legendary fighter may slay 500 guards to breach the castle's gates. However, he normally makes coffee or cleans his weapons as a slightly enhanced mortal. As noted with several other topics above, you as a group can vary this from session to session as an entertainment device. You will normally attain best results by being consistent within an evening's gaming session and by only varying your style as a matter of group consensus before the start of an evening's gaming. Keep remembering the key question of spirit of the rules – the rules exist to help you enjoy yourself and should never be used as a barrier to that enjoyment. If there is a conflict between the rules and the dramatic needs of your story, the story wins.

So why have rules at all? Absent rules, and dice, and attributes and all the rest of the baggage of roleplaying you are back to lets pretend as a child's game, where every game dissolved into a dispute over what happened. "BANG BANG I SHOT YOU" is answered by "NO I SHOT YOU FIRST" and spirals down from there. The rules are a starting point. A good set of rules provide a basic, workable, semirealistic (semi because the results are a little too heroically good to be true) methodology to how to create characters and have them interact with each other and their various worlds. Absent rules, GM'ing becomes too much trouble. Absent rules, your characters have no place to start from.

This article provides the beginning of the next step. The Rulebook gave you the rules and standard GM'ing techniques. The Rulebook raises the issues of Honor, Amarax, and the NecroDream and provides very basic rules for how GM and play using them. This article goes into more depth on how to use these rules and their implied extensions to better make your story feel as if it were part of the vast baroque world of the Metabarons.

This is why we spend so much time here on nuance, spirit, flavor instead of just giving you orders. The Metabarons are not a conventional story for our XXIst Century World and their World is not the XXIst Century with spaceships and weird science weapons. Think of how fast our world can change in a generation: the Internet, no Cold War, a united Europe to the Vistula and possibly to the Urals, cloned mammals, the full human genome available, biotech, globalization. Project that rate of change tens of thousands of years into the future and into a universe of human galaxies. This is not XXIst Century Paris or Los Angeles.

In the vastness of the World of the Metabarons anything is possible. It is undoubtedly true that there will be backwater planets where normal roleplaying without an elaborate Honor system would be appropriate. You get hired in a tavern. You go on a mission. There's a Princess to save, treasures to find, enhanced or magical weapons and potions, monsters and evil people to slay. If that is what you want, roll up your characters and have at it.

However, the bulk of this universe is enslaved by the NecroDream. You will get the major details when the World Book comes out. It is available in French. The release date of the revised English version is scheduled for Winter 2000-2001. The World Book will cover many of the baroque complexities of this world. For now, the key factors are baroque complexity, decadence, paleo-aristocracy, and the Empire. Rely on the comic books to give those words flavor and on the hints from the Rulebook. This is a vast world. We can only do so much in each book.

3. HOW:
THE TRIPLE INTERACTION WORKS

It is most important when applying the interaction of Honor, Amarax, and NecroDream to keep the spirit of the universe in mind. Losing your character to the NecroDream is not a rules question in the Jodoverse, it is a fact of life. Over 99% of the universe's population is lost in the various indulgences. It would take very little for a beginning character to fall back.

As GM it is your job to guide your players past these temptations. This means looking at potential transgressions situationally instead of literally. Thus characters meeting in a bar should not per se be put at warning. They are there on business – a drink or two is just polite social cover. PC's that adopt the proper attitude towards this world of depravity should be guided along the path to proper behavior. Even characters who take addictions as a defect can achieve proper play.

Similarly initial Amarax points should be awarded liberally. We do not want player's losing characters because by inexperience they finish a session with an excess of NecroDream points. Character loss should be for playing beyond the spirit of the game, for breaking Honor or indulging in decadence beyond what would be right for their character and the spirit of the universe as interpreted by your group.

With more experienced PC's you can GM a bit stricter but again remember the spirit. You do want to leave some form of behavior that preserves Honor. Discovering that path is part of the true joy of playing.

4. EVOLUTION:
WITHIN SESSIONS AND WITHIN CAMPAIGNS

Characters evolve over time. That is part of the dramatic tension of a story. In this game, there are two different versions of that evolution.

The first is best represented by the adventure in this book. A deliberate conflict was set up by the author and editor to help teach players and GM alike how to deal with such situations. Life does have such conflicts. Drama tends to have more than its share. A choice not mentioned in the adventure is that the GM can treat the dramatic moment as one where characters faced with a situation may evolve.

Evolving consists of doing something that is both Heroic and against the person's Code. Heroic is defined purely by GM approval but usually involves extreme risk without immediate personal gain. This new action now becomes the new standard of that player's Honor Code.

> **DO NOT READ IF YOU HAVE NOT PLAYED THE ADVENTURE IN THIS BOOK**
>
> Such a Heroic action would, for example, involve saving the ship captain, whatever the risk, and then dramatically getting the captain to the shipping line's board to expose the patron's treachery.

Evolution should not be done lightly. An evolved decision may be reversed only after at least three additional sessions have passed and only by an even more Heroic act.

Each player should keep track of all Honor Code situations in a running Honor Journal. This Journal does not have to be anything elaborate. It is merely a listing of each Honor situation with the character's resolution and the GM's response to those decisions.

What happens if you fail to properly journalize. Your GM's memory of what happened becomes

final. The purpose of the Journal is to avoid the petty disputes that the fuzziness of human memory tends to produce. Regardless of how many people claim infallible memories, in fact most of us cannot remember a conversation word for word even minutes after the event. Over time we further edit memories. A Journal reduces the need to rely on memory but its your choice. Journals should be reviewed at the end of every session, or, at the latest, at the beginning of the following one. Remember the time / memory tradeoff: because memory makes mistakes the longer the time you wait, the more time you allow for the journal to be completed, the more disputes you will have.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS:

This is where the uncertain and the relativists get tripped up. Each time they make a decision, either by commission or omission as to Honor, that decision is an example of what they would regard as Honorable in the future. This would seem to be simple and highly gameable. Every time you as a player are in a potential Honor situation, claim that Honor does not apply.

O.K. Mostly you can and if you can practice fast talk in real life mostly you will get away with it, at least for a while. Enter mutuality. If virtually nothing is a matter of Honor with you then virtually nothing triggers mutuality from the other members of your party / unit / group. You will be forming barriers towards them at the same time they are forming bonds with each other. You become the classic outsider within the group. You will be delegated first through every defended doorway. You will be the rear guard in every dangerous situation. In most military units the new guy, the replacement, the social outsider takes a vastly disproportionate share of the casualties. A character played in this manner would probably not survive for very many sessions.

Also be prepared for your GM to start using your earlier fast-talk answers to raise ever narrower challenges to your Honor Code. Eventually even the best fast talker will be tripped up on the internal contradictions of her position.

So what does the unsure player do? Answer honestly but honestly within the spirit of the rules. Honor Codes can evolve through play as long as the player is trying his best to be Honorable in a dishonorable universe. When faced with an Honor situation, take a stand. Use those situations to help define to yourself and your group what your sense of Honor is. However, be strict with yourself. Properly played, Honor should feel like a straight jacket to XXIst Century players. If you do not feel frustrated once or twice a session, you are almost certainly being too loose with it. Honor should produce a much more rigid set of values than you use in real life. Our world has spent most of the XXth Century moving away from rigid codes. The world of the Metabarons has reversed this.

CLARKE'S LAW AND METABARONS:

Technically this is a world so far beyond our own as to make Clarke's Law a fact. The 'law' states that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. Its all out there somewhere. However, unlike our own world, this is a universe of hidden knowledge. The media are omnipresent but designed to give you little besides scandal, sensation and diversion. Real knowledge is hidden away in private and institutional data banks as secrets. In turn this only makes the devices these institutions produce seem all the more magical as the knowledge behind them is never willingly revealed.
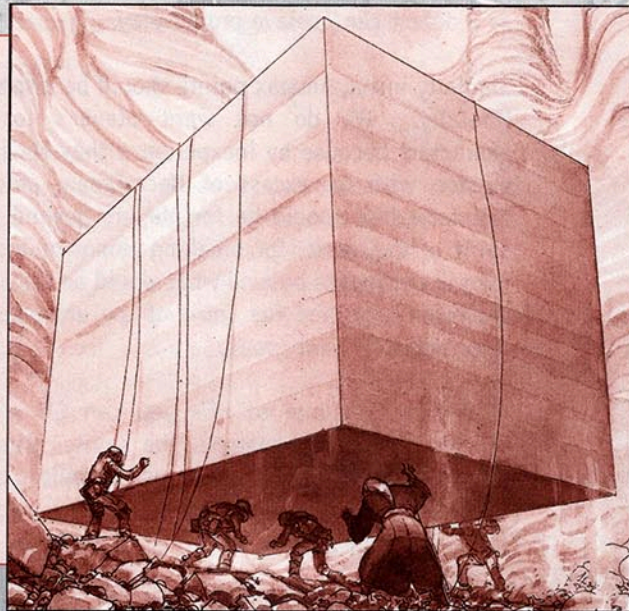
TRADE RELATIONS

AN HONOR CODE ADVENTURE FOR THE METABARONS ROLE PLAYING GAME

A METABARONS ADVENTURE

"Trade Relations" can be run as a stand-alone adventure, or be the springboard to launch a new campaign. The following "Player Introduction" can be used in both cases. If you prefer a more interactive introduction for your players, you can use the "Adventure Script" instead.

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

GM Note:

To start the adventure, you can either read this section out loud to your players or have them read the Adventure Script to launch the game.

Those of you who were with the Sable Corps have been stuck on this backwater planet at the Exofringe border for weeks. You've been hoping for news that more of your unit might have survived the super-nova accident from which you barely escaped, but you are starting to lose hope. You're hanging out in the local mercenary tavern, knowing that this is the first place your comrades would come if they made it to this planet. Even if they're not looking to hook up with other survivors, they're sure to want the strongest drinks they can find! You notice a group of mercenaries come in sporting the Thunder Brigade patch (these are the characters who will be run by the other players). You recognize the unit as one that fought alongside your own a few years back in the Battle of Auric's Cluster. While you don't know any of these mercenaries personally, you know that their unit is a reputable one. Apparently they feel the same way about you, approaching you and buying you a round of drinks.

After a few social formalities, their senior officer tells you that they've been separated from their unit as well, left for dead after a particularly nasty battle. They've been offered a security job protecting an interstellar shipping transport headed for a system beyond the rim. They've been promised 2,000 kublars each and a ticket anywhere in the galaxy. They can also access the research departments of any of the corporation's various headquarters, which could lead to information that will allow them to hook up with their unit. However, they were told to find a few more mercenaries to join them if they want the job. At this point, they ask the other players if they are interested in linking up.

Allow the characters to discuss any terms upon which they might want to join. The only deal that can be offered at this time is the one currently on the table. If any of the players

want to bargain for something more, they have to wait until the Thunder Brigade's senior officer talks to the patron.

This is a good moment to let the players define or clearly express their mutuality priorities, in regards to their Honor Codes.

The Sable Brigade mercenaries would generally sacrifice self for comrades. That is part of what has made their members efficient, and Sable picked her comrades on that criteria, regardless of their Honor Codes. Due to Sable's particular leadership qualities, most of the brigade has chosen her as their Patron, and have even placed her, as their Patron, above Self. They are therefore less inclined to confuse the Patron of this mission as a question of Honor. Remember, this is the Sable Brigade's mutuality tendency, not necessarily the rule. Let the player characters develop their Honor Code as they wish, but they should embroider their character's code around this information if they chose to have served for the Sable Brigade.

The Thunder Brigade has prided itself on getting their missions accomplished regardless of Self. They would sacrifice themselves to get the job done, but that doesn't mean that they would necessarily die to save each other. In general, their captain chose men and women that were willing to put Mission before anything else. The captain of the Thunder Brigade places the Patron of each mission as his second priority and his own life, Self, directly thereafter with Comrades coming fourth. Character's having served for the Thunder Brigade will often show this tendency and are more likely to be Bushitaka or Paleo-Noblis. These particular codes don't necessarily oblige the Character player to have a particular life Mission, and allows them to adopt the mission by mission mutuality definition. They will have a particular Honor dilemma at the end of this adventure, when they learn that the patron of the Mission has betrayed the group. It is therefore important to know as a GM if their mutuality places Mission first, and important to know if they also place the mission's Patron as second. Though their captain does, they might not. They might place the

Captain himself as their Patron, or they might have placed Patron very low on their mutuality, regarding Self and Comrades as more important. Perhaps, they didn't believe in the Mission first dogma to begin with, but feigned it in order to get hired into the group.

GAMEMASTER NOTE:

This involves a quick trip outside by the senior officer of the Thunder Brigade who goes to speak with the patron's representative. This brief interruption is followed by the word "NO." It's a take it or leave it deal. If you like, you can have the person playing the senior officer role-play this situation any way she likes. For example, she may just say, "We've already tried, it's take it or leave it." However, the end result is always the same.

CONTINUE READING ALOUD:

Now that you have formed a single unit, the Orphan Twins, and made up a new logo, you all go to the local headquarters of Korfast Industries, a relatively well-known interstellar shipping conglomerate. The offices are clean and modern, but not lavish. You meet with Tazuul Korfast (see stats below), the head of the company himself. He is a heavy set, white-haired man, with a wide face that looks like it might normally be jolly, but has lately been sporting more frowns than smiles. He explains to you, "Y'see lads, every one of our most recent shipments has been waylaid by pirates, no matter what security precautions we take. We've tried everything including hiring armed escorts by the dozen. Once we filled an entire cargo hold with a group of neer-do-wells that I'd hate to meet in a dark alley. Every damned time the ships returned here emptied of their cargo, the crew left with no memory of what happened and the computer logs wiped clean. The attacks always occur inside a giant Space Cloud that we just can't afford to go around. It's too massive to circumvent without losing months of time. These shipping lanes are too far outside the beaten path of the Human Empire, and the powers-that-be have turned a blind eye to our problem. They can charge their tariffs and taxes, but they just can't seem to find a way to protect

us out on the fringe where they have no political interests."

"The cloud interferes with communication signals, so you're gonna be on your own once you get inside it." He leans in and whispers conspiratorially, "Confidentially, I suspect there's a mole working for me, providing classified information to the pirates. So, it's absolutely essential that no one on board the cargo transport know about your mission. If you were discovered, the captain of the vessel would be informed. The captain's name is Zardigal (see template). He's from one of the outer worlds and he's a registered shape shifter. He's one of my most productive captains and the board of directors would have my head if I fired him, but I don't have to tell you that a shape shifter wouldn't have too hard a time sneaking information out to pirates."

"So, you'll join the crew disguised as regular workers. If the pirates attack, consider your mission status 'active.' I picked you to be a small team of specialists, which should keep things quiet. When these blasted pirates attack, I want you to infiltrate their ship, download its memory banks and uncover the traitor who's providing them with their information. I've got my tech boys whipping up a special Data Beacon that you can launch into space from any airlock. It'll carry its data out of the Space Cloud and broadcast it back to corporate headquarters. There's an escape craft hidden on the cargo ship, so I won't be leaving you high and dry once your mission is completed. If you're all as good as I've been lead to believe, you should be able to do this quietly enough to survive. As much as I'd like to wipe them all out, don't worry about killing the pirates. I've sent the toughest soldiers in this sector out there and all they did was come back with amnesia. Just get to that data. If you successfully send me that data, I'll do everything in my considerable power to help you find and rejoin your friends."

Now the characters can bargain with Korfast if they like. He can supply them with any basic supplies they might need for their mission, but his resources are limited so he can't get them anything exotic or expensive. Also, his company is not a military outfit, so he doesn't have access to any heavy firepower or military ordnance.

TAZUUL KORFAST:

All stats are 2D except: Knowledge 6D, Mechanical 3D, Perception 7D +1, bargain 8D, con 8D, Strength 3D, Technical 3D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 5. Amarax points 0. Necro-Dream points 1(due to a weakness for homeo-sluts). Expensive suit, Marble-Handled Viper Pistol (4D damage).

PREPARING THE PLAYERS TO PUT THEIR HONOR WHERE THEIR MOUTHS ARE.

The Tazuul Korfast NPC has no Honor Code and is therefore prone to his vices. He is driven by greed and belongs to the backdrop of the Metabaron's Universe, and is just the sort of NPC that you need to work to the greatest advantage. The players will be mislead however into thinking that he in fact has an Honor Code, a tailor made version of Paleo-Noblis or Rayah. Feel free to contribute to this misdirection. Roleplay it. Tazuul may make a comment about his dead brother, that he regrets having lost (typical Rayah). Tazuul may even spout out principles of fair trade and competition, how the Human Empire needs honest traders in order to create a better world (a capitalistic Paleo-Noblis phrase). If you play this well enough, one of the Player Character's might even make a pledge to the NPC, and state that the mission will be accomplished. Perhaps making it a question of Honor. A PC might even go as far as to declare Tazuul as a temporary Patron, by stating something like, "I will serve your request, Tazuul, you can count on me." It is important for the GM to listen to the players and determine whether they make it a point of Honor to serve the mission to its completion or its patron, or both. Players that have placed Temporary Mission, or Mission's Patron high up on their mutuality list will definitely have an Honor situation at the end of the adventure, especially if they have made any particular pledges.

GAMEMASTER INFORMATION

PREPARING TO PLAY

If you're running this adventure as the gamemaster, you should read it thoroughly, especially if you

haven't run many role-playing adventures before. Look it over a second time, taking any notes that will help you run it more smoothly – noting tasks and difficulties in the margins, highlighting important stats, and writing down any changes you want to make to tailor the adventure to your players.

When you're ready to play, help your players choose their character templates and start customizing them according to the Metabarons character creation rules. If there are fewer than five or six players, have some players double up and play more than one character. If for any reason the players do not want to double up, you can control the extra players as gamemaster characters. Just remember that the characters you control don't know any more about the situation than the characters controlled by the players. Let the players take the lead.

If your players are running previously existing characters or new characters, help them establish connections. All of the characters in this adventure need to be able to cooperate and trust each other for most of the adventure.

ADVENTURE MATERIALS

Dice and Paper. In addition to character templates (or experienced characters), you need several six-sided dice, pencils for everyone, and some scrap paper for writing notes, sketching what the characters see, and keeping track of any actions the characters take that might affect their honor code and Necro-Dream points.

Maps. You'll need to show the deck plan of the cargo vessel to players once their characters are allowed access to it. You might want to make a photocopy of the map for each of them. You will also need the deck plan of the pirate ship for yourself, but don't let the players see this one. Feel free to sketch out other levels and details of the ships if you want to expand this adventure beyond its current confines.

Script. You can use the script to start your adventure quickly and get your players into their characters. Photocopy and distribute it to the players or simply crowd everyone around to read directly from the script. If you don't want to use the script, you can just use the "Read Aloud" section above.

ADVENTURE SCRIPT

DIRECTIONS:

This script has been designed to help everyone get into character; you can use it to start your adventure. Your gamemaster will tell you what part (or parts) to read. Read your lines out loud when your turn comes. Try to deliver your lines the way you think your character would say them. Don't get too wrapped up in your own lines, be sure to listen to what the other characters say so that you'll get all the information you need to start your adventure.

ON A BACKWATER PLANET NEAR THE EXOFRINGE BORDER

GAMEMASTER:

Those of you who were with the Sable Corps have been stuck on this backwater planet at the Exofringe border for weeks. You've been hoping for news that more of your unit might have survived the super-nova accident from which you barely escaped, but you are starting to lose hope. You're hanging out in the local mercenary tavern, knowing that this is the first place your comrades would come if they made it to this planet. Even if they're not looking to hook up with other survivors, they'll want the strongest drinks they can find! You notice a group of mercenaries come in sporting the Thunder Brigade patch. You recognize the unit as one that fought alongside your own a few years back in the Battle of Auric's Cluster. While you don't know any of these mercenaries personally, you know that their unit is a reputable one.

1st Character (Sable Corps): Scan it, Thunder Brigade mercs.

2nd Character (Sable Corps): Hmmm, wonder what they're doing out this way?

3rd Character (Sable Corps): Looks like we're about to find out, they're coming over here.

4th Character (Thunder Brigade) – with a polite nod: Mind if we join you? Drinks are on us.

1st Character: Sure, have a seat.
Gamemaster: The Thunder Brigade mercenaries sit down and order a round of drinks for the table.

5th Character (Thunder Brigade): So, what's a nice group of mercenaries like you doing in a place like this?

2nd Character: Waiting for some friends. What's it to you?

4th Character: Please, be calm. I know about what happened to your unit and I was saddened to hear it. We've been separated from our unit as well.

6th Character (Thunder Brigade): Separated my butt. They left us for dead!

5th Character – to the 6th character: You would have done the same if positions were reversed. Drop it.

4th Character: Look, we've been offered a job handling security for a shipping transport headed for a system out beyond the rim. It's 2,000 kublars each and a ticket anywhere in the galaxy, plus we get access to the corporation's research departments in a dozen systems. This could be just what we need to hook back up with our units. The only catch is that they want more muscle for the mission and told us we have to find a few more bodies if we want the job. You're all Sable Corps so you're alright in my book. Are you interested in hooking up with us on this?

1st Character: Sounds good to me.

2nd Character: It sure beats sitting around this paleo-rat trap waiting.
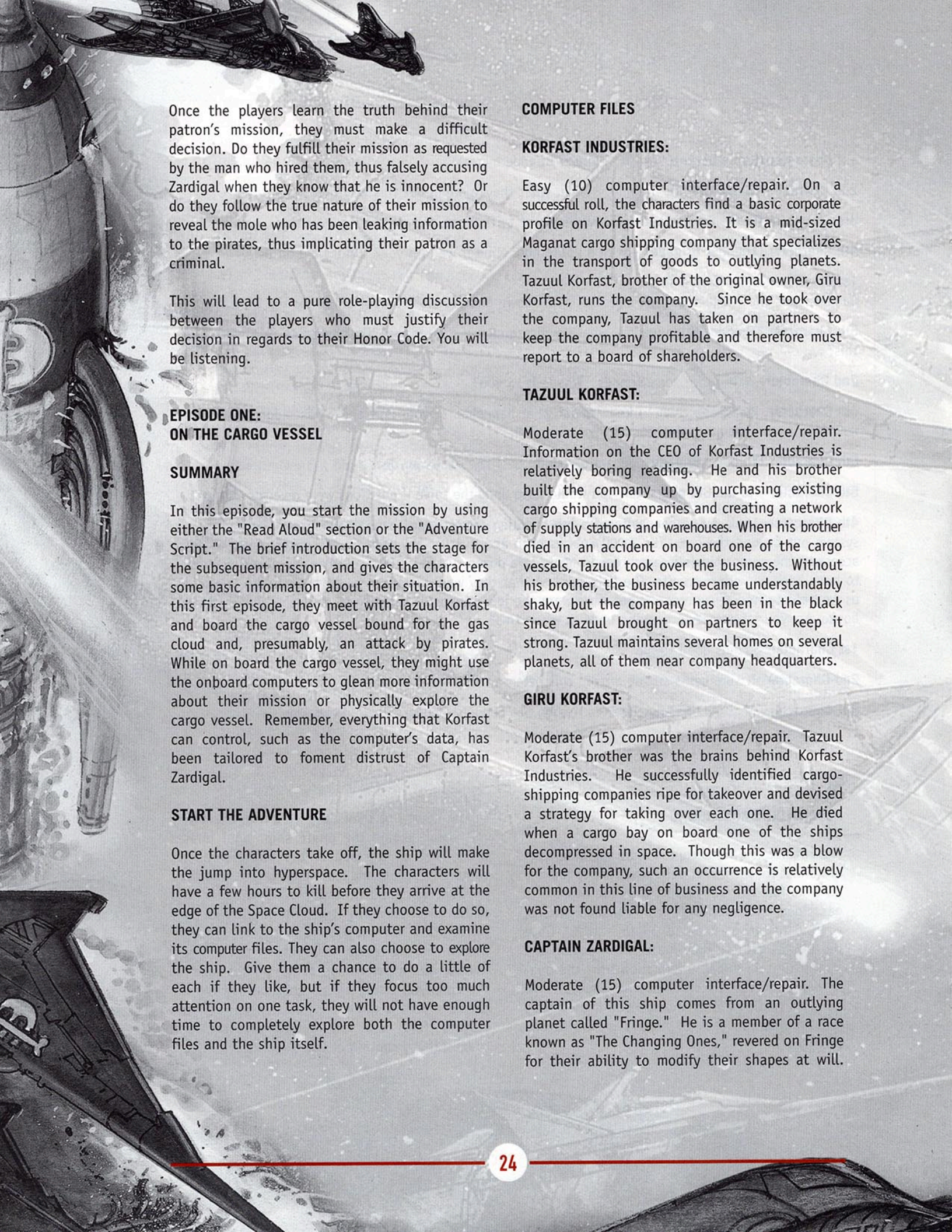
3rd Character: If it gets us any closer to finding our buddies, I'm in. Where do we sign up?

