TRAVELLER

Three Blind Mice
by Timothy Collinson

Three Blind Mice

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Foreword

District 268 with its varied polities and existence in the shadow of the Imperium to trailing, and the Zhodani to Coreward is always a region where travelling can be, well, interesting. In the years prior to the Fifth Frontier War, these tensions can be exacerbated by any number of factions having their own agendas: political, personal, provocative. The Cold War between Trexalon and Collace doesn't help matters. Close to the borders with the Trojan Reaches a desperate group of individuals is about to encounter a motley collection of merchants just trying to make their way.

This adventure can be run from either or both of two points of view. For three PCs playing some of the crew of a starship, or for three players as stowaways, or for some players as the crew and some as the stowaways. In the latter case, it would be most effective if the two groups could be run separately until they encounter one another in either of the Scene 4s of Act 1.

To run the adventure you will need the *Core Rulebook*. *Book 2: High Guard, Book 7: Merchant Prince* and *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters* may be useful and are either referenced in the text or have been used to create characters. Other volumes which are relevant: *Supplement 8: Cybernetics, Robots* and *The Spinward Marches*. The author has also referred for background to the Mongoose volumes *Book 1: Mercenary, Book 4: Psion, Book 9: Robot, Little Black Book 9: Library Data*, and other online works such as Don McKinney's Integrated Timeline, Joshua Bell's The Traveller Map and the Traveller Wiki.

Prologue

The men came down the hillside to the hollow where our farmhouse stood beside the large barn. Under their helmets their faces looked contorted with anger. Perhaps it was fear. My little sister didn't really understand what was going on and watched wide eyed; one of my nephews was twisting his headband in his hands deciding whether to put it on or not. We'd seen ships in the air and gazed at them with interest. Their shapes were funny and we didn't recognize any.

The grown-ups had been listening to the comms a lot recently. But it hadn't been family time, gathered around the set. We were told to hush and sometimes we were sent to our room even though it wasn't bed time. It didn't seem fair, but there was a lot of tension in the air especially after our cousins from the city came to stay. Twelve kids and six adults meant the house was busy, full and noisy. As the oldest, I was expected to keep the smaller ones out of the way.

The men came closer and we could hear their strange voices giving orders, calling to one another, shouting. We couldn't understand but the tones were urgent. Some came to the front, and some were round at the side. We could hear them pounding on the door and shouting more. The grown-ups downstairs had piled furniture against the doors and were shouting that there were no soldiers here, just farm workers. Then there was a crash and I heard a window smashing. Someone screamed - I think it was my aunt from the north and we heard

Three Blind Mice
Overview

stowaways	crew	
Running	Departure	Motmos
Hiding	(Drill)	
(Life in the Straw)	Life Aboard	

Found!

Arrival at Trexalon

| (Customs) | Barkan Dome | | Trexalon |
| | War Crimes | (Finding Bretton) | |

Snooping	Trexalon or Elsewhere
The Fair	
A Trap	
Rescue	

(optional)
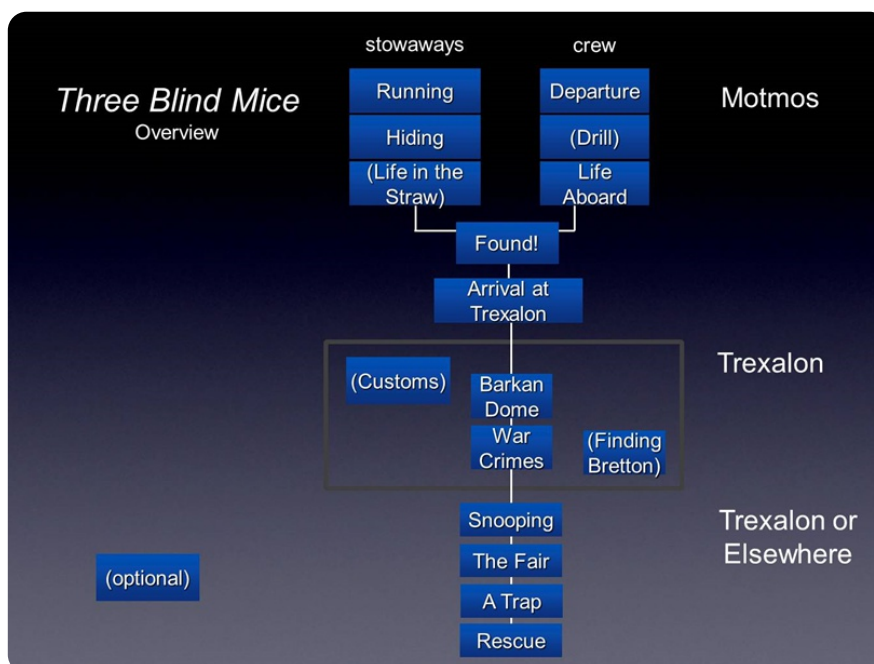
shots - lots of them. In a moment, it seemed, there were boots on the stairs and the door to the room we were all in burst open. A soldier stood there, weapon raised. For a moment, there was an awful stillness. No sound; no movement; and then little Steb started crying.

The soldier shot Steb and I ran to him. I felt a burning in my head and fell down over Steb's

body; then something else hit me - I think it was another of my cousins - and I must have passed out. I don't remember any more.

(from testimony given at the Shinchoddia Massacre hearings)

Act One

Some of the 'scenes' throughout this adventure are not necessarily a single dramatic moment, but may be a linked series of connected events. As noted above much of this Act will depend on how the adventure is being run. If the PCs are playing the stowaways, the Crew scenes of Act 1 can be skipped, if the PCs are playing the Crew, the Stowaway scenes of Act 1 can be passed over, if PCs are playing both sets of characters all of the scenes can be used (although some are optional in any case – see the Adventure Outline above) and the Referee will need to consider how to run the two groups until they formally meet. If the Referee would rather run six people as the crew of the ship, the medic and the steward roles can be beefed up and a gunner added. Another possibility is that Nestine is run as a more formal Patron. It has been left deliberately ambiguous as to whether Bretton was or was not actually involved in the war crime. The Referee and/or players should adjust according to preference.

> **Trade (butcher)**
> The character is skilled in the slaughter and cutting up of animals for sale and/or consumption. The Referee may wish to limit how 'alien' a creature can be to be included in this Trade.

The Stowaways

Ex Navy Bretton Kilián Vaillancourt 54A945, Age 60, Rank: E3 Able Spacehand

Strength 5 (-1), Dexterity 4 (-1),
Endurance 10 (+1), Intelligence 9 (+1),
Education 4 (-1), Social Standing 5 (-1)

Homeworld:
Magash (Deneb, 0316) Hi Ht In Na Va Cp

Skills:
Melee (blade) 3, Animals (training) 2, Mechanic 2, Zero-G 2, Comms 1, Engineer (life support) 1, Engineer (power) 1, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Sensors 1, Vacc Suit 1, Computers 0, Discipline 0, Engineer (jump drive) 0, Trade (butcher) 0, Streetwise 0

Equipment:
Cr.0 (was Cr.42,000), Pension: Cr.18,000 (currently suspended), blade, mechanical

toolkit, 4 ship shares and air/raft (sold to pay medical bills)

Background:
Bretton Kilián Vaillancourt – a grizzled 60 year old veteran of the Fourth Frontier War (see Library Data) which started when he was 37. He was mustered out of the Navy when blinded by starship laser fire; two subsequent treatments to grow replacement eyes have failed to take (which occurs about 1 in 10,000 times) and has consumed all the Credits he'd saved in his career. He carries a white stick with wireless earbuds that acts as a radar and gives some sense of surroundings. An investigation into a Fourth Frontier War atrocity has brought his name up in connection with being a participant and the Ministry of Justice wants to bring him in. They want no possible excuse for the Zhodani to have cause for embarrassing the Imperium.

> **Cybernetic eyes**
> Nestine's eye replacements are cybernetic replacements described in *Supplement 8: Cybernetics*, p.60-61. She has three enhancements fitted: TL10 Low-Light Enhancement, TL10 Telescopic/Micro Sight (as per book but x15), TL10 Camera (as per book but 10 hours of recording or 200,000 images). If using the first two enhancements intensively (more than 90 minutes at a time), she can develop debilitating migraines which reduces her Strength by 1, her Dexterity by 2 and her Endurance by 3 for up to four hours. The irises are a striking grey-blue.

