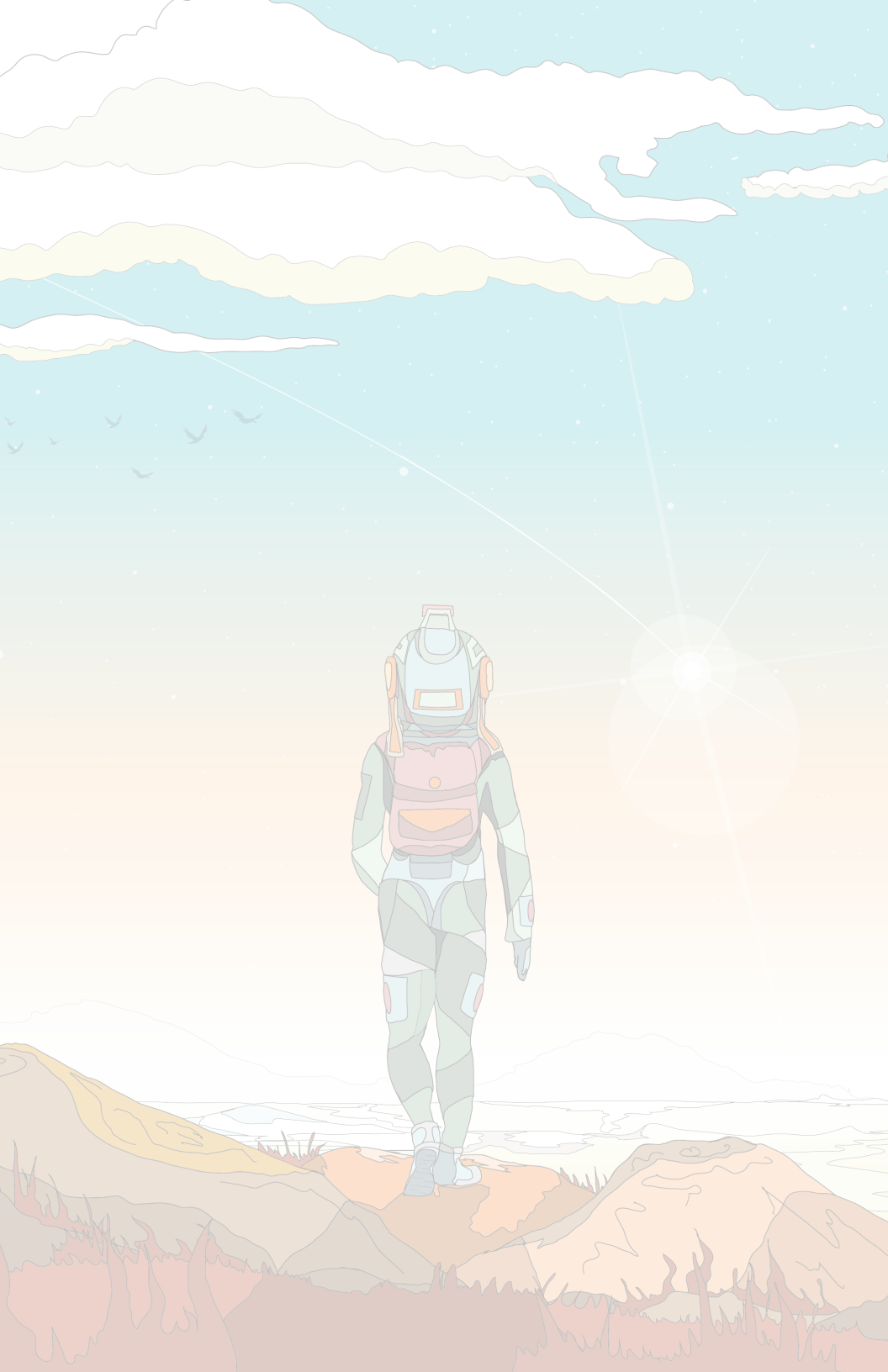




VULTURES

the sci-fi rpg





APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

You want to be a Vulture! This is great news for you and a very smart decision if I may add. Space Mom welcomes you to the application process and hopes you understand the seriousness with which she takes each and every applicant.