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The characters have accepted a job from the head of Korfast Industries himself. They are to journey on a Korfast cargo transport into the heart of a gas cloud that interferes with communications, waiting for an anticipated pirate attack. Once the pirates attack, they must sneak aboard the pirate ship, download information from the pirate databanks to discern how the pirates know Korfast's trading routes and schedules, then relay that information back to Korfast Industries and escape.

In the course of their adventure, the characters will sneak aboard the pirate ship, fight pirates inside and on the hull of the pirate ship, get captured, escape, and learn the truth behind their mission. Korfast is in league with the pirates and he has been providing them with flight path data so that they can hijack the unregistered epiphyte hidden in the cargo bays of Korfast's ships. Korfast gets a percentage of the pirates take for the epiphyte, lining his pockets and leaving his partners with a failing business. The data the players find will incriminate Zardigal, the shapeshifting captain of the cargo ship.

Once the players learn the truth behind their patron's mission, they must make a difficult decision. Do they fulfill their mission as requested by the man who hired them, thus falsely accusing Zardigal when they know that he is innocent? Or do they follow the true nature of their mission to reveal the mole who has been leaking information to the pirates, thus implicating their patron as a criminal.

This will lead to a pure role-playing discussion between the players who must justify their decision in regards to their Honor Code. You will be listening.

EPISODE ONE: ON THE CARGO VESSEL

SUMMARY

In this episode, you start the mission by using either the "Read Aloud" section or the "Adventure Script." The brief introduction sets the stage for the subsequent mission, and gives the characters some basic information about their situation. In this first episode, they meet with Tazuul Korfast and board the cargo vessel bound for the gas cloud and, presumably, an attack by pirates. While on board the cargo vessel, they might use the onboard computers to glean more information about their mission or physically explore the cargo vessel. Remember, everything that Korfast can control, such as the computer's data, has been tailored to foment distrust of Captain Zardigal.

START THE ADVENTURE

Once the characters take off, the ship will make the jump into hyperspace. The characters will have a few hours to kill before they arrive at the edge of the Space Cloud. If they choose to do so, they can link to the ship's computer and examine its computer files. They can also choose to explore the ship. Give them a chance to do a little of each if they like, but if they focus too much attention on one task, they will not have enough time to completely explore both the computer files and the ship itself.

COMPUTER FILES

KORFAST INDUSTRIES:

Easy (10) computer interface/repair. On a successful roll, the characters find a basic corporate profile on Korfast Industries. It is a mid-sized Maganat cargo shipping company that specializes in the transport of goods to outlying planets. Tazuul Korfast, brother of the original owner, Giru Korfast, runs the company. Since he took over the company, Tazuul has taken on partners to keep the company profitable and therefore must report to a board of shareholders.

TAZUUL KORFAST:

Moderate (15) computer interface/repair. Information on the CEO of Korfast Industries is relatively boring reading. He and his brother built the company up by purchasing existing cargo shipping companies and creating a network of supply stations and warehouses. When his brother died in an accident on board one of the cargo vessels, Tazuul took over the business. Without his brother, the business became understandably shaky, but the company has been in the black since Tazuul brought on partners to keep it strong. Tazuul maintains several homes on several planets, all of them near company headquarters.

GIRU KORFAST:

Moderate (15) computer interface/repair. Tazuul Korfast's brother was the brains behind Korfast Industries. He successfully identified cargo-shipping companies ripe for takeover and devised a strategy for taking over each one. He died when a cargo bay on board one of the ships decompressed in space. Though this was a blow for the company, such an occurrence is relatively common in this line of business and the company was not found liable for any negligence.

CAPTAIN ZARDIGAL:

Moderate (15) computer interface/repair. The captain of this ship comes from an outlying planet called "Fringe." He is a member of a race known as "The Changing Ones," revered on Fringe for their ability to modify their shapes at will.

Captain Zardigal has only been with Korfast Industries for a few years. There is no history from before he joined the company. In his time with Korfast, Zardigal has logged a record number of missions flown and has contributed a great deal to the company's bottom line, receiving several bonuses for his efforts. However, out of the five pirate attacks on Korfast vessels, three have been on ships under Zardigal's command.

PIRATES:

Easy (10) computer interface/repair. There is very little information on the pirates that have been attacking Korfast vessels. There have been five attacks. The first one was kept very quiet to avoid negative press coverage. Each subsequent attack has faced greater security measures and has defeated them each time. The one common factor of these attacks is the fact that each ship returns relatively unharmed, with both the crew and the ship's computers lacking any memory of the attacks.
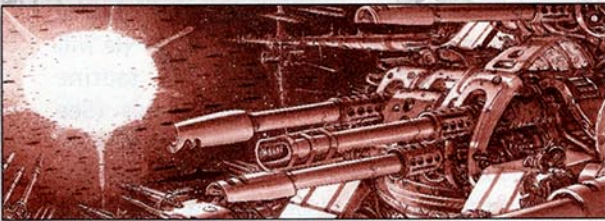
MARAK V MEDIUM CARGO CRUISER:

Easy (10) computer interface/repair. This is a relatively standard cargo vessel. It has few weapons and its cargo bays can be detached for easy loading and unloading. Allow the players to see the specs for the cargo vessel. The players are able to download a map of the vessel, which will be useful should they decide to explore the ship.

MARAK V MEDIUM CARGO CRUISER

Class: Cargo Carrier
Scale: Battleship
Length: 500 Meters
Skill: Piloting

Crew: 70, gunners 32, minimum 25/+10
Passengers: 10
Cargo: 5,000 metric tons
Supplies: 4 months
Stardrive: Yes
Maneuverability: 1D
Space: 4
Atmosphere: 250; 800 kph
Hull: 4D
Shields: 2D
Sensors: 40/1D
Ordnance:
  4 Flack Cannons
    Fire Arc: 1 fore, 1 aft, 1 port, 1 starboard
      Crew: 3 each
      Scale: Fighter
      Skill: Gunnery
      Fire Control: 1D
      Space Range: 1-10/15/30
      Atmosphere: 10-100/1.5/3 km
      Damage: 6D
  5 Laser Cannons
    Fire Arc: 2 fore, 1 aft, 1 port, 1 starboard
      Crew: 4 each
      Skill: Gunnery
      Fire Control: 2D
      Space Range: 3-20/40/80
      Atmosphere: 6-40/180/160 km
      Damage: 4D
Crew Skill: astro-nav 4D+1, comm 4D, gunnery 4D, piloting 4D+2, sensors 4D, shields 4D, command 5D
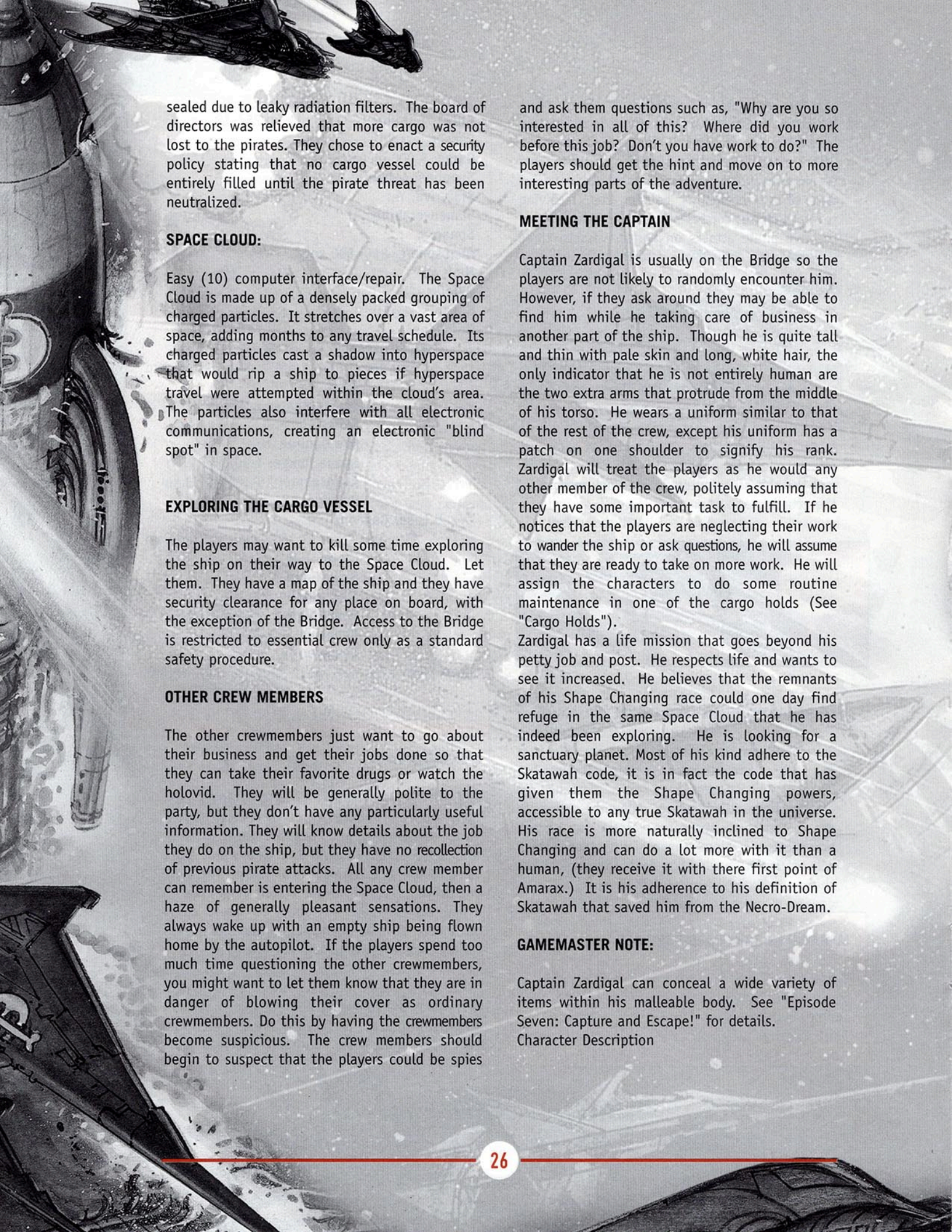
CARGO ONBOARD:

Difficult (20) computer interface/repair. The cargo onboard the vessel consists primarily of fabrics, spices, drugs and holovids that are relatively common in the center of the galaxy but more valuable in the outer reaches of space. There are two cargo bays that have been left empty due to a new Korfast Industries policy to spread cargo out among several shipments so that the pirates cannot take entire shipments at one time.

Note, if the player rolled a total of 25 or higher, give them the following additional information: The first two ships attacked by pirates each had an empty cargo hold. Both of them had been

sealed due to leaky radiation filters. The board of directors was relieved that more cargo was not lost to the pirates. They chose to enact a security policy stating that no cargo vessel could be entirely filled until the pirate threat has been neutralized.

SPACE CLOUD:

Easy (10) computer interface/repair. The Space Cloud is made up of a densely packed grouping of charged particles. It stretches over a vast area of space, adding months to any travel schedule. Its charged particles cast a shadow into hyperspace that would rip a ship to pieces if hyperspace travel were attempted within the cloud's area. The particles also interfere with all electronic communications, creating an electronic "blind spot" in space.

EXPLORING THE CARGO VESSEL

The players may want to kill some time exploring the ship on their way to the Space Cloud. Let them. They have a map of the ship and they have security clearance for any place on board, with the exception of the Bridge. Access to the Bridge is restricted to essential crew only as a standard safety procedure.

OTHER CREW MEMBERS

The other crewmembers just want to go about their business and get their jobs done so that they can take their favorite drugs or watch the holovid. They will be generally polite to the party, but they don't have any particularly useful information. They will know details about the job they do on the ship, but they have no recollection of previous pirate attacks. All any crew member can remember is entering the Space Cloud, then a haze of generally pleasant sensations. They always wake up with an empty ship being flown home by the autopilot. If the players spend too much time questioning the other crewmembers, you might want to let them know that they are in danger of blowing their cover as ordinary crewmembers. Do this by having the crewmembers become suspicious. The crew members should begin to suspect that the players could be spies

and ask them questions such as, "Why are you so interested in all of this? Where did you work before this job? Don't you have work to do?" The players should get the hint and move on to more interesting parts of the adventure.

MEETING THE CAPTAIN

Captain Zardigal is usually on the Bridge so the players are not likely to randomly encounter him. However, if they ask around they may be able to find him while he taking care of business in another part of the ship. Though he is quite tall and thin with pale skin and long, white hair, the only indicator that he is not entirely human are the two extra arms that protrude from the middle of his torso. He wears a uniform similar to that of the rest of the crew, except his uniform has a patch on one shoulder to signify his rank. Zardigal will treat the players as he would any other member of the crew, politely assuming that they have some important task to fulfill. If he notices that the players are neglecting their work to wander the ship or ask questions, he will assume that they are ready to take on more work. He will assign the characters to do some routine maintenance in one of the cargo holds (See "Cargo Holds").

Zardigal has a life mission that goes beyond his petty job and post. He respects life and wants to see it increased. He believes that the remnants of his Shape Changing race could one day find refuge in the same Space Cloud that he has indeed been exploring. He is looking for a sanctuary planet. Most of his kind adhere to the Skatawah code, it is in fact the code that has given them the Shape Changing powers, accessible to any true Skatawah in the universe. His race is more naturally inclined to Shape Changing and can do a lot more with it than a human, (they receive it with there first point of Amarax.) It is his adherence to his definition of Skatawah that saved him from the Necro-Dream.

GAMEMASTER NOTE:

Captain Zardigal can conceal a wide variety of items within his malleable body. See "Episode Seven: Capture and Escape!" for details.
Character Description

BACKGROUND:

One of the last remaining members of an alien race known as "The Changing Ones," Captain Zardigal grew up far from the Human Empire. The details of his past are a mystery, but it is clear that he escaped the war that ravaged his people and found a place within human society, albeit at its fringes. Zardigal accepted the post in order to accomplish his life mission, find a sanctuary planet for the Changing Ones.

PERSONALITY:

Captain Zardigal is very direct and matter of fact. Though his life mission is very important to him, he places the life of his Comrades above his mission, and his Self after. His Patron father died long ago. He is a natural born leader, and let into his secret, Honor oriented characters might even chose him as a temporary guide, especially a Skatawah.

CONNECTIONS:

He has little contact with his kind, but a few of his relatives do know what he is up to, and help him when they can.

A Quote: "The Shape Changers will survive, and live as they were meant to."

Equipment: Flight Suit
Comm Headset
Io Board
Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage)
3 kublars (he keeps more in his quarters)

Agility:	6D
	Dodge
	Firearms
	Running
	Throwing
	0-G Maneuver
Knowledge:	2D
	Aliens
	Astrography
	Bureaucracy

	Business
	Security Regulations
	Survival
Perception:	4D
	Bargain
	Command
	Hide 8D (Due to shape changing abilities)
	Persuasion
	Sneak 7D (Due to shape changing abilities)
Strength:	3D+2
	Climb/Jump
	Stamina
	Swim
Mechanical:	6D
	Astro-Nav
	Piloting
	Sensors
	Shields
Technical:	5D
	Flight Systems Repair
	Gunnery Repair
	Security
Psionics:	0D

CAPTAIN ZARDIGAL

Cargo vessel captain for Korfast Industries
Move: 10
Amarax Points: 5
Necro Dream Points: 0
Character Points: 8
Honor Code: Skatawah

Shapeshifting Game Notes: Captain Zardigal can modify his shape at will. This counts as a separate action each time he does it, but the change is nearly instantaneous. He cannot alter his mass, but he can change his size, shape and density as long as his mass remains constant. For example,

he could mimic the floor of a room, but he would have to spread his mass out across a wide area. When he grows extra arms, he may compensate for the shift in mass by leaving his torso suddenly hollow.

THE CARGO HOLDS

Each of the cargo holds is sealed with an opaque door as a standard security practice. Each door has a digital interface plate mounted into the door, which contains an inventory for that hold. If the players want to enter any of the cargo holds they must make a Moderate (15) Security check to bypass security measures. A failed attempt will prevent entry but it will not alert security. Two of the cargo bays are listed as empty. No attempt to open these doors will be successful. The two "empty" cargo bays hold the black market epiphyte that Korfast has smuggled onboard for transport to the pirates. If the players gain entry to one of the cargo bays adjoining the epiphyte bays (either by breaking in or being assigned a routine maintenance job by Captain Zardigal), they may notice that gravity seems slightly weakened near the walls that separate them from the epiphyte. Make a secret Perception skill check of Moderate (15) difficulty for anyone who comes within 1 meter of those walls. Remember, this information should be presented in a manner that draws interest, but not in a way that telegraphs the vital importance of this clue. It should be a piece of the puzzle that only falls into place when the larger mystery is solved.

THE HIDDEN ESCAPE TRANSPORT

By following their map, the players can locate their hidden escape ship. They will find it behind an airlock marked "Closed for Repairs." Using the key code listed on their map, they can enter this room and find a Comet IV Cruiser spacecraft. This is their escape vehicle, provided for them to use after they have completed their mission. If one of the players decides to check the condition of the craft, he will find it to be in good shape. However, if he checks the on board systems and makes a Fight Systems Repair skill check of Difficult (20), he will discover that the Astro-nav controls have been partially disabled. Any jump

to hyperspace made in the escape transport would malfunction, forcing the ship onto a path that would take it back into the Space Cloud, destroying the ship on contact with the Space Cloud's hyperspace shadow. There is no way to determine who tampered with the controls, nor when.

COMET IV CRUISER

Class: High velocity transport
Scale: Fighter
Length: 20 Meters
Skill: Piloting
Crew: 3, gunners 3
Passengers: 2
Cargo: 50 kilograms
Supplies: 1 week
Stardrive: Yes
Maneuverability: 2D+1
Space: 7
Atmosphere: 345; 1,000 kph
Hull: 5D
Shields: 2D
Sensors: 75/1D
Ordnance:
> 1 Forward Laser Array
> > **Fire Arc:** fore
> > **Crew:** 1
> > **Scale:** Fighter
> > **Skill:** Gunnery
> > **Fire Control:** 2D
> > **Space Range:** 1-3/12/25
> > **Atmosphere:** 100-300/1.2/2.5 km
> > **Damage:** 4D
> 2 Heavy Cannon Turret
> > **Fire Arc:** 1 fore, 1 aft
> > **Crew:** 1
> > **Skill:** Gunnery
> > **Fire Control:** 2D
> > **Space Range:** 1-3/12/25
> > **Atmosphere:** 100-300/1.2/2.5 km
> > **Damage:** 5D +2
Crew Skill: astro-nav 3D, comm 3D, gunnery 4D, piloting 5D, sensors 3D, shields 4D, command 5D

EPISODE TWO:
WAYLAID
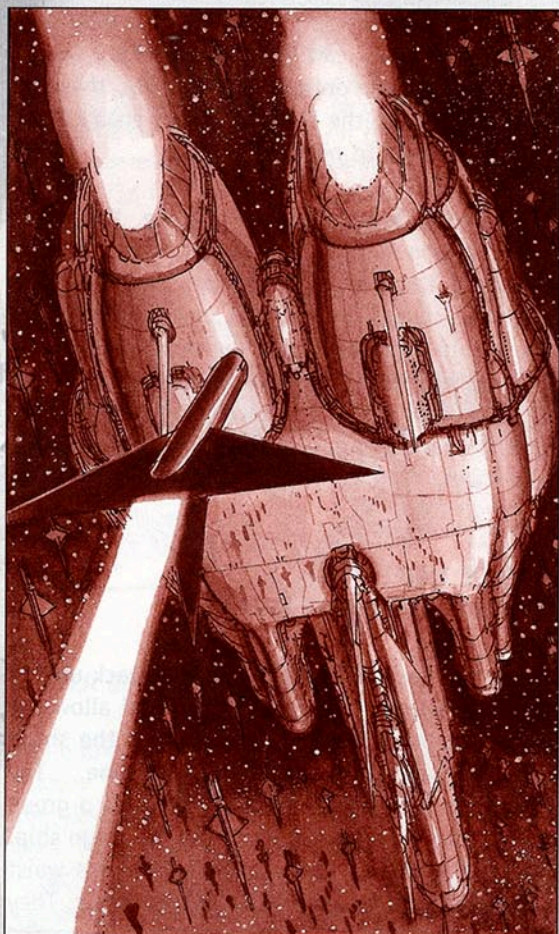
MEET THE PIRATES
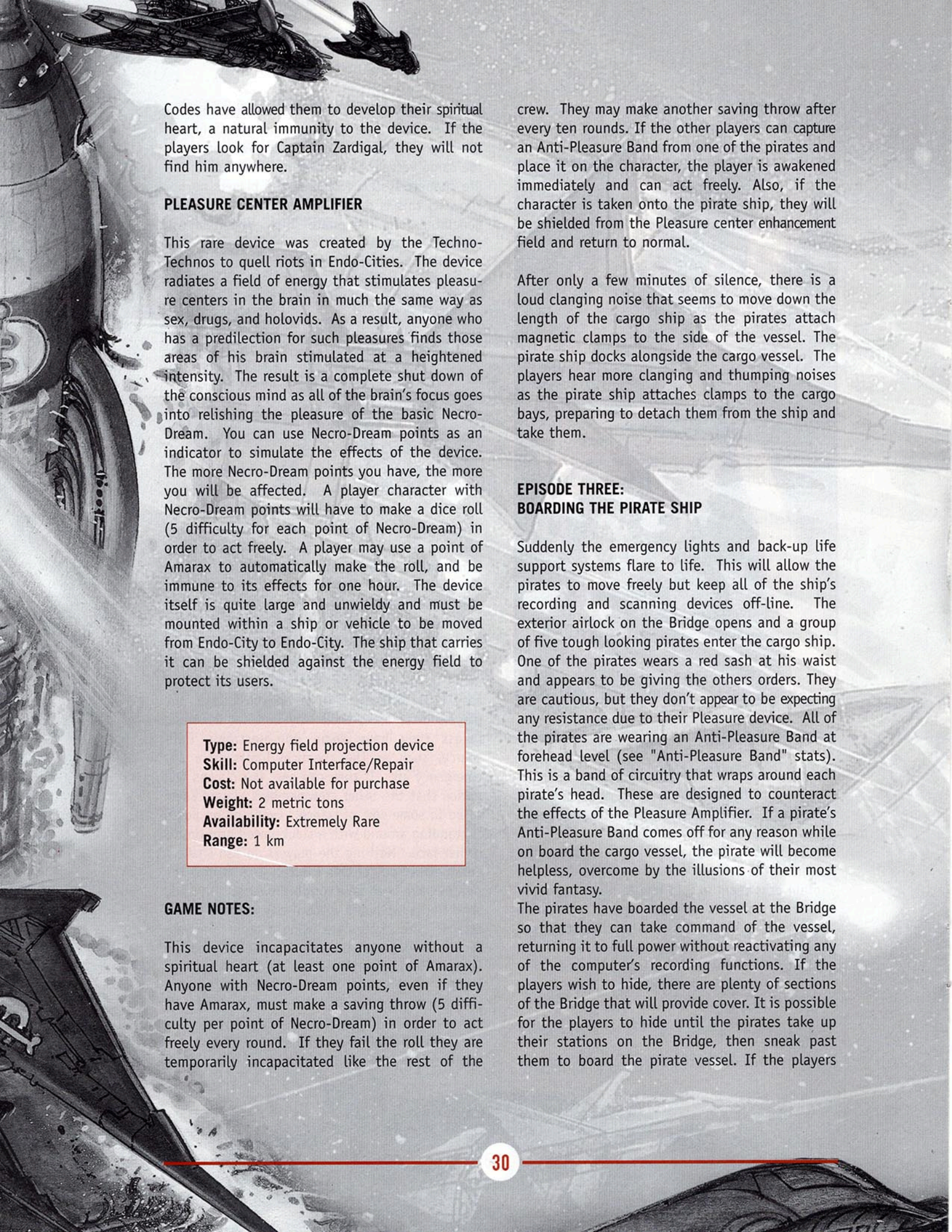
When the cargo vessel reaches the Space Cloud, it drops out of hyperspace to enter the cloud at a safe speed. Tell the players that after they spend about an hour nervously waiting for the pirates to attack, Captain Zardigal *suddenly summons the players to the Bridge.* When they arrive there, the Captain asks them to join him in his ready room. The ready room is a small, sparse, utilitarian space with a single desk. The characters will notice a computer interface terminal and a few markings on the wall for things like emergency survival kits and food dispensers. There is one chair for the captain and two chairs for guests. Neither of the guest chairs looks terribly comfortable.

