OUTER VEIL

Window

Scoops

2

3

9

4

12 7

6

Landing Gear

5

Fuel Tanks

M-Drive

Bladder Stowage

Through the Veil Part 1

Written by Martin J. Dougherty

Cargo Space

Cargo Level
(accessible from Deck 1)

SPICA
PUBLISHING

THROUGH THE VEIL 1

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INTRODUCTION

Through the Veil is an adventure for the *Outer Veil* setting from *Spica Publishing*. Set close to Earth in the near future, the key elements of the *Outer Veil* setting are:

- There is no Faster-Than-Light (FTL) communication other than sending a starship with a message
- Interstellar travel is in its infancy. Jump 1 ships with a range of 1 parsec per week have been available for some time but Jump 2 engines are a recent invention.
- Although alien ruins have been found, humans are the only sentient species active in this area of space as far as can be ascertained.
- Human outwards expansion from Terra has been going on for several decades but the distance from Earth to the Outer Veil and the unknown reaches beyond is relatively short. Nevertheless, this distance still represents several weeks of travel for most starships.
- Central authority and law and order are reduced away from the Core worlds near Terra, making the Outer Veil a somewhat hazardous place.
- Not all the exploration and expansion going on is licensed or even known to the authorities. Unregistered and sometimes downright illicit colonies can be found on worlds that have not been officially surveyed.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

This book is not a stand-alone game product.

This adventure is intended for use with the current edition of the Traveller roleplaying game; it is necessary for you to have access to or a copy of those rules or another SF RPG rules.

A copy of or access to the *Outer Veil* sourcebook from *Spica Publishing* would be invaluable when running this adventure in the *Outer Veil* game universe. You will also need gaming supplies such as pens/pencils, writing materials and six-sided dice (preferably at least two per player).

OUTLINE OF THE ADVENTURE

Through the Veil takes the form of ten episodes, each involving some time spent on the ship and some at a planet-fall or similar location.

Time in jump can be played out in detail if desirable, such as when an incident occurs or to permit character interactions, or can be glossed over to get the characters to their next adventure. The following outline serves as an itinerary for the trip and can be used as quick reference along the way.

Prologue: Marcos (Beta Hydri 2221)
Episode 1: New Chryse (Beta Hydri 2021)
Episode 2: Gamma Pavonis V (Avanim 2020)
Episode 3: Avanim (Avanim 2018)
Episode 4: Epsilon Cygnii (Avanim 2216)
Episode 5: Gas Giant Refuel at Avanim 2115, rendezvous at Avanim 2314
Episode 6: Gas Giant refuel at Avanim 2312, Avanim 2111
Episode 7: Tootega (Beta Pavonis 2310)
Episode 8: Gas Giant Refuel at NSSC 2510 (Beta Pavonis 2510), NSSC 2610
Episode 9: Naval Base at NSSC 2810 (Beta Pavonis 2810)
Episode 10: NSSC 3009 (Beta Pavonis 3009)
Epilogue: NSSC 3009 (Beta Pavonis 3009)

This adventure is suitable for almost any character type, although skills useful aboard a starship would be desirable for most characters.

The characters will need a reason to make the journey and working aboard the starship is the most logical option. Characters with potentially useful skills or who can pay for passage are also possible, though they will need a plausible reason for the long voyage out beyond the limits of civilisation.

The adventure takes the form of several episodes, most of which coincide with a visit to a planet along the route. Incidents will occur, some of them beyond the scope of the adventure plot (the characters may get themselves into all kinds of trouble along the way) and there is no set way of solving the problems encountered. Any given course of action will have consequences and some approaches will work better than others. There is room for fast talking, stealth, violence and all manner of clever stratagems.

The plot is driven by a Non-Player Character who needs to get to his destination and will not be amenable to long detours or sudden route changes. This will serve to get the characters from one interesting locale to another but they should not be unduly railroaded once they get there. As long as the ship makes its next port of call on time the owner will be satisfied. Actions that threaten the mission or place the ship and crew at risk are a different matter; a character who persistently endangers everyone else through greed, recklessness or simple stupidity will be left behind if necessary.

RECURRING CHARACTERS

John Hedley (Hunter/Ship Owner)

Str	5	(–1)	**Dex**	8	(+0)	**End**	8	(+0)
Int	9	(+1)	**Edu**	7	(+0)	**Soc**	9	(+1)

Male, Age 59, 10 Terms
Skills: Admin 1, Animals (Riding) 1, Astrogator 1,
Athletics (Endurance) 1, Comms 0, Carouse 0,
Computer 0, Drive (Wheeled) 0, Gambler 0,
Gun Combat (Slug Rifle) 2, Jack of All-Trades 1, Leadership 3,
Life Science (Biology) 0, Medic 1, Melee (Blade) 1,
Navigation 2, Persuade 1, Pilot 1,
Recon 3, Remote Operations 0, Seafarer (Sail) 0,
Sensors 0, Social Science (Archaeology) 1,
Space Science (Xenology) 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2,
Survey 3, Survival 4, Vacc Suit 0,
Zero-G 0.

Weapons and Equipment: John prefers to carry a blade to a handgun, at least as a sidearm, since a knife can be used for a great many purposes in the wilds. He is rarely without at least a small knife. In the field, he routinely carries a saw-backed machete (equivalent to a Blade) and will usually have a rifle or shotgun with him. If there is a possible human threat then he will add a semi-automatic pistol to his rig, just in case. He views handguns as useful only against people, whereas a rifle or machete can be used to deal with a wide range of threats.

His bush rig includes various survival items such as a couple of ration bars, a multitool, water bottle and fire-making equipment and he rarely goes far without it. In the field he will add a small pack with a range of additional equipment tailored to the environment. John favours multipurpose items that can adequately tackle various circumstances over repacking his kit to include the perfect items for any given situation.

Description: John Hedley is 59 years old and has a solid reputation as a wilderness guide and exploration captain. He typically dresses in a fairly nondescript manner, with tough 'working' trousers and shirt in neutral colours, plus boots. In the field he adds a sleeveless jacket with many pockets, a belt full of useful items and a bush hat, turning him into an almost stereotypical frontiersman.

John is aware that he resembles a cliché but does not care for the simple reason that his clothing and equipment are efficient and practical. On more formal occasions he can dress well but he generally prefers to wear working clothes.

John can be intolerant and is a hard taskmaster, a habit that has kept several expeditions alive in the past. When things are going well he is fair, in that his scathing criticism falls only on those who do not meet his high standards but there are times when his ire is directed equally at everyone. John is an absolute terror for beginners, i.e. anyone who does not really know what they are doing, as he will rip apart every single mistake.

This is not least because he grew up in a harsh colony where young people had to become competent fast or die and would often take others with them.

John was born in a remote area on Hamdir in Rusalka subsector, in an unsupported and unofficial colony that rapidly collapsed soon after being founded. This was in his grandparents' time and by John's early years his people were more or less barbarians, able to use only a small amount of high-tech equipment and tools left over from the original colony mission.

During his rite of passage, in which he was expected to demonstrate his ability to survive in the wilderness on his own and to contribute to the colony in his chosen capacity as a hunter and scavenger, John encountered a party of off-worlders who had no idea what they were doing and were in serious danger.

Assisting them seemed like the right thing to do but for reasons that remain unclear to John it offended his fellow colonists and he was cast out. He led the off-worlders to safety in a long trek and went with them when they left his homeworld. He has never been back and that is becoming a problem.

John and his fellow colonists were infected with a parasite which, unknown to them, actually helped them survive by assisting in the digestion of local foods. Since he left, John's parasites have been slowly dying off. They would all be long gone but for John's occasional exposure to compounds that they need to survive as John ate whatever he could hunt on frontier worlds. Most of the parasites have died off now and John's body has come to depend on them. If the last of them die, so will he. He does not know this, however and has no major symptom, though he is becoming aware that he is 'not as young as he used to be' and thinks that this is purely down to age.

John worked his way up from a barbarian kid to a renowned explorer and finally ended up with his own ship, purely through being good at what he does. He does not like to explain himself and expects others to follow his lead with trust or at least no pointless questions. Socially, especially with people he respects for their abilities, John is easy-going and likable but it is his decision whether someone is a 'social' contact or a 'business' one and that decision can be reversed without notice.

John has known Carlos Schmidt and has worked with him for many years on an informal basis. It was Schmidt that facilitated John's acquisition of the ship and one of the strings attached was a willingness to use it to support Carlos' endeavours out on the frontier. So long as this is not over-used, John does not really mind.

Amethyste (Amber) Hedley (Medic/Administrator)

Str	6	(+0)	Dex	8	(+0)	End	5	(−1)
Int	9	(+1)	Edu	9	(+1)	Soc	8	(+0)

Female, Age 32, 3 Terms
Skills: Admin 2, Advocate 0, Carousing 0,
Computer 0, Drive (Wheeled) 0, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle) 0,
Life Science (Biology) 2, Mechanic 0, Medic 2,
Persuade 1, Recon 0, Sensors 0.