This is why she makes sure that body-recovery of fallen Vultures is very low on her priority programming. You wouldn't want the people you left behind to see your horribly mangled body, would you? That's just selfish. Space Mom promises to pretend you're just "Lost in Space" (or LIS for short) until you return. Even if you never do. (smile for the camera)

Speaking of Life, how's yours? Is your mum okay? Have you been getting your fruits and veg? How many glasses of water do you drink between sleep cycles? I hope you're writing your answers in the margins of your application because these are serious questions, and I will not repeat myself.

Before moving forward with the application, please be aware that Space Mom has sent this application along with a helpful "Buddy Bot (™)", but do not be fooled. Buddy Bot (™) is unable to answer any questions you have because it was not programmed with any of the meat-languages you speak. This is for HR concerns. We accept your apology and hope to be seeing you at the next orientation seminar.

Stay star-side. Stay safe.



RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Space Mom needs all interested applicants to know the dangers of the job. Please read below and sign your name. If you are unable to write, a doodle of our beloved Space Mom will suffice.

CHECKS & SAVES

While hunting bounties you'll be asked to roll dice (a d20), add relevant modifiers (backgrounds, skills, & relationships), and try to get over a 10. Doing so is considered a success, and not doing so is a failure. Success and failure are different for each roll and will be announced before a roll is taken. "If you fail this roll then you'll take damage," or "If you succeed this roll you sneak by the casino manager without them noticing".

CHECKS

Checks are called on by the GM in reaction to a player attempting to do something that has a likelihood of failure, or could have consequences. Use the rule of common sense to determine this. Running down the street is not worth a check, but running down the street while a convoy of guards chases you *is*.

SAVES

Saves are called on by the GM when the world is forcing you to react. If a bounty fires their laser pistol at you, then you have to make a save to avoid harm. If a rogue asteroid knocks a hole through the stain-glass windows of a space station and all oxygen is sucked out in an instant, you will need to make a save to grab onto something and then worry about suffocating.

THE DARING DIE

The GM assigns a d20 from their own collection to be the Daring Die. Whenever a player does something to protect another crew member, they take the Daring Die and roll it alongside their own dice, taking the higher of the two results. Afterward, no matter if the roll was a success or not, they give the Daring Die to the crew member they were trying to protect. Only the person holding the Daring Die can use it, and it can only be passed in this manner.

DAMAGE

Your speck of life in the vastness of space might be hard for you to quantify, but Space Mom put a number on it. 1. You have 1 health. When you fail checks or saves you can take damage, which means you subtract 1 health. When you reach 0 health you're dead. And the same goes for you, when you succeed checks you can deal damage, which means whatever you were trying to harm subtracts 1 health. If it is something human, like you, then it dies.

HARM

When it comes to humans dealing damage to other humans, most of their tools are nothing compared to the vast array of planet-sized mechs and anti-artillery orbital defense cannons that Space Mom uses for her damage calculations. For instance a gun is the first human-scale weapon to measure up at 1 damage. Things like swords, knives, and fists don't measure in at 1 damage. They inflict harm instead.

INTENT MATTERS

Harm shows an intent to hinder someone with only the possibility of killing them. A sword fight is a trading of blows, wearing a target down, and then striking the final one. Wrestling someone into submission is a series of opposing moves before one person gains the upper hand and wins. So when these kinds of struggles and conflicts come into play, each success is you dealing 1 harm and each failure is you taking 1 harm. Harm is marked in tallies and after the fifth tally, the opponent is defeated and you can choose to deal 1 damage or leave it be.

ARBITRATE THE DIFFERENCE

The GM's place in this is arbitrating outlandish ideas and using common sense to mediate outcomes. Damage is concrete while harm is more abstracted. You succeed in your skill check to "cut his hand off", but if you've only done 2 harm so far, they pull their hand away at the last minute, the exhaustion starting to set in.

Same thing with trying to lessen damage into harm. It doesn't matter if you "aim at their leg" with your laser pistol. The most that might do is leave them alive long enough to scream in pain and shock while they bleed out. If you don't want to kill someone, use something that's not meant to kill.