"Let's get this out in the open. I know who you

are and why you are here," Zardigal begins. However, before he can continue, the lights on the ship flicker and go dead. All power on board the cargo vessel has been shut off, including the life support system. Though the players do not know it, this is due to an electromagnetic field generated from the pirate ship. The field will prevent the cargo ship from recording any data regarding the attack of the pirate ship. The field also prevents the operation of any personal devices that are electronic in nature, thus disabling the characters' powered weapons and scanning technology as long as they are on board the cargo vessel.

Make a secret Perception skill check of Easy (10) difficulty for each player. Any player who succeeds at this check will remember that they saw a marking on the wall of the ready room for an emergency kit. Give the players a chance to remember this on their own before you mention it. This is a standard emergency kit containing two hand vid-comms, a medkit, a manual door key, two personal lumas, and two non-electrical lumas activated by breaking the seal between the chemicals inside. These plastic devices give off a blue glow that illuminates the area within a 20-foot radius. The players will quickly discover that Captain Zardigal has disappeared. The players can use the manual door key to force open the doors to the Bridge on a Strength skill check of Easy (10) difficulty. Once on the Bridge, the players must make their way in total darkness, unless they have some non-electronic light source, such as the chemical lumas from the emergency kit. If they can see, the players will notice that the other crewmembers aboard seem to be in some sort of trance. Everyone on board is standing around with a slack-jawed grin on his or her face. *Nothing the players do can shake a crewmember out of this trance.* This is how the pirates have been able to rob the cargo ships and send the crews home without any memory of the attack. The pirates are using a stolen Techno-Techno device that projects a powerful Pleasure Center Field (see "Pleasure Center Amplifier" stats). This energy field amplifies the brain's pleasure center to leave anyone in its area in a state of blissful ignorance, living out fantasy pleasures in their own minds. The players are unaffected by this field only because their honor

Codes have allowed them to develop their spiritual heart, a natural immunity to the device. If the players look for Captain Zardigal, they will not find him anywhere.

PLEASURE CENTER AMPLIFIER

This rare device was created by the Techno-Technos to quell riots in Endo-Cities. The device radiates a field of energy that stimulates pleasure centers in the brain in much the same way as sex, drugs, and holovids. As a result, anyone who has a predilection for such pleasures finds those areas of his brain stimulated at a heightened intensity. The result is a complete shut down of the conscious mind as all of the brain's focus goes into relishing the pleasure of the basic Necro-Dream. You can use Necro-Dream points as an indicator to simulate the effects of the device. The more Necro-Dream points you have, the more you will be affected. A player character with Necro-Dream points will have to make a dice roll (5 difficulty for each point of Necro-Dream) in order to act freely. A player may use a point of Amarax to automatically make the roll, and be immune to its effects for one hour. The device itself is quite large and unwieldy and must be mounted within a ship or vehicle to be moved from Endo-City to Endo-City. The ship that carries it can be shielded against the energy field to protect its users.

Type: Energy field projection device
Skill: Computer Interface/Repair
Cost: Not available for purchase
Weight: 2 metric tons
Availability: Extremely Rare
Range: 1 km

GAME NOTES:

This device incapacitates anyone without a spiritual heart (at least one point of Amarax). Anyone with Necro-Dream points, even if they have Amarax, must make a saving throw (5 difficulty per point of Necro-Dream) in order to act freely every round. If they fail the roll they are temporarily incapacitated like the rest of the crew. They may make another saving throw after every ten rounds. If the other players can capture an Anti-Pleasure Band from one of the pirates and place it on the character, the player is awakened immediately and can act freely. Also, if the character is taken onto the pirate ship, they will be shielded from the Pleasure center enhancement field and return to normal.

After only a few minutes of silence, there is a loud clanging noise that seems to move down the length of the cargo ship as the pirates attach magnetic clamps to the side of the vessel. The pirate ship docks alongside the cargo vessel. The players hear more clanging and thumping noises as the pirate ship attaches clamps to the cargo bays, preparing to detach them from the ship and take them.

EPISODE THREE:
BOARDING THE PIRATE SHIP

Suddenly the emergency lights and back-up life support systems flare to life. This will allow the pirates to move freely but keep all of the ship's recording and scanning devices off-line. The exterior airlock on the Bridge opens and a group of five tough looking pirates enter the cargo ship. One of the pirates wears a red sash at his waist and appears to be giving the others orders. They are cautious, but they don't appear to be expecting any resistance due to their Pleasure device. All of the pirates are wearing an Anti-Pleasure Band at forehead level (see "Anti-Pleasure Band" stats). This is a band of circuitry that wraps around each pirate's head. These are designed to counteract the effects of the Pleasure Amplifier. If a pirate's Anti-Pleasure Band comes off for any reason while on board the cargo vessel, the pirate will become helpless, overcome by the illusions of their most vivid fantasy.

The pirates have boarded the vessel at the Bridge so that they can take command of the vessel, returning it to full power without reactivating any of the computer's recording functions. If the players wish to hide, there are plenty of sections of the Bridge that will provide cover. It is possible for the players to hide until the pirates take up their stations on the Bridge, then sneak past them to board the pirate vessel. If the players

confront the pirates, the pirates will fight back. However, if the odds are against them, the pirates will flee back to their ship and attempt to seal the hatch to the Bridge. You should remind your players that their mission is to be stealthy and find their way to the pirates' main computer, not to destroy the pirates themselves. Note: The pirates' electronic devices are also disabled as long as they are on board. The only exceptions are their Anti-Pleasure Bands.

PIRATES:

All stats are 2D except: Agility 3D, brawling 4D, dodge 4D +1, firearms 4D, melee combat 4D, 0-G maneuver 4D, astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 5D, sensors 4D, shields 4D, Perception 3D, Strength 3D, Technical 4D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 2. Jumpsuit, Dagger (STR +1 damage), Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage).

GORM – PIRATE FIELD TEAM LEADER:

All stats are 2D except: Agility 4D, archaic weapons 5D, brawling 5D, dodge 4D +2, firearms 4D, melee combat 4D, 0-G maneuver 4D, astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 5D, sensors 4D, shields 4D, Perception 3D, Command 6D, Strength 4D, Technical 4D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 2. Jumpsuit, Sword (STR +2D damage), Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage).

ANTI-PLEASURE BANDS

These devices were specifically created to counteract the effects of the Pleasure Amplifier. They are thin bands of circuitry that wrap their wearer's head at forehead level. Each band generates a short-range field that prevents stimulation of the pleasure centers of the brain. This renders its wearer immune to the effects of the Pleasure amplifier. Prolonged usage for more than a few hours can permanently shut down a person's pleasure centers, leaving them depressed and eventually suicidal. These Anti-Pleasure Bands have no internal power source. They are powered by the electrical activity in their wearer's brain. Thus, they are not affected by the electromagnetic field that has shut down the power on board the cargo vessel.

Type: Energy field projection device
Cost: Not available for purchase
Availability: Extremely Rare
Range: Wearer

GAME NOTES:

This device annuls the effects of the Pleasure Center amplifier. However, if an Anti-Pleasure Band is worn for more than 3 hours, it will permanently shut down the wearer's pleasure centers, which will eventually drive them to suicide. If a character wears one of these bands for more than 1 hour, warn them that they can feel it affecting their mind and that they are losing perspective on reality. Any Perception or Technical die rolls are made at −1D. After 2 hours, Any Perception or Technical die rolls are made at −2D. If a player chooses to ignore your advice and wear the band for 3 hours or more, make them pay the consequences by taking control of their character at inopportune times to have them take unnecessary risks and make poor judgment calls. Psionics cannot be used while wearing an Anti Pleasure Band.

"DARMAND'S MISTRESS" ALADRON CLASS LIGHT CRUISER

Class: Light Cruiser
Scale: Battleship
Length: 600 Meters
Skill: Piloting
Crew: 375, gunners 57, minimum 100/+5
Passengers: 60 pirates
Cargo: 5,250 metric tons
Supplies: 6 months
Stardrive: Yes
Maneuverability: 1D
Space: 5
Atmosphere: 275; 850 kph

Hull: 4D
Shields: 2D
Sensors: 50/1D
Ordnance:
    10 Laser Batteries
        Fire Arc: 2 fore, 2 aft, 3 port, 3 starboard
        Crew: 5 each
        Skill: Gunnery
        Fire Control: 2D
        Space Range: 3-20/40/80
        Atmosphere: 6-40/80/160 km
        Damage: 4D
    2 Gauss Cannons
        Fire Arc: Turret
        Crew: 2 each
        Skill: Gunnery
        Fire Control: 2D
        Space Range: 1-5/15/30
        Atmosphere: 2-10/30/60 km
        Damage: 4D
    1 Tractor Beam Emitter
        Fire Arc: Turret
        Crew: 3
        Skill: Gunnery
        Fire Control: 3D
        Space Range: 1-5/15/30
        Atmosphere: 2-10/30/60 km
        Damage: 4D
Added Equipment:
    1 Electromagnetic Disruptor
        This device projects an energy field that
        disrupts any electromagnetic energy
        sources within its range.
        Type: Energy field projection device
        Skill: Computer Interface/Repair
        Weight: 500 kg
        Availability: Rare
        Range: 1.5 km

GAME NOTES:

Any powered device or ship within a selected area will cease all electronic functions. As a result, no powered equipment will work on board the Cargo Vessel once it has encountered the pirate ship. All electronics function normally on board the pirate vessel.

10 Load Transfer Arms
These robotic arms transfer cargo holds from one ship to another. They cannot be used effectively in atmosphere.

20 Grapple Lines
These magnetically anchored cables help steady the connection between two ships in space. They cannot be used effectively in atmosphere.

1 Pleasure Center Amplifier
See stats previously listed.

Crew Skill: astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D,
        piloting 4D+2, sensors 4D, shields 4D,
        command 6D

EPISODE FOUR:
SKIRMISH WITH PIRATES

A long, transparent tube stretches between the narrow nose sections of each vessel to connect their airlocks. Once the players are in the tube, they can see down the length of space between the two ships. The cargo ship is held in place by cables that extend out from the pirate ship's hull. Massive robotic arms are being locked into place on the outside of the cargo vessel's holds. There are about a dozen pirates in vacuum suits walking on the hulls of both ships. They appear to be manually overseeing the placement of the robotic arms and cables. Once the players board the pirate ship through the airlock, they find a long, narrow room that looks like it stretches across the nose of the ship. There are low benches along each wall. This is a waiting area in which the pirates can gather and prepare to board a ship through the airlock. At the far end of the room there is a door that leads deeper into the ship. The door is open. Loud clanging noises and the sounds of electronic repair devices come from the doorway.

On the other side of the door is a narrow hallway. There are three pirates in the hallway. Two of them are on the ground, flat on their backs. They are reaching into an open wall panel with repair tools. Their repairs are very noisy and will probably

drown out the sound of the players' approach. The third pirate is crouching down beside them, giving them suggestions. The pirates are griping about a malfunction in one of the robotic arms that is supposed to be helping transfer the cargo bays from one ship to the other. They complain that Darmand will take them to task for any delays the malfunctions might cause, so they had better hurry up and find the source of the command system short circuit.

If the players attack, they will have a round of surprise due to the pirates' awkward positions. These pirates will fight to the death. They will not flee and leave this system hub open and undefended. Each of these pirates wears an all-access pass key on his jumpsuit. These keys will allow the players to open any door on the pirate ship, including exterior airlocks.

If the players decide to tamper with the ship's system hub, they can affect the functioning of a number of onboard systems. Any destructive attack such as an energy pistol shot or grenade will temporarily disable the robotic arms the pirates are using to transfer cargo. If a player takes the time to make a Fight Systems Repair skill check of Moderate (15), they can not only interface with the hub to disable those arms, but can also seal the airlocks that are linking the two ships together. They cannot detach the airlocks nor detach the grapple lines connecting the ships. With their newly acquired key cards, the players can open the door at the end of this hallway.

PIRATES:

All stats are 2D except: Agility 3D, brawling 3D, dodge 4D +1, firearms 4D, melee combat 3D, 0-G maneuver 4D, astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 5D, sensors 4D, shields 4D, Perception 3D+1, Strength 3D, Technical 5D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 2. Jumpsuit, Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage), Flight Systems Repair Tool Bag, Key Card.

EPISODE FIVE:
SPACE CHASE

The characters enter an airlock preparation chamber. This room contains a small airlock providing access to the exterior of the pirate ship. This airlock is on the side of the ship that faces away from the cargo vessel. There are seven vacuum suits in this room.

GAMEMASTER NOTE:

There should be at least one vacuum suit per character. Each vacuum suit has magnets built-into its boots, giving an additional +1D for all 0-G Maneuver checks. There are also two 20-meter long magno-tethers, which can be used to attach the players to each other for added safety.

MAGNO TETHERS

> **Type:** Grapple device
> **Cost:** 350 kublars
> **Availability:** Common
> **Game Notes:** Use of a magno-tether
> adds +1D for all
> 0-G Maneuver checks.
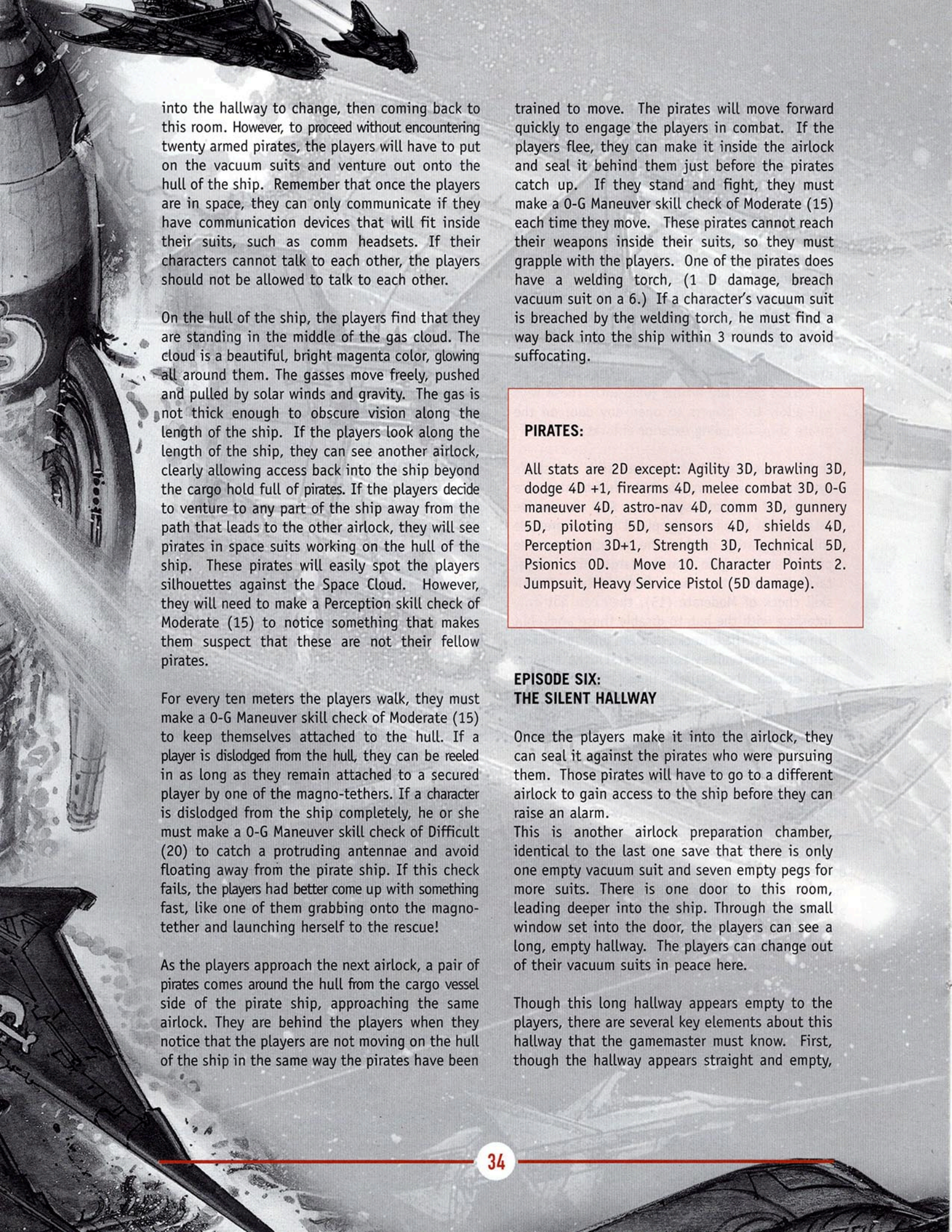
These 20-meter long polyfabric ropes are lightweight and thin, but quite strong. They have magnetic clamps at every meter along their length, which can be activated or deactivated with a touch. By attaching them to a vacuum suit and to the hull of a starship or to another space walker, the dangers of moving along the outside of a starship can be mitigated.

There is a door at the far side of the airlock preparation chamber. The door has a small window, through which the players can see a large cargo hold. The cargo hold is filled with pirate activity. There are at least 20 pirates in the room, all of them sorting through supplies taken from the cargo vessel.

If the players want to change into the vacuum suits, they feel that they may be able to do so without being noticed by the army of pirates in the next room. They may feel safer going back

into the hallway to change, then coming back to this room. However, to proceed without encountering twenty armed pirates, the players will have to put on the vacuum suits and venture out onto the hull of the ship. Remember that once the players are in space, they can only communicate if they have communication devices that will fit inside their suits, such as comm headsets. If their characters cannot talk to each other, the players should not be allowed to talk to each other.

On the hull of the ship, the players find that they are standing in the middle of the gas cloud. The cloud is a beautiful, bright magenta color, glowing all around them. The gasses move freely, pushed and pulled by solar winds and gravity. The gas is not thick enough to obscure vision along the length of the ship. If the players look along the length of the ship, they can see another airlock, clearly allowing access back into the ship beyond the cargo hold full of pirates. If the players decide to venture to any part of the ship away from the path that leads to the other airlock, they will see pirates in space suits working on the hull of the ship. These pirates will easily spot the players silhouettes against the Space Cloud. However, they will need to make a Perception skill check of Moderate (15) to notice something that makes them suspect that these are not their fellow pirates.

For every ten meters the players walk, they must make a 0-G Maneuver skill check of Moderate (15) to keep themselves attached to the hull. If a player is dislodged from the hull, they can be reeled in as long as they remain attached to a secured player by one of the magno-tethers. If a character is dislodged from the ship completely, he or she must make a 0-G Maneuver skill check of Difficult (20) to catch a protruding antennae and avoid floating away from the pirate ship. If this check fails, the players had better come up with something fast, like one of them grabbing onto the magno-tether and launching herself to the rescue!

As the players approach the next airlock, a pair of pirates comes around the hull from the cargo vessel side of the pirate ship, approaching the same airlock. They are behind the players when they notice that the players are not moving on the hull of the ship in the same way the pirates have been

trained to move. The pirates will move forward quickly to engage the players in combat. If the players flee, they can make it inside the airlock and seal it behind them just before the pirates catch up. If they stand and fight, they must make a 0-G Maneuver skill check of Moderate (15) each time they move. These pirates cannot reach their weapons inside their suits, so they must grapple with the players. One of the pirates does have a welding torch, (1 D damage, breach vacuum suit on a 6.) If a character's vacuum suit is breached by the welding torch, he must find a way back into the ship within 3 rounds to avoid suffocating.

EPISODE SIX:
THE SILENT HALLWAY

Once the players make it into the airlock, they can seal it against the pirates who were pursuing them. Those pirates will have to go to a different airlock to gain access to the ship before they can raise an alarm.

This is another airlock preparation chamber, identical to the last one save that there is only one empty vacuum suit and seven empty pegs for more suits. There is one door to this room, leading deeper into the ship. Through the small window set into the door, the players can see a long, empty hallway. The players can change out of their vacuum suits in peace here.

Though this long hallway appears empty to the players, there are several key elements about this hallway that the gamemaster must know. First, though the hallway appears straight and empty,

there are actually three rooms built into one of the walls. The entrances to these rooms are hidden by holograms of blank walls, preventing the players from detecting them. Second, there are four pirates hiding in each of these rooms. They are aware of the characters and are waiting for them confident that they will neither be seen nor heard. Third, the entire hallway is currently being affected by a sound-dampening device built into the walls and designed to block all sound waves in the hallway. The pirates have been ordered to let the players head for the door at the end of the hall. Once the players are away from the door into the airlock preparation room, the pirates have orders to surround them and capture them alive, if possible.

Once the players enter the hallway, the door to the airlock behind them seals shut and cannot be opened, even with their key cards. Also, all attempts at verbal communication are impossible. To make this as realistic as possible, forbid the players from speaking out loud. The players can ask the gamemaster questions or take action only by passing notes to the gamemaster. The players cannot speak or pass notes to each other unless their characters are equipped with devices that will allow them to write or type messages to each other. Now the players must proceed with their communication hampered.

As soon as the pirates feel they have the best advantage, they step out of their hiding places, brandishing their weapons at the players, hopefully at point-blank range. The pirates are wearing Powered Defense Belts. These generate a visible force field that gives them +2D against energy attacks. The players will be able to see this force field and guess that it is some sort of defense shield. If the players choose to surrender (which may be the wisest move), the pirates search them. They automatically take any non-concealed weapons. Make a Search skill check of Moderate (15) difficulty to see if they find any weapons or devices the characters have that are not in plain sight.

If for some reason the players feel they have a chance to fight, the pirates will fight to subdue the players, setting their vipers on stun. If it looks like the players are going to survive the battle, one of the pirates should throw a gas grenade, filling the hallway with gas and knocking the players unconscious.

EPISODE SEVEN:
CAPTURE AND ESCAPE!