Ex Navy Nestine Brümmer 85CA67, Age 44, Rank: O5 Commander

Strength 8 (+0), Dexterity 5 (-1),
Endurance 12 (+2), Intelligence 10 (+1),
Education 6 (+0), Social Standing 7 (+0)

Homeworld:
Maitz (Spinward Marches, 2927) Ni

Skills:
Deception 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Medic 2, Animals (riding) 1, Comms 1, Computers 1, Discipline 1, Drive (wheeled) 1, Leadership 1, Pilot (any) 1, Recon 1, Admin 0, Engineer (life support) 0, Gun Combat (energy

Precognition

The Core Rulebook tantalisingly hints at the possibility of precognition or prescience on page 152, but no rules are given. The Referee may choose, as suggested, to simply treat Sina's abilities as a one off, or possibly just as a Clairvoyant talent detecting when crew are approaching the area. In any case, remember that she's a Wild Talent and therefore completely untrained. She's not aware of what she's doing and certainly has no clue how she's doing it. Her talent is also nowhere near infallible either. Without specifying a time range, she typically detects 1-6 minutes or 10-60 minutes in the future. Bretton and Nestine may well have picked up some idea of a certain oddness about her after spending a few days with her.

However, the following rules may also be used if desired and may be considered either part of the Clairvoyant suite of talents (allowing the usual access to the other powers within the talent) or the Referee may choose to treat it as a separate talent. Note the cost of her Talent which will limit the number of times she can 'get a feeling' each day.

PRECOGNITION

The ability to sense at a distance in time rather than space. The precognitive character can get a feeling of how future events will unfold in the space they are occupying, or in their own vicinity if they move, or both at the Referee's discretion. The character must state the 'time range' at which the talent is being applied. The Referee will give a description of events as vague or specific as appropriate. Future actions by PCs may of course be quite opaque.

Precognition, Psionic Strength, 10-60 seconds, Difficult (-2)
Costs 4 + Time Range

1-6 seconds	0
10-60 seconds	1
1-6 minutes	2
10-60 minutes	3
1-6 hours	4
6-24 hours	5

rifle) 0, Gun Combat (shotgun) 0, Pilot (small craft) 0, Social Science (philosophy) 0, Streetwise 0, Tactics (naval) 0, Vacc Suit 0

Equipment:
Cr.6000, Pension: Cr.10,000, autopistol, 2 ship shares, ally, contact x 2, TL7 hand computer

Background:
Nestine is a very attractive, ex-Imperial Naval Intelligence officer, blind from birth due to a congenital deformity, but has cybernetic implant eyes which have several enhancements INI made good use of. She was retired against her will after cutbacks and is now struggling to make ends meet as a teacher on Motmos. With rumours of possible hostilities with the Zhodani, INI are looking to reactivate her. Nestine is not interested due to the way she was treated and due to the Navy's treatment of other disabled vets she knows.

Orphan Sina Heraidi Korson 5788834, Age 10
Strength 5 (-1), Dexterity 7 (+0),
Endurance 8 (+0), Intelligence 8 (+0),
Education 3 (-1), Social Standing 4 (-1),
Psi Strength 10 (+1)

Homeworld:
Motmos (Spinward Marches, 1340) Ni

Skills:
Animals 0, Telekinesis (lobotomized),
Precognition 2

Equipment:
None

Background:
Sina is a 10 year old who has spent nearly all of her life in a rundown orphanage on Motmos. She showed psionic talent in telekinesis from an early age and was 'lobotomized' at the age of 6 to destroy her ability by the zealous authorities keen to stamp out such abomination. Unknown to the so-called doctors who performed the operation at TL6 and unknown to Sina herself, this has strengthened a latent precognitive ability. She doesn't quite know why, but does have an uncanny ability to either avoid trouble or be in the right place at the right time.

Referee's Note: Sina's UPP reflects her age. The lack of specialisation in her skill (from her homeworld as an Agricultural planet) reflects her youth. 'Suffer Unto Me the Little Children' by Richard Morey in *Freelance Traveller*, no.40, April 2013 is helpful here, as is 'Child's Play' by Mark Graybill in *Freelance Traveller*, no.24, December 2011. Expect Sina's adult (aged 18) UPP to be 89996x where her Social Standing as an orphan will depend on her circumstances at the time.

Stowaway Scene 1: Running

All three of the stowaways are currently on Motmos (Spinward Marches, 1340) and have made their way to a starport 'fixer' in order to get off world, Jemmy Hranf. Bretton arrived in the port area and tracked him down a few days ago; he's now living with one of Hranf's seedier relatives in a cheap apartment while the fixer waits for the right opportunity. He's looking at various outgoing merchant ships for the best chance of either hiding someone or bribing the crew.

Now Nestine is knocking on Hranf's door just as he's explaining to Sina, who arrived a little earlier, that he can't possibly put her on a "ship to the stars". Sina explains something of her background to both of them and after hearing her story, Nestine offers to take her under her wing.

If PCs are playing the stowaways, these scenes – or even earlier ones such as Sina escaping the orphanage, Nestine taking leave of her school children or Bretton finding out that his past may be catching up with him – can be developed by the Referee into full interactions, or they can be improvised with the players being given a starting point and the goal of first finding and then persuading Hranf. Or, particularly in a convention situation, they can be assumed to have happened.

Jemmy Hranf, Starport Fixer, Rogue (Thief) 4 terms, 694975, male
   Strength 6 (+0), Dexterity 9 (+1),
   Endurance 4 (-1), Intelligence 9 (+1),
   Education 7 (+0), Social Standing 5 (-1)
Skills:
   Streetwise 4, Deception 2, Stealth 2, Carouse 0, Gambler 0, Melee (blade) 0, Melee (unarmed) 0
Equipment:
   Dagger (1d6+2), Jack (1) and a state of the art (for Motmos) TL6 Comm

Bretton has very little money but has given what he has to Jemmy and played on his dislike and fear of the Zhodani, Nestine has some savings which she can pay to Jemmy, Sina has no money at all and is not quite sure why she felt she had to run away from the orphanage and seek out Jemmy but had a strong sense she should. Her story about medical abuse and poor treatment at the orphanage has played on Jemmy's better nature - although his career path has led him through thievery and perhaps more, he's not without a heart. He can be played as a smiling, charming rogue who can't do enough for the three stowaways – even if he's really doing very little. Or he might be a shady, seedy type always looking over his shoulder and only persuaded to get involved because it's the quickest way to get rid of the threesome.

All three need to get off world and do so without it being known that they've left, where they are, or where they're going. Jemmy has a scheme to get all three aboard a subsidised merchant, *The Application of Credit*, which is being chartered to take a herd of hexapod xeeboo cattle to Trexalon. He's bribed a dockside loading wrangler to get them into the cargo hold and hidden in one of the spare animal pens a little before departure. They have basic rations for a week, one change of clothes and nothing else. Water they're expecting to be able to filch from the cattles' supplies. On realising Nestine's ex-Navy past Hranf will attempt to talk to her about it in the hope of gaining a contact, but her savage antipathy to the Imperial Navy should be made clear to him. If the Zhodani come up in conversation, it won't be clear who she despises more.

If this scene hasn't been developed into something more, then it at least gives the opportunity for the three stowaways to get to know each other and to share something of their backstories. Remember that Sina's 'history' will be seen through the eyes of a ten year old who may not have a very clear idea of why certain things have happened or are happening. If the three want to suggest refinements to Hranf's plan in the next scene, that should be encouraged. It might even be that the Referee wishes to outline a number of possible outbound merchant ships that they could discuss as potential targets.

Stowaway Scene 2: Hiding

Jemmy's plan to get the stowaways aboard with the xeeboo involves bribing one of the dockside loading handlers. But the tech level is low, the security fairly lax and this shouldn't be a problem. The bribe could be a task for one of the stowaways if desired.[1] The three of them will need to walk amongst the cattle which will be a little unnerving for Nestine and perhaps Sina, but

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[1] There is no formal Bribery skill in the *Core Rulebook* but Persuade is described as covering it. Deception or Streetwise could also be used. Having said that, Bribery skill is mentioned – but not defined – in *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters* and also *Spinward Encounters*. So Referees who wish to use it directly have a precedent. A possible check might be: *Persuading an animal wrangler to look the other way, Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Difficult (-2)* with a DM of +1 for every Cr.1000 offered.

Bretton will be confident providing he can put a hand on Nestine's shoulder. The handler will direct them to a stall at the forward end of the Cargo Bay which won't happen to have an animal in it. Nestine and Bretton will be familiar enough with the standard layout of a Subsidised Merchant to be able to check out other temporary hiding places which will be necessary when crew are around.

Possibilities include: Port side Secure Cargo Area not currently used for cargo but cluttered with rope, tie downs, kegs, small containers and various empty bags and suitcases; in the cab of the utility vehicle or under a tarpaulin at the rear of the truck; in a cleaning cupboard on the starboard side of the Main Cargo Bay just aft of the airlock. With Sina's abilities, it might also be possible, after observing the Engineer's general movements, to use one of the Landing Strut Access spaces.