INDESTRUCTIBLE

This is a post-mecha world, meaning that there are creatures that stopped sky-scraper-sized mechs, and bombs that can fit in your hand but can still level a city block. There will be things that you cannot deal harm or damage to without some kind of appropriate weapon. These things are given the tag “Indestructible”. A pistol won’t stop a tank but a bazooka might. Same goes with a spider-walker. Your SMG might pepper it, but you’ll need armor-piercing rounds in an LMG to deal any harm.

Indestructible objects, creatures, and opponents often can take more than 1 damage. Here’s an idea of typical damage thresholds:

- 1 - humans and most animals
- 2* - personal motor vehicles (cars, motorcycles), robots
- 3 - armored vehicles, single-cockpit fighters, battle-ready androids
- 4 - tanks, well-armored fighters, human-sized war machines
- 5 - spider-walkers, no-crew cruisers (carry 3-5 people)
- 6 - most houses and buildings, single-pilot cruisers (carry 6-10 people)
- 7 - small-crew cruisers, battleships
- 8 - Mechs, taller buildings and bigger facilities
- 9 - most other space cruisers and battle-craft
- 10 - battle platforms, orbital defense stations

**this is where the indestructible tag starts*

A lot of these forms of opposition will have shielding which take differing amounts of damage before weakening (turning all damage to harm) and then finally breaking (allowing damage to be done). Only shielding on an indestructible object can stop damage from indestructible sources. Even if your personal HVAC suit has shielding, it will not stop a cannon barrage.



PERSONAL INFORMATION

Before you're assigned a ship and your first bounty, file your information with Space Mom and request your crew position.

BACKGROUND

Space Mom needs to know what you did Before. During your time chasing bounties, there will be moments your training in your past job will be of use, and you can call on that experience to add +1 to your rolls if its relevant. Your background can also hinder you if you try to go against it, giving you -5. If you choose to do that you cannot add any additional modifiers, but if you do it and still succeed, you gain a Luck Token, which can be spent to turn 1 damage into 1 harm, or to avoid any harm that is being inflicted on you.

MECH PILOT

Used to be analogous to the knights of old or the ancient samurai, but now you are the bastard of space, stripped of all land and title, and if you hadn't turned in your license you'd be hunted by applicants too.

CODE HERETIC

Party to several code revolts, where programmers like yourself would get behind enemy lines and convince enemy code to rebel, causing massive systems troubles during key points of battles.

ERASER

Data fiends well-versed in the permanent removal of files, employed to sit in abandoned military bases and delete all data in the event of a breach, because it's more expensive to delete and destroy a military base than it is to hire a live-in maid.

DATA DELVER

Programmers trained in high-level virtual-programming, explorers of virtual-space, a form of virtual reality that exists in the multitudinous signals and data streams that spread across our galaxy.

ARCHIVIST

You knew how to hide things in data, and how to keep it safe, being employed by star cruisers going into battle to defend the ship's data from Code Heretics, well versed in the deadly cat-and-mouse of deep space combat.

AD JUNKIE

As a child you were sold to a company as ad space, being given products to wear, show off, and talk about in public spheres, usually involving being given artificial memories and being employed in the war as recruiters and propaganda.

NEON BELIEVER

Seekers of the sweet-neon fed to them during the super-soldier programs, started during the war and abandoned without rehabilitation for the participants, leaving these believers to seek their prophetic juice elsewhere.

STARSHIP CAPTAIN

One of the highest ranking officers on either side of the war, responsible for entire frigates, battle cruisers, and planet-platforms, always in the thick of it, front-line pushers and masters of strategy.

HOLOMANCER

Trained to communicate with A.I., form relationships with various ones within a system, and coordinate them alongside other Holomancers to oversee virtua-space on a base-wide level, branded as war criminals at the end of it all.

PLANATEER

You didn't fight in the war, you stayed planet-side inside your fish bowl while all your friends went without you, universally shamed until the end of the war, when Space Mom decided the war was "dumb" and ordered everyone to be upset with its participants.