No matter what actions they've taken, eventually the players will end up in the brig. If they are still conscious after the encounter in the silent hallway, they are blindfolded and handled roughly as the pirates escort them through the corridors of the ship and down a level to the brig. Occasionally they hear laughter and mocking words as they pass other pirates. Conscious or unconscious, the players find themselves strapped to a wall by their wrists and ankles, held in place by mesh straps. They do not have enough leverage to break free. Their eyes are freed (or they wake up) to see that the room is bare except for a two-person cot along the opposite wall. There is one door to this room, a round, blank, heavily reinforced steel door. The players notice that Captain Zardigal is strapped to the wall in the same way they are. His pale skin gives sharp contrast to the purple bruises on his face and the yellowish blood that seeps out of a cut and swollen eye. He is currently unconscious. Once all the players are awake, Zardigal opens his good eye, clears his throat and speaks to them.

"So, where were we before we were so rudely interrupted?" he asks. His voice is weary and you have to strain your ears to hear him. "Oh yes, as I was saying, I know who you are and why you are here. I know that Tazuul Korfast hired you to slip onboard this ship and download data from the

pirates' computer banks. He wants you to transmit the data back to Korfast Industries, right? The truth is, Korfast himself is behind the pirate attacks. He's been dealing with Darmand, the leader of this band of pirates, and making a fortune using Korfast Industries' ships to smuggle epiphyte to the pirates. The pirates sell it on the black market. He's been hiding the epiphyte in the empty cargo bays. It's weightless, so it is almost impossible to detect when the inspection teams weigh the ship before take off. There are probably a few bribes involved as well, they play things a little fast and loose here at the edges of civilization. Darmand gives Korfast a piece of the epiphyte proceeds so that Korfast can line his own pockets while his company and his business partners bleed kublars. I've listened in on his private conversations enough to know that he plans to divest himself of Korfast Industries soon and walk away with a load of kublars. His heart was never in the business anyway, it was his brother who built the business from nothing. Tazuul was just along for the ride. Some people think Tazuul killed his brother, but I don't think he had the guts. No, Korfast doesn't have guts, but he is crafty. His plan was for you to send the data successfully, information he planted in the pirate ship's databanks himself. Of course, everything will incriminate a certain shape shifting captain, leaving me to blame for all of the spying that has allowed the pirates to anticipate our cargo vessels at every turn. Darmand deployed his people on board so that they would offer you only token resistance. I think that only a few of the pirates know you're on board. I figure that if you all die or get captured and thus fail to send the data, Tazuul will at least be able to convince the shipping company's board of directors that he is taking steps to solve the problem. He will pin the blame on me, saying that I turned the ship over to the pirates and that I've been using my "unnatural" shape shifting powers and knowledge of the company to find secret trade route information. As a shape shifter, I can be blamed for the "information leaks" that lead to future attacks, even if I'm never seen again. I've earned the respect of my crew over the years, but after a while even my most loyal friends will forget the details. Speculation eventually drives reality and loyalties change quickly."

Before the players can ask Zardigal any questions, the door irises open and Darmand himself enters the room, flanked by two bodyguards. Darmand is short and heavy-set, like a squat barrel. He is a strong looking man, nearly as wide as he is tall, with long black hair and a crooked nose that shows evidence of several breaks. His bodyguards are massive men, with muscles on top of their muscles. They sneer as they look you over and you feel their gazes stopping at favored nerve clusters and vulnerable spots. These are men who enjoy inflicting pain.

"So you lot are awake, eh? Captain Zardigal boring you, is he? Funny really, everything he says is true. Hrmm, not really funny for you, but it is for me." His bodyguards smile cruelly at this, clearly the things Darmand finds amusing appeal to them. " You must admit that it's a nice little racket Korfast and I have going, eh? We both make loads of kublars and his ships and crews are put to almost no risk at all. The same goes for my crew, though some of them are getting tired of seizing ships without the excitement of battle." At this, his bodyguards look downcast, clearly pining away for better days filled with blood and guts and energy blasts. "Between our electro-magnetic disruptor and that Pleasure Center enhancer we stole from the CIS, the toughest battle we've got is wrestling the cargo bays from one ship to the other. I've gotta tell you, I was surprised that the lot of you weren't drooling like idiots on the cargo ship. But we knew the Pleasure Center enhancer doesn't work on every-one, it doesn't even work on me, so I took the necessary precautions. Heh, Korfast even tinkered around with the astro-nav function on your little escape craft. Would've been great to see you make a getaway in that thing and blow yourself to pieces from a faulty astro-navigator!" His bodyguards smile faintly as if this were an interesting way to watch someone die, but hardly the most fun. "Oh well, I made sure that you found your way here with a minimum of bloodshed, so all's well, eh? Well, maybe not for you, but business is business."

Darmand produces the players' Data Beacon from behind his back. "I downloaded all the data about Zardigal being spy into your beacon here. In a few minutes I'll have one of my people relea-

se into space so that it can go and broadcast its news. So, your mission will be complete, eh? Korfast and his partners will think you're dead when you fail to surface for whatever pay they owe you. The truth is, Korfast wants you dead no matter what. Well, that's not good for business and I'm not going to turn down potential profit. So, we'll be meeting some beings I know in a few hours. They'll get some good slaves and I'll have a share of profit that I won't feel honor bound to share with Korfast. Oh, and I'm giving one of you to my men here," he indicates his bodyguards. "They deserve some fun and I figure there's a profit in their loyalty that's worth its weight in kublars."

If you'd like, give the players a few minutes to talk to Darmand. They can ask him questions or insult him. The pirate leader will treat the players relatively politely no matter how hostile they get and he will not feel threatened under any circumstances. If any of the players attempts a psychic attack, one of the bodyguards will jump forward and strike the character, attempting to cut off his or her concentration. If this fails, he will shoot his heavy service pistol at the player at point blank range.

As soon as you are ready to start the action again, have Zardigal address Darmand. Suddenly, the weakness and pain is gone from Zardigal's voice. "Captain Darmand, may I offer a word of advice? Every day we learn lessons that teach us for tomorrow. Remember that chemical you administered to inhibit my shape shifting abilities? Someone did that to me when I first came to the Empire. I've been taking an antidote that negates your drug for almost two years now." With that, Zardigal springs into action. His bruises and cuts fade and his limbs ooze around his bonds, freeing him. At the same moment, he grows a multitude of extra arms, each one reaching out to free the players from their wrist and ankle straps. His flesh parts to reveal hidden body cavities, each one containing a defense pistol. He places a defense pistol in the hand of each player as he frees them. All of this happens in the blink of an eye. The bodyguards immediately fire their weapons at Zardigal, missing, while Darmand draws his own weapon with amazing speed and hits the captain. To keep the fight somewhat even, Darmand's blast should either kill or incapacitate Zardigal. The choice is up to you, depending on whether or not you want to keep Zardigal alive for future adventures.

GM NOTE FOR FUTURE ADVENTURES:

Zardigal has decided to put his own life in danger because he knows he is doomed. He is not helping the players as a question of Honor. It just seems like the only choice under the circumstances. He will try and live to complete his quest and flee at the first opportunity if he survives. He might be inclined to contact the players to help him in his quest, if they denounce their employer and news gets back to him. If the players rid themselves of Darmand, inspection of the ship might even give them something that Zardigal desires more than anything, the location of the pirate planet. This information could be concealed in his Ostrov Fighters on board computers.

If you feel that you need to challenge the players further, there can be one or two pirate guards outside the door to the cell who can rush in to aid their leader.

BODYGUARDS:

All stats are 2D except: Agility 3D, brawling 5D, dodge 4D +1, firearms 4D, melee combat 4D, 0-G maneuver 4D, astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 5D, sensors 4D, shields 4D, Perception 3D, command 4D, Strength 5D, Technical 4D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 2, Jumpsuit, Combat Shock-Knife (STR +1D+1 damage), Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage).

DARMAND:

All stats are 2D except: Agility 3D +1, brawling 4D, dodge 4D +1, firearms 4D, melee combat 4D, 0-G maneuver 4D, Knowledge 4D, astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 5D, sensors 4D, shields

4D, Perception 4D +1, command 7D, Strength 4D, Technical 3D, Psionics 0D. Move 10. Character Points 7, Jumpsuit, Sword (STR +2D), Heavy Service Pistol (5D damage).
Amarax Points : 3
Necro-Dream Points : 3
Honor Code : Rayah

This NPC has developed a Rayah code. His family comes before anything else, and they are well protected on a small and luscious planet hidden within the Space Cloud. Hmmmm... His passion for alcohol, drugs, and prostitutes has him constantly on the brink of retiring to his planet and forgetting the universe to finish off his days in bliss. His drive to see his children take his place one day, in control of their own destinies, keeps him going. He is a powerful opponent for novice players, but fortunately for them, his special honor abilities are more useful in space combat, behind the helm of his ship, than in hand to hand combat. Still, he has used 1 of his points of Amarax during his first action, almost instinctively, to shoot down Zardigal.

As they leave the cell, one of the players notices a small recording device that has fallen from a hidden cavity in one of Zardigal's hands. It has recorded everything that occurred in the cell, including Darmand's confession of his collaboration with Korfast.

In the small room outside their cell, the players can find their possessions piled up on a table in the corner. Darmand gave orders that their belongings be sorted for him to give out as rewards to his favorites among the crew. There are two doors leading out of this chamber. Both doors lead to hallways. One hallway leads to the Bridge, its reinforced door sealed against any attempts to enter. Not even explosives or the pirate key card will open this door. The other hallway leads to Darmand's personal hangar. Here the players can steal Darmand's Ostrov Racer, which is a stripped down Ostrov Fighter built for speed and evasion. The Racer has sufficient range to take them back to the planet on which they met Tazuul Korfast.

OSTROV RACER

Class: Ostrov racer
Scale: Fighter
Length: 20 Meterss
Skill: Piloting
Crew: 3, gunners 2
Passengers: 3
Cargo: 500 kilograms
Supplies: 1 week
Stardrive: Yes
Maneuverability: 3D
Space: 6
Atmosphere: 400; 1,000 kph
Hull: 5D
Shields: 2D
Sensors: 50/1D
Ordnance:
1 Forward Laser Array
    Fire Arc: Fore
    Crew: 1
    Skill: Gunnery
    Fire Control: 2D
    Space Range: 1-3/12/25
    Atmosphere: 100-300/1.2/2.5 km
    Damage: 4D
1 Heavy Cannon Turret
    Fire Arc: Fore
    Crew: 1
    Skill: Gunnery
    Fire Control: 2D
    Space Range: 1-3/12/25
    Atmosphere: 100-300/1.2/2.5 km
    Damage: 5D
Crew Skill: astro-nav 4D, comm 3D, gunnery 5D, piloting 4D+2, sensors 4D, shields 4D, command 6D.

EPILOGUE

Just when they think it is all over, the players will soon realize they have a dilemma on their hands. They have escaped the pirates and they have the data they were assigned to download from the pirate ship's computers. However, they now know the truth behind their adventure.

The players are left with a conflict for their

and only then, denounce Korfast to the media or the Korfast board.

In any case, this is not a Necro-Dream situation. The only players losing Amarax would be those who misspent them during the adventure.

If the players reveal the truth behind Korfast's scheme, and don't confront him, Tazuul will ingest poison rather than let himself be captured. Gruesome footage of Korfast's last words will be broadcast on the galactic telnet. He says that he won't be around to see it, but the players will suffer horrible deaths for interfering with his masters. The Obsidian Triangle will not be thwarted. What is the Obsidian Triangle? That is a question the GM can answer in a later adventure, but clearly the players have made some powerful enemies.

characters to resolve. Do they feel any duty to either their mission or their patron. The two are in obvious conflict. Compromising either may incur a lessening of both their reputations and those of their units, but that is of secondary importance. They must now discuss amongst themselves what to do, and if their Honor is at stake. As the GM, remind them if they pledged allegiance to the mission or the mission's patron. In game terms, this should help you decide how to award Amarax points. Give an Amarax point freely to everyone who survived, give an extra one to those who convince you that they are following their Codes with whichever solution they chose for the end of the adventure. PC's who break their codes through compromise will not get the extra point.

The best example would be the following: A Thunder Brigade member has vowed to complete the mission and serve it's Patron. IF the group decides to go back and provide the information for him that incriminates Zardigal, then they have respected the pledge and they gain an extra point of Amarax. If they decide not to and to denounce their employer then they don't, but perhaps the other players, whose code has dictated that Zardigal be unincriminated, would.

A nifty solution that the group might come up with is to go back and confront their employer, thus honoring their mission, and then killing him off just afterwards. This would be no easy feat, seeing as how he has twice as many guards as Darmand, but it would allow the entire group to gain that extra Amarax point. They would then,

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

MERCENARY SPY
SABLE CORPS

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Almighty Kublar

The pursuit of money is the only thing in life that has any meaning. It doesn't matter how you get the money, once the kublars are in your pocket, they're yours. Having the cash isn't so important as the challenge of acquiring it. Almighty Kublar followers will do anything to put money in their accounts.

A Quote: "What's in it for me?"

Equipment: Black Jumpsuit
Hand Vid Comm
Io Board
Viper pistol (4D damage)
Stun baton (5D stun damage)
Range goggles
45 kublars

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

You were brought up as the ward of an Imperial Merchants Guild corporation, trained for business. When you closed your first deal you experienced a sensation stronger than any vice you had ever known. It wasn't the amount of money you earned; it was the knowledge that you had negotiated more from the deal than they wanted to pay. A floodgate was opened and you've been looking for an angle ever since. Knowing the value of a business' secrets, you've made it your business to learn secrets and sell them to the highest bidder.

PERSONALITY:

You are always looking for a way to make a profit. You encourage others to forget all the minor details and keep an eye on the bottom line.

CONNECTIONS:

You're willing to throw your lot in with anyone who can help you pull a scam, make a deal, or lead you to a valuable secret.

Agility:	3D
	Dodge
	Firearms
	Melee Combat
	Running
	Sleight of Hand
	Throwing
Knowledge:	4D
	Astrography
	Bureaucracy
	Business
	Security Regulations
	Streetwise
Perception:	4D+1
	Bargain
	Con
	Forgery
	Gaming
	Hide

	Investigation
	Search
	Sneak
Strength:	2D
	Climb/Jump
	Stamina
	Swim
Mechanical:	2D
	Comm
	Piloting
	Vehicle Operation
Technical:	2D
	Firearms Repair
	First Aid
	Security
Psionics:	0D

EX-TECHNO INITIATE THUNDER BRIGADE

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Paleo-Noblis

A resurgence of the antique honor code of the paleo-knights, Paleo-Noblis is a harsh and constrained path, which requires its followers to respect the rules and principles of loyalty, humility, and sacrifice.

A Quote: "Don't worry about me, let me help you out."

Equipment: Jumpsuit
Hand vid comm
Io Board
Defense pistol (5 shots, 3D damage)
Tool Bag (Various tools for related repair skills)
Stun Grenade
2 kublars

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

You proudly served as a follower of the Church of Industrial Saints as a Techno-Techno Initiate until you came across some records that were improperly filed. You learned the truth about the Necro-Dream far sooner than normal and you rebelled. Now you spend your life trying to undo the work of the Techno-Pontificate, serving the masses. You will stop at nothing to free the minds of humanity, even if they don't appreciate it.

PERSONALITY:

You've learned that everything is an illusion and authority is not to be trusted. You won't hesitate to sacrifice yourself as long as an innocent stands to benefit.

CONNECTIONS:

Any group that strives to help the less fortunate can count on you. Any cause that serves the greater good has your support.

Agility:	2D
	Throwing
Knowledge:	2D
	Bureaucracy
Perception:	2D
	Bargain
	Search
Strength:	2D
	Climb/Jump
Mechanical:	5D
	Astro-nav
Technical:	5D
	Computer Interface/Repair
	Engineering
	Flight Systems Repair

Personal Equipment Repair
Robot Interface/Repair

Psionics: 0D

**CONTRACT PILOT
SABLE CORPS**

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Oath-Maker

A person's word is a sacred bond. Only by keeping your word at all times can you be truly worthy. If you can't keep a promise, don't make one.

A Quote: "I made a promise, I intend to honor it."

Equipment: Flight Suit
Comm Headset
Pilot's Helmet
Viper Pistol (4D damage)
Armored Vest (+1D STR to resist damage, torso only)

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

Your parents were pilots and they trained you to be a carefree spirit, relishing the freedom that came with your travels. You were given your own ship to command at a young age and your wild ways earned you a reputation as a maverick. Then one day you broke a promise without a second thought. Your ship was assigned to protect a troop carrier, but you abandoned that troop carrier so that your ship could escape from bloodthirsty pirates. One of those troops survived to hunt you down, killing your entire crew and destroying your ship. You survived only through a stroke of luck and vowed never to break a promise again.

PERSONALITY:

You are serious and intense. You understand jokes when you hear them, but they just don't seem all that funny anymore. Taking things lightly can get you killed. It is only by taking life seriously and keeping your word that you can be sure you've done the best you can.

CONNECTIONS:

You're a good pilot and you'll take any job that you can guarantee. If you aren't sure you can fulfill the job, you won't take it.

Agility: 3D
- Brawling
- Firearms
- 0-G Maneuver

Knowledge: 2D
- Astrography
- Security Regulations
- Survival

Perception: 2D
- Gaming
- Persuasion

Strength: 2D
- Climb/Jump
- Swim

Mechanical: 4D
- Astro-Nav
- Piloting
- Sensors
- Shields
- Vehicle Operation

Technical: 4D
- Flight Systems Repair
- Personal Equipment Repair
- Vehicle Repair

Psionics: 0D

**BRUTISH SOLDIER
THUNDER BRIGADE**

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Bushitaka

Inspired from the way of the warrior of the Castaka clan, Bushitaka requires its followers to act as warriors in combat and in all aspects of life. For the warrior the highest virtue, his constant objective, is victory.

A Quote: "You want I should hit 'em?"
Equipment: Jumpsuit
- Armor Pieces (+1D STR to resist damage, torso only)
- Old Cogan Rifle (5d+2 damage)
- Shock-knife (STR+1D+2 damage)
- 1 Grenade
- 3 kublars

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

Your mother died in childbirth and your father was a cripple who lost a leg in battle. You got beat up a lot by other kids and had no one to help you stand up for yourself. While you were still young, you had a growth spurt and found that you could dish it out as well as take it. The joy of a good brawl kept you from falling victim to the Necro-Dream. The Thunder Brigade unit took you in after you bested their toughest fighter and you've been pounding your way through the Brigade's adversaries ever since.

PERSONALITY:

You're not a stupid man, but you've learned that thinking is best left up to others. Let them point you in the right direction and you'll walk over anyone who gets in your way.

CONNECTIONS:

You'll be happy to join up with any unit that offers you the chance for combat. Let others have a cause and you'll use your fists to help them achieve it.

Agility:	6D
	Brawling
	Dodge
	Firearms
	Melee Combat
	0-G Maneuver
Knowledge:	2D
	Intimidation
	Security Regulations
	Survival
	Tactics
	Willpower
Perception:	2D
	Gaming
	Search
	Sneak
Strength:	5D
	Climb/Jump
	Lift
	Stamina
	Swim
Mechanical:	3D
	Gunnery
	Vehicle Operation
Technical:	2D
	Armor Repair
	Demolitions
	Firearms Repair
	First Aid
	Personal Equipment Repair
Psionics:	0D

**DEFUSED MENTREK
SABLE CORPS**

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Fuga

The act of fleeing is the highest expression of the art of dodging. There is no more glory in facing your enemy than to deceive him and to avoid aggression. The infamy lies in the objective of the action, never in the means you use.

A Quote: "There is nothing to be gained from an angry superior."
Equipment: Robe
Defense Pistol (5 shots, 3D damage)
Hand Vid Comm
Medkit
Cybernetic Hand [Conceals tools for robot and equipment repair as well as bio-surgery – the scalpel acts as a mini-blade (STR+2 damage)].
5 kublars

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

Your parents were robotics geniuses who shared their advancements freely, thus attracting the ire of the Techno-Pontificate You only know your parents through video footage they left behind when they were murdered by the Techno-Technos. Hidden away by your parents' advanced design servant robot, you were raised among machines, fascinated by humans but never really feeling like one. Your existence was discovered by the CIS, your robot guardian was destroyed and you were captured and transformed into a living computer. While you were happy to become more like your robotic friends, you had no desire to serve the Empire that had destroyed both your families. Your focused knowledge regarding human biology and robotics allowed you to disconnect yourself from the Imperial network and you have been on the run ever since.

PERSONALITY:

Your social skills are somewhat underdeveloped, making you more like a robot than a human in many ways. You are quiet and withdrawn around humans and when your emotions run high you usually try to push them away and rely upon logic. You're not a coward, but you know that every time you confront the power of others, you increase the risk that you will be dealt another tragedy.

CONNECTIONS:

You get along with computers and robots better than you do with humans, but you long for the human companionship you have been denied throughout your life. You will join a cause if you think it will help you find friendship.

Agility: 2D+1
Dodge
Firearms
Running

Knowledge: 4D
Aliens
Cultures
Languages
Scholar - Biology

Perception: 3D
Bargain
Hide
Persuasion
Search
Sneak

Strength: 2D
Climb/Jump
Swim

Mechanical: 2D
Comm
Sensors
Shields

Technical: 5D
Computer Interface/Repair

First Aid
Medicine
Personal Equipment Repair
Robot Interface/Repair

Psionics: 0D

MYSTIC WARRIOR
THUNDER BRIGADE

Move: 10
Amarax Points: 1
Character Points: 5
Honor Code: Paleojitsu

There is always someone stronger than you, but likewise you can always use your enemy's strength against him. The only way to find Honor is through an open hand and an open mind, changing as the universe shifts around you.

A Quote: "When a paleo-hurricane blows, the tree will break but a reed simply bends."

Equipment: Robes
Katana (STR+2D)
Combat Staff (STR+1D)
Med Kit

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND:

You were the heir to a ruling dynasty on a planet with a feudal society, existing completely unaware of the Human Empire and travel between the stars. Your entire kingdom was destroyed to make way for an Endo-City. You were rescued by a family servant who helped you stowaway on a Techno ship before she died. Making your own way in a strange new society, you continued your training wherever you could. Your life mission is a search for wisdom and for any of your people who might have survived.

PERSONALITY:

You are calm and wise in the face of adversity. Let your enemies rant and rave and thus waste their strength. You will strike when they are distracted and weakened.

CONNECTIONS:

You don't choose your companions; the universe chooses them for you. If you are extended an invitation you will accept it. If this is not the right group of compatriots, circumstances will correct the situation quickly enough.

Agility: 4D+2
- Archaic Weapons
- Dodge
- Martial Arts
- Riding
- Running
- Throwing

Knowledge: 2D
- Intimidation
- Survival
- Willpower

Perception: 2D
- Hide
- Search
- Sneak

Strength: 3D+1
- Climb/Jump
- Stamina
- Swim

Mechanical: 1D
- Shields

Technical: 2D
- First Aid

Psionics: 2D
- Energy
- Self Control

MARAK V MEDIUM CARGO CRUISER

1cm = 54m
1/2" = 224.7'

Airlock / Airlock
Bridge
Crew Quarters Galley, Dining Areas
Starboard Cargo Bay ONE / Port Cargo Bay ONE
Airlock / Starboard Cargo Bay TWO / Port Cargo Bay TWO / Airlock
Starboard Cargo Bay THREE / Port Cargo Bay THREE
Engineering
Hidden Escape Transport

DARMAND'S MISTRESS ALADRON CLASS LIGHT CRUISER

Boarding Tube
Airlock
Bench
1cm = 56.3m
1/2" = 234.6'
Repair Crew Pirates
Vacuum Suits & Magno-Tethers
Airlock Prep Chamber
Bridge
Cargo Bay — Level B
Guard Room
Level C —
Brig
Cargo Bay (Converted to Storage Forostrov Racer)
Airlock
Airlock Prep Chamber
The Silent Hallway
H = holographic wall
Elevator down to Level C

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

INTRO

Advantages and disadvantages are optional ways to add new dimensions to a character. They can describe aspects of a character in a way that attributes or skills cannot. Some options enhance the characters by granting them new abilities, allies or traits, while other options limit the character with deficiencies, foes, or difficulties. Players are free to use a combination of these to create a balance of strengths and weaknesses that round out their character.

