

SERENITY ROLE PLAYING GAME



PRAYING MANTIS

A TALE OF
STOLEN INNOCENCE
IN THREE ACTS



PRAYING MANTIS

WRITTEN BY
ROBERT EDMUNDS
JAN HENDRIK FRIEDRICH
MICHAEL CHUMBLER

ILLUSTRATED BY
LAURA GULLETT
KENDAL LEASK
JASON MORALES
AMY GUTHRIE

BASED ON A SCREENPLAY BY
JOSS WHEDON

WWW.CORTEXSYSTEMRPG.ORG
WWW.SERENITYRPG.COM

SERENITY © UNIVERSAL STUDIOS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

HERE'S HOW IT IS

What starts out as a simple delivery of farming provisions to a Border World town, becomes a chase across the Black to save a local woman who is kidnapped right before their eyes. As they set out after the kidnappers, they find out they are up against a powerful Tong that is currently in the throws of a leadership struggle and that a wealthy Persephone socialite has offered a large sum of money to gain possession of their victim.

GAME MASTER NOTES

The Premise of Praying Mantis is a simple one, to pull on the morality of the players to rescue a damsel in distress. The PCs will have to face a tough and organized foe and even members of Persephone's elite class to rescue an innocent woman from a life of slavery and unspeakable acts, all at great risk to themselves with little by way of obvious financial reward.

Presented a tale of heroism and morality, Praying Mantis consists of three acts of three scenes each. Act One places the crew in *Life on the Range*, and leads the players into *Innocent Abduction* and finally onto *A Family's Plight*. In Act two the players are *Bound for Persephone*, and then quickly find themselves *Chasing the Mantis* and ultimately *Facing the Mantis*. The gripping end comes in Act Three as they find their *Uptown Girl*, head out on *A Wing and a Prayer*, before finally reaching it's conclusion in *A Heroes Welcome*.

One thing the GM may have to prepare in advance is the initial job that introduces this adventure. The first scene begins with the PCs completing a job for Mr. Christopher Hardy, a wealthy landowner from Emerald River on Santo. The job could have easily been brokered over the Cortex and only requires the crew to land on Hera to pick up a boat load of farming supplies, and make the short trip to Santo to deliver them. The job is top rate, all legal and pretty much a milk run, so most crews should jump at the offer of easy money.

THE EMERALD RIVER SETTING

This adventure is based on a plot hook presented in the Emerald River town setting, which is available for free download from CS/RPG. While it is not essential to have the setting to run this adventure, it would certainly be an advantage and allow you to add more flavor and life to the town.

No exact location is ever presented in the Emerald River setting itself, so that individual GMs can place it wherever they feel it best fits their vision of the 'Verse. For the sake of this adventure, the town is

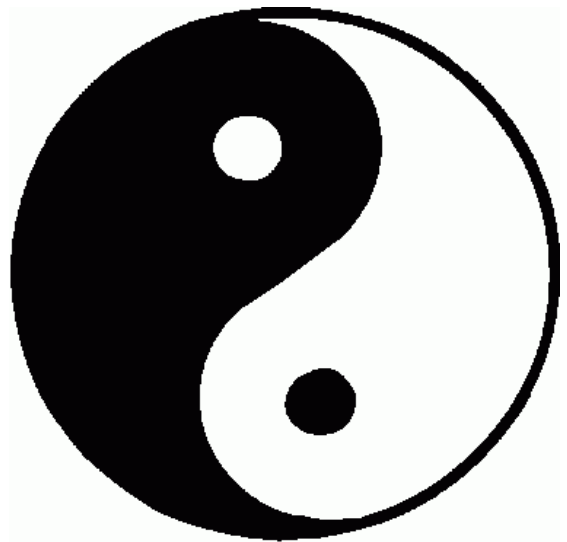
located on Santo, one of the many Border Worlds, and known for its agricultural industry, among other things (for more information, see page 214 of the main Serenity RPG rule book).

THE GOLDEN MANTIS

Like many Tong, the Golden Mantis is a collection of aligned families that protect one another and the neighborhoods in which they originated or operate, as well as being involved a many illegal activities from prostitution to smuggling. Also like many Tong, they often find themselves involved in turf wars with rival Tongs and other criminal organizations.

Unfortunately, the head of the clan has died unexpectedly, without a nominating his successor. This has plunged the Golden Mantis into a leadership power struggle to fill the vacuum, now being fought out between the two most influential candidates. Their fight for control has lead to a series of violent events, including kidnappings and assassinations.

The adventure begins as this leadership struggle is reaching its final days, when one of the leaders decides to go to extreme lengths to unbalance his opponent, while bringing in some much needed credits at the same time.



ACT ONE

Scene 1: Life on the Range

"Santo used to be a mite popular holiday destination a ways back, being all picture perfect an' pretty and all, but that was before the War. Seems that during those violent times, those rich folk from the Core didn't feel that inclined on coming out to the Border, in case some Independent type took a likin' to 'em as possible hostages an' such. 'Course, that weren't the end for Santo, as it seems it had a mite strong farming community who kept her going, as pretty much all folk was in need of feedin', 'specially during them hard times as was. That weren't the all of it though, as all them tourist places needed to find new ways to get their coin, they began turning to all sorta new business ventures, so it became a real fun place to visit. Now days, it's a recovering world, with them resorts all reopening, but them clubs for any pleasure is still there and it's no longer just for them super rich, while them farmers out in the plains is still going strong as ever. Yeah, Santo is a great place; just mind you leave the little ones at home."

– Hugh Fletcher, freelance farmhand, Hera.

The adventure begins with the player characters (PCs) aboard their ship, as they make their final approach to a large farming town on the Border World of Santo; a world that was once famous for its tourist industry, but also maintains a thriving agricultural base. The crew are feeling good, as the short two day job is about to reach its completion without any sign of complications. Almost filling the ship's cargo bay are numerous crates of top grade agricultural supplies, from machine parts to fertilizers, all paid for in advance and only requiring the PCs to haul them over from Hera. Their employer, Mr. Christopher Hardy, will be paying them top rate for their troubles upon arrival at Emerald River.

As the ship breaks out of the clouds, with the Town of Emerald River in sight, you, the Game Master (GM), should read the following passage out loud or paraphrase it. Read:

Finally breaking out from the clouds, you bear witness to the vast expanse of farmlands and prairies that form the agricultural heartland of Santo, the beauty of which is awe inspiring. Only a short way ahead, you can see the multitude of buildings that shape the large town of Emerald River, a man-made mark against the natural vista. Off to the east of town, the wide river after which it was named, shines with a brilliant green hue in the late afternoon sun. While to the north, the steady rise of hills and mountains stand tall and proud, thick forests lining their slopes, acting as a natural rain break and feeding the many life giving rivers of these fertile lands.

You bank the ship around and down towards the two landing pads and large fuel storage tanks at the northern edge of town, making for your final approach around what appears to be the Town's communications and control tower, before steadily setting her down.

As you lower down the cargo ramp, you see two shiny hover trucks already making their way up the road from town towards you and are in no doubt they belong to the Hardy family, probably the most wealthy family around.

When they reach the ship, the hover trucks come to a stop and the man himself steps down from the cab of the lead vehicle. His manner of dress is a little surprising, not the preened up gentlemanly garb you'd imagined, but very much the rancher. He strides up to the ship's captain and offers his hand, while his men start to clamber out from the trucks.

"Ni How¹ Captain, welcome to town and my gratitude to you for bringing my goods so swiftly. As soon as my men have unloaded the cargo and checked it all off, then the agreed sum will be credited to your account, or my man here can pay in coin." Christopher Hardy pleasantly informs you.

As soon as you give permission, his men set to work unloading the cargo and moving it onto the two large hover trucks.

Christopher Hardy may be dressed as a rancher, but he has the refinement of a highly educated and cultured gent. He is polite, charming and very businesslike and helps his men with the cargo, unless the PCs decide to converse with him.

Once the PCs ship is down on the ground, but while the pilot is still on the bridge, they can make a HARD (11) *Perception + Technical Engineering / Sensors* or *Pilot / Sensors* roll to notice another ship breaking atmosphere and entering the airspace around Emerald River, though it will be some time before it lands. Of course, this will not mean much and should in no way be alarming, but merely an observation, foreshadowing what is to come.

As the last few crates are being unloaded, an encounter takes place that is of importance, but at this time doesn't directly involve the PCs. Read:

With only a few more crates to unload, you hear the familiar sound of ships engines, as in a surprisingly busy moment for Emerald River; a second vessel is making its final approach. The ship that lands is smaller than your own, but sleek and no doubt built for speed and a low radar signature, an odd kind of ship to be in a place like

¹ "Greetings"

this. The name on the bow shows her to be called *Tang Lang*¹.

As it comes to a rest and lowers its cargo ramp, two large hover mules slowly make their way out, before each loading up with three passengers of oriental descent and speeding off into town. The ramp then closes and no one else leaves the ship, though you'd be sure that there'll still be folks on board.

Any PC alert PC who succeeds at a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception / Sight* roll will notice that all of the passengers are carrying personal firearms and that there are some rifles on the racks in the hover mules.

Despite the unusual nature of the other ship and its passengers, nothing further happens that has any bearing on the PCs at this moment.

The remainder of their cargo is unloaded and checked over and all found to be in order. The Captain is paid 300 credits for the job, either into their account or in hard currency. Read:

"Well thank you for your services Captain, here is the payment we agreed upon. I've already paid your port fees, but if you need fuel and servicing, I suggest you see the good men at Jimmy's Service Station over there." Mr. Hardy informs you, pointing in the direction of the structure that also doubles as the Town's communications and control tower.

"I've also taken the liberty to go so far as book you all a nights stay at Blake's Tavern, with all services and drinks tab on the house...just my way of saying thank you for a job well done."

You are a little taken aback by the man's generosity, but a night's stay in a real bed is too good a chance to pass up, especially when it's all on someone else's tab, though you are certain that is as much to do with ensuring future services as much as anything else.

With the pleasantries over, Mr. Hardy climbs back into the cab of his hover truck and both vehicles head back down the northern road into town and off towards the Hardy Farmstead down south, leaving you all to enjoy your overnight stay.

The PCs have now got a paid night in Emerald River, staying at the place to be, Blake's Tavern. Once they have cleaned up the ship, sorted out fuel from Jimmy's Service Station, should they need it (at the standard rate of 5 credits per ton), they are free to kit up as they wish and head into the center of town.

Once in town, the PCs are free to do as they please, but they arrive just as the sun is going down and most businesses are beginning to close up shop for the day. There is no sign of the two hover mules they witnessed earlier, should anyone ask.

The following is a description of the center of town. For more details regarding each location, I suggest reading the Emerald River town setting. Read or paraphrase:

Emerald River grew around the town square, with the town's four main roads all leading into (and out of) it, roughly creating a north, south, east and west cross, with the square in the middle.

In the center of the town square is Memorial Square, a small park with a few trees and a war memorial to those townsfolk who served and died in the Unification War.

On the north side of the square are the Town Hall, an impressive sculptured stone building, and Saint Mark's church, a modestly sized white washed, wooden building with a short flight of steps leading up to two thick wooden doors and the bell tower.

On the east side of the square is Sam's Smithy and Stables, a large blacksmiths forge as well as stabling for folks horses while they're visiting the town. The smithy and stables are separate buildings, but are situated next to one another.

Also on the eastern side of the square is Blake's Tavern, which is probably the liveliest business in town. Blake's is a towering brick and wood building standing an impressive four stories tall (impressive for a small town like Emerald River) with a decorative wooden balcony running around each floor. It is painted in a black, yellow and red pattern, making it a place that cannot be missed. It is a watering hole, cabaret venue, gambling hall, hotel and brothel all in one, catering to locals and visitors alike.

On the south side of the square are three buildings. There is the Sheriff's Office and town Jail, the Emerald River General Store and the Borderlands Bank.

On the west side of the square are three more prominent businesses. There is Fizz 'N' Chips, a retailer of electrical goods and scrap merchant, with most of the space taken up by four huge containers of scrap metal and electronics, where almost any spare part could probably be found, given enough time.

Of the other two, the larger is Dillon's Garage, which sells hydrogen fuel (and battery cell recharging), has a maintenance workshop and even sells second hand ground and hover vehicles out front. Next to Dillon's is Jane's Cortex Café, which is quite a small building that acts every bit like a cybercafé, with access to Cortex terminals and serving drinks and snacks.

The rest of the town is mostly made up of residential dwellings, the majority of which are two story wood and brick or prefabricated houses. Most of the dwellings close to the center of town are still inhabited and in good repair, but some of the buildings on the edge of town have been vacant for a number of years and have fallen into

¹ "Praying Mantis"

disrepair, some still have faded 'for sale' notices standing outside. The town generally has an old west feel to it, with a touch of modern technology seeping through, from satellite dishes on roofs to electronic locks on doors, not to mention the occasional hover mule cruising down the streets along side the horses.

Once the PCs have done looking around town, they should probably be heading over to Blake's Tavern for some well earned rest and recreation, with free drinks and a night in a real bed.

As the crew approaches Blake's, they can already hear the music and chatter from outside, it sounds like a rowdy place. Read:

With the sun going down, it would seem that Blake's has got going already. As you head across the dusty road to the brightly colored building, you can hear loud music playing and all manner of chatter from inside; it certainly sounds like a fun and rowdy place to be.

You step up onto the wooden boards of the veranda and in through the door, past the watchful eye of a hulking doorman with a certain intimidatin' manner about him.

Inside the place, it is lively, noisy and rowdy, but not so much so as to be out of hand or suggesting any kind of violence.

There are a lot of tables and chairs around for the clientele, a bar off at the back and a cabaret stage off to one side. A wooden staircase leads up from the ground floor to the first floor, where a decorative balcony overlooks the bar and some ladies of a particular profession are advertising their wares by offering teasing glimpses of flesh to entice you to their rooms.

While there may be a lot of folk already here, the place is still far from full and it is easy enough to find a table and get your drinks from the grizzled looking barman.

The drinks are fine, none too watered down and the entertainment is even better, especially when the dancing girls come on, all of whom are surprisingly good. You hear tell that one of dancers is Sophia Blake, the younger sister of Owen Blake, the man who owns the place.

The place has a friendly feel to it, the people seem decent sorts and it all helps to make for a much needed, fun night out on the town.

This is a time for the PCs to enjoy themselves and make the most having the entire bar bill paid for. The expenses do not cover the cost of the whores (there are six girls and one guy), but they are welcome to use their services (at 4 credits an hour, unless they can negotiate a discount price of 3 credits with a HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence* / *barter* roll).

The general idea is that they get to like the place and the people and feel that everyone is helping them to

have a good time. There should be no trouble, no bar fights and no arguments. If any of the crew is a known or decent gambler, they could even get invited into a poker game out back. The poker games have a 5 credit buy each round and require opposed *Intelligence + Perception* / *Gambling* rolls, with the lowest roll dropping out of the game. There are six players and the winner is whoever wins the final round and gets the pot of 100 credits. Please note that this is a very simplified system to represent the poker game and GMs are more than welcome to expand upon them, or even actually play a hand of poker with their players if they feel it would add to the enjoyment and know how to play the game.

Generally, the whole evening is a great chance for everyone to let there hair down and relax. Should the PCs start a bar fight, they will soon find themselves in trouble, as the barman, Harry McKay, pulls out a shotgun from under the counter and the doorman, Freddy Roark, starts banging heads. Together they will soon convince folk to settle down, and if the PCs refuse, someone will go get the sheriff and the trouble makers will get to spend the night in a cell. Ideally this situation should be a last resort as you, the GM, will have to make some adjustments to the next scene if this was the case.