This scene should allow the stowaways a chance to get used to the animals, get used to their 'quarters' on the merchant ship and to explore their very limited surroundings. The pens in the Cargo Bays are made up with metal bars, so they don't offer much in the way of cover close up, but the lower bars can easily be stood on to give a view down the Bay. Each pen is approximately 3m x 1.5m (i.e. two deck plan squares) and can hold two animals. There are some 25 pens all told in both the Main Cargo Bay and the forward end of the Aft Cargo Bay and thus nearly 50 animals. (A second, wooden, floor and more lighting could be added which wouldn't be airtight or watertight if the Referee wished to double the number of animals and make the environment really unpleasant: but perhaps easier to hide in.)

Xeeboo
Type
   Herbivore (Grazer)
Habitat
   Plain (or Clear) walker
   Strength 7 (+0), Dexterity 11 (+1),
   Endurance 15 (+3), Intelligence 0 (-3),
   Instinct 9 (+1), Pack 15
Skills:
   Athletics 0, Recon 0, Survival 0
   Horn (1d6), Number encountered: 4d6
Hexapedal cattle prized for its meat. Males usually have forked tails. The females provide good milk which is a pale brown in colour.

Stowaway Scene 3: Life in the straw

The Referee may wish to play out various moments in JumpSpace which will for the most part be very, very dull and uncomfortable given they have nothing to do, nowhere to do it, and no creature comforts. Bear in mind they don't even have 'fresher facilities and will have to disguise their excretions as part of the animals' output in the straw of other pens. It's not a pleasant way to travel! Then there will be the moments of tension and stress as they detect, or Sina senses any of the crew (or passengers) entering the Cargo Bay.

Some things that might occupy them could be along the lines of Nestine attempting to tamper with the computers to mask any use they might make of iris valves; Sina making a middle of the night raid on the fruit bowl in the Passenger Common Area; or Bretton's realisation that one of the xeeboo has fallen sick. Something along the lines of haemochromatosis might be suitable. This can be signalled by joint pain along with a darkening of the skin. Bretton might notice the first thanks to the xeeboo's obvious distress and Nestine or Sina might notice or describe the latter – particularly if Bretton asks. They should be able to find a medikit amongst other emergency supplies in appropriate locations around the Cargo Bay but this will be limited to such things as painkillers and bandages. However, the last thing they need is the crew paying any more attention to the animals than they already are, so he should do his best to treat the animal. This will involve regular, twice a day, bloodletting and the difficulties of disposing of the blood and clearing up. Each time use a Deception, Trade (butcher) or Animals (veterinary or farming) check:

Hiding blood etc in the animal litter: Intelligence or Education, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0).

Failure will give additional clues to the crew that something is afoot.
If Sina, or for that matter, Nestine, is curious as to Bretton's knowledge, he'll explain that for a couple of stints in the Navy he was stationed on a low-tech world where the 'motor pool' he was normally responsible for in his unit, consisted of local herd animals the troops would use for transport and load-carrying when their own vehicles were out of action due to the inclement weather conditions.

Stowaway Scene 4: Found!

Presuming that they are indeed, eventually, discovered[2] it should of course be at the most potentially difficult moment of being found as they're bleeding the sick xeeboo. They are trying to save its life, but that might not be immediately obvious. See Crew Scene 4 for further notes.

The Crew

Captain/Engineer Debba Wattins B4AA66, Age 50, Rank 4: Shift Manager

Strength 11 (+1), Dexterity 4 (-1),
Endurance 10 (+1), Intelligence 10 (+1),
Education 6 (+0), Social Standing 6 (+0)

Homeworld:
Uakye (Spinward Marches, 1805) Ni

Skills:
Engineer (jump drive) 3, Gun Combat (energy rifle) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Mechanic 2, Trade (salvage/repair) 2, Vacc Suit 2, Athletics (strength) 1, Broker 1, Engineer (life support) 1, Engineer (m-drive) 1, Investigate 1, Language (Gvegh) 1, Melee (unarmed combat) 1, Advocate 0, Computers 0, Melee (blade) 0

Equipment:
Cr.13,000, 12 ship shares, Pension: Cr.16,000, Assistant (Drone) – see Steward Charlie below, Influence + 1, enemy

Background:
Debba Wattins is a 50 year old former Junk Dealer who has a talent for salvage and repair and is an engineer skilled in a variety of areas (jump drive, m-drive, life support). She is a strong and somewhat taciturn Master but knows her stuff and keeps the subsidised merchant, *The Application of Credit*, just about in profit even in the difficult reaches of District 268.

> **Language (Gvegh)**
> The ability to understand, speak and write the most common of Vargr languages in the Spinward Marches.

Pilot Pauli Stoyko 836987, Age 38, Rank 1: Tramp Hand

Strength 8 (+0), Dexterity 3 (-1),
Endurance 6 (+0), Intelligence 9 (+1),
Education 8 (+0), Social Standing 7 (+0)

Homeworld:
Jenghi (Spinward Marches, 1810) Ni

Skills:
Streetwise 3, Gun Combat (any) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Persuade 2, Animals (farming) 1, Broker 1, Computers 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (unarmed combat) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1, Admin 0, Melee (bludgeon) 0, Vacc Suit 0

Equipment:
Cr.10,000, TL8 body pistol (*Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue*, p.63), blade, well annotated printed book of scripture

Background:
Pauli was forcibly taken into a slaver gang when he was 14 and grew up with them for nine years before the authorities caught up with the gang. Pauli spent 7 years in prison but during that time was converted to a faith group who convinced him to turn his back on that former life. Pauli now plays everything 'by the book' and won't turn a blind eye to what he sees as wrong doing but has spent eight years on various free traders before winding up, aged 38, on *The Application of Credit* as pilot and occasionally second medic.

Navigator Adma Dessada 5B7976, Age 32, Rank 2: 3rd Officer

Strength 5 (-1), Dexterity 11 (+1),
Endurance 7 (+0), Intelligence 9 (+1),
Education 7 (+0), Social Standing 6 (+0)

Homeworld:
Jenghi (Spinward Marches, 1810) Ni

Skills:
Astrogation 3, Drive (wheeled) 1, Gun Combat (shotgun) 1, Gunner (turrets) 1, Mechanic 1, Persuade 1, Vacc Suit 1, Admin 0, Broker 0, Comms 0, Computers 0, Drive (tracked) 0, Engineer (power) 0, Zero-G 0

Equipment:
Cr.0, TAS, TL5 short shotgun (*Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue*, p.71), allies x 2

Background:
Adma Dessada, like Pauli is a native of Jenghe, although six years younger at 32, his life has been very different. He served in the merchant marine for 14 years until an accident forced his retirement. Adma has now picked up work as the navigator on *The Application of Credit* and when necessary, acts as gunner. Adma is proud of his TAS membership although out here in the District, it's more a bragging point than actually useful.

> **Trade (salvage/repair)**
> The character is skilled at taking parts that others have scrapped and breathing new life into them as part of a repair job. Can include mechanical, electrical or other components as required or as determined by the Referee.

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[2] Classic Traveller had stowaways found on a roll of 4+ per day. There is no equivalent for Mongoose Traveller but the same roll could be used. Interestingly, MegaTraveller's *Imperial Encyclopedia* reversed the viewpoint and offered a task to find stowaways which was a Steward skill check and would translate to: *Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Routine (+2)*. This adventure, however, assumes that rather than a roll from either side of the fence as it were, the scenes will be role played. The Referee might wish to fudge some task roll however to have the stowaways discovered if need be.

Medic Tanith Zee – a 25 year old who has just joined the ship and is desperately unhappy. She's missing home and doesn't seem to be able to make friends amongst the crew - possibly because of her comparative youth.

Steward - TL13 Charlie robot (see p.56 of *Robots* by Weinbach & Freund) variously called Lee, Charliebot or just 'bot. This model is 45 years old, and nearing the end of its working life. It's a little noisier than might be ideal and despite several attempts to have its programming corrected continues to serve red wine in place of white wine and vice versa. No one has ever managed to stop it using awful puns as it waits on passengers. *Book 9: Robot* details are given below.

Service Robot, Steward
Characteristics:
    Strength 12 (+2), Dexterity 10 (+1),
    Hull 3, Structure 2,
    Intelligence 5 (-1), Education 9 (+1)
Skills:
    Diplomat 1, Steward 1
Body:
    Size 3 tall anthropomorphic frame + size 1 head unit, size 3 mechatronic arms x 2, size 3 erect legs x 2
Armour: 3
Input/Output:
    Audio sensor, infrared vision, basic optics, smell detector, smoke detector, tactile sensor, taste sensor, advanced vocoder, radio transceiver (distant)
Gadgets:
    Fire extinguisher, household cleaner, medikit
Computer:
    Synaptic CPU, memory stick TL10 x 3
Software:
    Language pack (Galanglic), personality program, CA 3, encyclopaedia 3, skill pack x 2

Weighing 173.5kg and costing Cr.84,200 new (this model is some four decades old and worth perhaps Cr.10,000 - see notes above), the robot is ideally suited to shipboard stewarding functions on board smaller ships such as a Free Trader or Subsidised Merchant.