Weapons and Equipment: Amber was indoctrinated with her father's view that 'nobody goes anywhere without a knife' and usually carries a small working knife in the field. She is also broadly competent with rifle or shotgun and will take one if going afield on-planet. She is also rarely without a small medical bag.

Amber dresses professionally and is happier acting as portside liaison for the ship than tramping around the boonies with Dad. She has a bush rig and can make acid comments about other people's choice of boots, clothing and accessories but she is happier in a world of well-lit corridors and computer terminals than swamps and forests.

Description: 'Amber' Hedley is actually called Amethyste but she does not like the name and typically goes by Amber. She is not the biological daughter of John Hedley. Both of them know this but both think the other does not. Amber was presented to John as his daughter by her mother, a woman whose mutual hatred of John is a subject quietly avoided. The baby was registered as born aboard a starship in jump; Amber has no official homeworld.

John thinks that Amber believes she is his daughter and Amber thinks John does not know she is not. In fact, they do think of one another as father and daughter; John did his best to bring her up and is still quite protective of her, although Amber does not like him much. He was a hard man to be around for a little girl with no aptitude for the things John respects.

John is quite proud of his daughter and will admit that 'I did my best and she turned out pretty good despite that.' He has a very real respect for Amber, not least because she survived a childhood with him around.

Amber's own feelings are more mixed. She has a lot of resentment for her father and the way he acts; some of the things he says and does remind her of bad experiences as a child and she will sometimes come to the defence of some poor kid who has disappointed John. The resulting rows can be tumultuous.

Despite her resentment, Amber does realise that her father (she thinks of him that way even though she knows he is not) gave up a lot to raise a child he did not want and he really did do his ham-fisted best. She recognises that he is still concerned for her and would do anything to protect her, although that, too, is infuriating at times.

Amber herself is a tall, slim brunette who tends to dress in a sober and professional manner. She does rather like wearing a ball gown to a big function and considers it both part of her role and also an opportunity to indulge herself. She does not mind wearing coveralls and climbing inside machinery to maintain it if it's necessary to getting the job done. Indeed, she has a similar attitude to her father in many ways – getting the job done overrides other concerns like comfort, sleep or personal distaste.

Amber is a qualified doctor, who left the conventional medical service soon after qualifying. Since then she has served as an auxiliary medic to marine forces, worked with humanitarian aid organisations in disaster areas and served a couple of stints as ship's doctor aboard liners.

Although never married, she has had long-term relationships and has hinted that her return to work with her father was mainly to get away from someone.

Geoff McWilliams (Crew Leader)

| Str | 7 | (+0) | Dex | 6 | (+0) | End | 12 | (+2) |
| Int | 7 | (+0) | Edu | 5 | (−1) | Soc | 7 | (+0) |

Male, Age 35, 4 Terms
Skills: Broker 0, Carouse 0, Computers 1, Deception 1, Drive (Wheeled) 0, Engineer (Power) 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 1, Gunner (Turrets) 1, Investigate 1, Leadership 1, Mechanic 2, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Steward 0, Streetwise 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1.

Weapons and Equipment: Geoff has a custom vacc suit which probably cost quite a lot. It has various holders and sockets for tools and is well adapted for maintenance or repair work outside a vessel in space. Other than this, most of his equipment is startlingly mundane, though he does have an enormous collection of supernatural-detective novels on his reader.

Although Geoff's training certificates indicate qualification with handguns, he prefers a small submachine gun for personal defence. His rationale is that any threat close enough to hit can be put down fast with a lot of bullets; if it were far enough away to require precisions shooting he'd probably miss and running or taking cover would be a better option.

Description: Geoff would describe himself as 'crew leader' for John's ship. That sort of translates to 'first officer' in many ways but the relationship is less formal and Geoff is expected to do a lot of 'crew' jobs himself. He is not actually in command of the crew in the real sense but there is an assumption that what he says comes from John so should be obeyed. He also tends to lead by example and most crewmembers would tend to follow and fit in with what he is doing.

Geoff's background is primarily in spacefaring; he worked aboard freelance trade ships for a while before taking a fairly regular berth with the Science Commission where he was, in his own words, 'a multiskilled non-specialist dogsbody' aboard various exploration craft.

Geoff is a friendly and personable sort of guy, with a wealth of amusing tales of his exploits and misadventures aboard trade and exploration ships. Most concern some kind of disaster or horrible error that led to desperate measures but of a mild sort. I.e. they are the sort of tales that a highly competent and confident person tells because 'well, I'm really good at what I do' gets boring quickly. Geoff is keen to tell his tales and an astute observer might realise that he is a bit too keen.

He deflects questions with anecdotes of mild disaster and can be hard to nail down on exactly where he was at any given time in his career. His tales might seem just a little too rehearsed, though that may be because he has told them so many times – or run through them repeatedly to get them right.

In fact, Geoff really is a highly competent spacer and at least some of his tales are true. However, he is aboard John's ship for reasons of his own. He has been working with John for several weeks now, having been recommended by a friend who John trusts. However, Geoff is actually a spy for a modest-sized corporation called the Survey, Exploration and Colonisation (SEC) Group. The SEC Group hopes to expand its interests by getting inside information on new initiatives along the frontier.

Geoff is not hostile to John nor to what he is doing; he is merely charged with observing the missions he undertakes and reporting back. Since the current mission revolves around facilitation of exploration along the frontier, this is of great interest to SEC and thus to Geoff. He will tend to be vague about his origins and how long he has been working with John. He wants the characters to draw the (incorrect) conclusion that he has been John's right hand man for a long while. It will probably not occur to John to tell the crew that Geoff has only been known to him for a short time and it is not obvious from their interactions.

Geoff is attracted to Amber but has decided that he will not act upon this in case it sours his relations with John. He may still be distracted by his feelings, especially if another crewmember makes advances and may go out of his way to derail a developing romance, even at the expense of his mission.

Geoff's superiors are interested in the current mission and suspect that there is more to it than meets the eye. He is therefore expected to snoop around the ship and may be discovered crawling through ducts or poking around in obscure corners. He can explain this readily enough as a combination of maintenance work and checking up that others are doing their jobs properly but crewmembers may become suspicious eventually, especially if they find objects mysteriously not where they should be.

Geoff normally wears nondescript coveralls aboard ship and in the field, though he does have a range of casual-smart clothes for portside visits. Despite his semi-official status as sort-of-executive officer he does not dress like a starship officer, more like one of the crew and is happier drinking in a portside tavern with 'his fellow floor-swabbers' than hobnobbing with officers and merchant factors.

Sandra Royceline (Bridge Officer)

Str	6	(+0)	Dex	8	(+0)	End	5	(−1)
Int	8	(+0)	Edu	6	(+0)	Soc	7	(+0)

Female, Age 27, 2 Terms
Skills:: Comms 1, Computer 0, Gun Combat (Shotgun) 1, Jack of All-Trades 1, Pilot (Small Craft) 0, Pilot (Spacecraft) 2, Recon 0, Sensors 1, Social Science (History) 0, Stealth 0, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 1.

Weapons and Equipment: Sandra typically dresses in shipboard fatigues and a ship-jacket; a sleeveless vest used to carry tools and other equipment. In her case it contains little; the pockets are just a place to put her hands. Although utilitarian, this mode of dress is pretty good for where Sandra originally came from and she has never acquired a desire to own or wear flashy clothes. Her lifestyle is similarly simple to the point of being Spartan and her quarters contain almost nothing that is not connected with her job.

On the rare occasions Sandra goes planetside, it is usually in a spaceport. In the field, she might be a liability unless someone told her which equipment to take and what to do. She does, however, know how to handle a shotgun. Her shooting style is a rather fussy 'must-get-it-exactly-right' version of the Science Commission Manual of Arms, right down to how she slings the weapon and how many spare rounds are to be carried. She does own a shotgun, a shortened four-shot pump-action weapon well suited to shipboard defensive use.

Sandra Royceline is one of the optional characters who present themselves in the hope of gaining a berth aboard John's ship. She is not essential to the plot but can fill crew gaps or create new opportunities for character interaction.

Description: Sandra Royceline hails from Makabel in Avanim subsector, a tiny frontier colony where life was fairly hard. For a variety of reasons, not least of which was a desire to have a better life, she took passage on a Science Commission vessel that was short of crew.

She expected to be doing support and facilitation work like cleaning instruments and making sandwiches but the ship's captain decided to follow regulations and run a full set of evaluation simulations. The results showed that Sandra had a strong aptitude for piloting and related bridge tasks and so she received on-the-job training as a bridge officer rather than general shipboard helper.

Although her rapid elevation did not sit well with some crewmembers, Sandra became a competent watch-stander and pilot and made herself very useful during the years she spent with the vessel. However, as an 'expedient recruit' she was not in line for advancement or even a proper salary from the Science Commission. Her qualifications as pilot, astrogator and watch-standing bridge officer are genuine but are accredited by a couple of starship captains rather than a prestigious board of study.

Eventually, a new captain came aboard to undertake a different deployment and Sandra was unable to follow her mentor to his new post. The new captain had a 'proper' crew lined up, who were on Science Commission payroll and did not need to be paid from the ship's expedient funds. Sandra was out of a job.