Once the PCs are ready to retire, their rooms are up on the second floor and the barman provides them with their keys. They have been given two of the luxury double rooms and as many of the standard twin rooms as is necessary to accommodate the crew. For a more detailed description of Blake's Tavern and the important NPCs, I suggest reading the Emerald River town setting sourcebook.

Once the PCs have settled down for the night, the scene is over and you may award one to three plot points for interesting and fun role-playing.

Scene 2: Innocent Abduction

"There are folks in the 'Verse that ply their trade in the trading of other folk. What I'm saying here is that there are men and women out there buy and sell folk to those that can afford them, and those poor folk don't have much say in the matter. Even worse, some of these folk get taken to order, to meet the specs as presented by the buyer. Yep, there is a slave market out there, as much as the Alliance tries to say there 'aint, an' it's even out there on the Core...just you won't see no fancy folk havin' theirs taken. Most slavin' takes place out on the Rim and at times on the Border Worlds, so all in all, what I'm saying is just always keep an eye open, and be careful not to spend too much time alone."

- Jackson 'Cowboy' Brown, veteran pilot, Eavesdown Docks, Persephone.

The next scene begins once the PCs have woken up and are ready to leave Blake's Tavern. Hopefully this will be early in the morning, but could take place at any time of day. As Emerald River is predominantly a farming town, many of its residents spend their day working out in the fields or on the ranches, so the town square tends to be somewhat quiet at most times.

As the PCs leave Blake's, ready to go back to their ship, or look for more work, they walk right into a dangerous encounter. Read:

It had been a good night and the beds at Blake's had indeed been very comfortable, but like most good things, it had to come to an end. Now it's time to get back to the ship, sort out your next job and keep flying.

As you step out into the morning light, adjusting your eyes, your attention is drawn immediately to the two very familiar looking hover mules resting outside the general store. Standing around them, looking alert and armed with rifles are three men and one woman and it dawns on you that something isn't quite right.

The morning air is abruptly broken by the sound of gunfire and a scream that is quickly muffled. As you look on, your relaxed feeling rapidly starts to fade away as two men rush out of the store carrying a wriggling young woman with a cover thrown over her head. They toss the woman onto the first hover mule, then jump onto its sides as it quickly accelerates forward and away from the store.

Before the PCs can react, the hover mule accelerates away and quickly vanishes up the northern road. What happens next will very much depend on how the characters decide to act in response to this daylight abduction.

If the PCs decide to try and rescue the woman, rushing towards the remaining hover mule or drawing weapons, they will be attacked by the four armed people outside, and will have to fight for their lives.

If the PCs keep back or step back inside Blake's to watch, they will see some townsfolk approach the store and get gunned down. If they choose get involved at this point, they will once again be in the fight.

If the PCs keep waiting, then eventually the Sheriff and his deputies will appear and a gunfight between them and the kidnappers will take place. If the PCs get involved now, they will find it easier as they have the local lawmen distracting the kidnappers.

If the kidnappers survive without the PCs getting involved for more than five minutes, those that are still able, will jump into the remaining hover mule and

head off out of town at high speed, down the eastern road, after a lap of the square to turn around.

Should the PCs get involved in the fight at any point, they will face the three men and one woman outside, around the hover mule, plus the mule's driver. There is one more man inside the store, but he is wounded (on half his wound level and with a -2 Step attribute penalty). These kidnappers are all Golden Mantis Tong foot soldiers.

The four kidnappers outside the mule are armed with standard rifles, pistols and knives, but the driver has an SMG. The last of the kidnappers, the wounded man has a machine pistol (as standard pistol, but capable of burst fire and with a 20 round magazine).

They will all fight to the death if they have to, but will try and escape if over half their number has been subdued or killed.

The veranda around Blake's Tavern and the General Store has enough support posts to provide light cover (+4 Difficulty to target number) and depending on the direction of the attacker, the hover mule can provide the Tong with up to medium cover (+6 Difficulty to target number).

If the PCs get involved straight away, the local lawmen will come to their aid one minute later (20 turns).

If the PCs waited until the local lawmen get involved, only half of the Tong will be able to focus on them and they will only fight for two turns before deciding to try and escape, given that it's not good to be caught in a cross fire.

Once they have overpowered the Tong, the PCs could decide to try and give chase in the other hover mule, or a hover mule of their own, but by this time the first mule will have already gained a good head start.

By all means let the PCs jump into the hover mule and speed off up the northern road, but they will not be able to catch up. One way to ensure this is to have their mule suddenly begin to lose power and all sorts of warning lights to appear on the control panel. It would seem that during the shootout, the mule took some hits and something critical was damaged.

Once the fight is over, all of the Tong should be dead or unconscious, bar those that escaped on the first hover mule.

The scene ends with the fight over and the Tong ship taking off from the northern end of Emerald River with its victim on board. No matter how quickly the PCs or townsfolk may have thought of it, land locking the *Tang Lang* does not seem to work. The Tong disabled the land lock transmitter during the night to make sure it would not stop them. Read:

While you are still unsure why, the kidnappers put up a hard fight to make sure that you couldn't go after the woman that was abducted. Despite all

your attempts, they just had too much of a lead, a situation that is only further enforced as their ship, *Tang Lang*, sweeps over town and flies up hard and fast into the clouds. The ship is no doubt heading off world, and in a hurry, but as to where they're heading is anyone's guess. If you were to follow after them, the only chance you'd have is to find out where they may be going, possibly from the folks at the store or any survivors among the kidnappers.

With the fight and possible chase over, all that is left is for the PCs to head to the scene of the abduction, the Emerald River General Store and find out what happened. If your crew are the type that may not go to the scene, even if just out of curiosity, the Sheriff will round up anyone who was involved or a witness, so that he can determine exactly what happened, this includes the PCs. The Sheriff will also ask if anyone with medical skills can help the wounded.

Depending on how the scene went, each character should now be awarded with two to four plot points, as well as one advancement point each if they rushed to help straight away.

Scene 3: a Family's Plight

"Law in the 'Verse is a wonderful thing and something the Alliance is right proud of, and rightly so. Trouble is, the Law is much like the government, its influence and benefits can be felt without a doubt on the Core, but it starts to get a little thin by the time you get out to the Rim. You go report a crime on the Core, you can expect the Feds to be showing up real quick like and dealin' with the poor unfortunate who took to breakin' into your home. Now out on the Border Worlds, this isn't quite the case unless you're in one of them flashy cities with all the rich folks. Out in the country towns, you gotta rely on your sheriff to deal with the situation at hand and then go reporting the crime if it heads outta town. Out on the Rim, well, there you can be lucky if you even have a sheriff. Anyway, back to that crime reporting, this is where it all falls down for us Border folk, as when those that have taken to crime decide to leave your world with something of value, then you got to be letting the Feds know about it, so they can send out the word. Trouble is, sending out that word has to go through all sorts o' hoops before it finally gets aired and that takes time. So if those Feds don't think your problem is all that important, then it can take days or weeks before they let all their stations know about it. That'd be why so many people as can afford it, end up employing Bounty Hunters or freelancers to get the job done instead, not that I'm all that happy 'bout that, just the way it is."

- Sheriff Blaine Durham, Emerald River, Santo

The scene at the General Store is as to be expected, given the big shootout. There are spent bullet casings, dead and wounded folk and a lot of spilled blood.

Inside the store, there are signs of a struggle and the family members that run the store, the Sun family, are all there. The father and eldest son are both lying unconscious on the floor, a bullet wound in the son's side, while the mother is crouched down by the counter and comforting her younger son, tears running down her cheeks.

By this time, sheriff Durham and his deputies will be at the scene, trying to find out exactly what took place and making sure that everything is okay, but he will gladly accept any help from the PCs, especially if any of them have any medical skills to tend to the wounded until the local doctor arrives. Also, as is often the case, some of the townsfolk have started to crowd around outside, in part to see if everyone is okay and in part out of curiosity to have something to talk about.

Once everything has been cleared up and the wounded recover consciousness, the PCs can talk to the family and any surviving Tong.

Shortly after the PCs have come to investigate the store, Sun Cai, the father of the abducted woman, regains consciousness. Read:

One of the unconscious men, an old man, slowly seems to come around, recovering from a heavy blow to the head, before sitting bolt upright and looking around frantically, panic in his eyes.

"Mei! Where is Mei? No...they took her, those *Ung Jeong Jia Ching Jien Soh*¹...*Rung Tse Fwo Tzoo Boa Yo Wuo Muhn*². Why did they have to take her?" With this, his body is wracked by sobbing cries.

It takes time for the old man to compose himself and look around at those that have gathered, before his eyes fall upon you, his gaze intense.

"You could save her, you could bring her back. I know that you came here yesterday, in a ship. I implore you; please bring my sweet Mei back to me." His voice is pleading and you feel all eyes in the room looking your way as he asks.

It should be obvious to the PCs that the old man, Sun Cai, has just asked them to go after the Tong and recover the abducted woman, his daughter, Sun Mei. Of course, at this time, they will be unaware that they are dealing with a Tong, or where they will have to go to find the girl, so there will be some questions in need of answering.

Hopefully, the PCs will pursue this of their own accord and start to ask around.

If it looks as if the PCs don't really have any interest, the sheriff will mention that it would be a real kindness

¹ "Filthy fornicators of livestock"

² "Merciful Buddha protect us"

if any folk who so happened to own a ship would take it upon themselves to go find the girl. They will also feel the pressure of many watchful eyes from the crowd looking to see if anyone will offer to do the right thing and offer to save the innocent girl.

If the PCs still look as if they don't really care, unless credits are involved, then Owen Blake, being the moneyed community man he is, will step out from the crowd of people that have just heard the old man's words and will offer to pay the PCs to track down the girl and bring her back home. He will pay their travel expenses; with the promise of an additional 500 credit reward upon her safe return. Of course this will only happen if they do not show any interest of their own.

The information available to the PCs can come from two sources, any captured Tong, or the Sun family themselves, and both of these are explained in the following:

The Sun Family - Cai, the father and head of the Sun family will freely give the following information, but ask that they have the discussion in private:

- The people that just attacked his store and abducted his daughter are members of the Golden Mantis Tong and the person in charge called himself Lei Wu.
- They arrived in his store that morning and demanded to see him and his family, threatening the lives of his wife, Hua, and his youngest son, Jian, who'd been restocking the shelves.
- Both Yi, his eldest son, and Cai had tried to free his family, but the Tong had been prepared and put Cai out with stun batons, while Yi was shot.
- They will be heading for Persephone, as that is where they are based.
- His family has had past problems with the Golden Mantis.
- His daughter, Sun Mei, is a very pretty young 21 years old woman and they are worried for her safety and virtue.
- They can provide a picture of her and it doesn't take a professional eye to see that she is very beautiful (see player handouts).

There is more information that Cai can provide the PCs, but this is what he gives freely. If during their conversation, any PCs succeed at a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception / Empathy* or *Perception / Intuition* roll will be aware that Cai is not telling them everything, but seems to be holding back.

If they were successful and approach Cai about the fact he is holding back information that may be important, he will, at first deny it. If they succeed with an AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* or threaten that they will not help unless he tells them, Cai will also admit the following:

- The Sun family is actually part of the Golden Mantis Tong due to family loyalties, though they do not often have to involve themselves.

- The Tong members that came to them today said something about taking Mei as a guarantee to ensure the Sun family would not involve themselves in current affairs. This is because relatives of the Sun family line had once controlled the Golden Mantis Tong.
- It is because of this family connection to the Tong that he is certain that they will be heading to Persephone, though he has never been there and cannot tell them exactly where, but feels it will not be far from the Eavesdown Docks.
- He does not believe that the Tong captors intend to harm Mei, but their future intentions for her will certainly not be pleasant.

No matter how perceptive or persuasive the PCs where, one fact is certain, and that is that Sun Cai has no idea why the Tong actually came and took his daughter.

Surviving Tong member – Should any of the Tong have been taken alive, this gives the PCs a chance to interrogate them as to who they are and why they abducted Sun Mei. It is assumed they get the chance to question the Tong while the sheriff is busy clearing the scene and organizing his deputies.

Convincing the Tong member to tell anything more than the fact they are part of the Golden Mantis Tong will require a HARD Complex Action (55) using *Willpower + Discipline / Interrogation* or *Influence / Interrogation* roll, where every roll takes two minutes of time. The PCs may indirectly assist one another with this task. The threat of physical harm will not have any effect, but actually inflicting harm will grant a +1 step Skill bonus on the roll. Torturing is however illegal, not to mention immoral, and the Tong survivor should not be harmed in any way if sheriff Durham or one of his deputies are nearby.

You, the GM, must role-play the Tong member, who will remain silent or only give his name, Tan Peng, and Golden Mantis Tong affiliation, until the Difficulty Threshold has been reached or exceeded. A Botch at any time increases the Difficulty Threshold to FORMIDABLE (75), as the Tong member holds out that bit longer.

Once broken, the Tong survivor will provide all of the following information:

- Their ship, *Tang Lang*, is heading to Persephone and will land at Eavesdown docks.
- They are not sure exactly where the girl will be taken, but their leader said something about a warehouse.
- Their team leader is called Lei Wu, but he is only a lieutenant in the organization.
- As far as they are aware, the girl was abducted because she is a blood relation to a rival captain and they wanted a suitable hostage.
- The old boss of the Golden Mantis recently died, and since then there has been a power struggle

between his two most influential captains to take control.

- His boss, and in their words, the rightful heir to the Golden Mantis, is called **Yu Shu**.
- Someone outside the Golden Mantis recently sponsored his boss with a large sum of money to help finance this job.
- They spent the previous night in one of the houses on the eastern edge of town, one that has been up for sale.
- They also disabled the Land Lock transmitter overnight, to make sure that it would not become a problem.

This is all of the information that is available, from either Sun Cai or the Tong survivor, so the PCs have to decide if they are still going to help or not.

Both Cai and his wife Hua will plead for the PCs to help them and rescue their daughter, who is an innocent girl and did not deserve to be taken.

Again, if the PCs look to say no and Owen has not already stepped up, he will offer to reward them, but at the end of the day, any big damn heroes should know that going after the girl is the right thing to do. What will be pointed out by the Sun Family and sheriff Durham is that time is of the essence and that with every passing minute, the lead the Tong have on them increases.

Sheriff Durham will take any surviving Tong to the jail and lock them up, as well as confiscating any weapons they had on them, as evidence, until the Feds can come and collect them. The PCs can keep any weapons they managed to gather off bodies before the sheriff arrived, if they wish, with the exception of the rifles, which are a little too obvious not to be noticed. If the PCs have agreed to help rescue the daughter, it is only an AVERAGE (7) Willpower + Influence / Persuasion roll to convince the locals to let them keep the remaining large hover mule, generally with the story that it will help them chase the Tong on Persephone.

With any luck, the PCs go to their ship and set a course for Persephone and Eavesdown Docks.

Once the scene is over, you may reward each PC with one to three plot points, depending on how they dealt with the situation. If the PCs agreed to rescue the daughter without any prompting from the sheriff or Owen Blake, they should also be awarded with one advancement point each.

ACT 2

Scene 1: Bound for Persephone

"Eavesdown docks, now there's a barrel of fun. I remember my first time there with a ship of my own and I was sure glad I'd hired myself a half decent pilot for the run. You see, back then, I'd just got the Liberty in shape and was heading to Eavesdown to get myself a crew, but pretty much only knew the basics of flight. Anyway, I stood there looking out of bridge and stared in wonder at all those ships, constantly coming and going, this way and that, it was like something living. I heard traffic control give some instructions to my pilot and clearing us for a landing zone, but that didn't make it any the less confusing. Big place that spaceport and I know why they say it's not for the inexperienced or faint hearted and that's just the airspace. As for once you're down on the ground and stepping off your cargo ramp, well that's a different story altogether my friend."