The passengers, and there are 13 of them, can be generated by the Referee or suitable characters from *Starship Encounters* by Andy and Sarah Lilly might be used - see Crew Scene 2 for one possibility.

Aboard the Ship

The Application of Credit is a standard Type R, Subsidised Merchant - see pages 119-120 of the *Core Rulebook*. It is as described and well maintained although occasionally instances of Debba's handy 'fixes' can be seen. She's competent but doesn't necessarily have the finishing skills that would make an installation or repair look completely professional.

A wheeled flatbed truck can be found in the Forward Cargo Bay which Adma drives on errands and taking the crew ashore in some ports (see Utility Vehicle below). At present the Main Cargo Bay has had cattle stalls fitted throughout so that it can contain the herd of xeeboo. The Aft Cargo Bay has had its forward 4.5m fitted with more stalls and also has cattle feed, straw and some other cargo containers filling much of the rest of the space.

Pauli will be taking charge of the care of the cattle in general as he has some slight training although he will expect other crew members to take their share of daily chores once he's shown them what's required.

Utility Vehicle
('Ute' or Pickup Truck)
A TL9 vehicle for small planetside trips and cargo errands. A cab for the driver and up to two passengers in double capacity seating. The cargo bed is open and can carry up to two tons or, in some discomfort, six people. (4 spaces)

TL	9
Skill	Drive (wheeled)
Agility	0
Speed	200
Range	500
Crew/Pass	1/2
Cargo	2 tons
Open?	Cargo Bed
Hull	2
Structure	2
Cost (Cr.)	7000
Shipping Size	2 tons
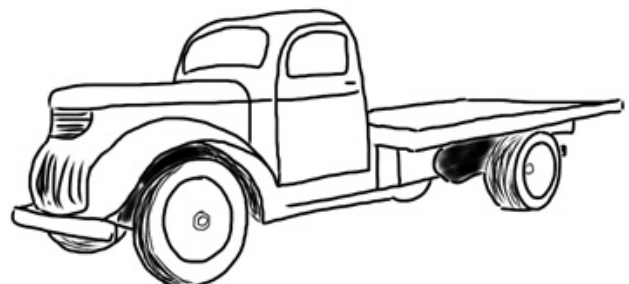
Location	Armour
Front	4
Right	4
Left	4
Rear	4
Top	4
Bottom	4

Other Equipment/Modifications:
Double Capacity Seating for passengers Cr.2000, TL6 V. Distant Comms Cr.1000, TL8 Entertainment System Cr.140, Fire Extinguisher Cr.500.

For a TL8 example of such a pick-up truck and possible variations see Moon Toad Publishing's *Vehicle Book: Navarro Ute* by Ian Stead.

Crew Scene 1: Departure

Departure and entry into Jump should go as usual. See the *Core Rulebook*, p.141 for appropriate tasks. This can be an opportunity for the players to get to know each other's characters although the PCs will have known each other for a while.

Crew Scene 2: It's only a drill

There is an Imperial legal requirement for muster station drill within 24 hours of lift-off as usual. Even out here in the District the crew should conform to this regulation. All crew and passengers are expected to participate and the crew should ensure that all passengers are aware of where they muster and where the nearest escape pod, rescue ball and other emergency equipment is stored for both their staterooms and the Passenger Common Area.

There are 8 passenger staterooms and the Referee can generate passenger NPCs as required or use passengers from a source such as *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters*:

Stateroom 1. Kev/Mara/Sanya Aer (p.89)
Mara (aged 39) is an established nerve surgeon on her homeworld but her husband Kev (aged 38) lost his job as a telecomms software developer some years ago. Mara has now been offered a sufficiently beneficial contract on another world such that the family have decided to move. They have two tons of their most valuable personal possessions in the Aft Cargo Bay. Kev has become excessively fussy as a house-husband, and is very protective of their six-year-old daughter Sanya, who is constantly getting herself into trouble. Mara has a counter-balancing calm and collected personality. Their expenses are all being paid by her new employees, so they will want to take advantage of all the ship's facilities. If the Referee doesn't allow a young child as a third occupant of a stateroom, Sanya may not exist or may be elsewhere – perhaps in another stateroom with that passenger forward in the Crew Quarters.

Staterooms 2 & 3. Eryl/Winette/Samban/Heria Klio (p.92)
The Klio family thought they'd make a life on Motmos thinking the tech level and uncrowded world was ideal for a simpler way of life without giving up all the benefits of civilization. Eryl (aged 29), a technician, was the driving force behind this, but his wife Winette (aged 27) was interested in the biology of the world and willing to give it a try. However, after three years, they've decided it's not for them after all and are moving back 'home'. Several tons of the cargo in the Aft Cargo Bay belong to them. The two children (aged 6 and 4) are lively youngsters. The possibility that the children are carrying the Heifell Kuros virus which could spread round the ship can be used or ignored as desired. Or a quick diagnosis might keep the whole family quarantined for the duration of Jump if the Referee wishes to slightly reduce the number of characters to track.

Stateroom 4. Septimus Lither (p.85)
Septimus (aged 40) is a Hyumian (see Library Data) in his wanderlust period and on the lookout for adventure. While his Scout ship is being completely refitted to improve its tech level, he's taking passage on *The Application of Credit* and likely to get involved in anything that's going on. He has a very mild telekinetic ability which he's used for good and ill. His skill in gun combat with laser pistols, energy rifles and shotguns is backed up by an impressive array of weaponry stored in the Cargo Bay. If he gets to hear of Sina's abuse in the orphanage he will be livid with indignation - although he won't reveal his own abilities - and go on at length about returning to Motmos to 'deal with' the barbarians. Depending on the players' desire for inter-species relationships, he could even become a love interest of Nestine. Or he might simply develop a crush on her once he sees her devotion to Sina.

Stateroom 5. Barclay Haven (p.84)
An elderly man in his 70s, Barclay appears to be an utterly harmless old Scout. Sadly, however, senility has set in and he's losing his

memories, his abilities and his patience. He may not even always recall that he's travelling to see his son and family. He'll find anything to complain about (food, passengers, the crew and their service), and complain he does. As it happens, he does have some experience of animals – Animals (riding) 2 – and could be useful should things get out of control in the Cargo Bay. He can be played to the hilt as described or simply as a gentle old man.

Stateroom 6. Poppi Hellam (p.84)
As a sales rep (aged 27) for BattleBlue, a company producing paints and coatings for vehicles, buildings, starships and everything in between, Poppi carries a complete range of samples whether it's laser-reflecting paints or chameleon-cammo. She's authorised to deal with MegaCorps or individuals should the crew wish to take advantage of her presence. She will take a very hard-nosed and quite brutal attitude to spacing the stowaways if she gets to hear about their existence.

Stateroom 7. Swen Jonathan (p.81)
Swen (aged 25) is a geeky star-spotter avoiding his wealthy father's aim to put him through Merchant Law school by visiting various stars in the subsector and collecting their spectra on an electronic notebook he keeps on a chain round his neck. He is intensely boring to talk to on his pet subjects – particularly his collection of images of old radio antenna. The Referee might like to play up Swen's money and have Melissa mistake him for a mark she can take advantage of.

Stateroom 8. Melissa Ayal and Jepper (p.96)
Melissa (aged 27) is a beautiful hustler who was born in the slums but used her charms to attract men with money and influence. Never staying with anyone for long, she's skilled at using her wiles to pick on wealthy marks, usually single, and fleece them. Occasionally, she falls for an attractive person whatever their financial status. Melissa might well make a play for Kev Aer seeing his well-dressed manner. Although he won't be interested, Mara may turn out to be the jealous type. Melissa is accompanied by her bodyguard and factotum, Jepper, who may also assist her in a scam.

Jepper (aged 29) is an enormous thug who accompanies Melissa to keep her safe and intimidate those who might come after her feeling she's misled them in some way. He's something of a bully, but those who stand up to him can earn his respect. (Note: *Starport*

Encounters described him as Hyumian, like Septimus. He can be kept as human for simplicity, or if the Referee feels the interaction between the two aliens would be interesting, kept as described originally.)

For further details and skills for all the above see *Starport Encounters*. Note that there were no more High Passengers on Motmos wanting passage, and no more Middle Passengers - perhaps the prospect of the smell of the xeeboo, or the look of *The Application of Credit*, put them off. The Low Passage berths can be as full or empty as the Referee sees fit.

The Referee can flesh out interactions between these travellers and between the crew and the travellers as much as desired to ensure that the stowaway clues in the next scene aren't too obvious. For the muster station drill at least there can be much chaos with few of the adults experienced at space travelling and thus not sure what to do, Melissa playing the part of a high passenger who thinks this is beneath her, Swen going into raptures over rescue ball ID serial numbers (he has side interests as well as star spectra!), the three children getting under foot, and the demo of a rescue ball being deployed going horribly wrong when it unexpectedly develops a serious puncture which won't reassure anyone.