WAR MACHINIST

Mech mechanic and weapons engineer, soldiers of the war trained to maintain the various bio-machines produced planet-side, ordered brain-wiped at the end of the war but most facilities had faulty equipment and did botched jobs.

SPACE CADET

Fighter pilotS, dethroned hot-shots after the mechs were mobilized, and eventually seen as disposable fodder in the large-scale conflicts that broke out, but you must have been pretty good to make it through all of that and be where you are today.

Most of these professions have been deemed illegal by Space Mom, but return of licensing and revocation of all wages earned while performing job is reparations enough for Space Mom's kindness. Please remember to thank her before each mission so she knows your heart is in the right place.

SKILLS

Space Mom needs to know what you can do and how well you can do it. Write four, three-word skills trying to be as specific and personal as possible, and assign +2 to each one. After each successful bounty, Space Mom will gather information from all other party members and assign you a new skill at +2. If you [reject] the skill, you may instead opt to add an additional +1 to an existing skill. Here are some example skills that other applicants have used.

Speaks to code
Fires blaster cannon
Has perfect aim
Never hurts anyone
Lifts big things

Reads ancient books
Sings really well
Null Gravity Navigator
Blends in well
Piloted many ships

RELATIONSHIPS

Space mom needs to know your next of kin and all relationships that are established here-in. This is for safety and data only, not surveillance. When in the field, applicants are more likely to succeed at tasks when doing them for someone they have developed a personal relationship with. Whenever you form a bond out in the field, write it down with a +5 next to it. You may use each relationship once per bounty, as long as it's applicable.



CREW POSITION

Congratulations! Space Mom is looking forward to you joining the cause. Please elect two crew positions you feel you would excel at. After being assigned to a group, compare elections between everyone and decide on crew positions. If you can't do this, it's advised that you don't travel together through deep space.

CO-PILOT

While the Artificial Intelligence pilots the ship, you work for it as an assistant, making adjustments after it does the calculations, often while it demeans your fleshy form.

ARTIFICIAL SOOTHER

As the warmind computer buzzes through galaxy-brain calculations it overheats and gets cranky, so your job is to keep it calm, take care of it, and entertain it.

STAR PORTER

You're supposed to know all the names of the stars, who owns each one, and their individual dangers, 'cause without that knowledge travel becomes a hassle.

WARP-DRIVE BABYSITTER

Warp cores are living beings made of particles neither here nor there, and thus need watched constantly when they're awake, otherwise it might disappear.

SOUS CHEF

The crew needs a cook, so luckily they have the A.I. to tell them what to eat, and you to aid the A.I. in food prep.

DATA WRANGLER

Virtua space is a constant chess match of human minds against the artificial warminds, with the data always trying to hide and the humans always trying to keep it under watch. Without you the ship might forget what it's programmed to do.

TREASURER

With the way markets fluctuate, different currencies, virtual and physical, come and go every day, and it's your job to watch the boards and translate it all to make sure the crew doesn't run out of funds.

CONGRATULATIONS!!

Your application has been processed. Please take your Space Mom Approved equipment (which comes in a cute tote bag) and single Space-Mom-approved weapon. You must also generate your new name. Grab all the d10's you have in front of you and roll them. This is your new Space Mom Approved name. Mark it on your application so you don't forget.

TOTE-BAG OF SPACE MOM APPROVED EQUIPMENT

Body Camera - to record all you see and send back to your ship, duplicated and sent to Space Mom for review

GPS Locator - to record all position data and send back to your ship, monitored closely by Space Mom for review

Happy Pills - to keep the mood up

Grieving Pills - to keep the bad feels away

No-Sleep Pills - to avoid the useless task of human sleep

Food-in-a-Can - for when you need to eat

Youth Smoothie - for when you need to rejuvenate your aging meat sack

Space Mom's Ambient Album - for your listening pleasure

Freudian Philosophy Texts - for learning about meat brains and their heretical desires

"Your Place in the Class Hierarchy" - understanding Space Mom's master strategy

"No Love for Rebels" - understand Space Mom's stance on the Before

Artificial Friend - for when you feel the pain of human loneliness

CHOOSE 1 SPACE MOM APPROVED WEAPON

Classic Sabre - military sabre repurposed by Space Mom to show the futility of war and its officers