- Captain Alexander 'Chance' Chancer-Dumont, New Vegas, Santo

The chase is on and in this scene the PCs are in their ship and on the short journey to Persephone, hoping to catch up with the Golden Mantis Tong before anything terrible happens to Sun Mei.

Persephone is not that far from Santo and the pilot can make an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation roll to know it is a short 250 hour trip for a Speed Class of 1 vessel, so for most ships it'll only take a day or two to get there. Read:

You are finally away and chasing the tail of the Tong ship, steadily leaving the beautiful world of Santo behind in the wake of your pulse trail and heading as fast as you can for Persephone. The course is plotted and by all accounts it'll take you a day or so to get there, which by all accounts may not seem like much, but for that poor girl, Sun Mei, it could be a lifetime.

From what you have been told by the Sun family, they are not of the opinion that the Golden Mantis Tong has any intention to harm her, but their plans certainly cannot be to her benefit.

The biggest problem you face will be finding the Tong ship, *Tang Lang*, once you land at Eavesdown Docks, which are both chaotic and vast, and then finding the Tong themselves.

Guess it's time to call up some old friends and start looking.

Pretty much all that the PCs can do now is to try and find out as much as they can about the Golden Mantis Tong and possibly getting the heads up as to where the *Tang Lang* lands at Eavesdown.

While the Cortex will certainly include some general information and warnings about Tong gangs in general, it will not provide and specific information on the Golden Mantis.

To find out anything about the Golden Mantis, they will have to call up friends and allies and see if they can give them anything of use.

If any of the crew has the *Friends in Low Places* asset, they can spend plot points to obtain the information; the more they spend, the more they'll get. The following information is available:

- **1 plot point** – The Golden Mantis Tong has its power base on Persephone, in and around the Eavesdown docks, mostly in the warehouse districts.
- **2 plot points** – The old boss of the Golden Mantis recently died, and since then there has been a power struggle between his two most influential captains to take control.
- **3 plot points** – The boss of one side of the conflict is a woman by the name of **Bai Lian** and the other is a man by the name of **Yu Shu**.
- **4 plot points** – For a long time, the Sun family ruled the Tong and **Bai Lian** is a blood relative of that line. She is the more stable of the two bosses and more likely to talk to outsiders. To arrange a meeting, you just need to put word on the street that you are looking for her and someone will find you or point you in the right direction.
- **5 plot points** – If you want to arrange a meeting with **Yu Shu**, you need to put the word out in the south docks area or the warehouse district, but you better be careful to watch your back, they're not so keen on outsiders unless a lot of money is involved.

That is all that can be gathered through use of the asset. Alternatively, if none of the PCs have this asset, or do not wish to use it, this information can be gathered by talking to any contacts they may have on Persephone. If the PCs want to ensure they have a contact that knows about the Golden Mantis Tong, they can spend 4 plot points to influence the story in their favor.

Once they are in touch with their contact, they can question them for information; this requires a *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* roll. The difficulty starts at EASY (3), with each additional piece of information increasing the difficulty by one step. Each step of information is the same as above, with the plot points spent being replaced by the level of difficulty; for example, a HARD (11) roll will grant them with 3 plot points worth of information from the list above.

Another option is that the PCs may actually already know about the Golden Mantis Tong, due to time spent on the street and their understanding of the culture or an actual connection to another Tong clan. Any PC with the *Streetwise* specialty can make an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* roll to recall the information. Again, for each difficulty level step, they gain another piece of information; for example, a HARD (11) roll will grant them with 2 plot points worth of information from the list above.

If the PC is part of another Tong Clan, and to represents the way that the various Tong clans often keep a close eye on the affairs of their rivals, they may make an EASY (3) *Intelligence + Knowledge / Culture* or *Knowledge / Family* roll instead. Again, for each difficulty level step, they gain another piece of information; for example, a HARD (11) roll will grant them with 3 plot points worth of information from the list above.

Of course, the crew may attempt to gather the information from all of these sources and therefore be able to confirm the information. A botch on any attempt means that they can find no information and raise the difficulty of any further attempts by one step.

Next up, the PCs may wish to find out where the *Tang Lang* will be landing, or has landed and maybe find out anything else they can dig up relating to the ship. Obviously, they can initially ask any of their Persephone contacts to keep an eye and let them know, but no contact will actually get involved to the point where they try and stop the Tong from leaving the ship and they will loose them if they try and follow after them.

It is down to you as the GM as to whether any of the PCs contacts find out where the *Tang Lang* has landed and contacts them about it.

If the PCs want to be more directly involved, they can try to find out for themselves. If any of the PCs has the *Friends in High Places* asset, they can use this to get docking information and landing permissions for Eavesdown Docks, but obviously can only be done close to their arrival at Persephone (within ten hours of estimated time of arrival). Gaining this information requires 3 plot points to be spent and it will take 1d4 + 2 hours before their contact is able to retrieve and supply the data they require. After this time they told exactly where and when the *Tang Lang* landed (see Act 2, Scene 2), as well as who the ship is registered to. The registered owner of the ship is a small haulage company, Jade Dragon Interplanetary, in the warehouse district and the Captain is listed as Lei Wu.

If none of the PCs have this asset, or do not wish to use it, then there are a couple of other ways of gaining the information. In both cases, the information can only be obtained when the PCs are close to Persephone.

The first method to gather the data as to where the *Tang Lang* has landed would be to get access to the Eavesdown Docks traffic control records. This will require a dedicated Cortex terminal and some fancy computer skills. To access the traffic control computer via a remote link requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. Once the hacker has got the link, they then have to find the correct data files, which requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* or *Computer Operations* roll. Now that they have the files,

they need to bypass the security and encryption to finally get the data, this requires another FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. After this, the hacker will now have the information that is quoted above, but they still need to log off the system undetected. This requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll to break the connection without alerting any security programs. It takes 3d10 + 5 minutes to find the correct data files.

A failure at any time increases the difficulty of any further rolls by one step, as security gets suspicious, while a botch means that security has been alerted and their connection is terminated. Should the attempt to log off result in a Botch, security will unsuccessfully attempt to track the source of the signal, but they will alert the Feds that a breach took place and provide them with details of the information that was accessed. This will have an impact on the next scene.

The second option risks being fined by the Feds and a visit by Persephone's customs officers upon landing, not to mention some fancy flying and this can only be attempted as their ship is coming in to land at the docks.

Firstly, the PCs have to wait until they have been given clearance to land and assigned a docking location, but instead of taking the flight path they have been issued, they could attempt a fly-past of the docks around and close to the warehouse district, to see if they can spot the *Tang Lang*. Obviously, this is not something that the port authorities take kindly too and given the level of traffic at Eavesdown docks, it could be an incredibly dangerous thing to do and possibly even result in a collision. Their reason for the fly-past is that due to how busy the docks are, there is no way of spotting the ship by following their flight path and as the *Tang Lang* has landed and powered down, she can not be traced with sensors without her exact transponder codes, something the PCs do not have.

To safely attempt the fly-past in the crowded airspace above Eavesdown Docks requires a HARD (11) *Ship's Agility + Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* roll, while spotting the *Tang Lang* herself requires a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception / Sight* roll. Should both rolls succeed, the crew survives the maneuver and find out where the *Tang Lang* is docked, though they do not get the details of ownership.

If Pilot fails their piloting roll, they end up in a near miss with a large transport ship and have to take evasive action, which increases the difficulty to spot the *Tang Lang* by two steps. Anyone not seated or strapped in must succeed at a HARD (11) *Agility + Athletics / Appropriate Specialty* roll to avoid being thrown around the ship. If they fail, they take 1d6

points of stun damage from the various cuts and bruises inflicted.

Should the pilot Botch the roll, then the near miss becomes a collision instead and the PCs are in big trouble. To establish the level of damage as their ship scrapes against the hull of a large transport vessel, their pilot must make a HARD (11) *Alertness + Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* roll. Success inflicts 1d6 points of basic damage to their ship, while a failure indicates 1d6 + 1 points of basic damage for each point by which they failed their roll. A Botch here means that their ship has sustained critical damage and crashes down into the docks, going up in flames, as well as leaving a damaged heavy freighter limping away to come down hard elsewhere. All in all, it's a scene that makes the evening news.

Any crew that are not strapped down as the ship's collide, must make a FORMIDABLE (15) *Agility + Athletics / Appropriate Specialty* roll to avoid being thrown against hull plating or the deck of the ship. If they fail, they take 2d6 points of basic damage from the impact.

No matter the outcome of the fly-past, the crew will find themselves in trouble with the authorities, and they will be waiting to meet them when they eventually land. Exactly how the situation plays out will depend on how successful their fly-past was. The Alliance Customs team consists of one ranking officer, two technical engineers (who search the ship, if so required) and four armed support personnel.

- If the initial piloting roll was successful and there was no near miss or collision, the Alliance Customs officers will only be annoyed. In this case, they will demand to see the ship's papers, will have a stern word with the Captain about pulling this sort of stunt and impose a fine of 50 credits, as well as a black mark on the Pilot's license. If the pilot had achieved an extraordinary success, the crew manages to avoid the fine, as it is clear they were in control. This holds the crew up for 1d10 + 10 minutes while the ranking officer chastises the crew for their reckless actions.
- If there was a near miss over the docks, but the pilot managed to avoid a collision, the Alliance Customs officers are furious, but reasonable. In this case, they will demand to see the ship's papers, conduct a detailed search of the ship, will have sterns word with the Captain and crew about pulling this sort of stunt and impose a fine of 100 credits, as well warning the Pilot that if they try anything like this again, they may have their license revoked. Should the customs team find anything illegal on the ship, it will be confiscated and the owner will be fined 10 to 100 credits, depending on the nature of the item; better hope those automatic weapons and Fedband scanners are well hidden. This

holds the crew up for 1d4 + 1 hours, as they are required to remain on the ship during the search.

- If there was a collision, but no actual crash, then the Alliance welcoming party is more substantial. The PCs ship is immediately land locked as it touches down and is met by the Alliance Customs team plus a twelve man squad of Alliance troops. Their ship is boarded and they will demand to see the ship's papers, conduct an extremely detailed inspection of the ship, will have stern words with the Captain and crew about pulling this sort of stunt and impose a fine of 500 credits, as well warning the Pilot that if they try anything like this again, they will have their license revoked. Should the customs teams find anything illegal on the ship, it will be confiscated and the owner will be fined 10 to 100 credits or possibly taken away and imprisoned, pending a trial. It all depends on the exact nature of the items they find; so you better hope anything the Alliance considers particularly illegal to have in your possession is very well hidden. This holds the crew up for 2d4 + 2 hours, as they are required to remain on the ship during the inspection.
- If the PCs were unfortunate enough to crash their ship, they are met by rescue crews who pull them to safety. The remains of their ship is impounded and the pilot has their license revoked. If the crew does not manage to get away during the initial chaos, they are arrested and imprisoned for reckless endangerment of lives and the destruction of government property (serving a term of five to eight years). To escape in the confusion after they are rescued requires an AVERAGE (7) *Agility + Covert / Appropriate Specialty* roll, but the only possessions they have with them are those items they were carrying on their person at the time of the crash, as well as leaving them all with a minor *Branded (Alliance)* complication.

If the PCs are determined to find the *Tang Lang* and have not already tracked her down, they can do so once they land and this is covered in the next scene. Finally, one way or another, the PCs touch down at Eavesdown docks and are ready to disembark and track down the Golden Mantis Tong and it's time to move onto the next scene, assuming they did not crash and were not arrested that is.

All of the action of the last scene should reward the PCs with two to five plot points each, plus if any PC spent two or more plot points on *Friends in High or Low Places*, that person also receives one advancement point.

Scene 2: Chasing the Mantis

"One word the Alliance likes to toss around is 'Unity', like its some kinda badge of honor. How humankind durin' the Exodus learned to see past what made `em all different and found a way to be all lovin' and carin' and such. Well if we went and got all so fired unified an' all, why do them Huen Dahn¹ Tongs still exist? Way I heard it told was the Tongs started back on Earth-That-Was. Seems folk back then didn't cotton to Asians for some gorram reason and used do all sort of unseemly things to `em. So them Asian fellers banded together to form some protective group, figurin' they would be safe in numbers. Worked for awhile, but folk being folk, the Tongs, got it into their heads that since they was accustom livin' hidden an' all and they was so good a keepin' outta sight, that they could start smugglin' in others of their kind. First it was kin, then anyone as could pay. Well, smugglin' folk soon drifted into just plain smugglin' and next thing you know them Tongs was just another den o' thieves and whores. Guess things in that there Exodus weren't as all rosy as they claim and them Tongs survived the trip, or hell, mayhap they started new here, I ain't got the learnin' to know. All I do ken is if you ain't o' Asian stock, you ain't welcome with `em, unless you go an' crack the code to makin' friends with `em and they invite ya'll in. They is still out to protecting their own and if you cross one, you done gone and crossed `em all."

– Pops McMurty, itinerant spacer and long time Rim resident

The PCs are now docked at Eavesdown Docks and ready to start chasing the Golden Mantis Tong. Now they may have some information that can help, then again, they may not.

Port fees at Eavesdown Docks are set at a fixed 2 credit landing charge, plus 1 credit per 100 tons of ship per week, to a maximum of 50 credits per week. This charge includes administration costs, power hook-up, septic flush and fresh water fill. Fuel must be purchased separately, but it is cheaper here than at many other docks, due to fierce competition among vendors, so fuel is charged at 4 credits per ton.

Once port fees have been deducted and any matters with Alliance Customs have been resolved from scene one, the crew can leave the ship. Read:

Stepping down off the ramp of your ship, the chaotic throng of life that is Eavesdown Docks stands before you. There is a vibrancy of color from the variety of garb worn by the many folk of many ethnicities and from the multitude of market canopies that border the landing bays. Your other senses are assaulted by the complex mixture of smells from cooking food to engine oils to human

¹ "Bastard, jerk"

and animal odors, and by the cacophony of noise generated by hundreds of people, animals, ships and vehicles.

It's a sensation that can intimidate folk that have not been to the docks before, but one that would be sorely missed by those that frequent them.

By experience you know that Eavesdown docks are not a safe place for the unwary, with all manner of thieves, pickpockets and organized crime families doing as much business as the market holders and cargo haulers. It just so happens that today you are actually looking for one of those very same crime families, which could end in all manner of hurt unless you play it real carefully.

Now it's time for the PCs to track down the Golden Mantis Tong. If the PCs do not feel that they have enough information to be going on with, they can start asking around. Most folk will be too frightened to help when it comes to informing on a Tong, but eventually, on a successful AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* or a HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* or *Discipline / Intimidation* roll, they will find out the 'word on the street'. If they fail the roll, they find out about the first three points below, but they will also alert the Tong that they have been asking questions about them. On a Botched roll, the PC is unable to get any information. The following information can be discovered and it requires approximately an hour of asking around:

- The Golden Mantis Tong has its power base in the Eavesdown docks and they can usually be found in the warehouse district.
- The old boss of the Golden Mantis recently died, and since then there has been a power struggle between his two most influential captains to take control.
- Getting in touch with either of the bosses would probably just involve asking around for them in the warehouse district. Someone will come and find you; just they may not be friendly.
- The boss of one side of the conflict is a woman by the name of **Bai Lian** and the other is a guy by the name of **Yu Shu**.

If the PCs know where to find the *Tang Lang* and decide to check her out, she is docked on a bay near the warehouse district and some distance from where they were able to land. It takes around an hour to reach the *Tang Lang*, as much due to the crowds and traffic as to the actual distance traveled.

If the PCs had not previously been able to locate the *Tang Lang*, they can head out into the docks and search for her. This requires a physical search of the docks and is a HARD (55) Complex Action requiring either *Alertness + Perception / Search* or *Perception / Sight* to find the ship for themselves or *Willpower +*

Influence / Persuasion to convince people to point them in the direction of anything that matches her description. Each roll takes 20 minutes of time, but eventually they will discover the correct docking bay.