The only life she really knows is starship bridges and a tiny cabin on some beat-up free trader or courier would be preferable to going home. After drifting through a couple of jobs she wound up on Marcos, seeking a new berth aboard whatever ship will take her. There is no point in going further towards the core worlds; her qualifications are not good enough for the shipping corporations there. But out here on the frontier, perhaps talent counts for more than book-learning…

Sandra is not especially talkative and can seem standoffish. This is mainly because of friction with some members of her old crew. She subconsciously seeks a mentor figure like her old captain and also goes out of her way to prove her abilities. She is acutely aware of lacking of a formal education and reads widely on a great variety of subjects. As a result she knows little bits about many things and her Social Science (History) skill actually reflects fragmentary knowledge of a range of related subjects.

Lucas 'Beach' Garrington (Technician/Engineer)

| Str | 8 | (+0) | Dex | 9 | (+1) | End | 4 | (−1) |
| Int | 8 | (+0) | Edu | 9 | (+1) | Soc | 7 | (+0) |

Male, Age 34, 4 Terms
Skills: Admin 0, Advocate 0, Computer 3,
Diplomat 1, Drive (Wheeled) 0, Engineer (Electronics) 0,
Engineer (Jump Drive) 2, Engineer (Manoeuvre Drive) 1,
Physical Science (Electronics) 1, Sensors 0,
Space Science (Robotics) 0, Trade (Hydroponics) 0,
Vacc Suit 0.

Weapons and Equipment: 'Beach' Garrington owns a surf board, which he has never used and has no idea how. He waxes it from time to time and dreams of the day when he will try his hand. He's actually hoping he will hate surfing, since that means he hasn't lost out all these years but the board is sort of a symbol of his dreams. He is well aware that his near-obsession is contradictory and a bit silly but to him it is aspiring to surf that matters, rather than getting to do it.

Beach has virtually no other outdoor equipment. He wears slippers aboard ship and has never needed footwear more robust than a pair of indoor sports shoes. His clothing is attuned to crawling under a console in the drive room than outdoor pursuits. He owns no weapons and has little idea how to use one.

Lucas Garrington is one of the optional characters who present themselves in the hope of gaining a berth aboard John's ship. He is not essential to the plot but can fill crew gaps or create new opportunities for character interaction.

Description: 'Beach' Garrington grew up in an underground city of concrete and endless corridors on Gleipnir in Aningan subsector.

An airless rockball, the only green to be seen was in the hydroponic gardens where Beach served his apprenticeship. His ambition for many years has been 'to run along an actual beach, with sea and birds and everything, including air.'

As soon as he was able, Beach got a job in the technical department of a commercial starship. Starting as an electronics technician he worked his way up to drive hand and then assistant engineer. He is capable of running a small ship's engines and systems, though he has never actually been in charge of a drive without supervision.

Beach is anything but an outdoorsman as there was no outdoors where he grew up and he is actually a bit nervous under an open sky.

His first beach encounter was brief and unexpectedly wet after he ran on a beach and had to be rescued from the sea by crewmates. He hopes to try again without making what he refers to as a 'noob beach-user error' this time. He is quite at home aboard starships and the warrens of an artificial-environment colony.

Beach is quite easy to get along with and hard to annoy. His humour is a bit geekish for most tastes but he is unlikely to be much of an irritant.

He is often not noticed as he works away at some technical task or potters about the ship with a toolkit in one hand and a cup of long-since-cold coffee in the other.

Simone Fowler (Steward/Technician)

| Str | 8 | (+0) | Dex | 4 | (–1) | End | 8 | (+0) |
| Int | 9 | (+1) | Edu | 8 | (+0) | Soc | 8 | (+0) |

Female, Age 29, 2 Terms

Skills: Athletics (Endurance) 0, Carouse 0, Comms 0, Computers 0, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle) 1, Gunnery (Turrets) 1, Heavy Weapons (Launchers) 0, Engineer (Life Support) 1, Medic 0, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 0, Steward 0, Tactics (Military) 1, Zero-G 1, Vacc Suit 0.

Weapons and Equipment: Simone owns a standard vacc suit and two bags of clothing and personal effects. Her gear is stowed in an orderly (and recognisably marine-style) fashion and she hates unsecured objects that can fly about in an emergency manoeuvre. Most of the time Simone wears tough civilian working clothes; jeans, boots and a heavy shirt are common attire. She does own a dress marine uniform which she is entitled to wear on formal occasions and a suit for job interviews.

Simone owns a 'colonist model' assault rifle, complete with optical sights and a bayonet which is not normally attached. Such weapons are easy enough to obtain out on the frontier for those with a 'need to possess', which is covered by her mercenary licence. Although not specifically hired as security. She will revert to her former military role when groundside, protecting any expedition in addition (and possibly in preference) to any assigned task.

> *Simone Fowler is one of the optional characters who present themselves in the hope of gaining a berth aboard John's ship. She is not essential to the plot but can fill crew gaps or create new opportunities for character interaction.*

Description: Simone Fowler was a Lance Corporal in the Marines until an injury ended her career. Her usual role was a ship's troops assignment, acting as part of the crew when not needed for security work and groundside combat. Her specialist areas were gunnery and life support maintenance but like most such personnel she could also fill in as a sickbay attendant or general crew. She had a particular dislike for the 'bridge sandwich patrol' but naturally got assigned to it on a regular basis.

It was whilst ensuring that the command staff did not starve to death that she encountered Colonel (then Admiral) Carlos Schmidt. After her injury (which resulted from a shipboard accident and is not a particularly interesting story), the colonel helped her find work in the private sector. He is not particularly interested in Simone as such – indeed, he barely remembered her – but he does feel an obligation to anyone who served under his command and was willing to help. The result was that Simone was able to make a career of sorts as a spacer rather than returning to her homeworld of Alrai in Beta Hydri subsector.

Simone is clumsy as a result of nerve damage to her arm and hand and this both upsets and enrages her when she struggles with simple tasks. The result is a tendency to concentrate intensely on what she is doing, sometimes to the exclusion of what is going on around her.

Simone Fowler is not a hero or a fighting-fool; she was a career Marine who was willing to fight if necessary and is now just trying to make a living. She misses the camaraderie of her shipmates but is tough enough not to try to bond with every bunch of strangers she meets. If she does come to feel she belongs, her loyalty will be all but absolute but it must be earned. She is willing to join a new band of blood-siblings but she is not looking for one.

'Nimrod' Class Subsidised Safari Ship

The *Nimrod* class is an expensive but flexible design intended primarily as a 'safari ship' for rich clients wanting to experience strange new worlds in complete comfort. It has a secondary function as a yacht for rich corporate and governmental figures and can be reconfigured to other roles. The Nimrod class can carry seven passengers in great luxury and might occasionally see use as a top-end liner, though this would be wasteful of its capabilities.

The Nimrod class makes use of the standard 30-ton module as used in modular cutters and similar craft. It can carry up to four modules without reducing its Jump-2 capability, though fuel requirements necessitate the use of at least one module to carry fuel. This function can be fulfilled by the vessel's associated 'safari' module.

In its standard configuration the Nimrod class is streamlined and can make a planetary landing on a world with an atmosphere, but it can only do so with one module attached. The others must be detached before entering an atmosphere or undertaking fuel skimming from a gas giant. Landings are possible on worlds with trace or no atmosphere without detaching modules.

The Nimrod is equipped with one hardpoint, and as standard a popup triple turret is carried. The normal loadout of this turret is mixed: a beam laser, a sandcaster and a missile launcher. Most Nimrods carry probes instead of some of their missiles.

Modular configuration allows the Nimrod to be tailored to a variety of roles. Most commonly the modules are used to carry extra fuel and mission stores, or specialized systems such as observatory or laboratory modules. It is possible to carry cargo or passenger modules, though the Nimrod makes a very expensive transport or passenger ship.

Standard equipment includes an enclosed air raft and a 20-ton launch. Options that can be specified when ordering include upgraded hull armor and magazine storage, plus additional hardpoints for and increased weapon fit.

The vessel carries two 'capture tanks', one of which can be configured for an aquatic environment. These are used to contain captured specimens and can be set up to resemble a variety of environments. Similarly, the passenger environment can be tailored to a range of tastes. In addition to four fairly standard 'crew' cabins there are six luxury staterooms and a double-sized suite, all of which are luxuriously appointed.

Passenger cabins all have their own escape pods. Crew emergency facilities are built into their duty stations and include an emergency 'softsuit' that can be used for a short time instead of a proper vacc suit. Each crewmember's acceleration couch serves as an escape pod at need.

The ship has a large lounge/dining area with a huge observation window, plus a well-equipped if small medical facility and lockers for various equipment necessary for a safari.

The 'safari module' is tailor-made to match the ship. It contains additional fuel tanks and processing equipment, allowing the vessel to skim its own fuel from a gas giant or take it aboard in the form of water from a planet with seas, and process it into refined fuel. It has some cargo space plus a collapsible fuel bladder that allows fuel to be carried in this space if desired. The bladder can be stowed to allow conventional cargo to be carried instead.