Crew Scene 3: Life Aboard

The Referee should run each day with the following:

• An Animals (training) task check to manage the feeding, watering and cleaning of the animals in the hold (failure represents carelessness, distaste etc.). A minimum of 1 hour is required plus the task time frame.
Feeding, watering, and cleaning out a herd of cattle in the cargo hold: Education, 10-60 minutes, Routine (+2).
Unskilled crew (i.e. everyone except Pauli) helping out may choose to go slower. Two people doing the work only has the effect of getting the job done in half the time. Failure may represent anything from the cattle becoming unsettled and doubling the amount of cleaning their stalls require to full on beating against the enclosures in their distress which may result in injury or possibly one of them getting loose if the enclosure breaks.
Note, however, that this period won't necessarily be when the stowaways are found because Sina's 'sixth sense' tells the

three of them when they need to be hidden elsewhere (Bretton's hearing or Nestine's general awareness will be assisting with this as well). See Stowaway Scene 2 for possible hiding places.

• An evening meal with the crew on at least one occasion - or being served to passengers Charlie will be struggling to manage all the passengers (his skill level of 1 allows serving ten passengers but he's no longer really up to this) so at least one of the crew should expect to help out at each meal and additionally interact with passengers. A Steward task check should be used to ensure everything goes smoothly:
Serving an evening meal: Dexterity, 10-60 minutes, Average (+0).

• Any other interactions between crew or passengers as desired.

Other possible 'rumours' or events:

1. A PC is disturbed by a nightmare of a ten-eyed monster chasing them down a tree-lined alleyway; they may or may not choose to share this with the others over breakfast.

2. On the first evening one of the passengers (perhaps the one with the highest social standing) makes a fuss about being served by a robot. Melissa would be a good candidate for this.

3. A life support air scrubber in the Passenger Lounge unexpectedly needs replacing - preferably when the passengers aren't around.

4. Swen comes with a serious request to know what it would be like to look at JumpSpace and would he be allowed to try?

5. During a meal or possibly at some other time, one of the passengers (or was it Charlie's fault as he passed something over?) will spill a quantity of orange wine (Chateau Satsun, 1098) in the carpeted Passenger Lounge. Charlie will go into overdrive trying to clear up/apologize/call for crew help.

6. Tanith Zee is found crying on the shoulders of Mara Aer - she's picked the doctor as a mother figure on whom she can pour out her woes.

7. Septimus wants access to his weapons in the Aft Cargo Bay for cleaning. Whether the crew's standard procedures allow this or not is up to them.

8. Pauli mistakes a passenger either for a former slave he laboured with, or for a former slaver.

9. One of the escape pods keeps reporting a malfunction although none can be found.

10. Barclay is looking for his battered Scout cap which he's mislaid somewhere.

11. Jepper has been working out rather enthusiastically and reports that he's broken one of the training machines. It's fixable with mechanical skill.

12. One of the children, Samban, Heria or Sanya talk about what's assumed to be an imaginary friend (Sina) they've been playing with in the Cargo Hold. (This obviously needs to be used with discretion, late in Jump week, or not at all.)

Amongst the above, i.e. without making a big thing of them, add the following during Jump (they don't have to be run in this order but have been designed to become increasingly blatant):

Day 1 on the bridge, one of the crew spots something on a screen monitoring the interior of the ship, but so out of the corner of his or her eye, it's subliminal and could be a flicker or glitch, and it's gone before anything can be made of it. (Perhaps it's one of the stowaways barely glimpsed on a monitor although normally they're very careful about staying out of sight).

Day 2 the Engineer notices an odd spike in the telemetry from an iris valve leading to a landing strut but finds nothing on checking out the iris valve or the electronics. (This is due to Nestine's tampering of the systems to mask the stowaway's use of any iris valves.) (Note that depending on how the Referee determines such things are monitored, this may be unnecessary.)

Day 3 a passenger tells a meal time story of a ghost she's seen late at night - 1.5m high, floating down the alleyway 1m off the ground. (This is actually the orphan pinching fruit from the Passenger Common Area, but the passenger has embroidered the story or their mind is playing tricks.)

Day 4 the fruit bowl in the Passenger Common Area generally seems to be ignored by passengers and yet they're going through it at a rate of knots. (This could be an observation or a complaint by Charlie.)

Day 5 whoever is tending the cattle on this day thinks they hear something odd from another part of the cargo bay but on investigating find nothing.

Day 6 perhaps there's another hint such as the above, or perhaps Sina's intuition, Bretton's hearing and Nestine's best judgement finally fail them and one of the crew simply stumbles across them.

Crew Scene 4: Found!

Of course, with one thing and another, the stowaways could be found at any point during the Jump. Or conceivably not at all if the crew are slow off the mark. The Referee should judge the clues as appropriate for the players and adjust accordingly, with perhaps something very blatant towards the end if required.

When found, the stowaways will be encountered in very suspicious circumstances. Bretton is holding a knife to the neck of one of the cattle as it lies on the deck. Nestine will be using a cleaning bucket to collect the blood that's freely flowing from the wound. Sina will be trying to help. In fact, Bretton has been treating one of the animals that has fallen sick and without his intervention it would have died. As part of the crew's payment depends on the number of xeeboo that arrive alive, this will have saved them some few Credits.

Options for the crew are of course spacing the stowaways which is perfectly legal if inhumane; keeping them imprisoned and immediately handing the stowaways over to the authorities on arrival in the next system; or, perhaps after hearing their stories, aiding them in getting to Trexalon without alerting the authorities. This latter should be possible but could be interesting as they smuggle them out of the docking area and starport. A better plan might be for the stowaways to remain in hiding until the cattle are being unloaded at the domed city that is expecting the delivery. If there are PCs as stowaways and PCs playing crew feel that spacing is the only option, then the passengers should get to hear about what's going on and have something to say on the subject too. Perhaps an old school spacer wanting to space them but the majority of others sympathetic to their stories and unwilling to allow the killing. In short, they should prevent any PCs from being executed in this way.

Spacing of course leaves evidence and Jemmy will know that they left aboard the ship so there could be repercussions later even if the law is on the crew's side. While there will be no one particularly interested in Sina, there are parties who will be very interested in what's become of Bretton and Nestine. While Bretton's death might not - by those pursuing him - be seen as anything but poetic justice, Imperial Naval Intelligence will be more than irritated at the loss of a valuable asset such as Nestine.

JumpSpacing the stowaways, spacing them whilst in JumpSpace, might be considered. Different Referees may choose to treat this as simply impossible; possible but opening the ship to potential 'things' from JumpSpace getting aboard; possible but risks breaching the Jump bubble around the ship and causing a misJump; or possible with no side effects. PCs playing crew will need to decide what they're going to do. Assuming they don't space the stowaways, they will also need to decide how they'll treat them for the remainder of the trip. There is enough cabin space for them to move out of the Cargo Bay – providing, of course, that some are willing to share!

Scene 5: Arrival

Emergence from Jump Space will be on the shorter side of typical Jump durations. (This ensures that those in pursuit should be a little behind.) On their way into the inner system they'll meet a Trexalon Trade Consortium cruiser heading outbound who will hail them as per standard procedure and who will want to know what ship movements they saw in the Motmos system. A Colonial Cruiser (pp.98-100 of *Supplement 2: Traders and Gunboats*) could be used to impress, or the Type T Patrol Cruiser (pp.118-120) if that's felt to be more in-keeping with the borders setting. Yes, they have the authority to ask and expect a response! Churlishness or over-caution on the part of the PCs will negatively affect their reception at Trexalon; a positive or helpful response will work in their favour.

Act Two

This covers events in Barkan (see Library Data), one of the domed cities on Trexalon. The first and last scenes are optional although they can also be played very briefly.

Scene 1: Customs

Customs should go fairly smoothly if the stowaways keep out of sight. It will consist of a thorough examination of all the passenger (and crew) credentials and what would normally be a check of cargo containers will turn into a short tour around the holding pens of the cattle. Any nervousness on the part of the crew as this goes on might invite further checks. A Deception or an Art (acting) task check may be called for:

Acting naturally knowing there are stowaways aboard: Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Easy (+4).

One of the crew can pass the Captain a piece of fruit to help calm her nerves. The passengers will disembark except for the Klio family and Hellam who are going on to Avastan (Spinward Marches, 1037).

Scene 2: Barkan Dome

The main starport, however, is not the final destination of the cattle. Trexalon has seven domed cities and the xeeboo are to be delivered to Barkan, the third most populous dome some two hours flying time once immigration has been cleared. The crew should note that the world has a law level of just 1, so caution is advised, but by the same token, they needn't fear too much interference from the government or law enforcement - such as it is. Given the Law Level of 1, the Referee may prefer to keep things very simple and allow arrival at Barkan directly, bypassing the main starport.