The *Tang Lang* will be powered down and locked up tight, with a couple of Tong keeping guard. They will be hostile to anyone who approaches and give only one warning to go away. If the PCs decide to fight these guards, they are joined d4+2 turns later by another six Tong that appear out of the nearby crowds.

If, in the previous scene, the PC hacker rolled a Botch, there will be a squad of six Feds keeping an eye on the *Lang Tang*, with backup close to hand. A successful HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception / Sight* roll before the encounter, will alert the PCs that there seem to be an unusually high number of Feds in the streets around the *Lang Tang*. This should give them enough warning to know that starting any trouble would be a very bad idea.

As soon as any violence breaks out, the Feds will appear from the crowds and order everyone to drop their weapons and cease fighting. So long as everyone does as they are told and nobody has been shot, the Feds will question them and eventually release them, after a 50 credit fine each and the confiscation of any unlicensed weapons. If the PCs had shot anybody or attack the Feds, then they are going to be in a lot of trouble, as they will call for their backup and fairly soon the area will be swarming with armed men and woman, all very much focused on the crew. They can expect to be imprisoned and dealt with accordingly. The PCs can, of course, choose to run and hide, so as to not be stopped by the Feds in the first place, which requires a successful HARD (11) *Vitality* or *Willpower + Athletics / Running* roll to get away from pursuing officers, or a HARD (11) *Alertness + Covert / Stealth* roll to blend into the crowds and sneak away.

If the PCs decide to retreat at any time in their fight against the Tong, assuming the Feds were not involved, they are allowed to do so. Should the PCs challenge and defeat the Tong guards, they can question any survivors.

Getting any information out of the Tong guarding the ship requires a HARD Complex Action (55) using *Willpower + Discipline / Interrogation* or *Influence / Interrogation* roll, where every roll costs five minutes of time. The PCs may indirectly assist one another with this task. The threat of physical harm will not have any effect, but actually inflicting harm will grant a +1 step Skill bonus on the roll. Torturing is however illegal, not to mention immoral, so should be done out of sight. A Botch at any time increases the Difficulty Threshold to FORMIDABLE (75), as the Tong member holds out that bit longer.

If successful, the PCs discover that their captives do not have access to the *Tang Lang*, but they can tell them that they work for **Yu Shu** and that he is the

rightful heir to the Golden Mantis Tong. No matter what the PCs threaten, they will not, and cannot, tell them exactly where to find him, but will let them know he is somewhere in the warehouse district.

Breaking into the *Tang Lang* requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device* or HEROIC (19) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty* roll to bypass the security to open any of the hatches or the cargo ramp. A failure results in a loud alarm sounding for a few minutes and the entry security increases by one difficulty step, obviously, this may attract unwanted attention, but this is up to you as a GM. A Botch sounds the alarm, but also locks down the ship, preventing any entry at all for ten minutes and also increasing the required difficulty by two steps.

Getting inside the ship will not actually provide the PCs with any additional information as to where Sun Mei has been taken, but it could provide them with the opportunity to disable the ship, should the wish to make sure it won't quickly follow them later. Disabling the ship in such a way as to make sure it is not quickly noticed requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Mechanical or Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty* or *Intelligence + Covert / Sabotage* roll. They could also loot the ship, which will net them a couple of standard rifles, 100 credits worth of food and drink, a set of standard medical supplies and four vacuum suits, but will also take around twenty minutes to find. There is an outside chance that particularly lawless crew of PCs may decide to steal the *Tang Lang*, but they should bear in mind that doing so means they will have to take it now and lose any chance of rescuing Sun Mei. Additionally, they will need to fairly quickly find someone who can forge ownership papers and no matter what they try, a world of trouble will soon be following them, from Feds checking out the reported theft to angry Tongs who want their ship back.

If the PCs ask any of the folk in the area around the *Tang Lang*, they will easily discover that the ship landed around five hours ago and that a large hover mule departed soon after, heading into the heart of the warehouse district. If they ask about the passengers, every witness they speak to remembers seeing a beautiful, but deeply saddened young Chinese woman being held in the back of the hover mule by two men. If they show Sun Mei's picture to whoever they are talking to, they will confirm that it was indeed the same woman they saw.

One way or another, the PCs should realize by now that to contact or find the Golden Mantis Tong, they are going to have to enter the warehouse district and ask around.

The PCs cannot arrange a meeting with either of the Tong bosses unless they go to the warehouse district, as any outside requests will be ignored. Once they

finally enter the district, you are ready to continue the scene. Read:

The Eavesdown Docks warehouse district bears a stark contrast to the port itself, as the crowded throng of people and colorful market vendors are replaced by large, looming buildings, dark alleyways and large open access roads. This is where all the bulk goods to and from Persephone are stored, ready for shipment out on a heavy freighter or off to one of the many cities and communities spread across the planet. That is not to say that it is quiet, as the people and markets are replaced by manual laborers, trucks, mules, hovercraft and lifters. The warehouse district is just as noisy, it's just that the noise is different, just as the smells. No longer do you have the sweet smells of a thousand foods and spices; now it is all sweat, engine oil and chemicals.

Somewhere in this huge expanse of colossal buildings are the two factions of the Golden Mantis Tong, a family at war, but one you need to find. Yet one decision still remains, which side are you going to approach?

The warehouse district is predominantly made up of huge warehouses that store the giant cargo containers hauled by heavy freighters, but there are all manner of buildings to be found. There are warehouses of all sizes, bars and food vendors for the workers and even cheap hotels and brothels. The only real difference between the businesses here and out on the docks is that in the warehouse district they are cheaper, seedier, dirtier and even less safe for the unwary.

To arrange a meeting with one of the warring Golden Mantis bosses, the PCs will need to ask around, or leave word that they are looking to meet with them. It is advisable that they only ask after one of them, as asking for both will have a negative impact in scene 3.

Finding a likely source to get word to the Tong requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* roll. On an Extraordinary Success, the PCs have actually managed to find a bar that is operated by the Tong faction they are looking for and it only takes one hour to arrange the meeting with the boss they wish to talk to. On a success, they get word to the right people and it takes d4 + 1 hours to arrange a meeting, after which time a dozen Tong members will arrive to escort the PCs to the meeting place, which is where the next scene begins. The discussions to find the right people should be role-played as much as possible. A failure means that the arrangements take an extra hour to sort out, while on a Botch, they accidentally ask in a bar run by the rival faction and will face a beating from four angry Tong members, but if guns are drawn they will back off and let the PCs go.

Once they have found a contact, actually arranging the meeting does not require a roll, as the Tong are as interested to find out who has been asking after them, as the PCs are to meet the Tong boss.

Now they have the meeting arranged, we move onto the next scene. The PCs should be awarded two to four plot points for their actions in Chasing the Mantis.

Scene 3: Facing the Mantis

"I am glad you brought up the subject of Indentured Servants and their rights, as it is something very dear to my heart. You see, many people here on the Core Worlds really have no idea what life is like for those poor souls that pay debts with their lives. While it may not be slavery, in many cases it is not far from it, especially with unscrupulous employers. Yes, it is legal to become indentured, but many of those that choose this life do not realize what they are agreeing to. You see, agreeing to become indentured binds you to a contract, usually in agreement to pay off significant debts accrued to you or your family and by working off those debts without wage for a specified duration of time; though the employer is expected to feed, cloth and home you for that time. While this may seem all very amicable, this ideal is not always a reality for indentured servants. Both male and female laborers can be subject to violence, occasionally even resulting in death. Female indentured servants in particular might be raped and/or sexually abused by their masters. Cases of successful prosecution for these crimes is very uncommon, as indentured servants are unlikely to have access to a magistrate, or to be believed by the authorities, especially out on the Rim. Also, unlike paid servants or employees, indentured servants tend to be poorly treated, often seen as second class citizens and forced to sleep together in large communal bunkrooms with no regard for privacy or sex. Another part of indentured life is that many wealthy owners often sell on the contracts of particularly skilled, attractive or hard working servants to other employers and while this may not change their term of servitude, it can be distressing to be moved away from what is familiar and possibly even a great distance from any family. The work undertaken by indentured servants is often in the form of hard labor, such as is the case with many 'mudders', but can also involve employment as maids, gardeners or handymen, though this type of work is less common. One final, lesser form of indentured service is that of the traveler who agrees to work for a ship's captain in payment of passage and subsistence, though this will rarely result in the drafting of a contract, relying more on the bond of a man's word. Now, the reason this is all dear to my heart is that I feel it is time for these workers to have some form of official representation, so their voice can be heard, by way of a guild or union..."

- Dr Albert Hayworth, *The Big Debate* program, Cortex channel 36

After an intense search, the crew get to meet with the boss of one of the two warring factions of the Golden Mantis Tong, and depending which side they chose will depend on how things play out, especially as they may be unsure as to which side abducted Sun Mei, unless they interrogated any Tong survivors in Emerald River or the Tong guarding the *Tang Lang*.

As the PCs can meet with either boss, each will be dealt with separately. Just as an advance warning, this is a long and involved scene.

Meeting with the White Lotus, *Bai Lian*

The PCs have decided, for one reason or another, that meeting with *Bai Lian* is the best way to go, quite possibly due to the fact she is a blood relation of the Sun family, and if they have all the available facts, they know she wasn't responsible for abducting Sun Mei. Read:

Tracking down the Golden Mantis has taken longer than you'd hoped and it is already getting dark by the time a dozen members loyal to *Bai Lian* come to escort you to the meeting.

They are polite, if not friendly, and instruct you to follow them and keep any weapons holstered, slung or put away, and until this request is honored, they refuse to go any further.

Once you have your weapons out of hand, you are lead through a maze of alleys and down long open streets until you eventually come to a stop at a relatively small warehouse, somewhere to the east of the district. One of the doors slides open and you are escorted inside, to be greeted by a dozen more armed men and women, though they do not have their weapons raised.

The warehouse is cluttered with cargo crates of all descriptions and there are two trucks at the front, as well as a large hover mule that has seen some heavy customization.

Your Tong escorts lead you to the far end of the warehouse and to a metal stairwell that leads up to an upper walkway and raised office area.

You continue up the stairs and eventually come to a stop at the door to the offices, a secure and armored door by all accounts, and probably not the original office entryway.

At this point their escort requests that any PCs wishing to meet with *Bai Lian* must leave their weapons behind. If they refuse to give up their arms, the meeting will be over and they will be escorted from the building. Starting a fight is inadvisable given how outnumbered they are.

Only the PCs that are attending the meeting have to disarm, anyone who wishes to stay outside can keep their weapons to hand.

For those PCs that agree, their weapons are placed in a metal locker outside the offices and the armored door is opened from the inside, enabling them to enter. Only half their escorts stay with them now, as the rest wait outside with the PCs that kept their weapons, if any.

The first room they enter was once a large office, but it has been converted to become something akin to a barracks, with a number of bunks, a shower room, weapon racks on the walls and a security station in one corner with a bank of security monitors displaying varied views from inside and outside the warehouse. There is only one other door from this room, which is guarded by two Tong men armed with SMG's. The Tong that have been escorting them to the meeting inform the PCs that they are to enter through the door and to show proper respect at all times, as **Bai Lian** will see them now. Read:

You enter into a room that would have once been a supervisor's office, but it would be difficult to tell if you had not just walked through the warehouse. It is a scene of decadent opulence, with fine drapes over the windows, expensive tapestries on the walls depicting traditional Chinese animals and scenes, a lush rug across the metal floor and a large, real polished wood desk in front of you.

Behind the desk sits a middle-aged Chinese woman who is finely dressing in an expensive looking and colorful silk kimono. A young woman stands either side of her, both similarly dressed in a silk kimono, but also holding a sheathed *liuye dao sabre*¹ in their seemingly delicate hands. There is an alertness in their almond eyes that suggests they are carefully watching your every move.

There is the smell of sweet incense and perfume in the air, which is pleasant and at the same time intoxicating.

The woman behind the desk stands as you enter, without any hint of emotion crossing her carefully painted face, looking reminiscent of a white mask, as she gives the slightest of bows. She gestures to three empty chairs in front of the desk, with a graceful sweep of her hand.

"Ni How², please be seated. My name is **Bai Lian, and who is it I have the pleasure of entertaining?" The woman enquires in a soft, careful voice.**

Now it's time for the PCs to role-play the meeting **Bai Lian**. Firstly, all those in her presence should give their names, least they offend her. If there are more than three PCs, those that intend to do most of the talking should be seated, while the others should stand at the back and preferably remain quiet.

All of the PCs will be offered a cup of tea, which if accepted will be poured with great ceremony by their host, who will not talk until she has completed the task. An Average (7) Intelligence + Knowledge / Culture roll will ensure the PCs are warned by the GM before they do anything that may be seen as an insult, unless any of their characters are linked to or from a Tong, at which point, they can be considered to already know how to present themselves. If the PCs fail or Botch the roll, they are generally unaware as to the relevant customs and they will not be warned should any of their actions be potentially seen as insulting.

With pleasantries out of the way, the PCs can finally get down to asking their questions and they should do so respectfully, without issuing demands. It would be best not to have crude folk talking here.

Bai Lian will quietly listen to what they have to say regarding Sun Mei and will respond with short, polite answers until they have finished. In all likelihood, the PCs will ask if she has Sun Mei or knows where she is and who does have her. They can also try and use the angle that Sun Mei is actually related to **Bai Lian**, to try and gain her support. To convince **Bai Lian** to assist them, the principle communicator of those present must make a *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty* or *Willpower + Performance / Oratory* roll. For the difficulty of the roll, refer to the following list:

EASY (3) – If the PCs were respectful during the meeting, without making demands, did not try to contact both Tong bosses and they told her all of the facts.

AVERAGE (7) – If the PCs were respectful, but did try and contact both Tong bosses or if they held back any important information.

HARD (11) – If the PCs were respectful, but did try and contact both Tong bosses and they held back any important information.

FORMIDABLE (15) – If the PCs were disrespectful at any time during the meeting, including demands, threats or insults.

If the PCs brought up the family relationship between Sun Mei and **Bai Lian**, they gain a +1 step Skill bonus to their roll.

If the PCs should fail or Botch the roll, **Bai Lian** will refuse to help them, because they have not shown the proper respect and she will ask them to leave. If they take this chance to apologize for not being respectful, pleading their case that they are unaware of certain customs and that they meant no offence, they get a second chance and can make the roll again, at the HARD (11) difficulty. Alternatively, as GM, you can rule that the only way to recover the situation is to alter the story with the expenditure of plot points, which in this case would be in the region of 4 to 8 points.

If the PCs gain an Extraordinary success on the initial roll, **Bai Lian** will be very impressed at how they have presented themselves and once the immediate

¹ A traditional of Chinese sword

² "Greetings"

situation is over, they can try and cultivate her as a contact (with the potential to gain the asset *Friends in Low Places* at a later date, should they remain in touch and maintain good relations).

Should the PCs attempt to force the issue with violence, then they will be attacked by a warehouse full of armed Tong, and most likely be killed. As this should be obvious, the GM should at least give any PCs a warning to remind them that they are heavily outnumbered and attacking the Tong is ill advised. Should you wish to act out the fight, there are currently thirty six Tong members in the building, plus **Bai Lian** and her bodyguards.

Hopefully, the PCs will manage to gain her trust and support and she will offer to help them.

Bai Lian will inform them that she has already made enquiries of her own, since they first started asking around, and can confirm that **Yu Shu** did indeed abduct Sun Mei and believes he is holding her at his headquarters. She is also annoyed, as her rival has tried to use family to break her resolve.