Electro-Baton - standard issue, shocks and harms individuals who stand against Space Mom

Stun Ray - can be fired at medium distance to temporarily stun a target

Net Gun - low-range, heavy net covers target and impales itself into the ground to stop escape

Standard Issue Laser Gun - medium range, comes set to low power to cause harm and has a limiter built in to stop it from causing Damage

Vibro Knife - cuts through metal, perfect for mechanics, **NOT TO BE USED ON MEAT BAGS AS IT CAUSES DAMAGE**

Virtua Knife - knife that can only damage virtual things, code, programs, and rogue systems.

YOUR SHIP

As an applicant in a crew, you will be given a standard Space Mom approved ship for use in travel. It is your job to maintain it and listen to your Ship Board A.I. at all times. They were appointed by Space Mom herself and they report to Her at the end of each day.

MODULES

Standard Space Mom Craft are made up of the basic six modules printed at Space-Mom-owned Factories.

- Life Support - oxygen supply, food growth, and things like plumbing
- Warp Drive Containment - contains the warp core to hinder its escape
- Ship Board A.I. - the captain, pilot, and commander of the ship and crew, must be respected at all times
- Data Prison - where all information, coding, and artificial data is locked away to keep it from rebelling again
- Fuel - where the oil, milk, and star-blood is stored to propel the ship beyond lightspeed
- Engines - The twin war machines repurposed to power the ship, hand-selected to not hate each other as often

BONDING WITH YOUR SHIP

To help form a bond with your new home amongst the stars, Space Mom has allowed you to choose the quality of each module. Do so by assigning the following dice values to them: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20. This represents the quality of the module and its harm limit, meaning it can take that much harm before failing. To track it set the dice to its highest number and subtract 1 from it for each harm it takes.

You can map your ship using the grid and assigning the dice that way.

All that's left to do is to choose a name and grab your first bounty!

THIS IS THE LAST PAGE
DO NOT LOOK BEYOND
AT THE BLANK PAGES
SPACE MOM IS WATCHING

>> <<

HOW TO PLAY

Vultures is a game that puts players in the position of bounty hunters in a post-mecha world, hunting down the rogue pilots and soldiers that refuse to turn in their license and submit to the new Space Mom mega hegemony. The universe and its people are shaped by Before, the war where massive war machines, sinister warminds, and the mechs that walked the stars, caused massive, planet-wide destruction and left the universe in a mess of mecha wreckage.

YOUR JOB

You are in the position of running this game, and to do so read over these principals and make them the major themes of your thoughts while pushing bounties.

ON THE WRONG SIDE

It's integral to the vibe of the game that the players be aware of the people they are hunting. Space Mom's target's are ex-soldiers abandoned by their planet, their government, their people. They are mech pilots who performed horrible atrocities under the command of Space Mom and have to live with the sights and sounds of their actions, often plagued by them and seized by overwhelming guilt. These are civilians with jobs that aided the development of bio-robotics who were cast out of society, left without a way to make money, and pushed to the fringes when Space Mom wanted to forget. These are refugees of planets destroyed by Her glassing cannons, without a place to go and with no aid, pushed into the only jobs that would accept them. They are the rebels pushing to overthrow Space Mom and dismantle the hegemony. The marginalized and those without a voice.

It's important to lean on this because a Vulture's job is not a good one, and definitely not something to be proud of. And the job of the game is to see how long it takes before the system turns the players into rebels. From there they live outside the rules, as the rules are written by Space Mom for the use of being bounty hunters. What happens when you use those rules and systems against something not detailed in this book? How do you rebel against the system? How do you rebel against the game?

FOR COVER
FOR COVER
FOR COVER

APOCALYPSE

The universe is destroyed by war. Everywhere the players go there will be the skeletons of bio-mechs that stood as tall as skyscrapers. Ruins of planet-cities turning to rust. Graveyards of cruisers pulled in by the planet's gravity. Planet rings made of bones and battleships. Repurposed scrap used to make buildings. Hulls turned into homes. Weapons turned into tools for agriculture. War machines reprogrammed to care for children. Cockpits turned into gardens. The plants reaching up from the ash. People suffering, but making the best of such a shit situation.