Barkan has a cargo airlock which is just big enough to take the subsidised merchant whole and, once cycled, means the cattle can be herded down the cargo ramps and into the city proper. It's a couple of kilometres to the farm that has purchased the herd and the buyer has arranged suitable barriers along the route - no permit is required but the roads here are not too busy and cargo storage areas give way fairly quickly to open spaces which will be used to pasture the herd. This is something of an experiment for the locals who feel they are all too dependent on off-world imports of food. An Animals (training) task check should be used:

Herding xeeboo half a kilometre: Strength or Education, 10-60 minutes, Average (+0)

Animals (riding) and Animals (farming) can be used at one difficulty level harder, i.e. Difficult (+2).

Note that four successes will be required to cover the distance. The task can be made easier with additional help even if it's unskilled: add the Effect of up to six assistants blocking side roads, rousing the cattle, etc. Only add negative Effects if a PC rolls a negative Effect twice in a row to represent them getting in the way and being more of a hindrance than a help. Even Bretton may be of limited direct help but he can assist in calming the cattle. Allow an additional positive DM if the same crew member worked with the cattle daily rather than all the crew working in rotation.

If they're not too distracted by the task in hand, the PCs might notice the gas giant Aalon glowering large in the sky above the dome with another of its moons transiting its face, they might note the slightly metallic tang in the air and they will occasionally notice hexipuffs (see Library Data) floating through the air. In the illustration below, the brain stem and sex organs can be seen as the darker central core and leading ganglia.

Hexipuff

Type
  Herbivore (Filter)
Habitat
  Domed Habitat Floater

  Strength 0 (-3),
  Dexterity 1 (-2),
  Endurance 5 (-1),
  Intelligence 0 (-3),
  Instinct 2 (-2),
  Pack 0
Skills:
  Athletics (co-ordination) 3, Recon 0, Survival 0
  No weapons except for their potential for clogging ventilation and machinery. Number encountered: 1, (but throw each day for a 12 on 2d6 for a bloom to occur which will consist of 2d6 x 100)
Lighter than air floating gossamers that might be mistaken for a dustball or a dandelion head. Blooms can occur in a variety of colours.

Depending on what interactions have gone on between the crew and the stowaways, this might be a good moment for the latter to fade into the city. This will be easy enough as there seems to

be little in the way of controls at the cargo 'lock and what supervision there is can be easily avoided. If the crew are expecting their illicit cargo to disappear, then they can vanish as needed; if the crew have decided to help them out in any way, they may even be staying aboard for a while at least. A couple of points should be noted. By now, Nestine sees her future with Sina and, having discussed it with her, thinks that she will adopt the girl - Trexalon with its law level and tech level would be the ideal place to get decently forged identities and to make the adoption real. If Nestine and/or Sina are PCs rather than NPCs, this should be left to the player(s) involved. Depending on how the Referee chooses to have identification throughout the Imperium and beyond work, forged identities may not even be necessary. Although Trexalon is Tech Level 12, it's also Law Level 1 so simply getting real identity papers in any name(s) they care for may be sufficient. Bretton doesn't have such definite plans but expects to be able to disappear into the city's darker parts, begging where he has to. Meanwhile, however, Tanith Zee, *The Application of Credit*'s medic has chosen to jump ship here - or at least to leave, she's not contractually bound - either because of her genuine unhappiness in the job, or because of the crew's treatment of the stowaways, whether it was good or bad it wouldn't have been what she wanted. This, of course, leaves an opening on the merchant ship for a medic which Nestine could possibly fill if the crew wish. If they do, she'll jump at the chance but with a fake identity if need be and with Sina attached to the deal as well. With Bretton's disability there isn't an obvious role for him - gunner would of course have been ideal in the days when he had his sight - but if the crew feel so inclined they might take him on out of charity. Again, possibly, with forged identity. Despite his blindness, once he knows his way around the galley, he can certainly drum up a decent meal which would put the robot to shame and he's a fund of old navy tales which may even have some basis in fact.

Scene 3: War Crimes

Whether he's staying or already gone, at some point when Bretton is off in the city the ship will receive a visit from two representatives of the Imperial War Crimes Investigation Bureau. They're operating under cover because of Trexalon's attitude to the Imperium, but they may choose not to reveal that. They're looking for Bretton, know that he was aboard *The Application of Credit*, and want to know where he is now. The PCs can respond to this in whatever way they want: denying any knowledge, admitting he was aboard but saying he left the ship at the main starport, admitting he was aboard but that he left the ship in Barkan, denying knowledge of his whereabouts now, or giving details of wherever he might have said he was heading. Presumably they're after him for the war crime he is accused of committing although they won't immediately reveal their aim to see what the reaction of the PCs might be. The Referee can play up the nastiness of the IW-CRIB men as desired but eventually - particularly if they're getting nowhere - they will say that they're not after Bretton to indict him but to exonerate him as new facts have come to light showing his innocence. The IW-CRIB have no local assets, so they want to know if the PCs can help track Bretton down? Especially as Bretton is more likely to at least listen to the PCs if they can find him rather than take off at the first hint of strangers attempting to locate him. He's been blind for some time and quite adept at decoding the signals from his stick so he can move fairly freely even in environments he's not familiar with should it come to a chase. If the Referee doesn't want Imperial bureaux to proliferate, the pair could be from an independent organization tracking such crimes.

This could be a fairly simple task if he's expected to return to the ship or they have some idea of where he might have gone, or a more complex task if the PCs sent him on his way. Or it could be played for comedy effect as Bretton attempts to run through a crowded market area which probably is testing his ability to navigate his immediate environment beyond its natural limits.

Scene 4: Finding Bretton

If the PCs have to locate Bretton in the seedier parts of Barkan, they'll need to start trawling the city centre and the less salubrious parts of town. He doesn't have money and will probably only be able to find money begging. Frequenting hostelries and talking with down and outs on the streets is probably the best way of going about this. But if they give any impression of being 'authorities' of any kind, the underworld will close ranks around 'one of their own' even if he's only newly arrived on planet. Use the following Streetwise check:

Finding Bretton in the city: Education or Intelligence, 1-6 days, Difficult (+2).

Social Standing may be applied negatively due to the nature of the search - i.e. a negative characteristic modifier may be applied positively. Thus a character with Social Standing of 3 could *add* a DM of +1 rather than subtract it.

Eventually, Bretton will be found in the South Side

Barkan Working Sophont's Club where he's been 'adopted' by the patrons and for the cost of an ale, regales them with war stories and the humorous side of his life as a blind man. An ornately designed SSBWSC adorns the doorway into the place and the interior has seen better days but is well maintained. A large central room with a bar at one end and a small stage in the corner at the other has various smaller rooms off to the sides: a kitchen, a quiet room, a gaming room and so on. The stage is currently empty save for a battered percussion set at the back. Tables and chairs are casually spread around the room and the place is ¾ full. It's a good and lively atmosphere but dominated by those in their 40s and 50s and more men than women. Some Aslan are present and there's even a table with a couple of Vargr in close discussion about something. Other races may be present as the Referee wishes.

Bretton is currently perched on a stool in the middle of a small knot of people at one end of the bar. There'll be enough people in the place to make him difficult to spot immediately even if they head towards the bar.

As the PCs begin to ask around for Bretton, a brawl will break out between a particularly rough looking crew around one table and a group around a table nearby. It will quickly spread to the whole of the main hall.

The PCs can get involved or not as they wish with a Carouse check:
Avoiding any punches, thrown bottles or furniture: Dexterity or Social Standing, 1-6 minutes, Very Difficult (-4).
Doing so with a drink in hand and not spilling it makes the task Formidable (-6).

Any attempt to remove Bretton forcibly will result in the PCs being the cause of the brawl. If they explain the situation to him, he'll be exceedingly dubious at first and his new-found friends will discourage him from listening to the 'off-worlders'. Perhaps one of them will sneeringly accuse one of the PCs "You're not from Collace are you? I think I've seen you before, haven't I?" So there's plenty of opportunity for things to turn ugly.

Eventually however, the PCs should be able to persuade him to come with them and talk to the Bureau in person. "You know what this could mean?" he'll realize, "I can claim my pension again." And after a moment's more thought, "The drinks are on me." Of course, he won't actually have the money yet - and will need to either get to an Imperial world with a Class A or Class B starport (the nearest is Mertactor) or an Imperial Navy Base such as at Motmos - so he'll be asking one of the PCs for a loan.
Assuming Nestine (and Sina) have remained with

Act Three

The Application of Credit, this may occur some little while after previous events. Other incidents and adventures may take place before the following scenes occur and Nestine will have been home-schooling Sina and taking courses in her spare time to qualify for this. (Alternatively, replace her Leadership 1 skill with Instruction 1[3]).
Supplement 1: 760 Patrons has various patron encounters that could take place during this period, or *Spinward Encounters* offers fully fledged adventures - some of which take place in this region of the sector. If it's preferable to keep the adventure much tighter, then these events could take place on Trexalon or the ship's very next port of call.