She will inform the PCs that it is unlikely that they will be able to negotiate Mei's release, but they could help her out and effectively kill two birds with one stone.

As it turns out, **Bai Lian** has been preparing to end the conflict over leadership of the Golden Mantis once and for all. To that end, she has planned to raid her rival's HQ and 'remove' him, but could really do with a distraction to draw the attention of his supporters.

If the PCs agree to be that distraction, her supporters will carry out the actual raid and take control; she gives her word that she will then release Sun Mei and let them take her home to her family.

Assuming that the PCs entertain the idea of being a distraction, they will most likely want to know what **Bai Lian** has in mind before agreeing to endanger themselves.

The distraction is a fairly simple one, and should involve minimal danger to the PCs. All she wants them to do is take a large hover mule and a regular truck and have a collision right in front of the warehouse that has become **Yu Shu's** base of operations. This should draw enough attention from the guards to enable her supporters to sneak in and subdue their rivals. **Bai Lian** insists that the fight itself is a matter of honor and strictly Tong business and that the PCs should not get involved except in self defense. Once the raid is over, they will be called in and Sun Mei will be handed over to them.

If the PCs refuse to help, **Bai Lian** will be disappointed, but seemingly understanding. She informs them that the raid is still going to take place and that should they find Sun Mei, they will release her. However, she does inform the PCs that she expects them to remain as her guests until the raid is

over, just as a precaution and hopes that they understand her situation. It will be obvious to the PCs that this is not a request and that going against her wishes is ill advised. They will have to stay at the warehouse until the morning, but they will be treated respectfully and provided with fresh food and drinks.

Hopefully the PCs will agree to help and they will be thanked by **Bai Lian** for accepting their part in destiny. They will be given the address of the warehouse, instructions on how to get there, a time to be there and presented with the two rather battered and barely functional vehicles required for the distraction.

The raid is set to take place late that night, at a time when the warehouse district is not as busy and most importantly, it is dark. All the PCs have to do is drive down the road towards each other and accidentally get in each others way, therefore causing a crash outside the Tong warehouse.

To successfully collide with one another, without causing injury to the occupants, the driver of each vehicle must make a HARD (11) *Agility + Planetary Vehicles / Appropriate Specialty* roll. If both drivers are successful, the vehicles collide and skid to a halt outside the warehouse without any injuries to either the drivers or passengers. If only one driver is successful, the occupants of both vehicles must make an AVERAGE (7) *Get Out of Harms Way* roll, which represent them realizing the danger and bracing themselves. If they fail this, they take d6 points of stun damage.

If both drivers fail their roll, then the collision is far more real than the PCs had intended and the occupants of both vehicles must make a HARD (11) *Get Out of Harms Way* roll, which represents bracing themselves or leaping to safety. If they fail this roll, they take 2d4 points of basic damage.

If either driver rolls a Botch, then there is nothing staged about the collision, as one of the PCs completely miscalculates the maneuver. Everyone involved must make a HARD (11) *Endurance* roll to determine basic damage. Additional they take a further d6 points of wound damage.

No matter how successful the PCs where at avoiding injury, the two vehicles crash to a halt outside the warehouse and this does indeed get the attention of the Tong guards who will come to investigate. They will not, however, make any attempt to help the PCs; neither will they attack them, unless they were involved in a fight with any of **Yu Shu's** men in the previous scene. If this is the case, they will be recognized and the Tong will level weapons at them, call out choice swear words and instruct them to leave the vicinity and be quick about it.

Moments later, **Bai Lian** and her supporters launch their raid and begin to take down their rivals, including the guards out front, all with apparent style and finesse.

After around twenty minutes, the raid is over and all of **Yu Shu's** supporters are either subdued, dead or have surrendered, and the PCs are called into the warehouse to speak with the new big boss of the Golden Mantis Tong. Read:

The scene inside the warehouse is one of violence and very much what may be expected given that only minutes before, a battle for leadership just came to its swift and bloody end. Despite the obvious signs of violence, there are far less fatalities than you may have expected; obviously **Bai Lian** did not want to needlessly waste the lives of Tong members that would now swearing loyalty to her.

You find **Bai Lian** at the far end of the warehouse, now sensibly dressed for the fight, standing over the body of what was once a bulky, muscular man dressed in fine clothes and a jade green silk jacket. It is obvious to see he was killed by a single gunshot wound to the head, most likely from the engraved, pearly white pistol in **Bai Lian's** hand. At her side are the same two women you saw previously, but with disturbing streams of crimson on their blades.

"*Sheh Sheh*¹, my wonderful little distractions." **Bai Lian** states, a gleaming smile actually gracing her features.

"I have already instructed my people to find Sun Mei, so you will not have long to wait. This all went rather well, don't you think?"

Unfortunately, her words are optimistic and things have not gone as well as the PCs may have hoped. After some time of looking and talking to the subdued Tong members, it becomes clear that Sun Mei is no longer at the warehouse, and even worse, she has been sold to a procurer of indentured servants, an agent that works for Persephone's Elite classes. All that **Bai Lian** can provide is a name, that of Ms Victoria Deveroux.

She gives her sincere apology that they were too late and her disappointment is obvious, as it seems she may actually care for her cousin. Unfortunately she cannot help the PCs any further, as the influence of the Golden Mantis does not extend to the streets of Persephone's capital city. On a positive note, it would appear that the trade only took place that some hours ago, so the trail is still warm.

For their part in meeting with **Bai Lian** and possibly helping her to gain control of the Golden Mantis Tong, each of the PCs should be rewarded with two to five plot points, especially if they were always respectful and agreed to act as the distraction.

With that, the scene comes to an end and it's time for the final Act, as the PCs search continues.

Meeting with the Jade Rat, **Yu Shu**

The PCs have decided, for one reason or another, that meeting with **Yu Shu** is the best way to go, possibly as they may have concluded that he is responsible for abducting Sun Mei. Read:

Tracking down the Golden Mantis has taken longer than you'd hoped and it is already getting dark by the time a dozen members loyal to **Yu Shu** come to escort you to the meeting.

They are curt and not particularly friendly. They instruct you to follow them and to keep any weapons holstered, slung or put away, and until this request is honored, they refuse to take you any further.

Once you have your weapons out of hand, you are lead through a maze of alleys and down long open streets until you eventually come to a stop at a relatively small warehouse, somewhere to the east of the district. One of the doors slides open and you are escorted inside, to be greeted by a dozen more armed men, though they do not have their weapons raised.

The warehouse is cluttered with cargo crates of all descriptions and there are two trucks at the front, as well as a large hover mule that looks somewhat familiar.

Your Tong escorts lead you to the far end of the warehouse and to a metal stairwell that leads up to an upper walkway and raised office area.

You continue up the stairs and eventually come to a stop at the door to the offices, a secure and armored door by all accounts, and probably not the original office entryway.

At this point, their escort informs the PCs that if they wish to meet with **Yu Shu**, they must all place their weapons in a lockbox outside of the door. If they refuse to give up their arms, the meeting will be over and they will be escorted from the building. Starting a fight is inadvisable given how outnumbered they are.

Assuming the PCs agree to the request, their weapons are placed in a metal locker outside the offices and the armored door is opened from the inside, enabling them to enter. Only half their escorts stay with them now, as the rest wait outside.

The first room they enter was once a large office, but it has been converted to become something akin to a barracks, with a number of bunks, a shower room, weapon racks on the walls and a security station in one corner with a bank of security monitors displaying varied views from inside and outside the warehouse. There is only one other door from this room, which is guarded by two Tong men armed with SMG's. The Tong that have been escorting them to the meeting inform the PCs that they are to enter through the door and to show proper respect at all times, as **Yu Shu** will see them now. Read:

¹ "Thank you"

You enter into a room that would have once been a supervisor's office, but it has been converted to look every bit like a shiny corporate office, full of chrome and glamour, with the focus on a large, real polished wood desk in the center of the room.

Standing behind the desk is a bulky, muscular man dressed in fine clothes and a jade green silk jacket; his expression is cold and calculating. Beside him, off to one side of the desk, are three more men, two of which are certainly bodyguards, but the last is noticeably recognizable as one of the men who threw Sun Mei into the hover mule back at Emerald River. They are paying you close attention and are no doubt ready to act at the slightest provocation.

"I would greet you, but let it be known your presence is not entirely welcome here." The man in the jade green jacket states in a stern voice.

"I am *Yu Shu* and you would do well to note that your conduct here may decide your fate this night, as I am not a tolerant man." He eyes you all carefully, looking for any sign of weakness.

"So, take a seat and tell me why you have been making such a nuisance of yourself...and this had better be worth my while."

Now it's time for the PCs to role-play the meeting *Yu Shu*. He does not seem to care whether the PCs introduce themselves or not, but he does want to hear why they have been looking for him.

He will listen to what they have to say and will remain cold to their presence, making it clearly obvious he does not like them and unless they can spark his interest, will likely not help them.

When they mention Sun Mei, and the fact they want her back, he will laugh and possibly even mock them, unless they back this up with the offer of money, a lot of money.

It will be obvious to the PCs that *Yu Shu* thinks of himself as some sort of business hot shot and that only a reasonable offer of credits will get his assistance. How much it actually takes depends on how much of a nuisance the PCs have made of themselves, as far as *Yu Shu* is concerned.

If the PCs have not fought with any of his Tong supporters since they left Emerald River and they did not try to contact *Bai Lian* and have remained respectful despite *Yu Shu's* attitude, it will take 200 credits.

If the PCs have fought any of his men, tried to contact *Bai Lian* or resorted to insults or poor behavior of their own, the price rises to 400 credits.

A successful HARD (11) *Willpower* + *Influence* / *Barter* or *Influence* / *Persuasion* roll can reduce the required offer by 100 credits, but a Botch will increase the required offer by a staggering 200 credits.

If the PCs are not willing to part with credits or do not have them, then the meeting will come to an end and they will be escorted from the warehouse, unless one of their crew members is an attractive female who is skilled at using her womanly wiles.

This character, and only this character, can try and seduce *Yu Shu* into helping them, through teasing and offering up all manner of carnal promises. As he is a man not easily swayed when no money is changing hands, this requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower* + *Influence* / *Seduction* roll. If successful, then the conversation continues, but if the roll is a botch, they will all be escorted from the warehouse without any further negotiation, having committed some form of terrible insult.

Should the PCs attempt any violent action, they will be attacked by a warehouse full of armed Tong, and most likely be killed, this is the main reason that intimidation will not succeed. As this should be obvious, the GM should at least give any PCs a warning to remind them that they are heavily outnumbered and attacking or threatening the Tong is ill advised. Should you wish to act out the fight, there are currently twenty one Tong members in the building, plus *Yu Shu* and his guards.

Once the PCs offer the required sum of money, or at least a figure very close to it, *Yu Shu* will instruct the man who abducted Sun Mei to take the money and count it. Once the man nods that it is the correct figure, the conversation can continue. Read:

"*Jahn!*¹ So, you do know how to do business after all, my congratulations." *Yu Shu* expresses in a mocking tone.

"Well, I did promise to assist you if you could show suitable compensation, and that you have. So I shall meet my side of this bargain." He leans forward, his hands pressed together, a smile playing on his lips.

"You are too late; I no longer have that *Bei Bi Shiou Ren*² of a girl. She got what girls from that family deserve...slavery. I sold her some hours ago to a procurer with far more money to offer than you can dream of, especially as they put in an order for her type." *Yu Shu* appears to state this unfortunate news with some pleasure, emphasizing the words for greater impact.

"But you did compensate me, so I shall give you the one piece of information you will need to follow the girl. A name, the name of the procurer, a lady who deals with indentured servants for the wealthy and nobles, a woman by the name of Victoria Deveroux, so best of luck finding her...now please do run along." He finishes sharply, a smug expression gracing his face.

¹ "Shiny, awesome, fantastic"

² "Pathetic wretch"

With that, the meeting is over. No matter how much the PCs protest, they will get nothing more and as stated previously and violence is not advised. They will be escorted out of the room and their weapons will be returned to them on the way out of the warehouse.

This is an unfortunate moment for the PCs, to discover that Sun Mei has been sold and that Victoria Deveroux will, almost certainly, only be found in Persephone City itself. On a positive note, it would appear that the trade only took place that some hours ago, so the trail is still warm.

Should the PCs hang around outside **Yu Shu's** warehouse for an hour or so, while they think about what to do or are thinking up a plan for revenge, they will witness the scene of violence as **Bai Lian** and her loyal supporters launch their raid and take control of the Golden Mantis Tong. It may make them feel a little better to know that **Yu Shu** was unable to remain smug about his dealings with them for very long.

For their part in meeting with **Yu Shu** and possibly buying his assistance, each of the PCs should be rewarded with one to three plot points.

With that, the scene comes to an end and it's time for the final Act, as the PCs search continues.

ACT 3

Scene 1: Uptown Girl

"Well, Persephone City is a world removed from Eavesdown Docks, despite them being less 'an a dozen kilometers apart. Up in them shiny towers, folk is different you see, they look down on us common folk who know the meaning of a hard days work. Up there, folk speaks all proper like, with fancy words, an' clothes that are smart as you like an' cost more than likes of us will make in a years wage. They don't know the meaning of hard living up there, its all snobbery, position an' fancy dinners or one o' them big shindigs they call balls. You gotta be careful if you is thinking to be going into the city proper, as there is all sorts of regulations an' them streets is clean, so you wanna make sure you scrub up to not stand out. Not only that, but they is policed, with like real policing that comes quick to a call and even just patrols about to make sure no trouble looks immanent like. Not the kind o' place for folk with a record or lookin' to be causing trouble or without purpose. Better if you got reason to be there, like an invite or some such. You go up there with no credentials, or look like you aint belonging, then you can expect to be sent right back down here with the rest of us."

- Cutter Westby, dockworker, Eavesdown Docks, Persephone.

The characters now have a completely new challenge ahead of them. Sun Mei has been sold to a woman who 'recruits' new staff for the Nobles and elite classes of Persephone. They have to somehow get access to the glittering uptown districts of Persephone City and find this woman if they are to have any hope of rescuing the abducted daughter.

The first challenge the PCs have is tracking down Victoria Deveroux, by trying to find any record of her on the Cortex, by asking around on the streets or by calling up any upper class contacts.

Finding a listing for Ms Victoria Deveroux on the Cortex is surprisingly easy and only requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty or Influence / Administration* roll. She is a legitimate business woman and the address for her office is openly listed on the Cortex, as are her business contact details and picture. If the PCs decide that they want to look further and try to find any personal listings, this is much harder and requires a successful FORMIDABLE (15) roll, using either of the skills previously given. In this case, they can also track down her private residential address and contact details, but it appears that she lives in a fancy apartment at a secure private compound. It will be obvious to the PCs that trying to meet her at work or breaking into her office will be far easier.

Gathering information about Victoria Deveroux on the streets of Eavesdown Docks is incredibly difficult, as most of her business is done in the safety of Persephone City. Finding anyone who can provide her business address is a HARD (55) Complex Action, requiring *Willpower + Covert / Streetwise or Influence / Streetwise* roll, where the PCs can provide Direct Assistance. Each roll takes ten minutes of asking around by the crew. They will not be able to find anyone on the street that can provide any information as to her private residence or details.

Any PCs with *Friends in High Places* may spend two plot points and use this asset to find out Victoria Deveroux's business details. Additionally, they will be provided with the page from the Cortex, so to have a picture of the woman. If asked, their friend will politely refuse to provide any private residential details, clearly stating that the business details are more than enough to contact her.

One way or another, the PCs should now be able to find out where Victoria Deveroux's office is located and can even choose to contact her.