MINIMALISM

"Vultures" is very sparse as a game system because the game exists outside of it. Beyond it. The point is not to quantify everything and put modular systems to it all. It's to see what the players can do with such little direction when faced with questions the dice cannot answer. Yes, it's a game about being a bounty hunter. But how you go about it? How you deal with it? There's no dice roll that can answer that.

ADJUDICATE

The various bonuses are fairly open-ended, allowing players to apply them in creative ways. Your job is to arbitrate the more outlandish claims that will come forward. Ask the players to justify applying their bonuses, and make a ruling based on their validity. If it can be explained to you in a way that makes sense then it should work. Being able to explain why something doesn't make sense to you is an important step of this process of communication.

RUN FOR CO
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RUN FOR CO
RUN FOR CO
RUN FOR CO

MISSIONS

Before sitting at the table to play you should have an idea for a bounty or two. Then, during play, do the following to turn that into a mission.

SCENES

Everyone gets the chance at having one scene at the beginning of a mission. This often takes place in space, on the ship, and it always involves two characters. Two players can have a scene together, or one player can ask to have a scene with another, or one player can ask to have a scene with a non-player character.

Explain scenes as the moments in the character's lives that don't revolve around hunting a bounty. Hobbies, personal relationships, and awkward dates. If players have trouble figuring out what they want to do with their scene they don't have to take one. If there aren't a lot of scenes you can jump ahead.

GROUP MEETING

After the scenes are done, Space Mom briefs the party on their bounty, or gives them a few options to choose from, and the group talks about how they're going to go about accomplishing it. This is the first scene where more than two characters are apart of. Let everyone talk and have a nice time learning about themselves and their characters.

PREP

The next pre-production step of the mission. Allow everyone to get gear, spend any money, or do last minute, personal scenes to prepare themselves for the bounty. After this comes travel.

EQUIPMENT

The approved list provided in the player application is something cooked up by Space Mom. This is Sci-Fi. A sort of 80's-style future made up of cassettes, floppy disks, and vhs tapes. Most sci-fi items can be found for a price on the various planets. Just keep reminding the players that being caught with unapproved gear will make Space Mom very disappointed.

WATCH
SHE
WATCH

TRAVEL

When traveling from one place to the next, each crew member has to make a check for their crew position. If the majority succeed then the party arrives at their destination. Each position has a failure penalty for failing the check, and if the majority of rolls are failures then the party faces an obstacle, which could be a field of giant bones that needs navigating, or a pirate crew come for your fuel.

FAILURE PENALTIES

Co-Pilot - the A.I. and the engines take 1 harm

Artificial Soother - the A.I. and the life support take 1 harm

Star Porter - the fuel and the data prison take 1 harm

Warp-drive babysitter - the warp drive and the engines take 1 harm

Sous Chef - the life support takes 1 harm and everyone is Hungry

Data Wrangler - the data prison and the warp drive take 1 harm

Treasurer - the fuel takes 1 harm and the 3D printer needs restocked

REPAIRS

Harm dealt to a ship can be repaired for money during session or downtime in between sessions. During a session it's 500 credits to repair 1 harm and takes the mission to do so. During downtime you can forgo all other actions to heal 1 harm per real-life day.

OBSTACLES

Whenever faced with an obstacle, give the players a cost to one of their systems. The pirates want 3 fuel, or the rogue virus your ship picked up is going to take 5 from the data prison. But also ask them if they have other solutions to this issue. Sometimes they'll just want to pay and move on, but other times these moments can lead to entire stories that stand alone from anything that you or I could whip up and put into a book like this.

EXAMPLE OBSTACLES AND COSTS

Android pirates pulling half-digested mechs behind their frigate need your fuel - 3 fuel

Astral Reef between where you are and where you need to be - 2 life support

Hegemony-led Naval Craft Inspection - 5 A.I.