Three other modules can be carried. These can be standard 30-ton cutter modules, additional safari modules or custom modules carrying whatever systems are needed for the ship's mission.

THE 'NADDOD'

The *Naddod* is constructed to the class's standard configuration with no additional hardpoints or armour. She is capable of Jump 2, 2 G acceleration and has an endurance of five weeks without taking jump fuel into consideration. Additional fuel can be carried in bladders or aboard either the safari module or other modules if fitted.

Staterooms

At present, John Hedley occupies the double-sized luxury stateroom, which he refers to as the owner's suite. His daughter and crew-leader also use luxury staterooms. Four luxury and four standard cabins are used for additional crew and passengers.

Fuel

The *Naddod* is equipped with a Safari Module, which permits refuelling from gas giants and two cargo plus one fuel modules. This gives an additional 60 tons of cargo capacity, though it can be laborious to use when dealing with worlds with an atmosphere.

Since the *Naddod* can only land with one module loaded, she must detach the others then land to deliver her cargo, or manually transfer cargo to the shuttle. On worlds with trace or no atmosphere, or where there is a good orbital port, or a modular cutter is available to take the cargo modules planetside, then this is not a problem.

The fuel module increases fuel capacity to 120 tons, or 130 if the bladders in the safari module are used. The power plant uses four tons per week of operation. Jump 1 requires 40 tons of fuel with all modules attached; Jump 2 requires 80. With just one module attached the ship needs 31 tons of fuel for Jump 1 and 62 for Jump 2.

Although the fuel is listed separately for Jump and power plant, the *Naddod* could operate for a long time on her fuel reserves or could jump then jettison the fuel modules and jump again with a reduced mass and fuel requirement.

Cargo

The *Naddod* is carrying 40 tons of cargo bound for her final destination. This is loaded into the safari module and one of the cargo modules, leaving the other 30-ton cargo module available for freighting or speculative cargoes. The ship also has five tons of 'ship cargo' which is mainly used up by mission stores, food and spares for the vessel. The launch's cargo bay could be used to carry an additional 10 tons of cargo, as might the capture tanks. The latter is doable but would be quite a problem, as the tanks are not really designed for rapid loading and unloading of cargo crates.

Ship's Weapons

The ship's turret contains a beam laser, a sandcaster and a missile launcher that can also launch probes. There are 10 canisters for the sandcaster and a magazine for six missiles. Four are carried, along with two probes capable of undertaking a detailed planetary survey.

Lockers

The ship has clothing, weapons and hunting lockers. The clothing locker contains outdoor gear ranging from boots and bush hats to cold-weather clothing and underwater breathing gear. The hunting locker contains equipment tailored to stalking and either photographing, shooting or capturing various creatures. This does not include weapons; the hunting locker is dedicated to equipment for building hides, analysing spoor and items such as nets and tranquiliser compounds.

The weapons locker has plenty of space for additional weapons and John will insist that personal weapons bigger than side arms be put in here. It contains the following weapons:

- Large survival knives × 12;
- Hatchets × 4;
- Large machetes × 4;
- Tranquiliser dart rifles × 4;
- Underwater spearguns × 4;
- 'Shock poles' × 4 (hand stunners on a long shaft);
- Bolt-action hunting rifles × 4;;
- Heavy-calibre double-barrelled rifles × 2;
- Pump-action shotguns × 4;
- Large-calibre hunting revolvers × 4.

Crew

Starship manuals are very precise in exactly what crew numbers are required by a given ship, but for a smaller vessel operating on the frontier the reality is a little more variable.

In an emergency the *Naddod* can be operated by a minimal crew but for extended operations a larger number of personnel are needed. These are ideally multiskilled people who can assist in other areas when not fully occupied within their own specialisms.

The *Naddod* needs two personnel with Engineer skill in Power, M-drive or J-drive specialisms, at least one pilot and one astrogator and some additional support personnel. It is unwise to only have one pilot aboard and additional crew are useful to help with large or complex tasks or to handle mundane jobs like producing meals.

The following positions must be filled:

- Astrogator (can be doubled up with a pilot position);
- Chief Pilot;
- Shuttle Pilot/Backup Pilot;
- Chief Engineer;
- Assistant Engineer.

Plus at least some of the following:

- Medic;
- Gunner;
- Steward(s);
- Bridge Watch Stander (Sensors, Pilot or Astrogation skill needed);
- Technicians (Engineer (Electronics) or Mechanic skills required);

These are not full-time jobs. There is no reason why a steward cannot man the guns when needed and stand a bridge watch at another time if he/she has the right skills. Exactly what mix of skills is available depends upon who presents themselves for employment. Even someone with no relevant skills can run errands and carry out routine tasks, freeing up more skilled personnel.
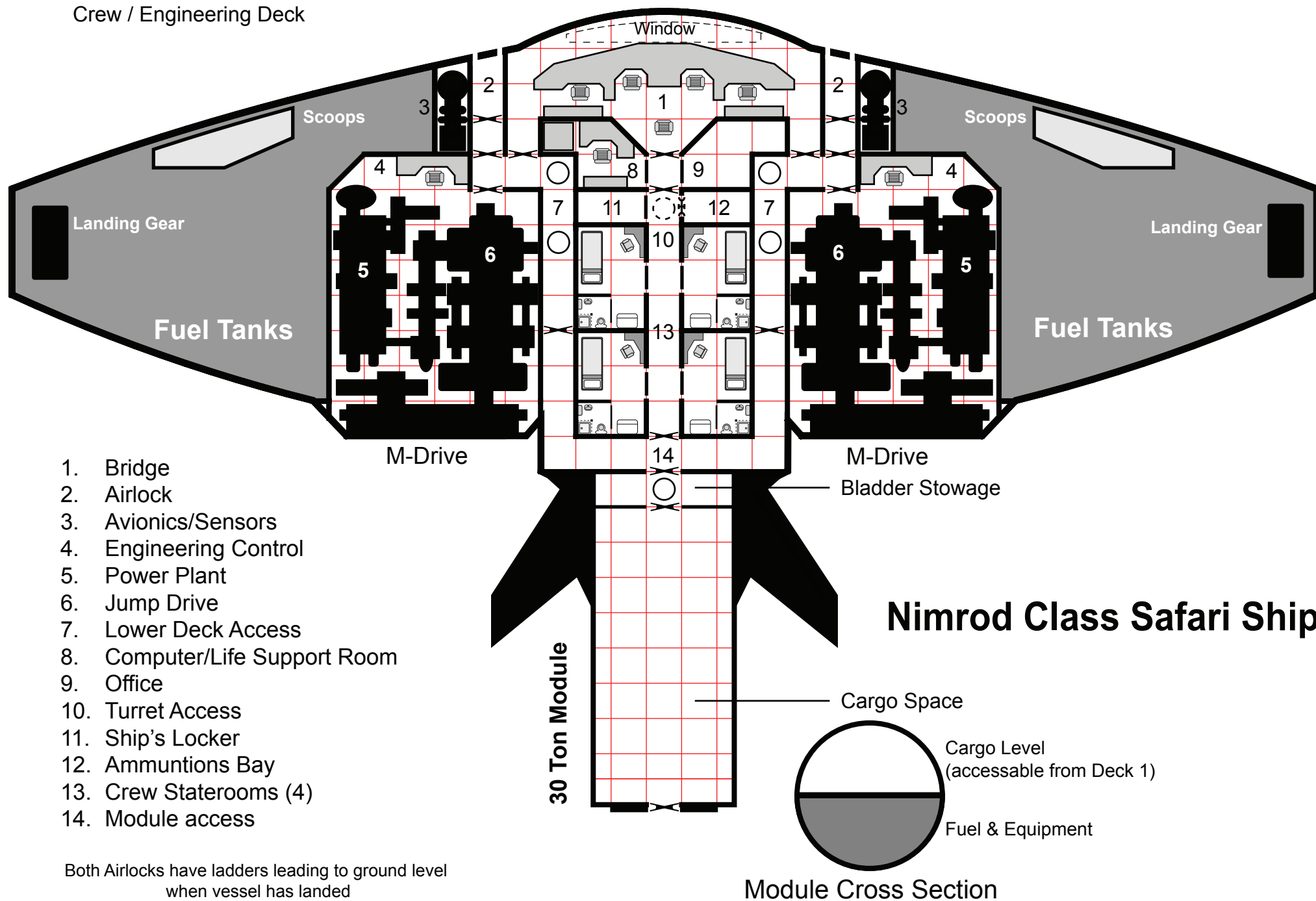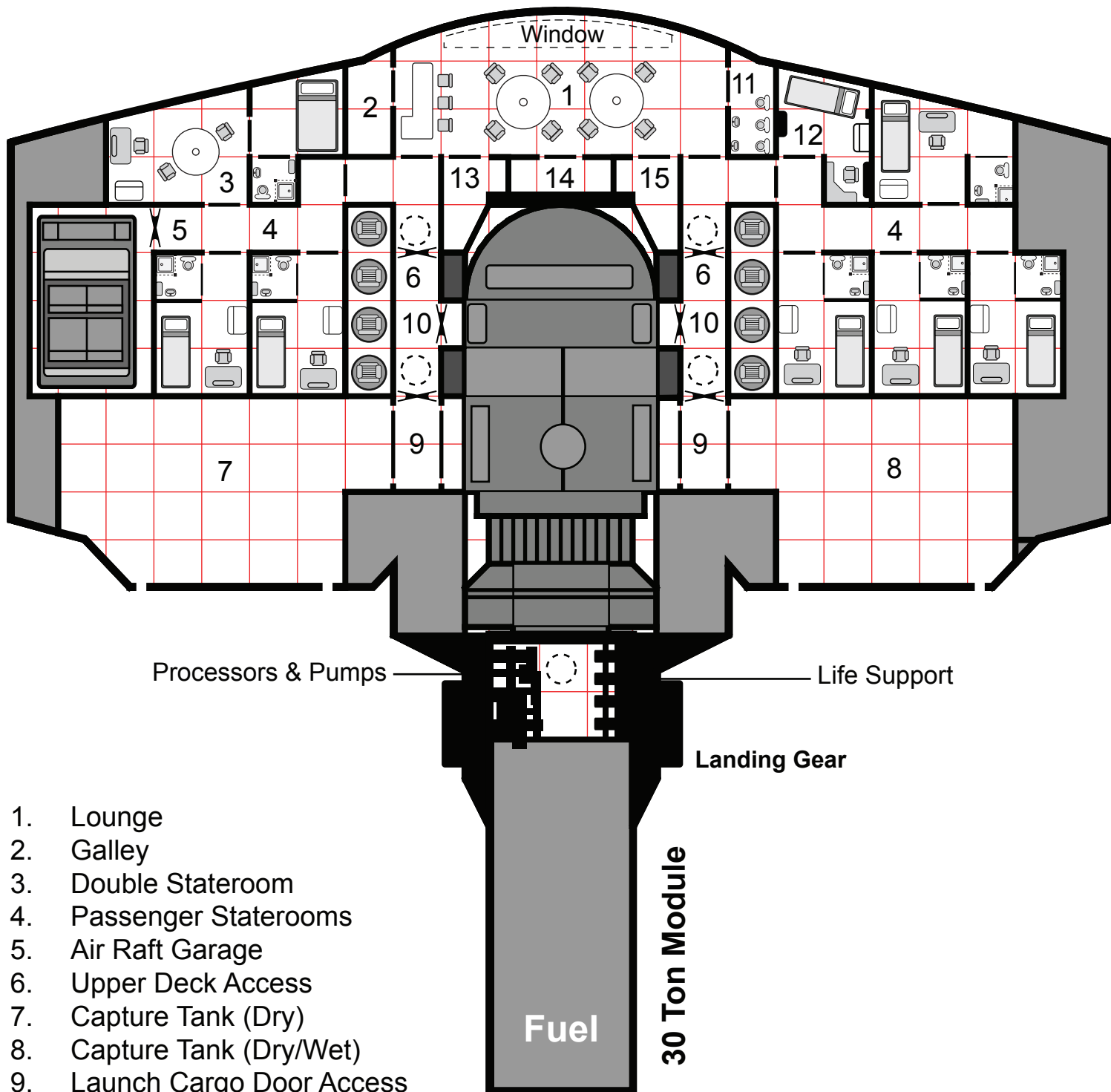
'NIMROD' CLASS TL 11 SUBSIDISED SAFARI SHIP

			Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	Code 1	Structure 3	300.0	142.00
Configuration	Streamlined	Self-Sealing, Fuel Scoops	–	16.20
Armour	None		–	–
Jump Drive	D	Jump 2	25.0	40.00
Manoeuvre Drive	D	2 G	13.0	32.00
Power Plant	D	Rating 2	7.0	16.00
Bridge	Standard		20.0	2.00
Computer	Model/2	Rating 10, Hardened	1.0	0.24
Backup	Model/1bis	Rating 10, Hardened	x.x	0.06
Electronics	Basic Military	+0 DM	2.0	1.00
Weapons	Turret 1	Popup Triple Turret	3.0	4.20
		Beam Laser × 1		
		Sandcaster × 1		
		Missile Launcher × 1		
Magazine		Holds:	1.0	0.01
		Smart missile × 4	–	–
		Probe × 2	–	–
		Sand canister × 10	–	–
Fuel	Jump Drive	Jump 2	60.0	–
	Power Plant	5 weeks operation	20.0	–
Cargo		Cargo	5.0	–
		Capture Tanks × 2: 1 × Dry + 1 × Wet or dry	20.0	0.20
Accommodation & Services	Staterooms	Standard (crew) × 4	16.0	2.00
		Luxury (guests) × 6 + Luxury, double sized × 1	36.0	7.20
	Lounge	Luxury: bar, restaurant, large open front windows	6.0	1.00
	Medical Station	Includes Low Berths × 2 for medical use only	3.0	1.10
	Lockers	Clothing	–	–
		Hunting	–	–
		Weapons _All 3 lockers:_	3.0	1.00
Small Craft & Vehicles	Module	Holds the Safari Ship Module	30.0	1.70
	Launch	Passengers × 6 + 10 tons cargo	21.0	14.20
	Air/Raft	Passengers × 6, enclosed, sealed, extended life support	5.0	0.50
	Survival Pods	× 8: 1 per Luxury stateroom + 2 in the Luxury double sized stateroom	4.0	0.80
Software	Jump Control/2	Rating 10	–	0.20
	Manoeuvre/0		–	0.00
	Fire Control/1	Rating 5	–	2.00
	Intellect/0	None	–	0.00
	Library	Rating 0	–	0.00
		Total Tonnage (including module) & Cost (MCr)	300.0	145.00
		Maintenance Cost (Cr per Month)		12,000
		Life Support cost (Cr per Month)		30,000

			Tons	Cost (MCr)
TL 11 Safari Ship Module		Fuel	10.0	–
		Fuel processor (40 tons per day)	2.0	0.10
		High volume fuel transfer pump	1.0	0.10
		Extra life support, self-sealing hull	2.0	1.40
		Cargo	14.0	–
		Fuel bladder storage for the 14 tons cargo space, holds 10 tons of fuel	1.0	0.10
		Total Tonnage & Cost (MCr)	**30.0**	**1.70**

Deck 1
Crew / Engineering Deck

Window

2

3

Scoops

1

2

3

Scoops

4

8

9

4

Landing Gear

7

11

12

7

Landing Gear

5

6

10

6

5

Fuel Tanks

13

Fuel Tanks

M-Drive

14

M-Drive

1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Avionics/Sensors
4. Engineering Control
5. Power Plant
6. Jump Drive
7. Lower Deck Access
8. Computer/Life Support Room
9. Office
10. Turret Access
11. Ship's Locker
12. Ammuntions Bay
13. Crew Staterooms (4)
14. Module access

Both Airlocks have ladders leading to ground level
when vessel has landed

Bladder Stowage

Nimrod Class Safari Ship

30 Ton Module

Cargo Space

Cargo Level
(accessable from Deck 1)

Fuel & Equipment

Module Cross Section

Window

2

1

11

12

3

13   14   15

4

5   4

6   6

10   10

9   9

7

8

Processors & Pumps —

— Life Support

Landing Gear

30 Ton Module

Fuel

1. Lounge
2. Galley
3. Double Stateroom
4. Passenger Staterooms
5. Air Raft Garage
6. Upper Deck Access
7. Capture Tank (Dry)
8. Capture Tank (Dry/Wet)
9. Launch Cargo Door Access
10. Launch Crew/Passenger Access
11. Fresher
12. Med Bay
13. Clothing Locker
14. Gun Locker
15. Equipment Locker

Deck 2
Passenger Deck

Both tanks have rear doors and ramps for access
when vessel is landed

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Beta Hydri subsector borders Sol subsector and is relatively well developed compared to the regions beyond. However, some parts of the subsector lie in what is known as the Outer Veil and are less well travelled. In time, these systems will be developed and become core worlds but for now this is the fringe of civilization.

Naval patrols are reasonably common and space travel is safe in all but the fringe systems. Even there, attacks and mysterious disappearances are rare and a starship crew in distress can be reasonably confident of rescue sooner or later. Those heading to Coreward or Trailing know that they are leaving the relative safety of proximity to Terra and that out in the Veil and beyond there are no guarantees of anything.

Ships serving the outer colonies tend to conduct their business at the outermost of the more civilized worlds, then turn around and head back out. Those coming out from the core tend to do the same in the opposite direction. It is rare for a 'frontier' ship to head into the core worlds and rarer for 'core' ships to make the long and hazardous trip all the way to their destination. Those that do are mainly military, government or corporate vessels with a specific mission.