One other fact that any search will turn up is the rather strict gun laws in and around the Persephone City business district to protect all those wealthy business types. In summary, it is illegal for civilians to carry weapons of any type, with the exception of derringers,

which are considered a valid self-defense weapon. If you are caught with any weapon, other than a derringer, on your person, you will be immediately fined 100 credits and you will be escorted out of the district, and that is only assuming the weapon is officially licensed. If you are caught with a weapon drawn, including a derringer without good reason, you will be taken into custody and either fined 200 to 1000 credits or given a custodial sentence, usually depending on the nature of the weapon. It is however, not illegal to carry a licensed weapon in your vehicle, so long as they are stored in a locked container or weapons locker. All told, it is highly recommended that the PCs do not carry weapons on their persons, though having some nearby in their shuttle or vehicle is relatively safe.

Two of the most likely options regarding Ms Victoria Deveroux are offered below with *Making Contact* and *Shadowy Business*; though others are possible, these will hopefully provide enough information to resolve them.

Making Contact

If the PCs choose to contact Victoria Deveroux, they will find she is polite, well spoken and quite charming, if a little businesslike. Unless they are rude, insulting or threatening, she will happily agree to meet them at her office to discuss their situation, no matter whether they are bluffing about their intentions or are telling the truth and mention Sun Mei. Ms Deveroux agrees to meet them in two hours time at her office. If the PCs think to request it, she will arrange for their shuttle or planetary vehicle, should they own one, to be given access to the business district for the duration of the meeting.

If they only think to use their shuttle later, it will require permission from local traffic control, and take about ten minutes to organize.

Gaining entry to the business district in a planetary vehicle does not require any time to organize, but all entry roads have toll points. The PCs will be requested to stop and asked the nature of their business, as well as their destination. Once they give satisfactory answers, there is a 1 credit toll for the vehicle, and they are then free to continue. All of the vehicles occupants will be reminded to leave their weapons, if any, in the vehicle. The trip to Victoria Deveroux's office will take about forty minutes.

If the PCs do not think of it or do not have a shuttle or other means of transport beyond their ship, they can either call for a taxi or take the local maglev train.

The maglev tickets costs 0.5 credits each and are valid for the whole day. It will take the PCs about twenty minutes to get to the business district, but they initially have to wait half an hour for the next train. When they arrive at the station, they will spot the 'no weapons' notices at all exits, but find that there is a

weapons locker service available where they can store their weapons for 1 credit a day. It would seem that the Alliance expects people who traveled from Eavesdown Docks not to have done so unarmed.

The taxi will cost 2 credits in total, but can travel directly to Victoria Deveroux's office in forty minutes and yes, it is expensive, but so is a taxi license that gets you free transport around the business district. As a law abiding citizen, the taxi driver will remind them about the district's weapons laws.

Once the PCs arrive in the business district of Persephone City, they should have its stark contrast against the docks impressed upon them. Read:

Where Eavesdown Docks is crowded, dirty and buzzing with life, the business district of Persephone City is spacious, clean and orderly, with gleaming white and silver towers, open parks and well placed rows of trees. The air is fresh, the smell of flowers hangs in the air and though there is noise, it seems almost silent compared to the cacophony of the docks. The city is rich, opulent and well maintained; trying to live up to the magnificence of the Core World cities and for the most part, it achieves this lofty ideal.

Unlike the docks, where Feds seem few and far between, here in the city you can see special police emergency terminals conveniently placed on every street corner and even patrol cruisers routinely passing by overhead in fancy hovercraft. For those of you that have never seen the city beyond the docks, it is a breathtaking sight, one that could easily give a longing to live in one of the expensive apartment complexes, if only you could afford it.

This is a place where moneyed individuals can live away from the common folk, keeping them in their place behind gates, fences and a wall of poverty. You know this is not really your world and probably never will be, but you are here for a reason, to get the job done and save an innocent young woman from a probable life of slavery.

If the PCs arrived on the maglev or by shuttle, it will only take ten minutes to walk to the office block, and if they took a taxi or used their own planetary vehicle, they can park outside.

The office block is a simple ten story, square design with smooth white walls and plenty of illumination both outside and in. Each floor has a number of window panels, but they are of an opaque design that prevents you from seeing inside. There are two entrances to the building, both of which are locked with good electronic locks. Beside each doorway is a panel of intercom buttons with the names of the businesses beside them, so that clients can get buzzed in. Positioned above each doorway is a wide angle camera in a secure housing, so that whomever is outside can be clearly seen by whoever answers the intercom, there is also a sign clearing stating 'No Weapons'. Looking

at the labels on the intercom panel, it appears that Victoria Deveroux's office is on the ground floor.

Ms Deveroux will be at her office by the time the PCs arrive, though she will not see them until the agreed time. If they buzz her office intercom, they receive a recorded message informing them that Ms Victoria Deveroux is currently unavailable and kindly ask them to try again later, until at least ten minutes before the meeting is due, when the door will be opened for them and a message will ask them to go to office 1C.

Both entrances have advanced weapon scanners built into them and if a weapon is detected, they will trigger a silent alarm which will alert building security that an armed individual has entered the building. Building security can then monitor the cameras and decide on the best response, from challenging the intruders to calling the Feds. For the purpose of detecting weapons, the scanner has a d10 Alertness + d6 Perception and successfully detects weapons and explosives on an Average (7) roll. Every weapon carried should be rolled for separately, as any one of them could set off the alarm. Noticing the scanner before entering the building requires a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception Search or Perception / Sight* roll. Disabling or spoofing the scanner requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device or Technical Engineering / Technical Security Systems* roll.

Heading inside, the PCs find an open reception area, with plants and chairs, along with an elevator bank and a door for the stairwell. There is also a large plaque on the wall that displays the names of the businesses to be found in the office building, along with their floor and office number. Ms Deveroux's business is indeed listed as office 1c, on the ground floor. There is also a handy map of the ground floor displayed near the plaque, so finding 1c isn't all that hard. Read:

You arrive at the door to office 1C, on the ground floor of the building. The door looks as if it is made from real wood, with a bronze plaque at head height that reads Deveroux Connections, while a camera over the door watches your approach. Beside the door there is a card reader entry system and a buzzer. It would seem that you either have to ring the buzzer or knock.

Just at that moment the door opens and a young man in a smart, expensive looking suit gestures for you to enter, a perfect smile gracing his face. You step into a small waiting room that is professionally decorated in soothing pastel colors with an aquarium of brightly colored fish set into one wall and paintings of beautiful people gracing the others. The room is furnished by two perfectly color coordinated sofas, a small glass coffee table and a reception desk by the door to Victoria Deveroux's actual office.

"Please be seated, Ms Deveroux will be with you shortly, my name is Steven and I am her personal assistant...can I get you any refreshments?"

Steven is actually not only her personal assistant, but also a trained bodyguard, and under the reception desk he has a panic button to alert building security, if the need should arise. There is a monitor on his desk which displays the feed from the camera outside the door.

If the PCs accept refreshments, they will be offered real coffee, tea, fruit juice, or mineral water. It is all top quality and no doubt expensive, probably far better quality than they are used to.

If the PCs have any questions, Steven will be extremely polite, but will not disclose anything about his employer or her business, beyond the fact that she arranges legal employment for indentured workers, all of the highest quality and best work ethic.

There are only two other doors in the room, the door to the actual office and the door to a restroom.

After a few minutes, an intercom on Steven's desk pipes up and a female voice instructs him to send in the guests, as she is ready to see them.

Steven stands and opens the door to Ms Deveroux's office, letting them know that they can go in now. Read:

Stepping into Victoria Deveroux's office, the first thing to catch your attention is the size of it. It could easily be the size of your ship's mess hall, if not larger. Much like the reception area, it is decorated in soothing pastel colors, but the paintings are replaced by photos of pretty people and framed certificates from fancy academies. The focus of the room is the large glass and chrome desk and the woman who stands from her leather chair behind it. She is dressed in an expensive looking, navy blue, pin-strip two piece dress suit, with her long blond hair pulled back in a ponytail and her bright blue eyes seem to sparkle. Her smile is perfectly sculptured, perfectly white and you can only imagine that this woman has been under the knife more than once to make sure her that no blemish could disrupt her aim for perfection, to ensure her clients will see only beautiful things.

"Good day to you, I'm Victoria Deveroux, but you may call me Vicky, please be seated." Her voice hints at a fancy education and is no doubt as well practiced as her professional smile and business-like manner.

"So, tell me how it is I can be of assistance to you today?" She enquires, taking her seat once more, with eloquence and grace.

As to how the meeting prevails, will depend a lot on what tactic the PCs decide upon to find out about Sun Mei and where she is. The most likely options are by

pretending to be potential buyers or by just telling her the truth.

If the PCs go with the approach of prospective clients, only requiring an AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* or *Perform / Acting* roll to pull off, she will ask all manner of questions as to what sort of servant they require and why. A failure means that any further rolls to persuade Vicky suffer a -1 step Skill penalty, as she is suspicious of them, while a Botch means that she quickly sees through their act and unless they decide to tell her the truth, she will ask them to leave.

She will also clearly inform them that indentured servants are not slaves and that they do have legal rights, as well as pointing out that once their indentured term has finished, the servant is free to leave their employment. Of course, this tactic doesn't easily lead into answering their questions unless they specify that they are looking for an indentured servant whose description matches that of Sun Mei. If they do, Vicky will mention, in an off-hand way, that she has just sold on a girl that would have met their requirements, but does not have anyone else available at this time. This gives the PCs the chance to pursue the matter and if they use something along the lines of "that's a shame, I don't suppose you could tell us who, so we can try and buy the indenture from them", they may be able to persuade her, though she will obviously protest that her client details are confidential.

Convincing Vicky to provide the PCs with a name will require a successful HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* roll. If successful, they get the name of the buyer, a man by the name of Atherton Wing. On an extraordinary success, they are not only given the name, but also the address to which Sun Mei was delivered. On a failure, she will not give the name unless they pay her 'consultation fee' of 100 credits. On a Botch, she simply will not tell them. With the apparent business deal over, she will politely thank them for their interest and offer her business card, just in case they need any indentured servants in the future and Steven will escort them from her office.

If the PCs decide to tell Vicky the truth about Sun Mei, and that she was abducted from her home and illegally sold by the Tong, she will initially protest that the transaction was conducted legally and she was provided with all the correct paperwork by the Jade Dragon Interplanetary. She will, of course, check the information they have provide her and it will soon become apparent that the PCs are indeed telling the truth, when she locates an official federal missing persons record for Sun Mei on the Cortex.

Vicky is horrified that the young girl has been effectively sold into slavery and is well aware that this incident could seriously harm her reputation. Even

though this mess could easily be cleared up through official channels, it may take a few weeks, and she could lose clients. The PCs on the other hand offer a quick and quiet resolution to her problem.

Firstly, she will make it clear to the PCs she had no idea the papers were forgeries and that the girl was not an actual indentured servant and she apologizes for the situation. She will also state that she was unaware that she was buying Sun Mei from the Tong (assuming the PCs mentioned the Tong involvement), as her dealings were with an agent from the Jade Dragon Interplanetary; it all seemed perfectly legitimate to her.

Secondly, she calmly states that for her to personally try and recover the girl, through official channels, could take weeks, but that if the PCs tried, they may be able to get her back today.

Vicky tells them that Sun Mei was purchased by a Persephone socialite by the name of Atherton Wing, whom is now the poor girl's official employer. She gives them the address where Sun Mei was delivered to, which is one of his many properties and his current 'entertaining' residence, located in the hills overlooking the business district. She implies that she didn't particularly feel comfortable passing the girl's service onto him, but as the transaction was apparently legal; there was no reason to refuse the deal. The nature of her discomfort is due to Atherton's rather abusive reputation with women, especially his servants, and his apparent need to always be seen in the company of beautiful women, but that was also why she could get a high price for the deal.

As Sun Mei was only sold recently and brokered through Atherton's agent, Mr. Fielding, it is possible that he has not even seen the girl yet, though it is unlikely he will readily part with her, solely out of principle and as she matches an order request; it appears that beautiful oriental servants are all the rage among Persephone's rich and elite at the moment.

Vicky recommends going to Atherton's estate and explaining the situation to the man and then either offering him money or challenge him to a duel for her release, but warns them that he is a skilled duelist, though if they have other ideas as to how to get her back, that is all well and good.

She states, in no uncertain terms, that it would be best not to mention her or this conversation and she will provide them with 300 credits with which to negotiate with Atherton. It should be obvious to the PCs that this is 'hush money' and they can try and negotiate a better deal. Vicky is a shrewd negotiator, given the nature of her business, so it requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower + Influence / Barter* roll to raise the money offered to 400 credits. An extraordinary success nets an incredible 500 credits, while a Botch has her deciding she has offered too much and the sum drops to only 200 credits. She will not offer more than 500

credits, as she is holding back some profit from the sale for herself, but the PCs will be unaware of this.

Upon taking the money, she makes it clear to the PCs that they understand that she will deny that they ever had this meeting and can prove she never acted outside of the law. She would just rather that the matter all got sorted without her involvement; that is the only reason she is assisting them. How they go about it and what they do with the money is their concern. With this, their meeting is over and they are asked to leave and not return. Steven will escort them from the premises.

Seriously threatening Vicky at any time, or any sign of violence, will result in Steven coming to her defense, but not before calling the building security for assistance. What happens next would largely depend on the actions of the PCs, but they would, at the very least, be asked to leave the building, but it could go so far as calling in the Feds.

Shadowy Business

If the PCs decide not to contact Victoria Deveroux, but instead choose to break into her office and find out what has happened to Sun Mei, it will not be easy. Firstly, they need to decide how they are going to get to the business district. Taking their shuttle will require permission from local traffic control, and take about ten minutes to organize, but it does mean they have to state the nature of their visit and the Feds will also be aware that they are in the neighborhood.

Gaining entry to the business district in a planetary vehicle does not require any time to organize, but all entry roads have toll points. The PCs will be requested to stop and asked the nature of their business, as well as their destination. They will need to give satisfactory answers, requiring a successful **HARD (11) Willpower + Influence / Persuasion** or **Performance / Acting** roll. If successful, there is a 1 credit toll to pay for the vehicle and they are then free to continue. If they fail, they are simply refused entry, but should they Botch the roll, the check point security suspect criminal activity and call in the Feds. All of the vehicles occupants will be reminded to leave their weapons, if any, in the vehicle. The trip to Victoria Deveroux's office will take about forty minutes.

If the PCs do not have a shuttle or other means of transport beyond their ship, they can either call for a taxi or take the local maglev train.

The maglev tickets costs 0.5 credits each and are valid for the whole day. It will take the PCs about twenty minutes to get to the business district, but they initially have to wait half an hour for the next train. When they arrive at the station, they will spot the 'no weapons' notices at all exits, but find that there is a weapons locker service available where they can

store their weapons for 1 credit a day. It would seem that the Alliance expects people who traveled from Eavesdown Docks not to have done so unarmed.

The taxi will cost 2 credits in total, but can travel directly to Victoria Deveroux's office in forty minutes and yes, it is expensive, but so is a taxi license that gets you free transport around the business district. As a law abiding citizen, the taxi driver will remind them about the district's weapons laws.

Failing that, the PCs could get themselves somewhere close to the business district and enter illegally over one of the walls. There are two main complications with this, and that is getting over when no patrols are passing by and actually climbing over the wall. Evaluating the patrol patterns and avoiding them requires a successful **AVERAGE (7) Alertness + Knowledge / Tactics** or **Perception / Sight** roll, with a failure requiring a **HARD (11) Alertness + Covert / Stealth** roll to avoid being noticed by a passing patrol cruiser. Failing both rolls or rolling a Botch on either means the PC has been spotted by the Feds and they will be arrested for trespassing, which luckily only entails a 100 credit fine. If they are caught carrying illegal items, that may affect the nature of the fine and possibly lead to a custodial sentence.