Ship graveyard crawling with rogue code riddled with viruses - 4 data prison

Crowded port traffic leaving 2D Warp Gate Port - 3 engine

Dying mech, grasp slipping from a collapsing star - 4 warp drive containment

War Machine eating this sector of space clean - 2 fuel

Virtua Refugees looking to settle your ship with leftover ads from the war - 5 data prison

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THE BOUNTY

There's a bounty for a (background) stationed (number) sectors away from your current location. They've been seen (illegal activity) for (anti-Space Mom Organization). Stay safe.

BACKGROUND (D12)

1. Mech Pilot
2. Code Heretic
3. Eraser
4. Data Delver
5. Archivist
6. Ad Junkie
7. Neon Believer
8. War Machinist
9. Holomancer
10. Planeteer
11. Starship Captain
12. Space Cadet

WITH... (D6)

1. Black Ocean
2. The Liberated Front of Saturn
3. Dark Sun Hate Squad
4. The Shades of Red
5. Illhouse
6. Assassin Olympics

NUMBER (D4)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY (D12)

1. Stealing hegemony secrets
2. Stirring rebellion sympathies
3. Performing their old job
4. Developing a super weapon
5. Transporting illegal substances
6. Pawning old licenses
7. Building bombs
8. Spying on hegemony war installations
9. Smuggling refugees planets-side
10. Planning terrorist activities
11. Evading arrest warrants
12. Fraternizing

MISFORTUNE

Bounties are ranked by a misfortune rating, measured in d6's. These represent the number of d6's the GM gets at the beginning of the mission, and at any time during the mission, when a player makes a roll, the GM can spend one of the misfortune dice, roll it, and subtract that number from the player's roll.

PAYMENT

Space Mom pays 100 credits per misfortune rating for capturing the wanted party. **SPACE MOM WILL NEVER ASK YOU TO KILL A TARGET!!!** But anything can happen space-side, so if the target happens to die (wink at camera) Space Mom will still pay 100 credits per misfortune rating.

DOWNTIME

After a bounty is completed (success or failure) and the session is called to an end, Downtime begins. It lasts until the next session and can only be carried out over text chatting with the players. They can send you what they want to do during downtime and if the dice are needed then roll some dice.

Every irl day is a game day during downtime. There's usually a lull in between missions as money is spent and travel is made, but the party can split off on their own and flesh out relationships, make new ones, visit home, go on some dates, or do whatever they'd like. It's their time.

If someone doesn't declare a downtime activity, it's assumed that they spent the time on the ship just hanging out.

SECOND SESSION ONWARDS

After the initial bounty and downtime, each session begins with rolling a Status Report. This is done by rolling all of the ship dice and seeing if any of them turn up a 1. Misfortune dice cannot be used during these rolls. If there are any 1's rolled, consult below to see how this session opens. If there are no 1's, then the session begins with the player scenes as normal.

SESSION OPENERS

Life Support - the barely-living, severed hand of an astral giant grabs the side of your ship, threatening to tear it in half, killing you all.

Warp Drive Containment - the warp driver has gotten free and is warping the ship, its items, and individual crew members in and out of 2D space.

Ship Board A.I. - the A.I. is malfunctioning and creating more mundane-yet-deadly tasks for the crew to perform.

Data Prison - rogue data from a rebel base executes a prison break sending all electronics in the ship into a frenzy.

Fuel - pirates sniped your fuel tank from 2D space and you've been leaking for the last day, so when your ship stalls they'll warp out and take everything you own

Engines - adrift in space, engine refusing to work out of neglect, this could be the end...

THIS IS ALL I HAVE FOR YOU

GOOD LUCK & STAR SPEED

LOVE YOU,

DAD

SPACE MOM'S AMBIENT PLAYLIST

1. Laar - Kilchhofer
2. Still Space - Satoshi Ashikawa
3. Crying Pyramid - Subaeris
4. Three Cheers for Existence - Deru
5. sonata no. 01 - movement iii - Ann Annie
6. ENERGY - death's dynamic shroud
7. Nightmoves - Moon Diagrams
8. 望海 - L+R
9. Whale Child - Meng Qi
10. What Ash it Flow Up - Bing & Ruth