BASIC MECHANICS

Advantages and disadvantages are parts of a character that cost or give character skill dice in exchange for a permanent physical, mental, psychological or social trait. Many advantages give a bonus to a die roll, while some disadvantages limit your actions or abilities.

While there is no specified limit of how many skill dice can be gained from taking disadvantages, the Game Master must closely monitor the disadvantages chosen. They can be abused, and should only be allowed with a Game Master's approval.

CHARACTER CREATION

Choosing advantages and disadvantages can help define the character. When designing a character, it is easy to develop what the character does, but not as easy to develop how the character reacts. Select a few of the choices below, and the player has built in behaviors for the character to follow.

It also helps differentiate between similar characters. If two players run mercenaries with similar skills and equipment, but one has disadvantages like pride and argumentative, while the other had hides emotion and compulsive (maintenance), they will still feel like two different characters.

Many of the choices listed below also give the Game Master a foundation to build adventures on. One character's vow can be a whole subplot for the whole group, the group could help another player keep his secret, or even try to avoid a "doomed" fate. The Game Master should feel free to use a disadvantage against a character (the player will certainly make us of his character's advantages) but as another challenge for the character to overcome, and not as a brick wall to stop the character's progress.

Characters are not limited to just the advantages listed, and the Game Master should feel free to adjust the costs. After the list are guidelines suggestions for creating your own advantages and disadvantages.

Also see the article in this book on 'GM'ing the Honor Code' for how to handle interactions between Honor Code creation and extra dice.

LIST OF ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

ADDICTION (SUBSTANCE) (-1D TO -3D) :

The character has a physical need for a substance, such as alcohol or certain organic or chemical substances. Going without the substance affects the character. Conditions vary (at Game Master's discretion), but a -1D on all attributes for short-term withdrawal, -2D (or worse) to all attributes for a long term.
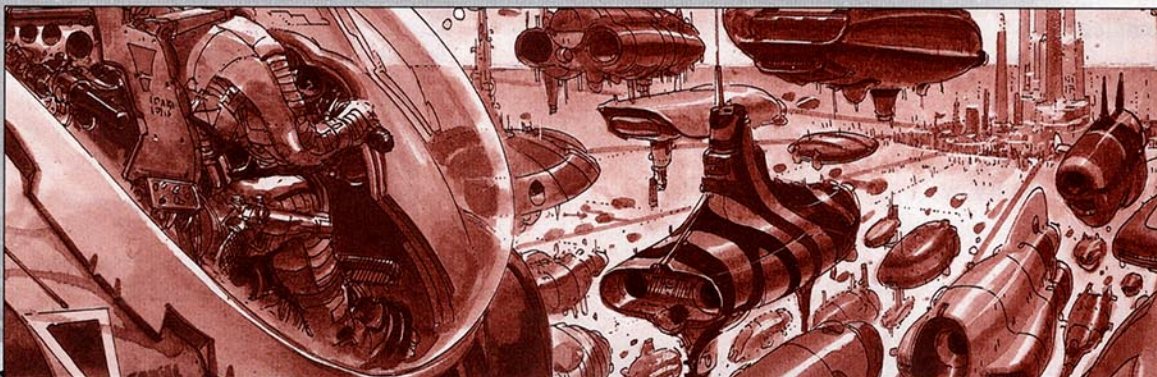
GM NOTE :

The NecroDream is particulary dangerous for characters with this disadvantage. Players choosing this disadvantage should have potential NecroDream situations interpreted more strictly than normal players as they have placed themselves in permanent danger to the NecroDream.

ALLY (+1D TO +3D) :
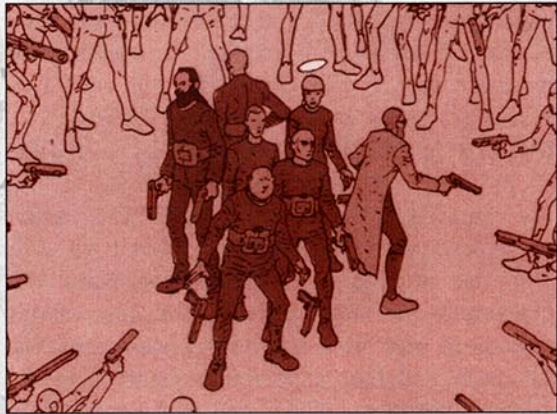
The character knows someone that will go out of their way to help them. At 1D, they will run errands or equipment under short notice. At the high end of the scale, the ally will go so far as to help the character in combat if asked. An ally will not tag along all the time, rather he is there to help a friend in need.

ATTRACTIVE (+1D TO +3D) :

While the character can have almost any appearance that a player chooses, characters that have this advantage get a bonus of +1D to +3D to persuasion or con rolls (however many dice they spend) whenever the other character would be affected.
Appearance levels : Attractive, Extraordinary, Divine.

AT GM'S DISCRETION :

2D and 3D may be limited to NPC's as the closer up in a hierarchy of attractiveness / beauty, the more likely they are corrupted by the NecroDream.

At +2D one should give 1 point of NecroDream, At +3D 2 Points of NecroDream. In any case a player character would starting at 2D would be very close to falling overboard; at 3D he or she would need two points of Amarax in order to remain free thinking. The first additional NecroDream point comes after four sessions of play. The second comes after ten full sessions of play. This gives the player both time and incentive to earn the offsetting Amarax points.

AUTHORITY (+1D TO +3D) :
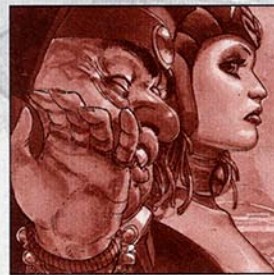
This character has special power in a given location or social structure. At the 1D level, it allows the character to inspect and cite for legal violations. For 2D, the character is allowed to search with cause and make arrests. At 3D, the character is a magistrate, with the authority to make rulings and pass sentences. +2D and +3D are limited in most cases, at the GM's discretion, to NPC's. A player starting with +2D takes a point of NecroDream.

CONTACT (+1D) :

The character has friends in helpful places. This advantage is usually represented by one person, but should be considered an "in".. If that contact is killed, the character should, over time, be able to develop another contact in that position through role-playing and at no additional cost.

COOL UNDER FIRE (+4D) :
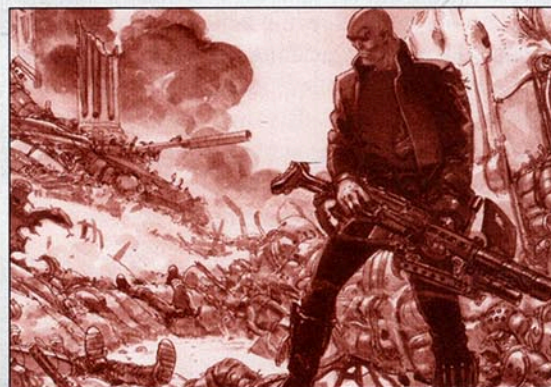
When the bullets start flying, this person doesn't panic. He has seen it all before, and doesn't let it get to him. He doesn't shake or shock easily. This character has a +2D against any rolls to intimidate or coerce him. He also gets a +1D to any dodge rolls.

CRACK SHOT (+3D) :

The character is a natural with sighted arms. He gets a +1D to any attacks with a sighted, ranged weapon (weapons that fire in a straight line that are aimed and targeted only by the firer). If the character takes aim for three consecutive turns, doing nothing else, he gets a +2D to one shot.

DEBT (-1D TO -3D) :

In order to finance a large purchase (like a starship or a business) a character may go into debt. On the low end of the scale is a smaller ship, typically financed by legitimate bank. The higher dice amount has the character going into much more debt for a larger (or more capable) ship, and has him owing a unlicensed lender. Whether this source is reputable or not is up to the Game Master, but missing payments is not recommended either way.

DEPENDENTS (-1D TO -3D) :

This character has people that are dependent on him. The lower cost (-1D) is comparable to an adult family member, while a higher number (-2D) denotes a child, or someone that cannot take care of themselves. At the highest level (-3D) the dependent has needs that require regular attention, and are present in the character's daily life, even when adventuring. For this to be a disadvantage, the dependent must need the character's support.

DISCIPLINE (+1D TO +3D) :

The character is awarded 1D for every two daily activities that he or she partakes in that help them in focusing on their code of honor. If unable to perform these rituals, the player loses temporarily 50% of their Amarax points. Round last point up. Therefore, you cannot lose your last Amarax point as 1/2 rounds up to 1. Examples of this would be: meditation, sword exercises, ritual dance, poetry reading, etc...

GM Note: Do not use this rule to cause loss of character if failure to practice discipline is truly beyond a character's control as opposed to inconvenient.

ENEMY (-1D TO -3D) :

The character has crossed tracks with this person or persons, and the encounter did not go well. This foe will go out his way to make the character's life more difficult. The cost relates directly to how often and how dangerous his foe is. Lower end foes appear infrequently and are minor annoyances, higher end foes appear more often, or are more lethal in their intent.

FOCUSED (-2D) :

This character is always deeply involved in his current task. He gets a +1D bonus on long tasks of moderate duration or longer, but is at a -3D to notice anything else.

FRAIL (-2D) :

While this character won't be blown away in a breeze, he does have trouble recovering from injury. Whenever he or another character attempt to heal him, multiply the healing time by 2.

HARDY (+2D) :

This character may get knocked down, but gets right back up again. Any rolls made to recover from injury are made normally, dividing the healing time by 2.

HEIGHTENED SENSE (2D PER +1D) :

Whether it is called "eagle eyes" or a dog's sense of smell, one or more of this characters' senses

are better than average. The advantage has to be purchased separately for each sense, and each 1D spent gets a bonus of +1D to perception or similar rolls when that sense would come into play. This is purely genetic, and can only be chosen during character creation. During play, if the character wishes to enhance his senses, he must turn to cybernetics (First edition of Rulebook, © 2001, p. 237).
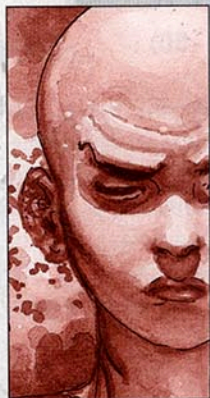
LESSENED SENSES (-1D PER -1D) :

If the character has no sense of taste or smell, or can't even see the broad side of a barn, then this disadvantage describes it. The exact reverse of Heightened senses, the disadvantage is worth 1D for every negative 1D it subtracts from rolls that rely on that sense. If the disadvantage is correctable, like lessened vision would be with glasses, it would only ever be worth a -1D, no matter how bad the sensory loss actually is.

LOUSY LIAR (-2D) :

When this character tells a lie, it shows. It may be a facial tic, a wink, a goofy smile, or just a forced expression. This character is a –2D to any con rolls, and cannot buy and levels in this skill.

NATURAL TALENT (+4D, PLUS +5D FOR COMBAT OR PILOTING SKILL) :

This character has a gift. Whatever the focus is, pick a skill, or at the GM's discretion, a set of skills, the character gets a free +2D to the skill (s) that doesn't count when he improves the skill.

NO SPEECH (-3D) :

The character is mute. The character can learn sign language, but if any form of mechanical speech replaces the useless vocal cords as part of initial character creation, this disadvantage is reduced to -1D cost. This Disadvantage may be

won back or bought back through cybernetics or future Honor Code advantages given by the GM as part of play. If done at least two sessions after character creation, this disadvantage remains at –3D.

OBSESSIVE TENDENCIES (-1D) :

This character has turned a habit into a reflex. For example: wearing breathing mask and gloves at all times. Other characters and NPC's may react negatively to this character if they notice the obsessive behavior (-1D to most social rolls).

PAIN TOLERANCE (+4D) :

Either knock this character unconscious or get out of the way! This character graduated magna cum laude from the school of hard knocks. Any time the character may become incapacitated roll against a moderate difficulty against strength to keep the character conscious. He also suffers no die penalty from injuries.

PERIPHERAL VISION (+3D) :

This character is really hard to sneak up on. This character's vision is extraordinarily wide, and allows him to notice movement in a much wider arc. His only spot is directly behind him.

SENSE OF DIRECTION (+1D) :

This character never needs a compass. He has a good sense of where he has traveled, and the direction and length of his travels. This character gets a +1D bonus to any applicable navigational skill roll

SHORT ATTENTION SPAN (-2D) :

Character cannot focus on any task for a length of time. Character gets a minus –1D to any tasks that last for more than a few minutes, and a –1D to Perception rolls.
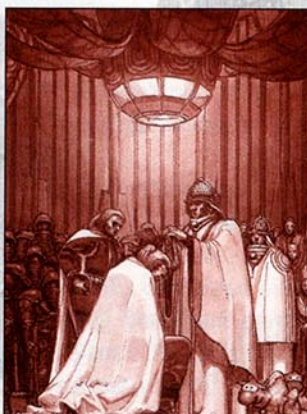
SOCIAL STATUS (+1D TO +3D) :

This character has special power in a given social structure. At the 1D level, it allows the character to avoid inspection and citation for legal violations as well as intimidating all basic civil servants and corporate employees. For 2D, the character the character is allowed to overturn search warrants, get released after being arrested, to not be shot or excessively beaten on arrest as well as to intimidate supervisory level corporate and civil servants and basic level law enforcement personnel. At 3D, all NPC's other than Endoguards, police supervisors, and social equals / superiors will avoid contradicting the player. Her wishes may not always be granted but NPC's will try to evade rather than flat out refusing her. GM Note: +2D and +3D are limited in most cases, at the GM's discretion, to NPC's as this is a very powerful advantage. A player starting with +2D or +3D normally should take a point of NecroDream.

SPATIAL SENSE (+2D) :

The character has a sense of up and down in all three axises, which is quite useful for space flight. On an easy roll, he isn't turned around; a moderate skill roll will get him back to a previous location.

SPACE SICK (-1D) :

This character does not travel well, becoming nauseous and weak during space travel. Character is at a –1D for any actions.

UGLY (-1D TO -3D) :

Characters that have this disadvantage take a penalty of -1D to -3D (depending on how many dice they received from the disadvantage) to persuade and con rolls when another character would be affected by his appearance.

WANTED FOR A CRIME (-2D TO –5D) :

The character has warrants out for his arrest. The character doesn't have to be guilty of the crime he is charged with, the government wants him to stand trial. The value of this disadvantage varies depending on how large the government that is after him is, and how severe the crime is. At the highest cost, this disadvantage should dominate the adventure.

WEAKNESS (-1D TO -5D) :

This is the character's Achilles' heel, his fatal flaw. While all the disadvantages listed here could be considered weaknesses, these are specific flaws that can, to varying degrees, disable the character.

EXAMPLES:

- **-1D** : Slightly Allergic to common item (grass, plastic, milk), causes mild but noticeable discomfort
- **-3D** : Immediate exposure causes illness/ weakness, prolonged exposure makes character progressively more sick
- **-5D** : Exposure to item quickly leads to "near death" (like not being able to eat nuts without a fatal allergic reaction)

WEALTH (+1D TO +4D)

+1D = 5,000 K in cash plus income of 1,000K per week

+2D = 20,000 K in cash plus income of 10,000K week

+3D = 100,000K in cash plus income of 100,000 K
per week

+4D = 500,000K in cash plus income of
1,000,000 K per week

The character has assets and an income as specified above. However, he must be someplace civilized and secure to in fact receive the income. Otherwise it piles up in his bank waiting for him to claim it. Cash must be in a form – bank notes, credit stick, coins, whatever – each of which will present their own problems for carrying and theft.

PLAYER CONTRIBUTIONS

The entries below are incentives to encourage the players to think more about their character and the adventure, to give the GM plot hooks to work with, and hopefully creating a richer gaming experience. They are, all items in this chapter, optional, and shouldn't be used if it is counter to the Gamemaster's methods, or the players don't live up to their end of the obligation.

Another option is, instead of giving characters the points for the below jobs once, is to offer the tasks to new players as a way to catch up to the more experienced characters in the group. Reward their work with character points (1-5, depending on effort) instead of character dice though, since it is after character creation.

ADVENTURE LOG (-3D) :

The player keeps a detailed log of the adventure, keeping track of names, places, and events. The player shares these notes with the moderator, and may be asked to give a synopsis of the previous gaming session's events.

BACKGROUND STORY / PICTURES (-1D TO –3D) :

The player can make a character illustration and/write up a background story, or provide some other writing that fleshes out the character. The number of dice this work is worth is solely up to the Game Master, although a limit of 3D is suggested.

GUIDELINES FOR USING AND MAKING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES :

Almost all advantages should cost between 1D and 3D Any disadvantage not being role-played is lost, along with the points it gave, at the GM's discretion.

An advantage that may be taken more than once, like an Ally, or less powerful ability like Sense of Direction should be priced at one, while something powerful like Photographic Memory should be priced at least 3D, if not more.

Almost all disadvantages should cost between -1D and -3D. A minor inconvenience like impulsive would warrant a -1D, while Fear of Space Travel should cost -3D. Only a disadvantage like Terminally Ill should be worth more.

It is possible to gain or lose advantages and disadvantages in play. If, during play, the Gamemaster gives you an advantage, it is free. No further payment is necessary (although a thank you would certainly be considerate). Likewise, if during playing the Gamemaster decides you have earned a disadvantage (such as Enemy) you do not receive any extra skill levels to purchase skills with.

A player may want to purchase an advantage for the character during the game. While some advantages should only be purchased at character creation (like Natural Talent), many others could have legitimate in game reasons for purchase. A character could purchase Speed Draw (blaster) and rationalize it as the character having been practicing it a lot, or heightened senses from training. The cost in skill points is 10 times the die cost, and can only be done with the Gamemaster's explicit permission.

ADDS AND GAMING STYLES:

The best times to take on adds and disadvantages are either at character creation or after some major turn in a campaign (people are more apt to make major personality changes after high stress situations that risk getting them killed). Plus and minus dice should be taken in the following ratios depending on your group's roleplaying style.

POWER GAMERS :

"I kilz duh monsta, I grabz duh lut" : Do a 3 – 2 ratio. To get three plus dice you must take on two minus dice. This ratio will create powerful but individualistic characters better suited for action adventures. So if you want adds totaling +12 you must take disadvantages totaling –9. Dice for player contributions do not count for this ratio. Your groups may only use these with GM permission. They must be offered to the least experienced or weakest player (GM choice) and then on up the ladder. They trade at 1-1. So adventure log is –3 and gets you advantages at +3. You round down. So adding one disadvantages gets you nothing. Adding the second minus die gets you three more plus dice. Thus two disadvantage dice get you zero to three advantage dice. To get a fourth advantage die you must take a third disadvantage die. To get a fifth or a sixth you must take a fourth disadvantage die.

ROLE PLAYERS :

"If I just wanted to figure odds I'd play wargames".. You know who you are. You bring props, speak in voices, weep when your character dies because you lived him and not because he carried a plus 16 DeathMaster blaster. The 3-2 ratio is too great for your style; to help preserve depth of character creation we recommend a 6-5 ratio. However, you can count player contributions. All of you CAN do a journal if you wish.

The Metabarons

Caracter Name		Gender		Move	
		Age		Amarax points	
Type	Species	Height		Necro-Dream points	
		Weight		Character points	

AGILITY

KNOWLEDGE

STRENGTH

TECHNICAL

PERCEPTION

MECHANICAL

PSIONICS

	Energy		Influence		Self Control	

RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Range	Firerate	Ammo	Damage

MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Difficulty	Damage

ARMOR

WOUND STATUS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

EQUIPMENT

BACKGROUND and DESCRIPTION

Home Planet

GROUP and CONTACTS

Kublars

HONOR CODE

Values	Priorities	Interdictions

AMARAX POWERS

Amarax Points

NOTES

ADVENTURE HOOKS AND PATRONS

PATRONS

Characters in a freewheeling Metabarons campaign usually don't have difficulties getting themselves into trouble. All too often, players stand ready to escalate any encounter into a major event. Even the most elementary milk run—escorting the daughter of a minor noble to a dance festival on Rovia III—will spiral downward into a complex and sordid tale of betrayal, mind control drugs and blaster shots in the night given half the chance.

Even so, sometimes gamemasters need a little help in jumpstarting adventures, and that's where our list of potential patrons comes in. Each entry below presents a person looking to hire a band of 'freelance employees', i.e., the characters, to take care of a problem (which may be the adventure, or lead to it). These entries aren't fully developed or fleshed out—most are simply the skeleton of an idea with perhaps the suggestion of a plot twist or two.

There are adventures suitable for a variety of group types—from scouts and bounty hunters to athletes and out-and-out thieves. Since this is the Metabarons universe, the adventure ideas vary in tone as well. Many are save-the-princess type adventures suitable for all gaming groups—but others delve into darker realms and require characters (and players) who are not squeamish about violated legal and ethical codes.

One thing all these adventure ideas have in common is a patron—hence the name of this section. The patron serves as the introduction to the adventure, and usually the inciting incident that draws the characters into the action. Patrons come in all sizes and shapes. Some are eager for help and will do all they can to ensure the characters' success. Others are using the characters as patsies, to cover up crimes or provide distractions from their true activities. Few patrons, sadly, are entirely honest with their employees, and even relatively upright patrons may have other unseen interests at play.

How you work patrons into an adventure will depend largely on the past actions of your group and the sort of adventure in the offing, but here are a few general ideas.

The best source for patrons are NPCs you've already established in your campaign — people the characters have already interacted with. There's always a roster of likely suspects: The starport commander who once took a bribe; the wacky arms dealer who's been trying to pair up one of the characters with his homely daughter; the barkeep at the Hovering Hovel; the merchant who financed the group's last adventure. These folks have the advantage of a prior relationship with the characters. You already know whether the players like Commander Cerdic or "Lighting Rod" Pearson; you know what buttons to push to get the characters interested in helping them. Heck, they may even owe one of your NPCs favors!

Other patrons may also arise from a character's past, but be a newly introduced NPC. Perhaps a character's old squad leader shows up in desperate need of help, or a family friend in the Imperial Palace has lost some jewels she was entrusted with. In generating appropriate NPCs, recall conversations you've had with players about their characters' past, and review their characters sheets to take stock of possible sources. If a character is a noble, or went to a military academy, or grew up in the streets of Camfo II, you've got choices. Even a former gutter rat may have known someone from the street who has gone on to an acting career or worked herself up into the confidences of a local noble.
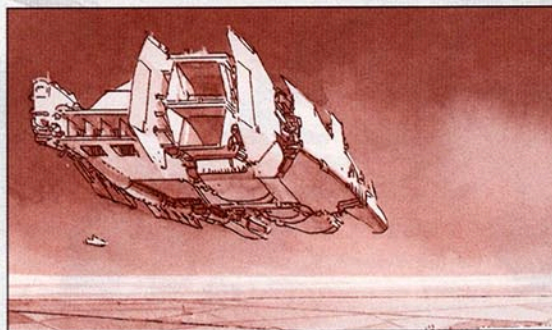
Of course, you always have the option of resorting to the "found" patron, the NPC you place in the path of the characters for the purpose of drawing them into an adventure. This method is no more or less effective than the others in introducing an adventure, but is far more prone to coming off as

clichéd if mishandled. (It might be a good idea, for example, to avoid the mysterious cloaked stranger in the tavern routine.) Having a known NPC refer a patron to the characters is one way to lessen the potential for contrived setups.

PIRATES

The Gemsol Aura raiders have been hitting the gem colony on planet Densol periodically for the past decade. The colonial director, Kamar Stuksi, unable to outrun the pirates' ship with his slower militia, hires the characters to infiltrate the pirate's ship and cripple its drive engines to give him time to close in with his orbital fleet.