Scene 1: Snooping Around

At some point when the ship is docked and when Nestine, and probably Sina as well, are away from the vessel, two Imperial Naval Intelligence officers will arrive to present themselves to the Captain. They're on the trail of Commander Nestine Brümmer but only have a holopic of her and her navy details, including the information that she was mustered out on Motmos. They haven't yet caught up with the change of identity she took on but are checking through ports that she could have passed through or ships she could have encountered.

Commander Collet Shuurbonn, Naval Intelligence (Black Operations), 76A878, female
   Strength 7 (+0), Dexterity 6 (+0),
   Endurance 10 (+1), Intelligence 8 (+0),
   Education 7 (+0), Social Standing 8 (+0)
Skills:
   Deception 3, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Recon 1, Admin 0, Broker 0, Comms 0, Pilot (small craft) 0, Tactics (naval) 0
Equipment:
   Laser Pistol (TL11 3d6+3), Stunner (TL12 3d6), TL13 Comm
Lt Commander Muy Deck Oo Yi, Naval Intelligence

[3] Instruction skill can be found in *Book 1: Mercenary.*

(Black Operations), 885758, male
  Strength 8 (+0), Dexterity 8 (+0),
  Endurance 5 (-1), Intelligence 7 (+0),
  Education 5 (-1), Social Standing 8 (+0)
Skills:
  Recon 3, Stealth 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1,
  Carouse 0, Gun Combat (shotgun) 0, Pilot
  (capital ship) 0, Sensors 0
Equipment:
  Gauss Pistol (TL13 3d6) with silencer, Stun
  Grenades x 2, TL13 Comm

This scene is deliberately similar to Act 2 Scene 3 when the Bureau comes looking for Bretton. This may lull the PCs into a false sense of security over it all turning out well in the end. Paranoid players may exercise a lot of caution still - and they'd be right to do so. The two agents are determined to re-activate their 'asset' and will stop at little in order to do so due to the increasing threat as they see it from the Zhodani. If the Referee feels the Imperium wouldn't reach this far, the agents could be retired INI officers trying to get hold of Nestine for their own purposes: patriotic or nefarious. If the Referee wishes to distinguish this scene from the previous one, it could take place sometime later, on a different world, or perhaps there was only one Bureau representative after Bretton. Another wrinkle might be that the whole scheme of forcing Nestine to work for them backfires if she decides she would rather become a double-agent for the Zhodani than work for the Imperial Navy again – particularly in the light of their actions in the next scene. The Referee can make as much or as little as desired of any antipathy or lack of it on her part towards the psionic race. Of course, any such duplicity could become the subject of further adventures involving her and any PC or NPCs attached to her.

It is up to the Captain and crew of *The Application of*

> **Grav-choot**
> (pronounced 'shoot' or 'chute')
> One of the most frightening rides of the fair, and possibly any fairground.
> The patron is put into a gravbelt harness and by means of an elasticated rope launched 50m into the air. However, they have no control over the gravbelt which is self-actuated at the height above ground that will just allow a safe landing. A zero-g area acts as a landing pad as a backup safety feature although the operators have never had an accident. Yet. Some riders choose to be launched feet first so they approach the ground head first.
>
> Roll END or less +INT DM (representing common sense "this is not a good idea") to avoid being sick/lose bladder control/spend five minutes after landing unable to walk due to wobbly legs. +1 for every five people they've watched screaming and squealing through the air until they venture a turn. (It's a known effect that some queuing at a ride and watching patrons increases anticipation, excitement and enjoyment).

Credit to handle this in whatever way they wish, but the more suspiciously they behave, the more the INI officers' curiosity will be aroused. Their ID will be in order, but it should be remembered that they are outside of their jurisdiction so have little real authority to make any trouble unless they can persuade the local government to take an interest - which will usually only be if they are being told that Nestine has committed some local infraction of the law. On Trexalon this will be virtually impossible given their law level and their attitude towards the Imperium. Indeed, the INI officers may have decided that their best approach is subterfuge and pose as something else entirely - perhaps prospective passengers, perhaps local dock workers. Any alternate identity will be slightly less rigorous - they're not expecting detailed scrutiny as they can use their Imperial Navy personas if the worst comes to the worst - and characters with Deception might spot it:
Noticing the agents are not what they appear to be: Education, 10-60 seconds, Difficult (-2).

A Streetwise or Stealth task check may also spot their bearing, training, speech patterns or concealed small arms as not being appropriate for who they say they are, but is one difficulty level harder:
Intelligence, 10-60 seconds, Very Difficult (-4).

Scene 2: All the fun of the fair

Whether it's almost immediately after the events of the previous scene, or some time later, the crew will be out in the local starport or nearby city for some rest and relaxation. Perhaps there's a local funfair Nestine can take Sina to with its grav rides, side shows and indulgent sweetstuffs. Nestine will probably even have a reasonable chance of winning a small prize at the Zho Pot Shots shooting gallery where stereotypical images of angry looking Zhodani make up the majority of the targets. Or perhaps there's a display of equestrian riding prowess that Sina particularly wants to see and Nestine has persuaded the others will make a good afternoon's entertainment. It could be an upmarket display of dressage or more down to earth rodeo - or in the 57th century a mixture of both with women displaying their strength as they wrestle steers to the ground and the men showing off their dexterity in keeping their immaculately turned out mounts completely under control. Indeed, perhaps there's a fair going on as well to draw even larger crowds. Nestine won't be wrong in suggesting that there's something for everyone what with the varied events in the main arena, the

trade stalls selling and buying everything to do with qoon and their care, and the food vendors plying all manner of wares.

Qoon
Type
   Herbivore (Grazer)
Habitat
   Plain (or clear) walker
   Strength 17 (+3), Dexterity 10 (+1),
   Endurance 7 (+0), Intelligence 1 (-2),
   Instinct 12 (+2), Pack 10
Skills:
   Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Melee (hooves) 1,
   Recon 1, Survival 1
   Hooves (2d6). Number encountered: 3d6
Large hexapedal horse-like creature which can be used for riding, racing or as a beast of burden. Qoon is both the singular and the plural form.

But at some point Nestine will turn around to realize that she can't see Sina. An Investigate check may be made:

Searching for clues to the kidnapping: Intelligence, 10-60 minutes, Average (+0). (Or make a Streetwise check at one difficulty level harder).

Success will find one nearby stall holder who recalls a couple who could match the description of the agents hurriedly buying a child a gelato and leaving the area.

The Imperial Naval Intelligence officers have finally identified Nestine from holographs (or have received information about her new ID) and decided on an indirect approach to force her to return to work for them. She had of course, turned INI down pretty bluntly before she fled Motmos after she caught wind of their arrival on the planet. She wasn't wrong in thinking they were desperate enough to forcibly repatriate her to the Imperium.

Scene 3: It's a trap, of course it's a trap

Eventually, when the seriousness of the situation has sunk in, Nestine will receive a message telling her that if she wants to see Sina alive she should be at the main starport, Trexalon West Downport, underneath the First Proprietor statue. This is a grav memorial, 5m tall and 3m off the concourse floor, commemorating Barn Rasdorf the first convenor of the Trexalon Trade Consortium. She has 24 hours.
Clearly it will be a trap but Nestine will have to

consider carefully whether she chooses to go to the local law enforcement authorities to report the kidnap. Are her documents and identity going to stand up to close scrutiny? (This won't be a problem of course if she's simply got formal Trexalon identity of one kind or another now.) She may well feel that the only way to recover Sina is to track down the INI officers before the appointed time.

Once again, this set of events is going to be similar to those of Act 2 Scene 4. However, things should be harder now and much less light hearted as the agents will be professional operatives. A string of Streetwise tasks will be needed to track them down before the time and place they're expecting Nestine to turn up. The tasks below may be additionally adjusted for difficulty or timing depending on what world they take place. Note that as given, there is not a lot of chance of completing the task within the 24 hour limit. Also, this assumes the PCs are still on Trexalon. *Streetwise check:*
Finding the agents' hideout: Intelligence, 10-60 hours, Formidable (-6).

Other characters may be able to help out with Task Chain DMs such as a Computer task check:
Hacking into the starport computer network to track the agents' movements or purchases: Intelligence, 10-60 hours, Very Difficult (-4).

An Investigate task check:
Asking around the starport for workers having noticed anything out of the ordinary: Intelligence, 1-6 hours, Difficult (-2).

Or a Persuade check:
Talking the law enforcers on a low law level world into providing any intel they might have on off-worlder movements: Intelligence or Social Standing, Difficult (-2).