Thus the fringe systems of Beta Hydri subsector are an interface between core-dwellers and frontiersmen and there are those who make a good living from facilitating dealings between the two. Others simply fleece anyone they can and move on and it is not always possible to spot the con-artists. Many a grand scheme has foundered at the frontier/core interface and it is wise to deal carefully. A solid reputation is worth a fortune to those who know how to make good use of it but reputations can be ruined by single bad deal or unexpected setback.

Marcos (Beta Hydri 2221) C310322-9

Marcos is a rockball world with the merest trace of atmospheric gas. This and its moderate temperature range, made it the most habitable world in an otherwise fairly unpromising system. Astrography is the only asset Marcos really has; it is a link on the Jump 2 communications link to Coreward-Trailing and thus was a logical place to build a Science Commission base.

The base is the only major settlement on Marcos and is home to about 80% of the world's 6,000 people. The remainder dwell in small outposts, many of which undertake tasks that support the base. These include research stations, observatories and specialist installations such as water-prospecting rigs. Marcos is thought to have a modest amount of water locked under its crust and several 'wildcat' wells have been drilled to investigate promising sites.

Only small amounts of water have thus far been extracted but even this minor success goes a long way to making the base self-sufficient. The techniques for locating and extracting water may one day become part of standard terraforming practice.

The station itself has a small spaceport capable of handling several ships at once but tends only to have a couple on the ground at any one time. These include Science Commission couriers, research ship, supply vessels and naval patrol craft as well as traders bound for the Outer Veil.

Marcos does have a decent market, with goods from the core systems available at typically inflated prices. It is one of several places along the fringe of civilised space where personnel can be hired for expeditions into the Outer Veil and attracts small numbers of capable individuals seeking work or companions for a venture. It is also a good place to get fleeced by people pretending to be that sort of individual or a merchant with contacts in the core systems.

New Chryse (Beta Hydri 2021) C521411-9

New Chryse is described by many spacers as a 'largish rockball', which is a reasonable description. Its atmosphere, composed mainly of nitrogen with some carbon dioxide, is just thick enough that someone wearing breathing gear rather than a vacc suit would be able to work outside, though in considerable discomfort. Protection from the cold is also necessary, so most external working parties use pressure suits or standard vacc suits.

New Chryse has just a little water, most of which is buried in the crust or in sheltered valleys or caves. This is enough for life to exist but what there is tends to be very primitive. Lichens and moss-like growths can be found in areas with water or which receive some moisture occasionally but there is nothing more complex.

Despite this unappealing nature, New Chryse was a better prospect for colonisation than many rockballs. The very thin atmosphere provides some protection from meteorites and solar radiation and mitigates extremes of temperature somewhat. Water and useful gases can also be obtained locally, rather than having to be shipped in.

New Chryse is home to about nine thousand people, most of whom live in the world's one city. This is co-located with the starport and takes the form of an underground settlement using several linked artificial caverns. The city is simply known as New Chryse and the planet and city are synonymous to most people. There are only three settlements with a population greater than three hundred people anywhere else on the planet, plus numerous small outposts.

New Chryse is a charter colony owned and governed by the Martian Mechanics Megacorporation, or MM, which took over the world in a buyout just after initial colonisation. MM turns a modest profit from mining and from the starport, which supports shipping headed out to Coreward. Much of this traffic is military, headed for Avanim, or operated by private firms on government contracts. MM has preferential arrangements with many of these firms and ensures that stopovers are enjoyable and support is efficient.

Private ships benefit from the facilities paid for by the relatively high volume of traffic, though they do have to pay an enlarged berthing fee and some recreation facilities are expensive. All the same, New Chryse the city is a welcoming place, unlike the world of the same name.

There is a busy shopping area around the starport, with good restaurants and sports facilities. An excellent range of goods is available in the stores, though at inflated prices compared to worlds closer to the core. There is also an impressive bazaar, with shop fronts and temporary trading stalls opening and closing all the time. The bazaar is known as a place where almost anything can be traded and it is easy to get fleeced. It is, however, policed and regulated by MM, so people expecting a den of sin and iniquity are sometimes disappointed to find that it is a well-regulated and properly licensed den of sin and iniquity.

The best facilities are reserved for those with very fat wallets. These include the social and managerial elite, many of whom are shareholders in MM who have moved into palatial accommodation on the world that they part-own. Membership of the most exclusive clubs is also obtainable for a large amount of money or by those with power and prestige; naval and military officers, officers of large trading ships and merchant factors are often simply offered membership for free.

It is possible to get into the elite clubs and parties by buying a temporary membership, coming as a guest of someone who has a full membership, or occasionally by being young, attractive and nearby. Those with memberships can usually pick up a companion or two in one of the bars near the elite sector.

It is in these clubs that most of the real business on New Chryse is done. MM negotiates long-term supply and maintenance contracts, security arrangements and most of its other external dealings, over dinner and drinks in its exclusive clubs. Negotiations between outsiders are also often conducted there. Those wanting lucrative deals must play the game, blowing large sums on gambling and expensive wine all the way from Terra if they want to impress their hosts or clients. The proceeds, of course, go into the pockets of the club owners, most of whom are Martian Mechanics shareholders.

PROLOGUE: MARCOS

There are times when it is possible to step off one ship at Marcos and board another without entering the starport buildings. There are also times when you can get stuck for weeks or even months, looking for a suitable berth or just a ship headed in the right direction. Those times are equally boring and stressful, as the money starts to run low and you can't afford what little entertainment the port has to offer.

Marcos is a Science Commission base, with its limited recreation facilities available at an inflated price to outsiders, and not much else to do. Most of the employment available at the port is either bar and shop work or maintenance which, more often than not, means cleaning rather than fixing.

The Commission does hire temporary research assistants but most of the jobs going are for data-monkeys or rock-sorters supporting the various installations studying what is, to all appearances, a typical dreary rockball world.

There is proper research going on at Marcos, mainly into finding water in the planetary crust, and there are portside jobs that pay a decent wage; you need to have worked with the Science Commission before to get those, or to know someone who has. There are a few people in the port who claim that they can get you work like that but all of them want money up front, and that's a red flag.

So here you are. Waiting around a backwater port on a rockball world in the Outer Veil in the hope that a proper job comes along, or a ship going where you need to be, or… whatever.

Like everyone else in your position, it's not how you got here that matters, it's what you're going to do next. That depends very much on the opportunities available and those are...limited.

A SHIP OUT OF MARCOS

John Hedley is the owner of that ship that just put into Marcos, and he's hiring. The buzz travels fast among the couple of dozen hopefuls hanging around the port, though most of them lose interest when he posts the details of the job.

John has a reputation for being a hard taskmaster but a good man to have on your team. He knows his way around the frontier and has served as a guide for several planetside exploration missions as well as captaining the transport ship. Details of the job are sketchy, but it's posted as a long-duration cruise out to Coreward, across Avanim and into Beta Pavonis subsector.

That's a long way even aboard a Jump 2 ship; on the other hand, it's a job for the whole of that time…

The cruise should take five to six months to reach its destination, and Hedley is hiring a mix of personnel: ship crew, groundsiders, scientists and maybe a guard or two. He's not giving any details away in the advert but at least he's offering to host prospective candidates aboard his ship.

A free meal to listen to a job offer? That's the best deal going right now.

John's Pitch

Prospective candidates (and passengers) are invited to dine aboard John's ship and listen to his pitch. His representative will meet anyone interested for drinks in the Nearest Bar, a popular establishment that got its quirky name from the fact that it is right next to the main arrivals area. After a couple of drinks (you have to buy your own!), the group will be escorted aboard the vessel and dinner will be served.

The representative turns out to be a tall woman in her thirties, with longish dark brown hair braided to keep it out of the way. She wears a not-quite-formal trouser suit with a pin in the lapel that looks like it might be connected with a professional association or perhaps a university. She introduces herself as Amanda Hedley, suggesting that she is a relative or perhaps partner of the ship's owner.

Prospective passengers and crew share a drink around a table in the Nearest Bar, giving them a chance to introduce themselves and to meet any other characters who show up. After a short time, Amanda leads the way to the main docking area and down a connecting tube to the main airlock of John's ship Naddod.

The ship is named, Amanda says, for a Norseman named Naddod who was one of the early settlers in the Faroe Islands. He was blown far off course during a voyage and ended up discovering Iceland. The ship's owner, she adds, is her father. She warns about his anecdotes that tend to end with the phrase 'and we ended up discovering Iceland', a phrase that he finds inordinately amusing for reasons of his own.

The ship is clearly new but has already seen some hard service. However, it has been properly maintained. There are signs of repairs, but – encouraging to an experienced spacefarer – there are no indications that these have been either concealed or left half-finished. When work has been necessary, the ship has received it.

Amanda conveys the characters to the ship's small eating area, where two men await them. The older, at about 60 or so, introduces himself as John Hedley. He wears the same sort of semi-formal attire as his daughter; a tunic and trousers that are not quite smart enough for a dinner party but too good for a casual outing.

The other person is a man in his mid-thirties, wearing slacks and a blue shirt. He bustles about, serving food and opening wine, and takes the role of host when John is too busy talking. He introduces himself in an offhand sort of way as Geoff McWilliams, but tends to be too busy to talk much. That's not a problem, because John has plenty to say.