The characters, while meeting a client about a perspective job on a luxury Maganat starliner, are caught in the midst of a high tech hijacking. Panicking as the pirates board and begin robbing the passengers, their potential client offers them a tidy sum to protect her and then help her and her pair of highly-excitable toy poodles escape.

The captain and first mate of the Kallic pirate fleet has been captured by a Union of Planets' police squad while on shore leave in an alpine villa on Bawea. The characters are hired by the remaining pirates to break their leader out of Bawea's colonial jail before the regional law enforcers show up to transport them to a more secure location.

MEDIA, HOLOVIDS AND THE 3D TV

The characters are hired to maintain security for a nature film crew recording the migratory patterns of Mitagulian ospreys. Sounds pretty good, except that Mitagul is a hellworld, filled with giant carnivorous plants, sucking bogs, poison slugs and acid rains. And that's not even counting the pirate hideaway or the total centennial eclipse which turns the docile ospreys into deadly killing machines. In fact the 3DTV team was sent to film the ospreys in action, and they needed your group to serve as prey
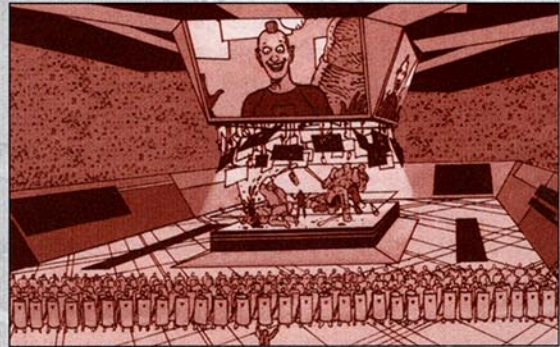
A plague has struck the small continent of Cambiel on Duran II, leading to a large-scale quarantine. Travis Bartly, a media icon, is trapped inside—along with the characters—and will pay huge sums to be smuggled out. He doesn't want to die a gruesome death for one thing. He's also got a once-in-a-lifetime interview with the Supra-Princess he simply cannot miss. Slipping through the quarantine will be 'amusing', since air traffic is forbidden and the coasts are patrolled. The characters might be able to infiltrate one of the armed and hazmat-suited medical teams surveying the plague's progress. They might also want to avoid the plague itself, which might prove 'interesting', since the medical teams are only moving through the most stricken areas.

Two of the media's most famous celebrities are getting married on a secluded island on the tropical resort of Cerus—no media allowed. A tabloid editor hires the characters to get his star reporter close enough to the proceedings to get some prize shots with her holocam. The couple have some influential friends, and because members of the Imperial court are expected, security is being maintained by a team of Endoguards. Just getting on the island will be difficult—approaching by sea or air is impossible unless the characters are posing as an expected guest or caterer, and submarines aren't easy to come by. Once on the island, of course, the characters must contend

with the formidable resources of the Imperials.

Capricia Jones is a well-known and ambitious reporter who covers large scale disasters and conflicts for her network. The characters encounter her in some 'unpleasant' area. She hires them to escort her to the hottest action—which is also the most dangerous place to be, of course. Obstacles may be natural (such as volcanoes), human (such as rampaging militias or officious bureaucrats) or even corporate (economic groupings never have things to hide or 'spin', do they?). The GM may even use Capricia Jones as a recurring NPC who turns up in various hotspots the characters find themselves in. She does have certain resources in addition to money, and can grant favors based on her contacts. She also has enemies by the space barge load and attracts endless attacks on the 'no pix, no story' basis of media life.

Prominent journalist Larris Seonides has disappeared while hot on the trail of corrupt Colonial military officers on Grandis III. The characters are hired to find him and, if possible, return him safely to the network's headquarters. What the characters don't know is that the network heads assigned Seonides to the story to flush out any trace of corruption so they might be plugged—as a favor to the military leaders involved. Seonides is in hiding—and in desperate need of rescuing—but he won't fare well if the characters return him to the network. He suspects as much, but probably won't willingly share confidential office politics with hired muscle.

Jen Gradis is a 4000-year-old woman. Cyrogenically frozen four millenia previously because her body was wracked with an incurable disease, she was recently thawed out and cured. Unfortunately, the Techno-Techno scientists who did this were interested only in her body. Literally. Discovering during her physical therapy that she was scheduled to be dissected as soon as she was proclaimed physically fit, she escaped the research facility with the help of a sympathetic (disgruntled and / or bribeable) technician. The characters are hired to recover her, but are warned it won't be easy— she possesses the rare ability to manipulate others with powerful pheromones (the reason they were drawn to her), and can sway nearly

anyone to her side to protect or hide her.
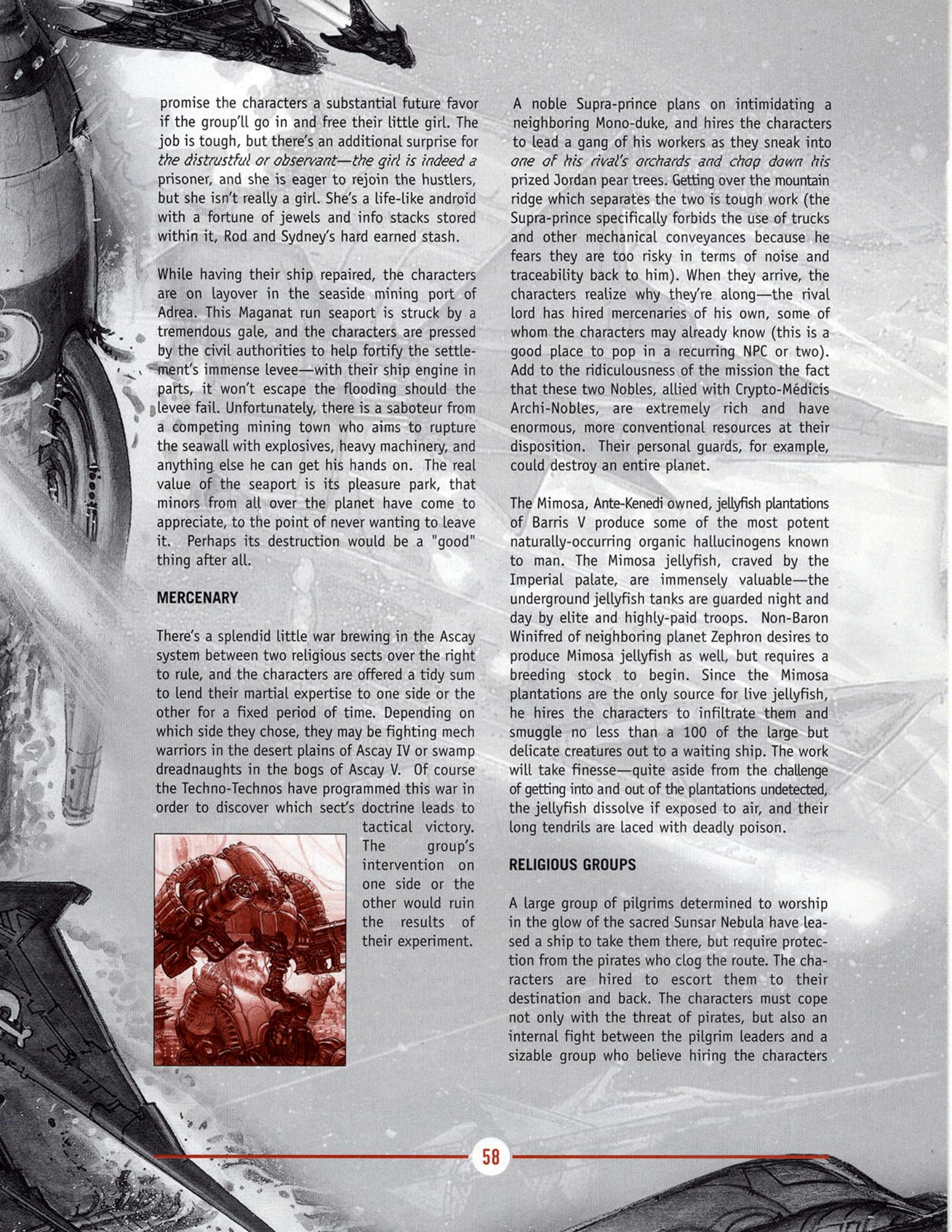
LEGALIZED VICES

The characters win a week's stay at an exclusive tropical resort on Timbra III. While there, a high-stakes Ekonomat gambler hires them to smuggle him offplanet. The Ekonomat, Rain Chamber Controller has lost an expensive Computer Chip that he didn't exactly own. In fact the chip is used by the Rain Chamber to calculate the probability of finding water in a given galaxy, and uses H2O technology that none of the other major factions in the Human Empire possess, especially the Maganats. He would like to leave the Retro-Winds'Or owned Maganat planet without honoring his debt, but the Infra-Noble that won the chip sees it as a way for him to gain the favors of the Queen Louisebeth. His once noble family has lost all of their wealth, and he sees it as a way for him to pass from the status of Infra-Noble to Noble. This scenario could see the group fighting both the Winds'Or Maganat Guard and Spies from the Scientifik Chamber of the Ekonomat, who have been ordered to recapture the chip, in no matter whose hands it falls. Both of these potential foes are among the most dangerous of the Universe.

A powerful Colonial Brigadier's wife wishes to leave her cruel husband, but lacks the resources to escape the planet. The Troglosocialik Brigadier of the Kamar Kougloff clan has obtained the authorization to torture her once a month in order to improve her resistance to pain. She will not leave without her family Paleo-Earth heirloom, a steel button from the uniform of Che Guevara. Her husband has confiscated the treasure, but his wife knows where it is. She has even pre-pared a duplicate to facilitate the switch. Should the group rally to her cause, they will certainly have to pull off the perfect robbery, or encounter the wrath of a very powerful military leader.

Rod and Sydney, two accomplished professional Endo-City hustlers, desperately ask the characters to help them out. Their hustle targets Aristos visiting the Red Ring, avid to discover new pleasures. The "new pleasures" turn out to be more than disappointing. Their daughter had been kidnapped by an irate former mark, and is being held within his fortress-like home. They

promise the characters a substantial future favor if the group'll go in and free their little girl. The job is tough, but there's an additional surprise for *the distrustful or observant—the girl is indeed a prisoner, and she is eager to rejoin the hustlers, but she isn't really a girl. She's a life-like android with a fortune of jewels and info stacks stored within it, Rod and Sydney's hard earned stash.

While having their ship repaired, the characters are on layover in the seaside mining port of Adrea. This Maganat run seaport is struck by a tremendous gale, and the characters are pressed by the civil authorities to help fortify the settlement's immense levee—with their ship engine in parts, it won't escape the flooding should the levee fail. Unfortunately, there is a saboteur from a competing mining town who aims to rupture the seawall with explosives, heavy machinery, and anything else he can get his hands on. The real value of the seaport is its pleasure park, that minors from all over the planet have come to appreciate, to the point of never wanting to leave it. Perhaps its destruction would be a "good" thing after all.

MERCENARY

There's a splendid little war brewing in the Ascay system between two religious sects over the right to rule, and the characters are offered a tidy sum to lend their martial expertise to one side or the other for a fixed period of time. Depending on which side they chose, they may be fighting mech warriors in the desert plains of Ascay IV or swamp dreadnaughts in the bogs of Ascay V. Of course the Techno-Technos have programmed this war in order to discover which sect's doctrine leads to tactical victory. The group's intervention on one side or the other would ruin the results of their experiment.

A noble Supra-prince plans on intimidating a neighboring Mono-duke, and hires the characters to lead a gang of his workers as they sneak into *one of his rival's orchards and chop down his* prized Jordan pear trees. Getting over the mountain ridge which separates the two is tough work (the Supra-prince specifically forbids the use of trucks and other mechanical conveyances because he fears they are too risky in terms of noise and traceability back to him). When they arrive, the characters realize why they're along—the rival lord has hired mercenaries of his own, some of whom the characters may already know (this is a good place to pop in a recurring NPC or two). Add to the ridiculousness of the mission the fact that these two Nobles, allied with Crypto-Médicis Archi-Nobles, are extremely rich and have enormous, more conventional resources at their disposition. Their personal guards, for example, could destroy an entire planet.

The Mimosa, Ante-Kenedi owned, jellyfish plantations of Barris V produce some of the most potent naturally-occurring organic hallucinogens known to man. The Mimosa jellyfish, craved by the Imperial palate, are immensely valuable—the underground jellyfish tanks are guarded night and day by elite and highly-paid troops. Non-Baron Winifred of neighboring planet Zephron desires to produce Mimosa jellyfish as well, but requires a breeding stock to begin. Since the Mimosa plantations are the only source for live jellyfish, he hires the characters to infiltrate them and smuggle no less than a 100 of the large but delicate creatures out to a waiting ship. The work will take finesse—quite aside from the challenge of getting into and out of the plantations undetected, the jellyfish dissolve if exposed to air, and their long tendrils are laced with deadly poison.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

A large group of pilgrims determined to worship in the glow of the sacred Sunsar Nebula have leased a ship to take them there, but require protection from the pirates who clog the route. The characters are hired to escort them to their destination and back. The characters must cope not only with the threat of pirates, but also an internal fight between the pilgrim leaders and a sizable group who believe hiring the characters

profanes their voyage. Not to mention the fact that part of their worship involves a human sacrifice. The lucky woman elected for the ritual, would gladly trade places with a member of the group.

The Savot Route runs through a harrowing space sector filled with such perils as disruptive nebulae, space-time anomalies and giant electrical ameba which attack passing ships. It is also the only reliable path to the planet Cordola, the location of a mystic shrine sacred to the Venturi Covenists. A band of pilgrims hire the characters to take them there, but they aren't actually Covenists. They belong to a rival sect intent on destroying the shrine…

NOBILITY / SERVANT

A minor noble hires the characters to frame a rival for a coveted royal appointment with the Archi-Noble Kama-Ming, sacred father, Tsui-Amah. The characters are given background information on the target, floorplans to his estate, and encryption keys to his security locks. All they have to do is dump the body of a dead boy on his bed and make a minor upload to his estate computer, and they'll be well paid. Whether they live long enough to enjoy it depends on how quickly they can get offplanet.

A noble house has convinced a visionary scientist, educated by a different family, to design its advanced computer systems. Unfortunately, the rival house doesn't care for this, and hires a deadly assassin—a master of stealth—to kill him. His new patrons hire the characters to protect him as he travels across the galaxy to his new home. The assassin, the only surviving member of an official mercenaries guild, has uploaded his mission specs to the Techno-Techno database as standard procedure dictates. The Techno-Technos, making

"illegal" use of the information, have also decided that the scientist would be a good addition to their ranks.

A wealthy and highly excitable shipping Maganate is convinced his manor is haunted, and hires the characters to prove it. They move in to search for ghosts, but discover instead a slight temporal rift which is sending shadow images from future inhabitants of the manor back to their time period. What will they do when they witness their own deaths at the hand of their client?

The characters are hired by a lord to attend a grand ball being thrown by Mono-Duke Erald. While under cover as wealthy traders, their task is to infiltrate the private quarters of the host and steal a small computer module containing private correspondences. Challenges include playing the part of wealthy Maganate elites before a sharp audience, circumventing the alert staff and security measures of the manor—and distracting Mono-Duke Erald's son and girlfriend, who are making out in the study. The module is hidden in an ornate music box, that's music gives anyone hearing it and missing a Willpower 20 roll a point of Necro-Dream.

The noble house of Zefias has completed an advanced prototype starfighter they have christened the Zypher. The characters are hired by a rival house to infiltrate the military base where the fighter is housed, highjack it , and return with it to the rival house. If they play their cards right, they may receive even more money to return the fighter to Zefias—but that's a dangerous game!

A Maganate transport bearing a noble to an important conference has made an emergency landing on Edopae, a convict planet. One of the noble's allies hires the characters to infiltrate the
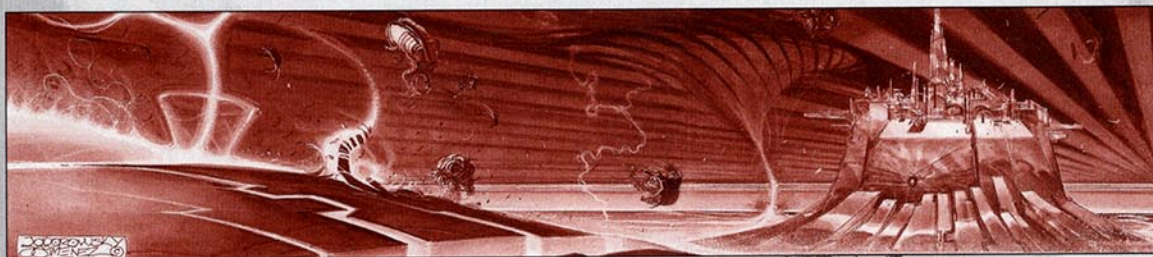
planet's security and rescue him and his entourage before they fall into the hands of the convicted locals. The characters may eventually discover that a Maganate Guard has also been dispatched by the government to rescue the noble, but among them is an assassin determined to assure the noble never leaves the planet alive—someone in the royal family doesn't want him to reach that conference.

CRAFTSMAN

A maker of custom-crafted ceremonial armor—highly sought after by nobles—hires the character to deliver a new suit of custom armor to a noble on campaign in a minor war. What the characters don't realize is that the craftsman's assistant, a sympathizer of the noble's opponents, has concealed a bomb within the ornate trappings of the armor, set to go off when the noble puts it on. And you know what they say about shooting the messenger...

A Terran artisan has restored Paleo-London's Big Ben clock, and is transporting the priceless relic to present as a gift to Lousiebeth and the Retro-Winds'Or court. He hires the characters to accompany him, and it's a good thing. There are plenty of ruthless characters out there who would love to add such an artifact to their private collections, and they have lots of money to spend on mercenaries, assassins, bountyhunters and other opportunists.

Lucian Commodus is one of the universe's top sculptors, and commands top prices for his skills in fashioning vibrant sculptures from priceless marbles and metals. His latest project for the Imperial palaces requires a large quantity of porous Febre marble from the private quarries of the ninja Narron monks of Latalia. His Imperial writ gives him instant access to the quarries, but he needs help in loading it and transporting it back to the Imperial palace. He hires the characters

and their ship (if they have one) to accompany him. Of course, certain monks are less impressed by Imperial writs than others, and determined to keep the sacred marble on their planet. There's a lot they might do to prevent the marble from leaving — and they are martial artists of the first degree.

BOUNTYHUNTER

Jingleberry Laxatovis is a physical comic highly regarded by the citizens of Neo-Bourgogne, and his clowning antics send his audiences into convulsive stitches. Unfortunately, Mssr. Laxatovis has become quite political in recent years, and his pointed barbs have succeeded in offending several local nobles who are not above expressing their displeasure by murdering him. Consequently, Laxatovis is on the run. The characters are hired by a fan of the comic to find him and escort him to safety.

A Maganate's daughter has been drawn into a religious cult and brainwashed. The characters are hired to kidnap her and return her to her parents for deprogramming. The easiest way to get to her is to join the cult itself, but the characters best beware. The cult doesn't content itself with conventional brainwashing techniques—sleep deprivation, protein-poor diet, and so on—but also employs more effective methods, including artificial brain modulation and deep pysche drugs. They'll have to be on their toes to get out!

Allister Javis is a highly regarded nureosculptor, who concocts sophisticated drug cocktails which send the imbiber on expertly-designed voyages through inner space. Alas, his latest creation, SuperNova, has a decidedly fatal affect on certain weak-minded individuals, including the playboy son of Kamar Harod Leines, planet Garial's Colonial Ruler. Enraged Leines ordered Javis and his family rounded up. Unfortunately, things went wrong and Javis escaped after seeing his family

gunned down by Leines' personal guard. Leines' comrades have trapped Javis in Garial's decaying urban sprawl known as Deep End, but haven't been able to locate him among the guttered buildings, subway warrens and deadly neon ghettos. The characters are hired by one of Leines' supra-lieutenants to do what the government can't—find Javis. What the characters don't know is that Javis is now under the protection of one of Deep End's most notorious Psycho-anarchic leaders, a shadowy figure known only as Longjaw. Under Longjaw's influence, Javis is designing a new chemical potion he calls Beanstalk, which Longjaw plans to slip into the sector capitol's water cisterns. Whatever Beanstalk does, it isn't likely to be pleasant.

ENTERTAINER / ARTIST / COMPOSER

Karl Greiber, manager of the Leoni Opera Company, has a problem. His all-girl opera troupe has six days to reach its next stop on planet Tracopi, and the Company's usual transport has broken down, stranding them in a backwater starport. He turns to the characters to help him run herd on the girls, all of whom are naive sheltered beauties eager to see more of the galaxy—especially men. Unfortunately for the characters, part of the job entails protecting the girls from all male interlopers—one another included! There are too many people to transport on any ship the characters may have ready access to, so they'll have to book passage on other ships—such as, for example, a cattle transport, a personnel transport bringing a hundred sex-starved miners back to civilization after 10 months in the wilderness, a small liner leased by a convention of used starship salesmen…you get the idea. There may even be a pirate attack before all's done. The progress to Tracopi is erratic at best—the group will have to change ships several times, and there'll be at least one lull planetside where the troupe can get into more trouble!

The characters are approached by Janis Fairbanks, a wealthy arms dealer and art collector. Fairbanks very much desires a rare sculpture owned by a minor lord named Feris Callias. Callias has turned down three increasingly generous offers, and Fairbanks is now willing to consider less legal means of procuring the piece. There are a number of ways the characters might approach the situation. Callias maintains several questionable businesses, and might be blackmailed if the characters obtain proof. Or they might simply break in and steal the two-meter-tall statue. By way of payment, Fairbanks can offer cash, or perhaps some exotic and quite illegal weapons.

Fio Rocotti is one of the Empire's most revered sopranos, but perhaps the The Hyper-Ab'sbourg Archi-Noble family are over zealous fans — they desire to have the woman's voicebox implanted in the throat of one of their servants so that they need not ever be denied her song. With Magante Guards on her trail, she entreats the characters to help her escape. She knows a doctor on a nearby world who can alter her appearance and help her disappear (he's a great admirer), but she needs help getting offworld. She can offer the characters very little, but the high esteem of the well-connected doctor who desires to see her removed from harm's way may yield more in the long run than a purse of kublars.

The characters are hired by a no-nonsense secretary to protect his boss while he's writing an important document. This isn't the cakewalk it might seem—the writer in question is penning a peace treaty between two warring factions, both Colonial, and is the only person both sides trust to write an initial draft. Of course, since not everyone wants peace, there are bound to be assassin types who want to make sure a treaty never gets completed. The characters may decide where they take the writer to protect him, but the assassins are most resourceful—and have a person or two on the inside.

ALIEN

A group of archeologists hire the characters to protect them from the wildlife as they investigate a ruined alien city of stone located on Ajax III. Aside from a few disruptions caused by local predators, all is going well, until one of the scientists discovers a buried chamber and awakens a long-dormant guardian, who will stop at nothing to repel invaders. The guardian may be an alien robot, an artificial lifeform, or even one of the aliens themselves. In any case, the characters may soon learn what destroyed the city eons ago,

the original Shabda'Oud order. There are potentially some Neo-Shabda'Ouds in the area, looking to capture the guardian as their new god.

The Teldown Merchants Guild is searching for a quicker route for its transports through the Helstrom Rift, a spectacular nebula which dominates a minor but lucrative trade route. Its reps hire the characters to make various test runs through the Rift to plot out potential new courses. Unfortunately, isolated areas of the Rift harbors a race of alien energy parasites, which attach themselves to spacecraft and drain their power. Could be a problem.