Scene 4: Rescue

If the PCs are successful in tracking down the INI agents before the deadline, they'll find them in the back of a disused fast food joint in a side section of concourse that is under renovation. There will be a front entrance which patrons would normally use; there's also a back entrance which can be accessed via 'staff only' doors and a series of corridors that lead to the rear of other establishments as well. Sina is being kept chained to a wall fitting with just enough slack for her to use a sofa that's big enough for her to sleep on and to reach a nearby bucket. There's a

blanket on the sofa and some food and water within reach as well.

Alternatively, if the PCs haven't tracked down the hideout, they will have to try and either affect a rescue before Nestine gives herself up to the agents on the busy concourse beneath the statue, or rescue Nestine from the agents after she's done so. It's also possible that the agents won't bring Sina to the statue but will expect Nestine to fall in with them, perhaps claiming that Sina is already aboard the ship that will take them back to Imperial space. In fact, they don't have their own ship and can only use commercial transport, but they've booked two staterooms for themselves and either Nestine, or Nestine and the girl.

Nestine will have to make some decisions about how she wants to approach this, but if being played as an NPC will endeavour to keep Sina as far from the agents as possible by attempting to persuade others in the crew to take her with them while she agrees to go with the agents planning to give them the slip as soon as possible. The agents plan to forcibly have her undergo a medical treatment which will give them a remotely controlled way of destroying her cybernetic eyes and leave her permanently blind if she tries to do any such thing. Their ultimate goal is to have her involved with various black ops they want to run against the Zhodani using her particularly abilities to record meetings and data that they can't otherwise gain access to.

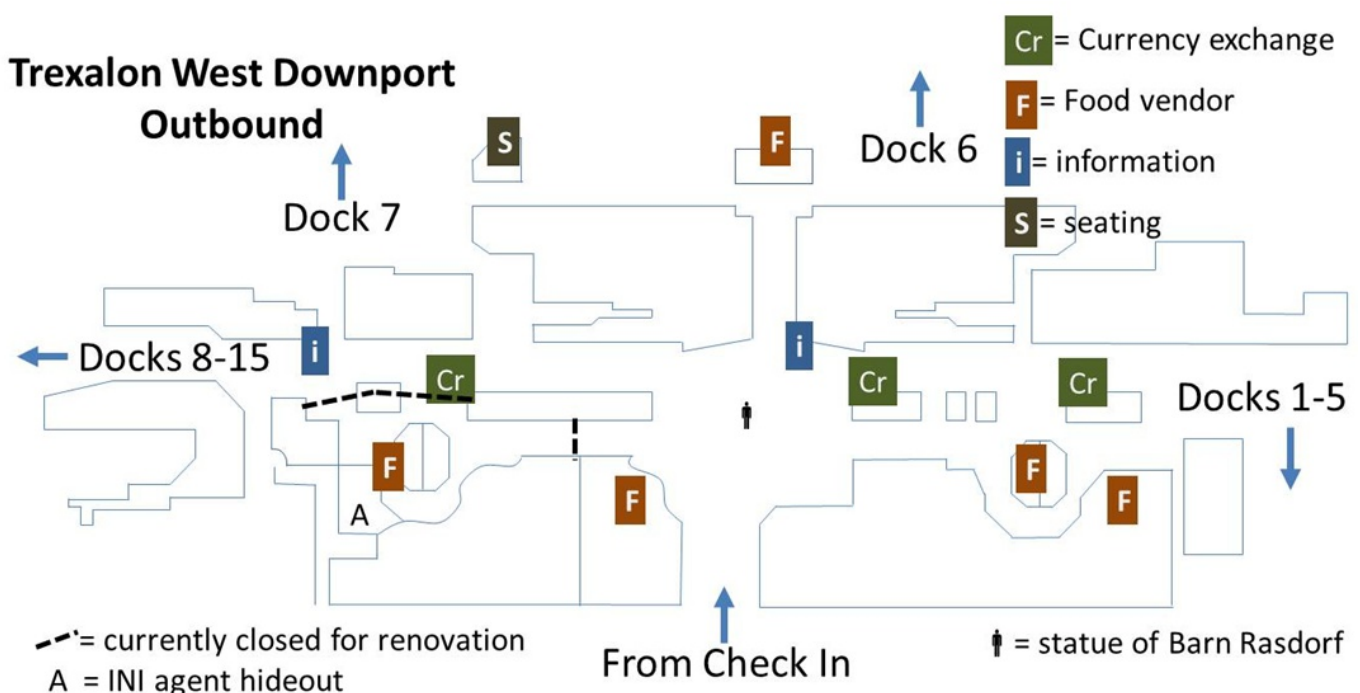If the PCs numbers and skills are likely to be too easy a match for the two agents, then they will have hired some local thugs to assist them.

If the PCs can get evidence of what the agents have been doing to the Imperial Navy, it will be the agents who are being hunted as they're operating well outside their orders. The Navy will insist that they have no need to reactivate Nestine - which could of course receive a mixed reaction from Nestine - and will be shocked at the treatment of Sina and will disavow any knowledge of such an operation or any orders to that effect. Indeed, if their apology is profuse enough, the agents are brought to book, and Nestine does still want to serve, she may even use this as a bargaining position to regain her commission! But it will be on the condition that Sina is allowed to remain with her and her adoption made formal and legitimate. Alternatively, she may now be on a mission to track down those who abused Sina and operated on her to destroy her psionic talent.

Bretton will remain with *The Application of Credit* at least until he can return to Imperial space and begin claiming his pension once again now that his name has been cleared. He may choose to stay with the crew longer if they want him. Whether or not he tries for yet another operation to return his sight remains to be seen.

The crew of *The Application of Credit* will finally get the cost of a High Passage from Bretton once he has Credits again - even if he's remaining with them as crew he'll regard it as a matter of principle. They will no doubt have many opportunities to make further Credits and find other adventures in District 268 or beyond.

Barkan

Trexalon West Downport Outbound

Dock 7

Dock 6

Docks 8-15

Docks 1-5

Cr = Currency exchange
F = Food vendor
i = information
S = seating

From Check In

‑‑ˋ = currently closed for renovation
A = INI agent hideout

† = statue of Barn Rasdorf

Library Data

Third largest domed city on Trexalon. Population: 10.8 million. One of the most densely populated of the cities, but maintains a generally friendly atmosphere although its grandeur of a century ago is somewhat faded now.

Fourth Frontier War (1082-1084)

An almost 'accidental' conflict between the Zhodani and the Imperium that didn't even last a year and a half. It was fought mostly in Jewell subsector and is sometimes called the False War. Objecting to the development of an Imperial Naval base on Quar (Spinward Marches, 0808) the Zhodani attacked and attempted to break through Imperial defences. The war's final battle is known as the Battle of the Two Suns and took place in space between Yres (Spinward Marches, 1802) and Menorb (Spinward Marches, 1803).

Hexipuff

A small airborne creature found in the domed cities of Trexalon. Carried by air currents, they look like dust bunnies or dandelion heads but are living animals. Usually they're encountered singly, but occasionally atmospheric conditions and breeding cycles create a 'bloom' of many hundreds if not thousands which can be both beautiful and a hazard to road traffic if they blow over transport routes. Popularly, they're the subject of school science projects as pupils track their movements and analyse both the atmosphere within a dome, the speed/method of atmospheric control adjustments and what effect that has on the creatures.

Hyumian

Hyumians are scaly, reptilian sophonts standing on average a little short of 2m tall and usually somewhat stronger than humans. Their claws and teeth make formidable weapons especially used in combination with a powerful tail. Best avoided in close combat.

Adolescent Hyumians enter a stage of wanderlust which may last up to twenty years and compels them to travel from place to place until eventually they return home to settle down and raise a family.

Motmos

District 268 (Spinward Marches, 1340) B68468B-5

A resource rich world on the very edge of the sector that is a client state of the Imperium. Colonized by separatists who believed in a simpler life, the Tech Level has been limited to 5. The population of 7 million live in small farming communities; the largest city and capital is Kinnipac with a population of 130,000 and the starport, owned and operated by an off-world corporation is 4km away.

Shinchoddia Massacre

A little known, in the Imperium, incident of the Fourth Frontier War (q.v.) in which two dozen Zhodani civilians were killed by an engineering support unit caught behind enemy lines in one of the few ground confrontations of the war. The unit panicked and unwittingly left one child survivor as witness to the atrocity. The Zhodani hold it up as an example to their children of Imperial perfidy that no one was ever held accountable for the crime.

Trexalon

District 268 (Spinward Marches, 1339) B561851-C

A non-aligned world outside of the Imperium, Trexalon is a cold moon orbiting a gas giant with rich mineral and crystal deposits. With average surface temperatures of -200°C, the population of 500 million or so live in seven domed cities or underground. Society is conservative and change-resistant, and dominated by the presence of the Trexalon Trade Consortium who own all the system's starports, almost all the mining, industrial and interstellar trade of Trexalon's economy and a third of the moon's surface. In competition with nearby world Collace to become the sub-sector's dominant polity; Trexalon is rumoured to turn a blind eye to pirates preying on Imperial shipping.