Actually climbing over the wall is a **AVERAGE (35) Complex Action** using **Strength + Athletics / Climbing**, with each roll taking five minutes, but having proper climbing gear available provides a +2 step Skill bonus, while just having a rope only provides a +1 step Skill bonus. The PCs can provide Indirect Assistance to their companions, so long as they are not in the process of climbing over the wall themselves.

Reaching the offices on foot will take around an hour and the PCs will have to make rolls to avoid patrols, as above, every fifteen minutes.

Once the PCs arrive in the business district of Persephone City, they should have its stark contrast against the docks impressed upon them. Read:

Where Eavesdown Docks is crowded, dirty and buzzing with life, the business district of Persephone City is spacious, clean and orderly, with gleaming white and silver towers, open parks and well placed rows of trees. The air is fresh, the smell of flowers hangs in the air and though there is noise, it seems almost silent compared to the cacophony of the docks. The city is rich, opulent and well maintained; trying to live up to the magnificence of the Core World cities and for the most part, it achieves this lofty ideal.

Unlike the docks, where Feds seem few and far between, here in the city you can see special police emergency terminals conveniently placed on every street corner and even patrol cruisers routinely passing by overhead in fancy hovercraft. For those of you that have never seen the city beyond the docks, it is a breathtaking sight, one

that could easily give a longing to live in one of the expensive apartment complexes, if only you could afford it.

This is a place where moneyed individuals can live away from the common folk, keeping them in their place behind gates, fences and a wall of poverty.

You know this is not really your world and probably never will be, but you are here for a reason, to get the job done and save an innocent young woman from a probable life of slavery.

If the PCs arrived on the maglev or by shuttle, it will only take ten minutes to walk to the office block, and if they took a taxi or used their own planetary vehicle, they can park outside.

The office block is a simple ten story, square design with smooth white walls and plenty of illumination both outside and in. Each floor has a number of window panels, but they are of an opaque design that prevents you from seeing inside. There are two entrances to the building, both of which are locked with good electronic locks. Beside each doorway is a panel of intercom buttons with the names of the businesses beside them, so that clients can get buzzed in. Positioned above each doorway is a wide angle camera in a secure housing, so that whomever is outside can be clearly seen by whoever answers the intercom, there is also a sign clearing stating 'No Weapons'. Looking at the labels on the intercom panel, it appears that Victoria Deveroux's office is on the ground floor.

If they buzz her office intercom to see if anyone is there, they receive a recorded message informing them that Ms Victoria Deveroux is currently unavailable and kindly ask them to come back later.

Avoiding the camera is the hardest part about breaking in, as it clearly covers the entire entranceway and is positioned deliberately out of reach in its secure housing. The only way to get around this is to try and disguise themselves and be quick about bypassing the lock, hoping they will not be noticed, or by breaking the camera, or obscuring its vision. As it happens, only breaking the camera will readily alert the building security of their attempt to break in.

The locks on the doors are electronic in nature and are particularly good, so bypassing the lock requires a successful HARD (11) *Intelligence + Covert / Open Locks* roll or a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Electronics* roll. Having a set of electronic lock picks provides a +2 step Skill bonus, while using improvised tools increases the difficulty by one step. An electronic tool kit allows the PC to make the roll without any modifiers. A failure increases any further attempts by one difficulty step, while rolling a Botch triggers a silent alarm that alerts building security.

Both entrances have advanced weapon scanners built into them and if a weapon is detected, they will trigger a silent alarm which will alert building security that an armed individual has entered the building. Building security can then monitor the cameras and decide on the best response, from challenging the intruders to calling the Feds. For the purpose of detecting weapons, the scanner has a d10 *Alertness + d6 Perception* and successfully detects weapons and explosives on an Average (7) roll. Every weapon carried should be rolled for separately, as any one of them could set off the alarm. Noticing the scanner before entering the building requires a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception Search or Perception / Sight* roll. Disabling or spoofing the scanner requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device or Technical Engineering / Technical Security Systems* roll.

Once inside, the PCs find an open reception area, with plants and chairs, along with an elevator bank and a door for the stairwell. There is also a large plaque on the wall that displays the names of the businesses to be found in the office building, along with their floor and office number. Victoria Deveroux's business is listed as office 1C, on the ground floor. There is also a handy map of the ground floor displayed near the plaque, so finding 1C isn't all that hard.

The door to office 1C looks as to be made from real wood, with a bronze plaque at head height that reads Deveroux Connections, while a camera over the door watches your approach. Beside the door there is a card reader entry system and a buzzer. It would seem that clients usually have to either ring the buzzer or knock.

There is very little the PCs can do about the internal camera over the door, but as there is no one in the office, there is no one to watch their approach. Of course, they will not know this until they are inside. Breaking into the office requires them to bypass the card reader, which is thankfully easier than the entrance to the office block. Bypassing the reader requires a successful AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device or Covert / Open Locks* roll or a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Electronics* roll. Having a set of electronic lock picks provides a +2 step Skill bonus, while using improvised tools increases the difficulty by one step. An electronic tool kit allows the PC to make the roll without any modifiers. A failure increases any further attempts by one difficulty step, while rolling a Botch triggers a silent alarm that alerts building security. Should the PCs get inside, read:

You step into a small waiting room that is professionally decorated in soothing pastel colors with an aquarium of brightly colored fish set into one wall and paintings of beautiful people gracing the others. The room is furnished by two perfectly

color coordinated sofas, a small glass coffee table and a reception desk by the door to Victoria Deveroux's actual office.

On the reception desk is a monitor that displays a camera feed to the building entrances and the camera outside the door. It wouldn't be very difficult to remove any recording of your entry, whilst the information you are after will most likely be found in Ms Deveroux's office.

As you open the door into her office, the first thing to catch your attention is the size of it. It could easily be the size of your ship's mess hall, if not larger. Much like the reception area, it is decorated in soothing pastel colors, but the paintings are replaced by photos of pretty people and framed certificates from fancy academies. The focus of the room is the large glass and chrome desk, the fancy terminal on top of it and the real leather chair behind it.

All that is left now is for the PCs to hack into Victoria Deveroux's personal terminal and find anything relating to Sun Mei. This requires a successful HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll to break her passwords and get into her business file. A quick search for Sun Mei will bring up details of a recent purchase and a subsequent sale only a couple of hours ago.

The transaction appears to have been completely legal and records Sun Mei as an indentured servant with a debt of 20,000 credits. Her indenture papers were purchased by Ms Victoria Deveroux for 1000 credits from Jade Dragon Interplanetary and subsequently sold under contract for 2000 credits to Mr. Atherton Wing. Looking up the delivery details gives an address that Sun Mei was transported to upon sale. It also appears that the deal was not brokered by Atherton himself, but through an agent under his employment, by the name of Mr. C Fielding. It also appears that Mr. Fielding had sent Ms Deveroux a request to find a female more or less matching Sun Mei's description, as her type was currently in fashion among Persephone's nobility.

There is nothing else of real interest on her terminal, as it only contains legitimate business transactions, but the PCs can search the office if they so desire. A successful AVERAGE (7) *Alertness + Perception / Search* roll will turn up a half dozen bottles of fine wine, a bottle of vintage brandy and a bottle of malt whisky in a drinks cabinet, plus four data books, a dozen clear data discs, and 150 credits in the draw of the reception desk. If they fail or Botch the roll, they accidentally trigger a silent alarm that alerts the building security.

If the PCs alert building security at any time, two guards will come to investigate, while two more will monitor them from the security station on the fourth floor. It will take d4+2 minutes for the guards to reach

them. If the guards encounter the PCs, they will order them to stop whatever they are doing and drop any weapons they may be holding, while the guards in the security station will call the Feds, who will arrive in d6+2 minutes. If the PCs attack or overpower the two guards that discovered them, the other two guards will not leave the security station until the Feds arrive. The initial Fed response team will consist of two patrol cruisers and four officers, though if they meet resistance, they will call for backup.

One way or another, the PCs should at the very least know that Sun Mei is in the possession of Atherton Wing, a wealthy Persephone socialite who has a reputation for two things, womanizing ways and his skill with a sword. If the PCs did not obtain an address, it only requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Influence / Administration or Knowledge / Culture (representing Current Affairs) or Technical Engineering / Computer Operations* roll to find out from the Cortex which of his many properties is listed as his current residence.

Now their search is almost at an end, after a very long day, we move onto the next scene. The PCs should be awarded two to five plot points for their actions in Uptown Girl.

Scene 2: Wing and a Prayer

"Them rich folk like to think their hands are so clean and look down as them as what ain't got no money, or even them as ain't had money long enough. An' with the way they dress an' talk, they can sure make you feel like they are special an' all. But you look deeper, down under those fancy threads an' you'll see the truth. While they look down their noses an' call us common for bein' all crude, but for what Rim folk would settle with fists, them Cheong Bao Ho Tze¹ moneyed individuals, for some fool reason, want go use these long pig stickers they calls swords to set things square an' all legal like too. They think it makes 'em all manner of manly, an' shows how much 'better' they are, but how come they call the lesser man the one that don't want to be spilling no blood, while they jus' can't wait?"

– Pops McMurty itinerant spacer, long time Rim resident

After a long, hard day of chasing around Eavesdown Docks and Persephone City, the PCs are finally close to rescuing Sun Mei; only one last obstruction stands in their way...Atherton Wing.

There are a number of options available to the PCs here, but the three most likely to succeed are by calling the Feds and alerting them to the fact that an

¹ "Monkey Raping"

illegally abducted woman can be found at Atherton's estate; or by speaking directly with Atherton Wing and trying to appeal or duel for her release; or by just plain sneaking into Atherton's Estate and freeing the girl. Each situation will be dealt with separately below with *Long Arm of the Law*, *Duel Purposes* and *Over the Wall*.

The trip to the Atherton's Estate from Victoria Deveroux's office takes about an hour in most planetary vehicles, while walking will take a good few hours and the maglev trains just don't go there. If the PCs are using their shuttle, they can certainly get close, but they will not obtain permission from traffic control to enter the area or land there, so they will therefore draw a lot of attention upon themselves if they do.

If the PCs had to sneak into the business district, they will have to sneak back out again to get to Atherton's estate, because while it is in the hills overlooking the district, it isn't actually in the district.

Long Arm of the Law

As the PCs know the girl has been illegally abducted, and that her indentured servitude papers were forged, they have the option to just call in the Feds and let them do all the hard work. If they take a quick look on the Cortex missing person's board, it does not take too long to find Sun Mei's official federal notice, which means they can back up any claims.

The PCs can call the Feds directly, or just leave an anonymous tip off, letting them know where Sun Mei can be found and who has her, then wait to see what happens. As Sun Mei comes from a Border World and not the Rim, the case is looked at a little more seriously and a few hours later, the Feds raid Atherton's estate and rescue Sun Mei. After a day or two of questioning, they will then transport her home to her family, unharmed, but still a little shaken by the whole affair.

Of course, the fallout on Persephone is a far different matter. The raid on his estate will bring social shame on Atherton and he will go out of his way to find out who was responsible and ensure suitable retribution. He will not face criminal charges as he will most certainly claim he was unaware that Sun Mei was not the indentured servant he believed her to be and he has paperwork to back this up. Not only that, but Atherton can afford to hire the very best lawyers and he will get off with little more than a warning.

Also, this will bring heat upon Victoria Deveroux and the Golden Mantis Tong as the Feds conduct their investigation into possible people smuggling and this will hamper their business. Victoria Deveroux will certainly give Atherton the names of the PCs if she knows them and the Golden Mantis Tong will also not

be thanking the PCs for the Feds nosing around in their business affairs for a few weeks. If anyone were to be sent to prison over this, it would be some Tong scapegoats and possibly Victoria Deveroux.

All told, there is every chance that the PCs will gain one or more influential enemies by taking the easy route of involving the Feds, no matter how justified it may have been, some folk just aren't that forgiving. Once the PCs are aware that Sun Mei has been released and has been sent home to Emerald River, they can follow after and claim any rewards. This option ends the scene quickly and rewards only a single plot point for coming up with the idea.

Duel Purposes

Given that the PCs know who has Sun Mei, and where she is being held, they could decide to pay Atherton Wing a visit and see if they can persuade or force him to release her.

Though the PCs may know where to find Atherton, it is not just a simple matter of turning up at the gates and asking to have a few words with him. The whole matter has to be conducted according to certain social graces and manner. The most obvious point of note is that it will now be either very late at night or in the early hours of the morning, so they will not be able to arrange an appointment with Atherton until later in the day, most likely the afternoon.

To go about arranging an appointment for the PCs to see Atherton at his estate, and getting themselves on his guest list, to allow them entry when they turn up at the gates, will require some adept social skills. Any PC with *Friends in High Places* can call on their contacts to arrange the meeting for them and will cost 4 plot points, as Atherton is not keen on entertaining common spacers.

If the PCs want to go about it for themselves, they will firstly need to make a successful AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Influence / Appropriate Specialty* or *Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty* roll to even know how to go about it. An extraordinary success allows them to know enough to gain a +2 step Skill bonus to their roll to arrange the appointment (see below). A failure means that they waste an hour figuring out who to contact and getting the run around, but they will eventually get it right. On a Botch, the PCs will consider that just turning up at the estate is the way to go after all. Of course, when they do this, they will be turned away for not being on the guest list (which is an actual written list, so it cannot be hacked).

Assuming that the PCs have managed to figure out the etiquette of dealing with Persephone's rich and elite, they can now try to persuade Atherton Wing's personal assistant to arrange an appointment for them later that day. The assistant is almost as obnoxious as the man himself, so arranging the appointment is hard work,

requiring a HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty* roll, remembering to add the bonus for an extraordinary success previously. On an extraordinary success, the PCs manage to arrange a meeting later that very morning, but on a basic success, they will have to wait until the afternoon. On a failure, they are told that an appointment is available, but in three days time, while on a Botch, their request is simply denied.

Should the PCs successfully arrange the appointment, they will still have some hours to spare to return to their ship and get some rest, not to mention the chance to dig out their best clothes. It should be very apparent to the crew, that even though they have an appointment, turning up anything less than presentable will still get them turned away. If they have not figured this out, you, as GM, should try dropping a few hints along these lines, as it'd be common knowledge for most folk.

Upon arriving at the estate, the PCs have to check in at the gate and anyone who is not presentable will be turned away. This means dirty or torn clothes, blood stains, or basically not at the very least trying to look clean and smart. Read:

Arriving at the front gates of Atherton's estate, albeit one of his smaller properties, it is easy to see how the truly moneyed live. The wall that surrounds the estate is made from a hard white stone with a marbleized finish; the gates are highly decorative with giant golden letters A and W set into them; a well maintained row of trees line the drive to the impressive looking house itself and the entire estate is set on a hill that looks out across the business district. This estate is just his business residence, for those times when he has to meet with advisors and clients, but it is a lavish affair none the less.

There is a gatehouse set into the wall beside the gate, where a smartly dressed guard watches you intently from beyond the armored glass of the booth, waiting for you to either ask his permission to enter or to walk away after your sightseeing.

Entry to the estate requires the PCs to check in with the guard in the gatehouse booth, where he will ask if they have an appointment. If they have come without an appointment, they will be turned away, otherwise their names will be checked against the guest list, which is out of their sight, and assuming they are not more than an hour early, they will be allowed to enter. If they are early, they will be asked, very politely, to come back closer to their appointed time.

As the gates open, there will be four more guards waiting to greet them and the PCs will be asked to submit to a weapon scan before they go any further. Failure to comply will have them turned away.