The characters are hired by an insurance firm to perform a safety audit of Lucius Park, an isolated Maganat island resort for the wealthy which is due to open in a number of months. The park's main draw is its incredible menage of alien predators, each species in it's own secure area. Unbeknownst to the park's staff, several of the species are sentient, and are in the process of taking down the park's power grid in an effort to escape. This may be a problem for characters who are in the middle of the park sampling its attractions, since the power fences are all that keep a hundred or so deadly species safely locked away.

Archeologists are anxious to recover the remains of ancient alien astronauts on the forested world of Gosshu III, but the indigenous humans believe that to be a sacrilege. The scientists hire the characters to back them up as they forcibly remove the sarcophagi of the aliens from their crypts and load them aboard their transports. Naturally, the locals aren't going to take this lying down, and though they are only armed with projectile weapons, there are a lot of them. And what happens when the characters learn that the natives weren't trying to kill them, but to protect them from the inhabitants of the sarcophagi? Or are they cocoons?

ROYALTY

The Royal Enuchs are talented bodyguards and assassins in the employ of Potentate Visor Ling, ruler of all of Calais IV. They alone are entrusted to guard the Chateau de Femme, the fortress-like but ornate palace in which live Ling's 239 wives

and 635 daughters. A militant but secret splinter group of the Enuchs has grown over the past few years, one utterly opposed to the present government. Wishing to make a statement, they have concocted a plan calculated to drive the king into frothing rage—they will don functioning mechanical penises and rape and impregnate the women under their care, before committing ritual suicide. Smuggling over a thousand mecho-penises into the palace is a daunting task, of course, and naturally the group's leaders turn to our characters. They must take delivery of the mecho-penises in the port of Salla and transport it overland (air transport is impossible so close to the palace) through harsh terrain, then conceive of a way to get it past the imposing walls of the palace. The Enuchs cannot leave the palace.

Rincewick and Fopp are two young handsome twin brothers — nobles with impressive bloodlines—who have a taste for adventure. They have untold riches, and are determined to wander the galaxy sating their wanderlust and shifting desires for action as long as possible. Brave but utterly foppish and more than a little dim, they delight in elaborate practical jokes, counting on their wealth and influence to get them out of trouble. The twins hire the characters to accompany them on their journeys for a while, either because they need help getting passed some obstacle or simply because the characters amuse them.
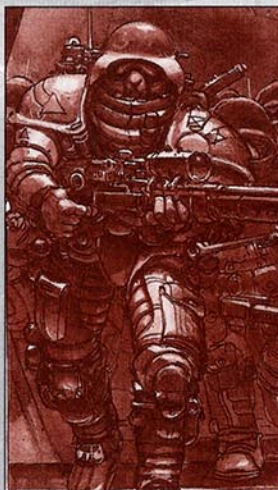
MILITARY / POLICE

A local Colonial warlord on Grelow suspects one of his generals is plotting a coup from a command center based within a domestic robot manufacturing plant and hires the characters to break in and gather evidence. He's right, as the characters realize when they find themselves in a factory filled with freshly-minted killer robots—all of whom attempt to kill them before they can

escape and report to the warlord.

A terrible earthquake has leveled the huge capital city of Varland on Oranso. The characters—and thousands of others—are hired (or volunteer) to lend their expertise and equipment to help in providing emergency relief. As they fly in medicine and rescue stranded victims, they discover a destroyed research lab is disgorging millions of tiny assassin robots who are preying on the survivors.

Ethnic civil war has come to the industrial world of Indo-Prussia, and competing factions of peacekeeping units in the cities are clashing as much as the rioting mobs. The characters are hired by one of the Colonial police factions to kidnap the leader of a competing faction for them. The leader isn't an easy man to get near, especially for those not of his semihuman subspecies.

SCIENTIST

Lolla Carver is an xenobiologist determined to studying the society of the primates of Laris III. The work is potentially dangerous, because the two human colonies of Laris III are the midst of a civil war, and the jungles where the primates are found are crawling with combatants. Carver, who knows her way around in tropical environments, hires the characters to serve as bodyguards and assistants. The work will be harrowing —not only are there the human warriors to contend with, but the terrain is thick with vegetation and other natural obstacles, including a rather active chain of volcanoes. Her work is sponsored by the Ekonomat. Hmmm?

The characters are taking their ease after a tough job when a pair of children fleeing from a group of government heavies beg them to help. They say only that they are orphans who want to escape their government orphanage. As the characters help the kids evade a large government sweep through the area, minor strange things occur to help them escape—a pursuing car breaks down, a building collapses, a spaceship crashes. The characters soon discover that they are harboring two ESPers escaped from a government lab. The government would do anything to get them back,

but the kids can get very violent when they are trapped. The Techno-Technos have also learned of the children's existence and will certainly show up at one point to take the children for themselves.

A pharmaceutical company with a prototype cure for the Hive plague hires the characters to rush an emergency supply through several combat zones and deliver it to a population wracked with disease. When the characters win through, they are feted and hailed as heroes by a grateful city. If they linger to enjoy their accolades, they discover that the drug has a slight problem—it cures the patient, but makes him a super-carrier of the plague. They may well find themselves caught in an Imperial quarantine.

SETTLERS / COLONISTS

The crooked Colonial politician of a small colony, in a desperate desire to create public support for a larger defense budget, hires a gang of pirates to pretend threatening the settlement. Unfortunately, they like what they see well enough to move in for real! Now the pol's daughter, in search of veterans handy enough with weapons to threaten the intruders, begs the characters to come drive them out.

A group of colonists have purchased a continent to settle on in the remote world of Entapus. None of them are pilots, however, so they hire the characters to fly their bulky transports to the planet. They don't quite explain why they want to slip out of the ratty spaceport the characters find them without paying their portage fees, and it eventually transpires that they didn't actually finish paying for the expensive ship the characters are flying into the middle of nowhere, either. This becomes apparent when skiptracers show up demanding the ships back, but the colonists don't plan to go quietly, no matter what the characters may think.

MERCHANT / CORPORATE

The character are hired by a manager of the Tenral Mining Corporation to covertly investigate working conditions in their mines on Aurus before a scheduled insurance audit. The characters

travel to Aurus on a company transport posing as new miners. Aurus proves to be a harsh, airless world, and mining is dangerous work. While the characters are down in the mines, they are trapped in a cave-in and must rally the miners, repair equipment, and otherwise get everyone back to safety. The cave-in may or may not prove to be sabotage. The insurance contract is interesting in and of itself. Human lives are not covered, but major equipment is. The Tenral Mining company must show that cave-ins are not dangerous enough to destroy machinery, and that the personnel is killed off at regular enough intervals to avoid their capacity to organize into a union or a riot. The group's life expectancy is actually a part of the insurance company's investigation. If they survive for more than two weeks, the insurance contract will be cancelled.

A herd of braile beetles have been plaguing a trading settlement on the world of Quirel, and the characters are hired by the community elders to go into their nest and exterminate them and their eggs. Braile beetles are large, noisy and creepy, but not terribly dangerous. They have a tendency to explode when they die, though, and their guts stink to high heaven. Oh, and their eggs are extremely explosive...

The tumbra plants on the Colonial Planet of Granalla only ripen and bloom once every 34 years, yielding an incredibly valuable spice used in the Imperial kitchens. Unfortunately, an outbreak of the hex plague wiped out a large portion of the planet's population a year or so ago. Since the tumbra harvest makes up a cornerstone of the Granalla economy, its leaders are desperate to round up enough workers to get the crop in. This is tougher than it might seem, because the tumbra plants are armed with large powerful strangle vines which must be subdued. The head of a large plantation hires the characters to supervise a work gang he's hired to harvest one of his fields. Unbeknownst to all, the workers are a gang of thieves who intend to make off with the fruits of their labor.

The characters are hired by a corporate head who complains that several of his deep sea mining subs have gone missing in the Trella oceans. He wants them to take down one of his armed subs

to discover what is going on. Some crewmembers fear some sort of previously-unknown sea monster, but the truth is a bit nastier—a rival company has unleashed a nasty strain of nanites near shafts being worked by the sub crews which attack and rapidly corrode the hulls of submarines while blocking radio transmissions. Hopefully the characters don't discover this 15,000 meters under!

It's the scorpia oyster season on Aspia IV, and the characters are hired by a trading company to travel there and supervise the harvest. Scorpia oysters yield extremely fine pearls, which some say confer on the imbiber temporary telepathic powers if crushed to a powder and consumed. The oceans of Aspia IV are tempest-swept, and the harvesting is done from atop great sea platforms, where workers remotely pilot small submarine drones which bring the oyster up to the surface. This year the storms are the worst anyone's ever seen, and the platform itself shows definite signs of distress. This is an Ekonomat owned world, and is run differently than a typical Maganat or Colonial Resource Planet. For one thing, the oysters are not killed, but rather returned gently to their beds after the harvest. During the worst part of the storm, an Ekonomat sorcerer will show up and literally calm the storm. Depending on how many of the oysters the players were able to save, the powerful character will reward the players with Aqua-Kublars, asking them to stay on the planet forever. Should they wish to leave, they risk death at the hands of the same Ekonomat sorcerer, for apparently no reason.

ROBOT

Unbeknownst to the characters, a merchant's diminutive and adventurous robot has escaped from its master, eager to experience the wonders of the universe first-hand. Unfortunately, it has taken refuge deep within the innards of the characters' ship, and struck up a rolling conversation with the ship's computer. Disaster strikes when it tells the ship a tale so thrilling the ship computer blows its retrogaskets in excitement and the characters are stranded in space. The contrite robot apologizes to the characters and offers to hack into a secure and loaded government bank account for them if they will fix the ship and

safely transport him to a nearby world unharmed—assuming, of course, they can fix the ship!

A group of Colonial scientists have created a new urban assault prototype cyborg, called Fidel III. Two days ago it killed several scientists and escaped into the local urban jungle. The characters are hired by the scientists desperate to quietly recover the prototype—keeping police, insurance agents and media out of the entire affair. The one bit of good news is that it wasn't armed when it escaped. The bad news? It looks exactly like a thousand of other robots, and, oh yes, its most recent programming compelled it to destroy the infrastructure of the nearest city—transportation, law enforcement, power, everything.

SCOUT

The characters are hired by an eccentric deep space hauler obsessed with locating an infamous ghost ship which haunts the region. The ship, the Marcus Maximus, was once a government military transport which vanished with all hands decades ago. According to legend. the ship disappeared with billions of kublars of high tech equipment on it. In the ensuing decades, the ship has reappeared on the edge of ship scopes, and other ships have disappeared from time to time. After a bit of exploring, the characters and their client find the ship, and its secret—it isn't a ghost ship at all, but a top secret experimental Techno-Techno sentient destroyer which went rogue on its maiden voyage and killed its own crew. Of course, the ship will do anything to preserve its secret. And so will the Techno-Technos. By Imperial treaty, they are not supposed to possess that type of ship.

A gang of privateers fighting in a local noble-backed brush war hire the characters to scout out enemy fleet movements and report them back to the privateer captain. While in the field, the characters learn the privateers are actually planning to use them as expendable decoys to justify a fresh attack by their sponsor noble on his enemy. Whether they learn this before or after they stick their heads through the noose is up to them.

The prestigious Rexus Regatta is a grueling two week rally through dangerous space areas held once every decade. Only the most skilled and insane starship captains attempt the race, but since the Imperial prize is a paradise moon to call home, there are always enough entries despite the 60 percent fatality rate. The regatta is only a year away, and the characters are approached to test the proposed route to ensure it is actually possible to run. They don't get a moon for their troubles, but they do each get a single Imperial get-out-of-jail-free card redeemable against any crime not targeting an Imperial noble—assuming they survive. The chances of this are much reduced because a ship of Endoguards are assigned to provide a fatal accident should they succeed. It just wouldn't do to have the actual route revealed before the regatta, would it?

GLADIATOR / SPORTS

Bandathae is a world known for its brutal sports brawls between men in hulking power suits. The characters are hired by the young sister of one of the contestants to prove that a rival is sabotaging his machine before important matches. Suspects include the rival, a local sportscaster, a bookie and several ex-girl friends. Of course, it could be the sister herself...

A team of offroad hover-racers are entering a one-week cross continental road rally on Radolay—a world of small cities and rough terrain. Convinced that the corporate sponsors of a rival team will do anything to lead their team to victory, the racers hire the characters to ride shotgun in their hovercraft and help ward off mischief. And indeed, the opposition is capable of any number of dirty tricks, from sabotaging vehicles and drugging water supplies to ambushes and altered route markers.

Rollis Weade is a wrestling tycoon who hires the characters to ensure that his biggest client, Mikus "Ironguts" Savolov, wins his next title match against Leo "Lionheart" Tigris. Short of murder, he doesn't particularly care how they handle the case, as long as Ironguts wins and whatever they do can't be traced back to him. Kidnapping, drugging, bribes and so on are all options, but all are going to be difficult to pull off—and Lionheart has powerful interests watching over him as well! Ironguts, it should be noted, hasn't

a chance at winning a legitimate match, so it's going to be up to the characters to generate a victory.

The characters are recruited to play in a popular gameshow in which teams of capable types are marooned in hostile zones of alien creatures and natural hazards until only one groups still has team members alive. What the characters may not realize at first is that the game is fixed by the sponsor—and they aren't scheduled to win!

The characters, caught off-guard on an isolated world, are captured and processed as combat slaves. Their only hope of regaining their freedom is gaining renown in the gladiator pits, or attempting to forment revolt among the desperate combatants.

SUMMATION AND GENERAL CONCEPTS

1. There are no vice laws in the World of the Metabarons. Therefore the massively organized organize criminal gangs of our world do not exist (no revenue base). There are gangs. There are crimes. The range of crime is from theft to violence. With much less revenue, the groups are small and somewhat ad hoc.

2. The difference between legal and illegal is very small. There are very few laws in the universe that are even semi-consistantly enforced, yet at the same time there are millions of laws nominally on the books. The only laws we know in detail are those dictated by the Endocities, and they concern the impoverished populace, not the Aristos. It is not allowed to fail at a suicide attempt. It is illegal. You can then be killed legally. It is illegal to kill someone until they have done something illegal... etc...Think of the law as one of the weapons of the five pillars of society in their endless battle against each other. They will all oppress the rest of society (Imperials, Technos, Magnates, Colonials, Ekonomat) , but do not pay attention on a consistant basis.

3. Most adventure hooks should come from the ever reigning competition from the five major pillar factions of the universe. Have them play off a maximum the intrigues within the factions and the intrigues between them.

4. The Pirate universe is complex. Empire society is hell on earth where everything is legal, therefore you will soon die or be absorbed. Major pirate societies and fleets might often be considered a welcome contrast, at least it's less hypocritical, but they are still pawns for the empire whether they know it or not. The Ekonomat's have official Corsairs. Only individual pirate ships and squadrons may be free by virtue of being too small to devote much effort to controlling.

The Metabarons™

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RANDOM SPACECRAFT GENERATION SYSTEM

When a gamemaster needs a particular starship but lacks the time to generate one himself, this quick generation system offers a means to instantly produce a balanced spacefaring craft. It also guarantees that a vessel's abilities reflect its general classification in the Metabarons universe. If you, as the gamemaster, are unsure as to how powerful to make a light freighter, this system is your quick and easy solution for generating spaceship stats.

You can also use this system when a handful of players gather for a game and their characters require space transportation of their own (or someone else's) for the imminent adventure. While the gamemaster busily prepares final scenario details, the inevitable questions floats across the table "So, what ship do we have?" The solution is easy: allow the players to roll a spaceship using this system. The players can divert their attention agonizing over die rolls, and that gives the gamemaster precious minutes to tie together player backgrounds and scenario lead-ins.

The heart of the quick generation system is the "Random Spacecraft Master Table" below. The master table lists each major class of vessel. The starships' statistics (crew, shields, stardrive, etc.) are shown on the far left column. Select the general class of craft that you desire from the master table. The appropriate column displays how many dice you should roll for each flight or weapon system on the appropriate system tables below. You'll find one system table for almost every starship statistics (for instance, the "Shields System Table," or the "Stardrive System Table"). Roll the specified number of dice for a given system as shown for that vessel class on the "Master Table," then flip to the appropriate system table. Locate the result you rolled on the table, and record the corresponding statistic.

Example: Aeron needs a new class of snub-fighter for the upcoming adventure. His player selects "light fighter" from the master table, and is working on the ship's space speed. He notes that, according to the master table, its space code will be generated by rolling 5D. He tosses the dice and gets a 21. Looking up on the "Space Speed System Table," he finds that a roll of 21 gives his fighter a speed code of 11. Not the Metacraft by any means, but pretty fast. He records an 11 for his ship's space speed score.

QUICK-GENERATION: MASTER TABLE

	Fighters Light	Heavy	Scout	Freighters Light	Medium	Heavy	Battleships Frigate	Dreadnaught
Scale	Fighter	Fighter	Fighter	Fighter	Fighter	Battleship	Battleship	Battleship
Length	2D + 5 m	3D + 10 m	3D + 10 m	5D + 10 m	3D + 10 m	3D + 100m	5D + 100 m	1D km
Crew	1	1–3 (1D / 2)	1D	1D	2D	5D - 10	3D - 100	2D - 1,000
Passengers	0	0	1–3 (1D / 2)	1D	2D	3D - 10	5D - 10	5D - 100

| | Fighters | | | Freighters | | | Battleships | |
	Light	Heavy	Scout	Light	Medium	Heavy	Frigate	Dreadnaught
Cargo	1D - 20 kg	2D - 100 kg	1D T	3D - 10 T	4D - 100 T	5D - 1,000 T	3D - 1,000 T	3D - 1,000 T
Supplies	2D days	2D weeks	2D months	1D months	2D months	4D months	4D months	1D years
Stardrive*	No	1D	2D	2D	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maneuv.*	3D	2D	3D	2D	1D+2	1D	1D	1D
Space*	5D	4D	3D	2D	1D+2	1D+1	3D	2D
Atmosphere*	4D	3D	4D	4D	3D	2D	1D	1D
Hull*	2D+1	3D	2D+2	3D	3D+1	3D+2	5D	5D
Shields*	1D	3D	2D	1D	1D	2D	4D	5D
Sensors*	2D+2	2D+1	2D+2	2D	2D	2D	3D	3D
Main Weapon*	2D	3D	2D	1D	1D+1	2D	5D	6D
Missile Weapon*	2D	3D	1D	1D	1D+1	1D+2	5D	6D

* Roll the die code listed here and reference the appropriate "System Table" below for the actual spaceship stat values.

SCALE

Ships in the Metabarons Roleplaying Game come in two scales: fighter and battleship. There's no need to consult a system table for this statistic. The class of vessel you've selected to create determines your ship's scale. Record either "fighter" or "battleship" as listed in the master table.

Example:

Aeron's creating a light fighter. Consulting the master table, he finds that all light fighters are fighter-scale craft. He jots down "fighter-scale" in the stat listing for his new vessel.

LENGTH

There isn't a system table for the craft's length. Simply roll the number of dice indicated on the master table and record the result. Note that some ships are fairly long, so you may have to multiply the result by 10 or 100 if the table instructs you to do so.

Example:

Aeron's light fighter is 2D + 5 meters in length. He rolls two dice and gets a 6. He adds 5 to the result, so his ship's length is 11 meters.

CREW

A ship requires a crew to operate its systems. Roll the appropriate number of dice listed in the master table. There's no system table for the crew statistic either. The result of your roll determines the vessel's normal crew compliment. If the spaceship is battleship scale or is a medium or larger freighter, that ship also has a minimum crew requirement. Divide the normal crew score by 5 to determine the minimum crew. For example, if the normal crew for your starship was 500, you'd need 100 crew members at an absolute minimum. Running

a starship with minimum crew incurs a penalty applied to all the crew's rolls: +5 for medium freighters, +10 for heavy freighters, +15 for frigates, and +20 for dreadnaughts. This represents the difficulty in operating a vessel with fewer than the required number of hands.

Example:

Aeron's light fighter has a crew of 1, as indicated in the master table. If he were generating a frigate, he'd roll 5D and multiply that result by 100 to determine the ship's crew requirements. One fifth of that requirement would equal the ship's minimum compliment.

PASSENGERS

A vessel may have sufficient physical space and life support to host persons not required for its operation. While the statistic is called "passengers," this group of people may also include troops or prisoners. Players or gamemasters designing the ship determine what kind of passengers it carries. Regardless of what you decide, roll the listed number of dice, and record the result for your ship's passengers statistic. Note that the smaller craft do not have room for passengers.

Example:

Aeron's light fighter has a passengers score of 0. There's only one seat in the cockpit, and even Aeron finds it difficult at times to squeeze into it.

CARGO AND SUPPLIES

There are no system tables for either of these scores. Roll the number of dice as indicated in the master table, multiplying the die roll if the table listing requires. Note that larger ships have their cargo capacity expressed in metric tons (T), while small craft can only carry kilograms (kg) worth of cargo.

Example:

Aeron rolls a 3 on his 2D supplies. With only three days of supplies, he'd better not wander too far from base. He rolls his 1D of cargo, and gets a 3. Multiplying by 20 kg, Aeron's new fighter has a

cargo capacity of 60 kg.

STARDRIVE

Few ships have a choice whether or not they have stardrive. Larger battleship-class craft almost always have stardrives, while the smallest of fighters don't have enough space for them. If your starship type has a "No" or "Yes" for its stardrive, simply record that fact as its statistic. Ships between these two extremes are sometimes fitted with faster-than-light engines, while others are not. Use the "Stardrive System Table" to determine whether or not your ship has a stardrive. Roll the number of dice indicated by the master table, and look up the result of that roll on the system table below.

Example:

Aeron's light fighter is too small to hold a stardrive, as the master table indicates. He writes "No" next to stardrive. It's assumed that his fighter docks with a larger craft, such as a carrier, to travel between star systems.

STARDRIVE SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Stardrive?
1–4	No
5–12	Yes

MANEUVERABILITY

To determine the agility of your spacecraft, roll the appropriate number of dice (as listed on the master table) and compare the result below.

Example:

Because he selected a light fighter, Aeron's player rolls 3D. He gets a 12. According to the maneuverability system table below, that grants his vessel a maneuverability code of 2D+2.

MANEUVERABILITY SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Maneuverability
1–4	0
5	1D
6	1D+1
7	1D+2
8–9	2D
10–11	2D+1
12–13	2D+2
14–16	3D
17–19	3D+1
20–23	3D+2
24+	4D
For every 5 above 29	Add 1 pip

SPACE SPEED

The "space" speed code indicates how fast the ship moves in material space, and the relative strength of its sublight drives. Roll the number of dice indicated in the master table. Compare the result of your roll with the system table below, and record the result for your ship's space statistic.

Example:

Aeron already determined his ship's space score in an earlier example. The master table instructs the player to roll 5D, and the result of that roll was a 21. According to the system table, that translates into a space score of 11, which is quite fast.

SPACE SPEED SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Space Speed
1–2	1
3–4	2
5–6	3
7–8	4
9–10	5
11–12	6
13–14	7
15–16	8
17–18	9
19–20	10
21–22	11
23+	12
For every 5 above 28	Add 1 speed

ATMOSPHERE SPEED

In the Metabarons universe, a ship's atmospheric speed is generally equivalent to its capabilities in space. However, some spacecraft suffer handicaps while surrounded by air, while other designs take advantage of an atmosphere to improve their performance.

When determining atmospheric speed, multiply the space score's value by 50. This is your vehicle's base atmospheric speed.

Some craft become more or less agile when surrounded by air than they are when in space. To determine if your craft varies from the base atmospheric speed you just converted (by multiplying the space speed by 50), roll the number of dice indicated in the master table. If you roll particularly high or low, you'll notice that your ship incurs a bonus or penalty to its atmospheric speed, as indicated in the system table below. Add or subtract that value to your base atmospheric speed to determine your ship's atmosphere speed score.

This might seem a little confusing, so let's see how Aeron did it.