The meal is a competent affair, apparently prepared by a portside caterer and brought aboard to be served. Over dinner, John outlines his plans, promising a tour of the ship later. He says that he needs some people for a long cruise – the characters already know that – and that ideally they will be multi-skilled. There are shipboard tasks to be undertaken as well as planetside jobs. There's no room for dead weight, he says, though if someone wants to make their contribution to the trip in hard cash then he's fine with that.

Everyone else will be expected to take a share of shipboard jobs, including cleaning and other menial tasks, and the agreement is that he's in charge and his orders are to be obeyed. If you have weapons, he adds, then he's okay with sidearms in cabins but larger weapons will be locked away when in transit. This is not negotiable; there was an incident once and he's not keen on guns lying around where they can be tripped over or accidentally shoot important parts of the ship. He does not expand on this statement.

The voyage will be quite long, and not without hazards. Mostly those are of the mundane sort, such as trying not to get ripped off for fuel in a frontier spaceport, but bad things do happen in the Outer Veil and again, he expects his crew to obey his orders and not to be stupid. He's quite willing to leave behind anyone who becomes a liability.

Along the way, there will be opportunities to defray the cost of the trip with speculative trade and some freighting if there are cargoes to be had. Anyone with negotiating or cargo handling experience will be useful and may be eligible for a bonus if the trip makes a profit.

There is also the possibility of undertaking survey work, either from the ship or on the ground. Again, those that perform well are eligible for a bonus although, as John puts it, more often than not survey trips end up discovering Iceland.

If the characters are still interested, John will give them a tour of the vessel. It is quite well equipped and seems to be in good order, though some of its equipment has clearly been replaced despite not being very old.

During the tour John mentions that he does have a final destination in mind, and it's not Iceland. He has been contracted to deliver several containers of supplies and equipment to an old colleague he worked with in the past.

The contract more or less covers the cost of the trip in terms of fuel, supplies and so forth, so salaries are guaranteed and the ship isn't going to go bust in the wilds. However, the profit margin is pretty small, so John wants to take whatever opportunities present themselves to force costs down and to generate income along the way.

To this end, he is not offering standard ship-crew salaries. Instead, everyone aboard the vessel will get a hiring bonus of Cr 2,000 at the end of the ship's first jump and C r2,000 per month of the voyage, with a Cr 10,000 payoff at the far end. Anyone who distinguishes himself will be eligible for a bonus as well.

He is, he says, not paying people to be engineers and pilots and stewards but to be part of the mission and to do what they can do well for the benefit of everyone else. The guy who brings the pilot his lunch makes it possible for the pilot to be at the controls instead of fixing a sandwich or making mistakes because he's hungry.

That's John's rule: *everyone contributes, everyone gets paid.*

Preparations

Assuming the characters decide to take the job, they have a couple of days to do whatever they need to. John is willing to advance Cr 500 against pay for those who need to settle debts, but will be visibly unimpressed with anyone who asks for an advance and then blows it. Outfitting is sensible; frivolous shopping is less acceptable.

During this time, the characters will encounter John's friend and patron. He is a grey-haired gentleman with a military haircut and rather abrupt manner, who arrives aboard a merchant ship the day after John recruits his crew. He introduces himself as Carlos Schmidt, though John always calls him 'the Colonel'.

Some of the characters might know or know of Carlos Schmidt. Admiral Carlos Schmidt, Retired. Carlos was a senior Marine commander with an impressive record, and now seems to go by the courtesy rank of Colonel. Much of his career was spent dealing with incidents out on the frontiers, which is where he ran into John.

Carlos has worked with John a few times, though they have not seen one another since Carlos left the Marines and took a distinctly mundane job in colonial administration. John's knowledge of frontier worlds was useful to the Marines on various occasions, and there were times when he could go where the Marines could not; at least not without causing an official incident.

Carlos is now involved in a project to develop parts of the distant frontier. That means supporting the creation of infrastructure which will eventually lead to deeper exploration by private concerns using the new Jump 2 craft that are becoming more widely available.

He personally believes – and is quite willing to go on about it at some length – that exploration should be handled in an organised fashion by government assets, but the present model is to keep costs down by basically laying a trail of breadcrumbs to the border and hoping that enough missions are launched to make some good discoveries. It's cheap, but it's not efficient.

If asked about the contents of the containers he is trans-shipping from the craft he arrived on, the colonel asks if the characters want the full list or just the index. Or maybe the index of the index. Every single thing that is needed for frontier exploration has to be shipped from the factory to the prospective exploration hubs. Spare spanners, bootlaces, cup holders and laser collimating tubes… it all has to be shipped out there just so that some freelancer can be sure of replacing his favourite hat if it blows off on a survey mission.

Carlos will expound on this topic at some length if he has an audience; he is adamant that it will be actually more expensive to build facilities to support private exploration than it would be to just outfit a few ships with what they need for a survey mission and send them out. But he doesn't make policy, he just makes it work…

The First Jump

The first jump will be from Marcos to New Chryse, at the Coreward end of Beta Hydri subsector. Along with the Colonel's containers there is a cargo to be delivered; a straightforward freighting job. John intends to pay the characters their hiring bonus upon arrival, to give him time to see if they are worth keeping on. Those that seem to be more trouble than they are worth will get a month's salary and be dismissed from the ship's company at New Chryse. Those that shape up will be considered hired for the duration of the mission.

Loading and preparing the ship to jump to New Chryse is not a difficult business, though there are always a few foibles to be learned with a new ship. The Referee should play out this first jump in more details than others, as the characters are getting to know one another and may find out some useful facts about their employer, colleagues or the vessel.

There is plenty to do aboard a starship in jump. Much of the routine maintenance that the ship requires is carried out during this time, though there are some tasks that cannot be performed and some that would require a desperate situation.

Anything that interferes with the power flow to the jump drive is extremely risky, and a task that requires going outside the ship is almost unthinkable. It is possible to survive outside in a spacesuit, though the space around a ship is very small and touching the 'jumpspace interface' will cause the loss of any body part that does so. There is also the non-trivial problem that looking at jumpspace will cause insanity in most people.

That said, there are plenty of tasks that need doing on a routine voyage: software and system diagnostics, maintenance of electrical systems, checking coolant and water pipes for cracks, crawling into tight spaces between the decks to check for damage, lost tools or just possibly local wildlife that has managed to get in. Floors need cleaning, washbasins scrubbing, dinner must be made and stick doors lubricated.

On top of all that, there are non-routine tasks to undertake whenever a new crew comes together. Items that have not been properly stowed have to be found a place, procedures established and drills prepared. Everyone needs to know their way around the ship. The crew will be very busy in this first jump, and of course will also have to get to know one another.

John is a particularly harsh taskmaster during this period. He believes that establishing solid procedures right from the start makes for a successful expedition or crew in the long term, and actually saves everyone work later – and it may also save their lives. He thus drives everyone hard, though he does lead by example and assists with even quite menial tasks.

Arrival at New Chryse is something of a relief for everyone. The crew will have a 'last dinner' the night before emergence is expected, which will be one of the rare occasions where everyone (or almost everyone) can get together and relax. Afterward, everyone not on night watch turns in, knowing that sometime tomorrow they will be at New Chryse… unless something has gone horribly wrong.

EPISODE 1: NEW CHRYSE

Within moments of arriving in the New Chryse system, the ship is contacted by traffic control and given an approach vector for the starport. There are a few defence satellites in orbit, and patrols of fighters occasionally eyeball visiting ships. This is a fairly solid level of defence for a small colony, and may be backed up by a naval ship in port or acting as Guardship in the system.

The port itself is a typical rockball port: an area of bedrock flattened out with fusion torches and shaped into several landing pads. There are more than a typical backwater class C port would normally have and some are quite large but then New Chryse does handle quite large freighters headed out to Coreward.

It is likely that there will be 1d3+1 ships on the pads, plus perhaps some small craft: small naval ships, merchants acting as naval auxiliaries, and a range of traders and couriers. At any given time there is a roughly one in six chance that a larger commercial starship, typically a freighter in the 1,000 to 2,000 ton range, is in port.

Traffic control is efficient, as are the portside crews who attach power and waste hoses. Manifest inspection is cursory and polite, and within a few minutes the crew are able to disembark into the main starport concourse of New Chryse. Although the official Law Level of the world is 1, the port and its associated city have a 'defensive weapons only' rule, which translates to handguns and similar weapons (such as very small submachine guns) being acceptable for open carry. Larger weapons must be checked at the entry point or left aboard ship.

As the characters will soon note, few people carry weapons of any kind and crime is very low. Weapons are not permitted in most bars and shops. The security force is armed and has a formidable arsenal available to back up its sidearm-carrying patrol officers, but normally serves as a deterrent to prospective criminals and a source of directions for lost spacefarers.

After a week aboard a starship, the amount of open space even in an underground starport concourse seems vast, and there are many attractions for the eye. Shops, restaurants, bars, sports clubs and people you have not spent the past week with! John tells the characters that they have 36 hours of liberty to do as they please, and to go enjoy it.

The crew are indeed free to do as they please for the next day and a half, at the end of which they have a choice. Those that report back will get their hiring bonus and be considered to have signed on for the duration of the mission. Anyone who does not want to can simply not show up. They will receive an electronic transfer of their salary to date and are freed from any further obligations.

The meet is set for a bar that John points out from the main concourse. This done, it is time for the crew to stretch their legs and have some fun.

In Port at New Chryse

The characters should realize that as their mission takes them further and further from civilization they will have few opportunities to buy things they want or gave a good time in relatively civilized surroundings. New Chryse is no pulsating metropolis but it is safe, civilized and has plenty to offer.

The Referee should let the characters interact with one another and their surroundings as they please. If they manage to get into trouble then they will have to deal with it, though in most cases of trivial offences the security force will do no more than detain the offender for a few hours and impose a standard fine. This practice has been described as a 'rowdy tax', and it does generate a lot of revenue. More serious offences will result in imprisonment until a trial can be arranged.

Note that while New Chryse has a low law level, it does impose fairly heavy penalties for those offences that merit it. In cases where little harm has been done, the offender is often just fined and deported, assuming a ship to somewhere is available. The cost of passage is an unofficial part of the punishment. Serious offences are normally dealt with by a period of incarceration in a penal mining camp, working in harsh but not especially hazardous conditions. Often it is possible to bargain with the authorities, who will use the threat of penal servitude to compel a settlement.

Unless the offender has done something extremely serious, such as causing very grave harm to someone or committing an offence that will have long-lasting consequences, the authorities will normally use the threat of incarceration to compel the offender to make a settlement with the victim. This is usually a large cash payment (which is taxed by the MM) by way of compensation. The offender will then be detained at the starport security centre until they can be put on a ship out of the system. They may or may not be banished for a fixed or unlimited time. A banished offender will not be permitted to return to New Chryse.

The characters should be encouraged to go where they please and to split up and get back together, sometimes losing track of their shipmates for a short while. While they are doing this, John, Amanda and Geoff will be busy with 'ship business', which means arranging refuelling and a cargo for the next leg of the trip. They will have time for some recreation but they will also be quite busy and may not be available to accompany the characters.

Portside Problems

About six hours before the meet-up is scheduled, one or more of the characters gets an urgent comm call from Geoff McWilliams. He has a problem, he says, and needs some help. He asks the characters not to get John involved but to meet him at a location near the starport loading area.

Arriving at the location, the characters find Geoff flanked by two large men in dock worker's clothes. One of them is holding Geoff's arm in a way that looks quite casual but to an experienced eye suggests that he is being covertly detained. Astute characters may realise that there are other 'workers' around who are watching the group whilst pretending to go about their tasks.

Geoff explains that he has run into a 'problem'. The short version is that he tried to work out a deal with the port workers to get the ship loaded on the cheap, basically bribing them to do the job off the clock, and someone snitched on him. Turns out the dockers have a pretty strong union, and a couple of the foremen have taken exception to his actions. They have made it clear that until the matter is resolved, the ship is not going to get loaded with anything.

Geoff explains that John does not know what he was trying to do, and Geoff does not want John to find out. He wants to resolve the matter quietly, but cannot do it himself as the dockers are insisting on holding him until a resolution is made.

The dockers are demanding a somewhat outrageous Cr 25,000 as a resolution, and they want the funds in cash that can be distributed on the quiet. Geoff does not have that kind of money available, and cannot go to get it anyway, so he is asking the characters to help him out. They have a few hours to come up with the cash or find an alternative solution. Geoff won't be fired if he misses the meet-up, but he will have to explain why and he does not want John to find out about this little disaster. He does promise to make up any financial losses the characters suffer with his own funds later in the voyage, or to help them out if they need it.

The straightforward solution of immediate violence is not going to work here. The characters are surrounded by an unknown number of dockers, and starting a fight will probably bring the cops down on them. Even if they got Geoff away from his captors, that would not get the ship loaded and they would just have a bigger mess to deal with.

The characters have several options, ranging from negotiating with the dockers to just getting the cash from somewhere. John could just get it out of the ship's safe and Amanda probably has access too (she does), but that means telling one or both of them what has happened. Drawing on their own funds would also work but there are limits on how much cash can be advanced in a given period, and Cr 25,000 is too much to just pull out of a dispenser somewhere; the average monthly wage is about Cr 1,500.

That much money is available at short notice in any of the exclusive clubs of New Chryse. None of these is close to the docks, and there is the problem of getting access.

If the characters can manage to get access, they will be able to obtain bags of cash easily enough, though there will be a fee of 10 to 20% for a large sum like that unless the characters can convince the club owner that the money is to be used for gambling in the club or something similar. They will then have to smuggle it out…

Just to complicate matters further, the characters might encounter law enforcement patrols as they try to sort out their problem. A bunch of starship crewmembers walking along with a bag will not attract much attention, unless the characters are acting suspiciously. What they are doing is not illegal as such; petty corruption and bribery of this sort is beneath the cops' radar unless someone gets hurt but the cops will ask awkward questions.

If a character thinks to admit that the money is a bribe for some dockers, to settle a screwed-up deal, then the cops will actually accept this and let them go. Unofficial dealings of this sort are not uncommon and so long as they do not cause escalating problems then they are routinely ignored. In fact, the authorities prefer matters that sort themselves out under the radar to situations that escalate into violence or long-running disputes.

The characters might also be able to negotiate with the dockers for a reduction in their demands. Threats of (or actual) violence could be used to back up this argument, so long as it is done carefully and does not escalate. Such an approach might work if the characters go somewhere to negotiate privately and then use force; bashing the foreman in the middle of the loading docks will bring about God's own Donnybrook and all kinds of bad consequences.

Note that the dockers have plenty of improvised weapons like wrenches and pieces of pipe, but no guns handy. However, there are security offices where weapons are stored and armed police patrols in the area. If shots are fired by anyone, the matter will get a whole lot worse. The locals will not bring guns to a fistfight however, other perhaps than as a threat in the hope of breaking the brawl up. It is up to the characters whether or not they escalate.

Solutions

There are plenty of ways the situation can be resolved. Some will end more beneficially than others. Options include:

- Walk away and leave Geoff to it;
- Find a way to come up with the cash without informing John;
- Make a deal with the dockers to solve the problem more cheaply;
- Tell John and let him sort it out;
- Tell Amanda and hope she has an answer;
- Go to the authorities.

Going to the authorities is a waste of time. As noted above a bit of corruption is below the radar, and people who are too incompetent to even bribe someone effectively can take their chances. The authorities offer a business mediation service which might be able to broker a deal, but it will still cost over Cr 20,000 to resolve the problem.

Amanda will be inclined to go to her father as soon as she is told about the problem, but could be persuaded to keep quiet and help, or keep quiet despite refusing to help. She can get money from the ship's funds, but sooner or later it will be noted as missing.

Leaving Geoff to it and telling John amount to the same thing. With no alternative, Geoff will have to call John who will pay the demanded sum and be angry with both Geoff for causing the problem and the characters for not fixing it. He will be very difficult to live with for a while afterward.

If the characters manage to sort out the mess and make the meet, then John need be none the wiser. Of course, they could tell him anyway. If they fail, or if they miss the meet and still want the job, then the situation will have to be explained.

The ideal solution is for the characters to resolve the problem, make the meet, and sort out with Geoff later how he's going to repay them. He will repay his debt, one way or another; he does not need resentful shipmates annoyed at him for freeloading.

If the matter can be resolved in a manner that does not result in a long period of penal servitude, the characters can meet John and Amanda for dinner, where they will receive their hiring bonus and a contract for the trip. John then informs his crew that the ship will be loading up with a cargo he has sourced and will be ready for space in about 24 hours or so. However, he intends to spend another two days in port, letting everyone rest up and blow off steam before they begin their long journey.

In short, the characters have another 48 hours in port, after which they are expected back aboard and ready to go.

It's time to begin the mission.

OPPOSITION

Docker Foreman

Str	7	(+0)	Dex	7	(+0)	End	7	(+0)
Int	8	(+0)	Edu	7	(+0)	Soc	7	(+0)

Skills: Gun Combat (Shotgun, Slug Rifle or Pistol) 1, Melee (Unarmed Combat) 1, Persuade 1.

Weapons: Usually none but possibly a Shotgun (4d6 damage) or an Autopistol (3d6-3 damage).

Typical Dock Worker

Str	9	(+1)	Dex	7	(+0)	End	8	(+0)
Int	8	(+0)	Edu	7	(+0)	Soc	5	(–1)

Skills: Melee (Unarmed Combat or Bludgeon) 1.

Weapons: Usually none but possibly an improvised club (2d6 damage).

Security or Police Officer

Str	8	(+0)	Dex	8	(+0)	End	7	(+0)
Int	7	(+0)	Edu	7	(+0)	Soc	7	(+0)

Skills: Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 2, Melee (Bludgeon) 1, Recon 1.

Weapons: Baton (2d6 damage), Autopistol (3d6-3 damage).

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