Example:

Aeron's ship has a space speed of 11. Using the basic rule of multiplying that number by 50 to arrive at his atmospheric speed, that means his ship's atmosphere score is 550. The player rolls on the atmospheric speed system table with his 4D and gets an 18. His ship is faster when surrounded by air than when traveling through the vacuum of space. The modifier says +100, so he adds that value to his base of 550. His ship's final atmospheric speed is 650. He records 650 next to the atmosphere statistic.

ATMOSPHERE SPEED SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Atmosphere Speed Modification
1–3	Incapable of atmospheric flight
4–5	−200
6–7	−100
8–9	−50
10–14	No performance change
15–16	+50
17–19	+100
20+	+200

Once you've determined the final atmosphere speed, consult the table below to translate the atmosphere speed into kilometers per hour (kph). Just find the closest atmosphere speed on the table and jot down the corresponding kph speed.

Example:

Aeron's determined his ship travels through atmosphere at a speed of 650. He consults the "Atmosphere to KPH" table below and finds that his ship's atmosphere speed of 650 translates into about 1,850 kph.

ATMOSPHERE TO KPH

Atmosphere Speed	Kilometers Per Hour
3	10
5	15
7	20
8	25
10	30
14	40
18	50
21	60
25	70
26	75
28	80
30	90
35	100

Atmosphere Speed	Kilometers Per Hour
45	130
55	160
70	200
80	230
90	260
105	300
115	330
125	360
140	400
150	430
160	460
175	500
185	530
195	560
210	600
225	650
260	750
280	800
295	850
330	950
350	1,000
365	1,050
400	1,150
415	1,200
435	1,250
450	1,300
470	1,350
485	1,400
505	1,450
520	1,500
540	1,550
555	1,600
575	1,650
590	1,700
610	1,750
625	1,800
645	1,850
660	1,900
680	1,950
695	2,000
715	2,050
730	2,100
750	2,150
765	2,200
785	2,250
800	2,300

HULL

A spaceship's hull statistic represents its basic durability. The higher the score, the more punishment the craft can take before it becomes crippled or destroyed. For this stat, roll the number of dice indicated in the master table, consult the hull system table, and record the result.

Example:

Aeron's player notes that, according to the master table, light fighters roll 2D+1 to determine their hull score. He rolls and gets a 4. Aeron's starship has a 2D hull code. His ship is turning out to be a fast vessel, but it's also dangerously fragile.

HULL CODE SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Hull Code	Die Roll	Hull Code
1	1D	14–15	4D+2
2	1D+1	16–17	5D
3	1D+2	18–19	5D+1
4	2D	20–21	5D+2
5	2D+1	22–23	6D
6	2D+2	24–25	6D+1
7	3D	26–27	6D+2
8	3D+1	28–29	7D
9	3D+2	30–31	7D+1
10–11	4D	32–33	7D+2
12–13	4D+1	34–35	8D

SHIELDS

Shield systems protect many larger ships, deploying energy barriers to prevent damage to their hulls. Consult the master table, then roll the prescribed number of dice on the system table to determine your ship's shield statistic. Smaller ships, or those constructed on a budget, may not be fitted with a shield system.

Example:

The master table indicates that Aeron's player should roll 1D on the shield system table. He does

so, and gets a 5. With relief he notes that his ship has a shield code of 1D. That should help protect the delicate hull when things don't go Aeron's way.

SHIELDS SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Shield Code
1–4	No shield system
5–8	1D
9–10	1D+1
11–12	1D+2
13–14	2D
15–16	2D+1
17–18	2D+2
19–20	3D
21–23	3D+1
24–26	3D+2
27–29	4D
For every 4 above 27	Add 1 pip

SENSORS

Two sensor values help define a spacecraft's abilities to perceive and analyze its surrounds. The first value indicates the range, in space units, that the sensor system can detect and analyze objects. The second die code indicates the relative strength of the sensor array. A high die code represents a ship possessing strong analytical computers and signal processors, perhaps one able to determine the difference in hull composition at several thousand meters distance. A low die code reflects a more primitive system, able to detect objects at a given distance, but with inferior detail.

To determine the ship's sensor range and power scores, recall the number of dice you should roll from the master table. Roll those dice and compare the result to the value in the sensor range system table. That's the range at which your ship's sensors can detect objects. Roll the same number of dice again, compare the result to the sensors power system table, and record the appropriate value. That die code becomes the ship's sensor power.

Example:

Aeron rolls 2D+2 for sensors and gets a 7. The sensors range system table indicates that his roll gives his craft's sensors a range of 30. He rolls again, this time for the power of his sensors, and gets a 14! Pleased with this roll, he looks at the sensors power system table and sees that his sensors die code is 4D+2; quite effective! Although his new ship's sensors only have a mediocre range, they are very powerful.

SENSORS RANGE SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Sensors Range	Die Roll	Sensors Range
1–2	5	19–21	55
3–4	15	22–24	60
5–6	25	25–27	65
7–8	30	28–30	70
9–10	35	31–33	75
11–12	40	34–36	80
13–15	45	37–39	85
16–18	50	40+	90

SENSORS POWER SYSTEM TABLE

Die Roll	Sensors Code	Die Roll	Sensors Code
1–2	1D	19–21	3D+2
3–4	1D+1	22–24	4D
5–6	1D+2	25–27	4D+1
7–8	2D	28–30	4D+2
9–10	2D+1	31–33	5D
11–12	2D+2	34–36	5D+1
13–15	3D	37–39	5D+2
16–18	3D+1	40+	6D

ORDNANCE

Finally you get to determine what weapon systems your new spaceship possesses, including auto-cannon, laser, gauss, missile, and flak weaponry. Roll the number of weapon dice for main ordnance, and consult the first table, "Number of Weapons." The right-hand column displays the potential number of weapons your craft may carry. If the value of the right-hand column is expressed as a range (like 16–20), pick any number within that range that you feel is appropriate. Next, determine the type of each weapon by rolling 3D on the "Ordnance Type" table. If you are generating a ship with a multitude of weapon emplacements, you can save time by rolling for more than one weapon at a time. For example, if your ship has 20 weapons, you might want to roll for weapon types in groups of five. If your ship only has three weapons, you can roll once—making all three weapons the same—or roll three times to see if your craft is armed with three different kinds of ordnance.

NUMBER OF WEAPONS

Die Roll	# Weapons
1–2	No main ordnance
3–7	1
8–11	2
12–14	3
15–19	4
20–24	6
25–27	8
28–29	10–15
30–31	16–20
32–33	21–30
34–35	31–40
36–37	41–60
38+	61+

ORDNANCE TYPE (Roll 3D)

Die Roll	Ordnance Type
3–4	Defense Cannon (−2D damage)
4–5	Auto-Cannon (−1D damage)
6–8	Laser Cannon (+1D fire control, −1D damage)

Die Roll	Ordnance Type
9–10	Gauss Cannon (–1D fire control)
11–13	Heavy Cannon
14–16	Flak Cannon (fighter-scale damage only)
17	Tractor Beam Emitter
18	Mag-Drive Cannon (+1D fire control, +1D damage)

Next, determine the weapon's damage by rolling 4D on the ordnance damage table. If you rolled a weapon with a bonus or penalty on damage (defense cannon, auto-cannon, laser cannon, mag-drive cannon), roll the appropriate number of dice, adding or removing dice as the modifier indicates. For example, if the ordnance type is a defense cannon, you'd only roll 2D on the damage table (4D less 2D).

ORDNANCE DAMAGE TABLE (Roll 4D)

Die Roll	Damage Code	Die Roll	Damage Code
1–3	2D	15	5D
4–5	2D+1	16	5D+1
6–7	2D+2	17	5D+2
8–9	3D	18–19	6D
10	3D+1	20–21	6D+1
11	3D+2	22–23	6D+2
12	4D	24–25	7D
13	4D+1	26	7D+1
14	4D+2		

Finally, determine the weapon's fire control. Roll 3D and record the die-code result as indicated in the "Ordnance Fire Control" table. Remember, some weapons have penalties or bonuses to this roll from the ordnance type table.

ORDNANCE FIRE CONTROL
(Roll 3D for main ordnance, 2D for missile weapons)

Die Roll	Fire Control	Die Roll	Fire Control
3–5	0D	14	2D+2
6	1D	15	3D
7	1D+1	16	3D+1
8–9	1D+2	17	3D+2
10–11	2D	18	4D
12–13	2D+1		

You may choose to fire-link weapon emplacements together to act as one. To do this, add 1D of damage for each weapon that fires as part of one massive salvo. For example, a spaceship may have four laser cannons, each weapon possessing a 3D damage code. Combined they fire as a 6D weapon, as each of the three supporting laser cannons add +1D to the fire-linked damage code. When combining weapons, the lowest fire control of the linked weapons becomes the effective fire control code.

You generate missile weapons using almost exactly the same system. First roll on the "Number of Missile Systems" table. If your craft has missiles, you roll 2D on the "Missile Type" table to determine the nature of the missile system, and roll 2D for the weapon's accuracy on the fire control table. Finally, missile weapons have finite ammunition, and each system can carry a limited number of missiles. Roll the missile weapon dice from the master table to determine the number of salvos a missile system carries.

NUMBER OF MISSILE SYSTEMS

Die Roll	# Missile Systems
1–5	No missile weapons
6–10	1
11–16	2
17–21	3
22–25	4
26–30	5–6
31–35	7–10

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Die Roll	# Missile Systems
36–40	11–15
41–45	16–20
46+	21+

MISSILE TYPE (Roll 2D)

Die Roll	Missile Type
2–6	Missile (–1D damage)
7–11	Torpedo
12	Micro H-Bomb Missile (+2D damage)

MISSILE AMMUNITION

Die Roll	Missile Ammo
1–4	4
5–9	6
10–13	8
14–16	10
17–18	16
19–20	32
21–22	50
23+	100

MISSILE WEAPON DAMAGE (Roll 4D)

Die Roll	Damage Code	Die Roll	Damage Code
4	6D	13–15	9D
5	6D+1	16–17	9D+1
6	6D+2	18–19	9D+2
7	7D	20–21	10D
8	7D+1	22	10D+1
9	7D+2	23	10D+2
10	8D	24	11D
11	8D+1	25	11D+1
12	8D+2	26	11D+2

Example:

Aeron's player is ready to roll up weapons for his new ship. He rolls 2D for the main weapons and only gets a 2! Aeron's starship won't have any main ordnance! Frustrated, his player rolls for missile weaponry and gets a 9. Well, at least that's something. Rolling for weapon type, he gets a 12...a micro H-bomb missile. Aeron and rolls 6D (4D plus the bonus of 2D) to determine its damage. Getting a 22, he records 10D+1 for the missile's damage. Finishing up the statistics, he rolls 2D and gets an 8, indicating a 1D+2 fire control. Rolling the missile system dice (2D from the master table), he gets a 10, meaning his starfighter carries 8 micro H-bomb missiles when fully loaded. Hmmm... sounds like a new mercenary strike bomber!

No doubt Aeron will want to generate a battleship-class starship from which to launch his new strike bomber from, but we won't follow his adventures this time. The system is exactly the same, he'll just have to keep in mind that most of the weapons will be battleship-scale, because that's the size of this ship he'll be generating. Now that Aeron has his new mercenary strike bomber stats all rolled up, here's how they'd look in short format:

Mercenary Strike Bomber. Fighter-scale, maneuverability 2D+2, space 11, atmosphere 650; 1,850 kph, hull 2D, shields 1D, sensors 30/4D+2. Ordnance: 8 micro H-bomb missiles (fire control 1D+2, damage 10D+1).

the Metabarons

GAME MASTER SCREEN

Featuring the D6 system

WEG

AGILITY:

A measure of how physically articulate your character is.

Archaic weapons: Wielding unpowered melee and ranged weapons no longer widely used in the universe. It's not just a skill, it's a way of life. It allows the user to roll 2 dice for every Character Point spent to boost an archaic weapons roll against those using melee or dodge to defend.

Brawling: Competence in unarmed combat.

Dodge: Slipping out of danger's way, whether avoiding an attack or a sprung booby trap.

Firearms: Shooting any gun one can carry, even if it requires a tripod set-up to fire. Covers everything from small Vipers to shoulder-launched rockets.

Martial arts: Proficiency in a more refined hand-to-hand combat technique than brawling. It allows the user to roll 2 dice for every Character Point spent to boost a martial arts roll against those using brawling or dodge to defend.

Melee combat: Wielding modern hand-to-hand weapons (those using a power source).

Riding: Controlling and riding domesticated mounts.

Running: Running quickly while avoiding obstacles and keeping from stumbling.

Sleight of hand: Nimbleness with the fingers, including picking pockets and palming items.

Throwing: Hitting a target accurately with a thrown item, including grenades, stones and knives. (Using or modifying grenades as explosives for special destructive effects requires the demolitions skill.)

O-G maneuver: Maneuvering on one's own in zero-gravity environments, including drifting through space in a vacuum suit, or flying under one's own power.

KNOWLEDGE:

Measure of a character's intelligence.

Aliens: Understanding of aliens not of the character's own species and their physiology, customs, and history.

Astrography: Familiarity with astrographic features (planets, star systems, nebulae); and general knowledge of any civilized elements present (settlements, industry, government, orbital installations).

Bureaucracy: Knowledge of and ability to use a bureaucracy's intricate procedures to gain information, favors, or attain other goals.

Business: Comprehension of business practices and the monetary value of goods and opportunities.

Cultures: Understanding of the manners, customs, and social expectations of different cultures.

Intimidation: Using physical presence, verbal threats, and fear to influence others.

Languages: Familiarity with and ability to use

METABARONS SKILL LIST

various forms of communication, written, spoken, and non-verbal.

Investigation: Gathering evidence and drawing a conclusion from it.

Persuasion: Influencing others through honest discussion.

Scholar: Expert learning in a specific area of study, though not a practical proficiency in that subject (a scholar of archaic weapons would know details of them, but couldn't wield them effectively without that particular skill).

Streetwise: Familiarity with criminal organizations, black markets, and other illicit operations.

Survival: Knowledge of techniques for surviving in hostile, uncivilized environments.

Tactics: Familiarity with deploying military forces and maneuvering them to the best advantage.

Willpower: Personal ability to withstand stress and temptation.

MECHANICAL:

Aptitude for operating mechanical equipment.

Astro-nav: Plotting courses through space using a vessel's navigational computer interface.

Comm: Effectively using communication devices and arrays.

Exoskeleton operation: Using personal exoskeletons which augment one's performance with mechanical aids.

Gunnery: Accurately firing weapons mounted on vehicles, space ships or within fortresses.

Piloting: Flying air- or spaceborne craft, from aircars and fighters to transports and battleships.

Sensors: Operating scanner arrays to gather information about one's surroundings.

Shields: Deploying and redirecting shields aboard vehicles and vessels.

Vehicle operation: Operating non-flying vehicles traveling on or through the ground or a liquid medium.

PERCEPTION:

A character's awareness of himself and things around him, including the ability to interact successfully with others.

Bargain: Haggling for prices for goods and services being bought or sold.

Command: Effectively ordering and coordinating others in team situations (such as commanding a battleship crew).

Con: Bluffing, lying and deceiving others.

Forgery: Creating and noticing false or altered documentation in various media (paper, electronic, plastic card).

Gaming: Winning and cheating at games of strategy and luck.

Hide: Concealing objects, both on oneself and using camouflage.

Investigation: Gathering evidence and drawing a conclusion from it.

Persuasion: Influencing others through honest discussion.

Search: Spotting hidden objects or people.

Sneak: Moving silently, avoiding detection and hiding oneself.

SECURITY:

Security regulations: Understanding of how law enforcement organizations, regulations and personnel operate.

STRENGTH:

Measure of a character's physical power.

Climb/jump: Climbing or jumping over obstacles.

Lift: Moving or lifting heavy objects.

Stamina: Physical endurance and resistance to disease and poison.

Swim: Moving and surviving in a liquid medium

TECHNICAL:

Character's ability to manipulate, repair and modify complex mechanical systems.

Armor repair: Fixing damaged armor.

Computer interface / repair: Programming, interfacing with and fixing computer systems.

Demolitions: Setting explosives to achieve particular destructive effects.

Engineering (adv.): Practical and in-depth understanding of a particular technical field.

Exoskeleton repair: Repairing and modifying exoskeletons.

Firearms repair: Repairing and modifying firearms.

First aid: Using basic field medicine to treat injuries.

Flight systems repair: Fixing damaged systems aboard flying vehicles and spaceships.

Gunnery repair: Fixing weapons mounted on vehicles, space ships or within fortresses.

Medicine (adv.): Detailed understanding and application of medical procedures, including surgery and cybernetic implantation.

Personal equipment repair: Fixing small, electronic equipment, including damaged cybernetics.

Robot interface/repair: Programming, interfacing with and fixing robots and their systems.

Security: Installing, altering and bypassing electronic security and surveillance systems.

Vehicle repair: Fixing ground- and ocean-based vehicles that do not fly.

PSIONICS:

Measure of a character's psionic ability. Can have a score of 0D.

Energy: Sensing and manipulating various forms of energy through psionics.

Self-control: Manipulating one's own body and mind from within.

Influence: Using psionics to bend others to your will, including hypnotic control.

HOW GOOD AM I?

When others ask how skilled your character is, don't just say, "Gee, I have 6D in astrography." Die codes just show how skilled your character is in game terms. But how do they measure up to everyone else in the universe in other descriptive terms?

The chart below gives you some idea how die codes translate into comparisons you can use to describe your character's skills.

Die Code	Description
1D	Below average for an attribute.
2D	Average for an attribute and many skills.
3D	Average level of training.
4D	Professional level of training.
5D	Above-average expertise.
6D	Considered about the best in a city or geographic area. About 1 in 100,000 people will have training to this skill level.
7D	Among the best on a continent. About 1 in 10,000,000 people will have training to this skill level.
8D	Among the best on a planet. About 1 in 100,000,000 people will have training to this skill level.
9D	One of the best for several systems in the area. About 1 in a billion people have a skill at this level.
10D	One of the best in a sector.
11D	One of the best in a galaxy.
12D+	Among the best in the universe.

SPACESHIP "TERRAIN DIFFICULTIES"

Very Easy (5)	Flying a vessel in clear space with no naviagational hazards
Easy (10)	Flying a ship in the vicinity of other craft, such as orbiting a space station. Flying around minor obstacles in space, such as a small, dispersed asteroid belt
Moderate (15)	Flying a ship in crowded space - like a busy spacedock staging area. Flying in an area littered with a moderate amount of debris
Difficult (20)	Fighter combat with many ships in the immediate area. Flying through an area clogged with debris and asteroids
Very Difficult (30)	Flying a vessel in an area of space densely packed with other ships or debris
Heroic (31+)	Flying through Heroic terrain is almost impossible. Flying through an ion storm in an asteroid field

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HEALING WITH FIRST AID

Degree of Injury	Difficulty
Stunned, unconscious	Easy (10)
Wounded, wounded twice	Moderate (15)
Incapacitated	Difficult (20)
Mortally wounded	Very Difficult (30)

COVER CHART

Cover	Add to Target's Dodge or Diff
Light smoke	+1D
Thick smoke	+2D
Very thick smoke	+4D
Poor light	+1D
Moonlight night	+2D
Complete darkness	+4D
1/4 covered	+1D
1/2 covered	+2D
3/4 covered	+4D
Fully covered	Must blow thru cover first

SCALE CHART

Scale	Modifier
Character	--
Vehicle	2D
Fighter	6D
Battleship	12D
Planetary	24D

TASK DIFFICULTIES CHART

Task Difficulties		Range	
Very Easy	5	Point Blank (5)	
Easy	6-10	Close (10)	
Moderate	11-15	Medium (15)	
Difficult	16-20	Long (20)	
Very Difficult	21-30		
Heroic	31+		

MANEUVERS CHART

+1-5	Maneuver is fairly easy
+6-10	Maneuver is somewhat difficult and requires a certain amount of skill
+11-15	Maneuver is very difficult and requires a very talented (or lucky) pilot
+16+	Maneuver appears to be almost impossible. Only the very best pilots can pull off a maneuver of this difficulty

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DAMAGED ARMOR CHART

Injury suffered by wearer	Damage to Armor
Wounded	Lightly damaged (-1 pip)
Incapacitated	Heavily damaged (-1D)
Mortally wounded	Severely damaged (Useless but may be repaired)
Killed	Destroyed

PROTECTION CHART

Sample Protection	Body Strength
Flimsy wooden door	1D
Standard wooden door	2D
Standard metal door	3D
Reinforced door	4D
Security hatch	6D

SPACESHIP DAMAGE CHART

Damage Roll Greater Than Hull Code Roll By:	Effect
0-5	Shields blown / controls disabled
6-10	Lightly damaged
11-15	Heavily damaged
16-20	Severely damaged
21+	Destroyed

HEALING WOUNDED CHARACTERS

Strength Roll	Result
2-4	Character worsens to incapacitated
5-6	Character remains wounded twice
7+	Character is fully healed

HEALING FOR MORTALLY WOUNDED CHARACTERS

Strength Roll	Result
2-6	Character dies
7-8	Character remains mortally wounded
9+	Character improves to incapacitated

PROTECTION FROM OBSTACLES CHART

Protection is:	Reduce weapon damage by:
Not seriously damaged	Character is completely protected
Lightly damaged	-4D
Heavily damaged	-2D
Severely damaged	-1D
Destroyed	Character suffers full damage

HIT LOCATION CHART

Die Roll	Hit Location
0-5	Head
6-10	Torso
11-15	Arms (roll again: 1-3 left arm; 4-6 right arm)
16-20	Mortally Wounded
21+	Killed

HEALING FOR INCAPACITATED CHARACTERS

Strength Roll	Result
2-6	Character worsens to mortally wounded
7-8	Character remains incapacitated
9+	Character improves to wounded twice

MANEUVER CHART

Maneuver		
Draw weapon	-1D	to rest of actions this round
Dodge	-1D	to rest of actions this round substitute Dodge roll for Difficulty
Full Reaction Code	--	no other actions this round, add Dodge to Difficulty
Called Shot: Chest (10 - 50 cm)	+5	to Difficulty Number
Called Shot: Head, Hand (1 - 10 cm)	+15	to Difficulty Number
Called Shot: Pinpoint (< 1 cm)	+30	to Difficulty Number
Use Character Point	+1D	for 1 task resolution. Can spend up to 3 character points
Use Amarax Point	--	Double the total amount of dice
Using Character Points with Archaic Weapons or Martial Arts	--	Get 2 dice for each point. May spend up to 6 points

DAMAGE CHART

0-5	Stunned	-1D for rest of round. If # of Stuns=STR D, ko'd
6-10	Wounded	Fall prone, lose next action, -1D still healed
11-15	Incapacitated	Fall prone, Ko'd for 10D minutes, cannot do anything til healed
16-20	Mortal Wound	Fall prone, Ko'd. End of each round, roll 2D, if less than # or rounds w/M.W, character dies
21+	Instant Kill	'nuff said

RESISTING TEMPTATION

Use these general guidelines when setting difficulties for willpower rolls to resist various temptations of the Necro-Dream:

Very Easy (5):	Resisting casual exposure to the Necro-Dream—strolling past a blaring holovid set; seeing an advertisement for a homeslut establishment.
Easy (10):	Avoiding general contact with temptation— resisting the advances of a beautiful homeslut; passing up an offer to do some Cocoloco.
Moderate (15):	Resisting basic exposure to the Necro-Dream—taking a hit of Cocoloco; spending the night with a homeslut; participating in holovid gambling; sitting down to watch holovid for the afternoon.
Difficult (20):	Prolonged exposure to the Necro-Dream—spending a week in an endo-city.

Characters with addictions—to homesluts, drugs, holovid, and other technological comforts—resist the Necro-Dream's temptations at one difficulty level higher than normal.

The Metabarons™