The weapon scanner is a handheld device that may not detect everything, even though the guards are quite thorough. For the purpose of detecting weapons, the scanner has a d6 Alertness + d6 Perception and successfully detects weapons and explosives on an Average (7) roll. Every weapon carried should be rolled for separately, as any one of them could show up. Not only this, but the guards will be looking for weapons while they are scanning the PCs, so any obvious weapons will be noticed, but the PCs can try and hide any handguns and small melee weapons. To hide a weapon from sight requires an opposed roll of the PC's *Agility + Covert / Appropriate Specialty* Vs the Guard's *Alertness (d8) + Perception / Sight (d8)*. To avoid having the scanner passing over a weapon demands a quick bit of manual trickery and can only be achieved with small weapons, requiring a successful HARD (11) *Agility + Covert / Sleight of Hand* roll. Failure on either of the above rolls means that the weapon has been spotted or scanned, though when scanned, the scanner still has to detect it. A Botch on either roll means that the weapon has definitely been noticed.

The guards will insist that all of the PCs weapons are left behind at the gatehouse, to be returned to them as they leave. Of course, any weapons that were not detected can be kept on them.

With the weapons check over, the PCs are told they can continue up to the house, where they will be met by Mr. Fielding.

Chester Fielding, Atherton's personal assistant, is waiting outside the front of the house and will greet each of the PCs and engage in polite conversation while he escorts them through the house and out onto a large balcony area that overlooks the business district. He asks them all to be seated, offers refreshments and informs them that Mr. Wing will join them shortly to discuss their business matter. It should be noted that they are never quite alone with the assistant, as there is always an apparent security presence, including a couple of smartly dressed, armed guards out on the balcony. Read:

After a few minutes you are joined by an impeccably well dressed and handsome man, who looks you over with apparent contempt, given that you appear to be from a lower social class, but none the less, he dons a perfect smile, even if his eyes still mirror his loathing.

"When my assistant informed me I had an appointment, I was not aware I had ordered anything from the docks." He scoffs in a condescending manner.

"My name is Atherton Wing, and what is it that you feel I can do for you?" Atherton does not offer his hand and his words are as challenging as they are questioning.

It should be obvious to the PCs that Atherton does not much care for them and when the appointment was

first arranged, he was probably unaware of who they actually were. With this in mind, it should be apparent that winning him over is an unlikely option. This is the PCs only chance to bring up the matter of Sun Mei, but as to how they do this will have a great impact on Atherton's reaction.

If the PCs decide to go with the approach of businessmen that were disappointed to have missed out on acquiring Sun Mei, they can try to convince Atherton to sell her on to them. He will listen intently to them, as money does spice his interest and then call over his assistant to find details of the purchase and to bring out the girl. When Sun Mei is brought out, she is dressed in a fine gown and someone has applied makeup; her striking beauty cannot be missed, though her manner is one of sorrow and fear. Her natural beauty and grace should be impressed upon the PCs, so that they can get the sense of why anyone would pay so much to try and own her. Sun Mei is charming, graceful, and respectful, possessing an allure of which few can match. She is quiet and makes no protest; as if she has accepted her fate, or maybe someone has made it very clear to her what will happen if she were to make a scene. Atherton looks her over carefully, a hungry look in his eyes, this seemingly having been the first time he has seen her, and returns to the PCs.

Initially he will refuse to sell her, after all, why should he? The PCs can now try to convince Atherton to change his mind, but they are at a possible disadvantage of not knowing how much he paid for her. If they offer less than 2000 credits, he will not even consider it and laugh at them, giving them a hint of what they'll actually need to offer.

Any offers over 2000 credits will need to be backed up by a successful **HARD (11) Willpower + Influence / Barter** roll. A success will let them buy her contract for the offered sum, while an extraordinary success will have Atherton agreeing let her go for the 2000 credits he paid. A failure means that he will not accept less than 3000 credits, while a Botch ends the negotiations with Atherton's refusal to sell, no matter the offer, as he doesn't like letting go of what is his.

Given that most crews will not have this sort of money to throw around, even moneyed individuals, they may want to try another approach.

If the PCs decide to go with the truth and inform Atherton that Sun Mei was actually abducted only a few days ago, and is not a legally contracted indentured servant, he will laugh, not because he thinks it is a joke, but at the brash way they have come into his house and tell him he has committed a crime.

He will call over his assistant, have him check over the contract and see if there are any official reports regarding the woman's abduction, as well as having Sun Mei brought out for him to see (if she is not already out). Her natural beauty and grace should be

impressed upon the PCs, so that they can get the sense of why anyone would pay so much to try and own her. Sun Mei is charming, graceful, and respectful, possessing an allure of which few can match. She is quiet and makes no protest; as if she has accepted her fate, or maybe someone has made it very clear to her what will happen if she were to make a scene.

After a private discussion with Chester, Atherton will smugly state that while she may have been taken against her will, his contract of indentured servitude is in order and binding. At this point, the PCs have the opportunity to try and persuade him otherwise with a winning argument or by threatening a federal investigation into the matter.

As Atherton Wing is not a reasonable man, being obnoxious, spoilt and possessive, it is no easy task to convince or intimidate him into letting go of his prize, especially as she was purchased to order.

Trying to persuade Atherton of the benefits of releasing Sun Mei requires a **HEROIC (19) Willpower + Influence / Persuasion** roll, while trying to intimidate him with threats of calling the authorities and such like requires a **FORMIDABLE (15) Willpower + Discipline / Intimidation** or **Influence / Intimidation** roll.

A success has Atherton agreeing to release Sun Mei, but only once he has received compensation from Victoria Deveroux, as this was ultimately her fault, a process that will take a number of days. Alternatively they can take Sun Mei sooner, but only if they replace her with another pretty oriental woman first, which is an option some less scrupulous crews may agree to. On an extraordinary success, he will give in and let them take Sun Mei straight away, as he just doesn't want all this aggravation over a common shop girl. On a failure he will not be impressed by their attempts, but will offer them a chance to win her, by besting him in a sword duel, confident of the fact he will likely win. On a Botch, he will be exasperated by their poor show of social graces and disrespectful manner and will have them hastily escorted from his estate.

The other option open to the PCs, especially given Atherton's reputation is to challenge him to a duel, with Sun Mei as the prize, or they may have already been challenged by Atherton. If the PCs make the challenge, they may be surprised when he accepts, almost without pause and asks who will be the duelist and their second and when they would like it to take place. As Atherton is extremely confident in his ability to defeat any of the PCs in a sword fight, so he clearly points out that he is quite happy to get it out of the way right there and then, out in the gardens and asks Chester to explain everything to them.

Chester will make sure that the PCs know exactly what they are agreeing to when they accept the duel, as they do still have the chance to loose face and back out, as well as being escorted from the estate. He

explains that each duelist will be provided with equal swords from the same case, meaning that the PC cannot use a weapon of their own, that no armor may be worn, and that each will be given a moment to prepare themselves before the duel is called to begin. They can choose to duel now, or later, in which case they will all be given rooms until the hour of the duel, when they will be released. The duel would normally be to the death, but each duelist has the right to spare a defeated opponent or one who surrenders to the mercy of their better.

It is now down to the PCs to either accept or decline the duel and decide how soon they'd like to commence with the challenge.

If they want to have the duel right away, they will be escorted to the rear gardens, overlooking the sparkling white and silver towers of the business district, and asked to prepare themselves for the duel, all under the watchful eye of an increased number of guards. This means that whoever has agreed to duel Atherton must strip down to their shirt and trousers and prove they are not wearing armor of any kind. They will then be presented with a polished wood and velvet sword case and asked to choose one of the two blades. The other blade is then presented to Atherton, who quickly makes a flashy display of swordsmanship. Chester makes it clear that he will preside over the duel and that the duelists may only begin upon his declaration, that they must cease fighting upon his instruction and that there must be no outside interference with the duel. Once everyone has agreed to these terms, he asks the duelists to take their positions; a few moments later, he calls for the duel to begin.

Atherton is a master swordsman and this is unlikely to be an easy fight, in fact, it could result in the death of a PC. The duel should be played out in much the same way as any combat, but with initiative being rolled each turn. If Atherton wins, he will only spare the PC if they actually surrender and plead for mercy or if they were too easily defeated, considering them not worth the effort to finish off, but if they managed to wound Atherton, he will take great pleasure in killing them. If the PC is winning and it looks as if Atherton may be about to be killed, Chester will quickly call an end to the duel and hastily announce the PC as the winner, ensuring that Mr. Wing lives to have revenge another day, unless, as GM, you'd rather see him die. Of course, should the PC do enough damage to put down Atherton before this call, they do have the option to spare his life and let his medical staff save him.

Should any PCs try to save the life of their defeated companion, or try to interfere with the duel, Atherton's security will immediately attempt to subdue them and removed them from the estate.

If the PCs choose to partake in the duel later in the day or the following day, they will be given fine, lavish

rooms in the estate, but will find that they are locked in, to make sure they do not try anything, mostly the idea of escaping. They are released an hour before the duel to give them enough time to prepare.

One thing that may come into the PCs heads could be to try and grab Sun Mei when she is brought out for Atherton to see and do a runner with her. While there is nothing wrong with this, Atherton's security will do everything in their power to stop them. Atherton and his assistant will try and escape straight away by getting as far from the PCs as they can. The result will be a fight to the gate or over the wall until the PCs can get clear, having to leave behind any weapons that were taken when they entered and probably finding themselves heavily outgunned. Should they manage to take Atherton hostage, his security will hold off and he will not try anything on unless he feels that they really intend to kill him. While this may get them to the gate unharmed, they will be reported to the Feds as armed criminals whose robbery plans went south and soon find themselves branded by the Alliance, not to mention that Atherton will not stop hounding them until he gets his revenge. Any PCs with *Nose for Trouble* or *Trustworthy Gut* will get the feeling that trying this would be a really bad idea and could easily get them all killed. All told, there are ten guards spread around the estate and five more at the gatehouse.

In summary, the PCs will either have rescued Sun Mei, or at least sorted out her release, and can now head back to Santo and Emerald River, or they will have failed and were escorted from the estate, possibly with one of their companions seriously wounded or dead.

Over the Wall

As the PCs know where Sun Mei is being held, they could decide to just sneak in, rescue her and sneak back out again, with a simple 'over the wall' job. Unfortunately, these things are never that simple.

The first thing the PCs will probably want to do is get a plan of the estate, so they can determine where Sun Mei will be being held. This can be done through the Cortex, by digging up building plans or security proposals, but as these are not generally public access files, it will take some work to dig them up.

Accesses the local building registry files requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. Once the hacker has got the link, they then have to find the correct data files, which requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* or *Computer Operations* roll. Now that they have the files, they need to bypass the security and encryption to finally get the data, this requires another HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. After this, the hacker will now have the plans to Atherton's estate, but they still need to log off the system undetected. This requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll

to break the connection without alerting any security programs. It takes d10 + 5 minutes to find the correct data files.

A failure at any time increases the difficulty of any further rolls by one step, as security gets suspicious, while a botch means that security has been alerted and their connection is terminated. Should the attempt to log off result in a Botch, security will unsuccessfully attempt to track the source of the signal, but they will alert the Feds that a breach took place and provide them with details of the information that was accessed, which will possibly alert Atherton's security.

The PCs can also request help from **Bai Lian** and the Golden Mantis Tong, so long as they previously gained her support. Though they have no direct influence in the business district or the estates in the hills, they do have some connections with household servants working at the estates, especially as oriental ladies among serving staff are the current fashion. If requested, **Bai Lian** will have the golden Mantis ask around and see if they can dig up anything of use. Eventually, after an hour, she will get back to the PCs and inform them that Sun Mei is definitely still at Atherton's estate and being held captive there and she lets them know which room Mei can be found in and provide rough plans of the estate.

Next up, with or without the plans, the PCs will mostly likely want to go and check out the estate while it is still dark, as it should still be late at night or in the early hours of the morning.

Their first issue is leaving the business district, which, if they came in officially, will not be all that difficult and just requires them to exit through the toll point that leads to the hills. If they snuck in, then they will need to make their way across the district and climb over the wall to get out, which works in exactly the same way as it did in the last scene to get into the district.

The hills bear yet another stark contrast, as it is a residential area for the rich and famous, consisting of a large number of private estates, all with their own security and hidden behind walls, leaving the streets connecting them reasonably empty. In addition to this, much of the woodland was left on the hills to make for a more pleasing aesthetic and to give further privacy to the estates. Of course, these very same woods can be extremely helpful to the PCs to move around the area unseen. Sneaking around in the woods at night provides a +4 step Skill bonus to any rolls to avoid detection by patrol cruisers or private security, but by day this is reduced to a +2 step Skill bonus. It is down to you, as GM, to decide how often they may encounter a Fed patrol cruiser passing overhead.

It will take roughly an hour to reach Atherton's estate on foot through the woods, which are too dense for

most planetary vehicles, but the PCs will have had no trouble hiding a vehicle in the early stretches of woodland before setting off. While it may be possible for small one or two man vehicles to navigate their way through the woods, this would mean that the PCs would most likely require quite a few of them, but should they manage it, they can half the time it takes to get through the woods. Eventually, one way or another, they should reach the estate. Read:

Arriving at Atherton's estate, albeit one of his smaller properties, it is easy to see how the truly moneyed live. The wall that surrounds the estate is made from a hard white stone with a marbled finish, which is overlooked by an impressive looking house with a raised balcony at the back, looking out across the business district. This estate is just his business residence, for those times when he has to meet with advisors and clients, but it is a lavish affair none the less.

It is difficult to see the gardens, due to the high wall, but there does not appear to be an abundance of lighting, so there will be plenty of dark, shadowy areas to be taken advantage of. The house itself looks quiet, but does have lighting around its edge and you can see that at least some of the rooms and corridors appear to be illuminated. A quick check around the perimeter of the estate makes it clear that the rear gardens are your best shot at getting in undetected.

All that is left for you to do now is climb over the wall, sneak into the house, avoid any guards and security, break out Sun Mei and sneak back out again. What could possibly go wrong?

It's time for the PCs to put their plan together and see how wrong it could go. Their first obstacle is the rather decorative, yet still solid wall, as the marbled finish actually makes it quite smooth and slippery.

Actually climbing over the wall is an AVERAGE (35) Complex Action using *Strength + Athletics / Climbing*, with each roll taking five minutes, but having proper climbing gear available provides a +2 step Skill bonus, while just having a rope only provides a +1 step Skill bonus. The PCs can provide Indirect Assistance to their companions, so long as they are not in the process of climbing over the wall themselves.

Every twenty minutes, a pair of patrolling guards will make their sweep of the rear gardens, but they are not really expecting any trouble and therefore are not paying all that much attention. As long as none of the PCs are out in the open, standing in an illuminated area or making a lot of noise, they are unlikely to be noticed. Anyone in the shadowy parts of the gardens only have to succeed on an EASY (3) *Alertness + Covert / Stealth* roll not to be seen, while anyone on the wall, or caught in the open must succeed on an AVERAGE (7) *Agility or Alertness + Covert / Stealth* roll. Failure or a Botch results in the guards coming to investigate the area in more detail and requires

opposed rolls of the PC's *Agility + Covert / Appropriate Specialty* Vs the guards *Alertness (d8) + Perception / Sight (d8)* to avoid being discovered.

Once the PCs reach the house, they will find that due to the wall, guards and a certain degree of arrogance, that the back entrance is not locked, probably much to their surprise. Unfortunately, once inside the house, they will notice cameras in all of the corridors, so getting to any room requires the PCs to avoid their sweep pattern or to try and stay within their limited blind spots, or just disable them. To avoid the cameras requires a successful **HARD (11) *Agility or Alertness + Covert / Stealth*** roll. A failure means that there is a 25% chance that a guard at the gatehouse, where they monitor the camera feeds, will notice the PCs, while a Botch increases this to a 50% chance.

Disabling the cameras requires a successful (**HARD**) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device or Technical Engineering / Technical Security Systems* roll. A failure means that it has not worked and trying again increases the difficulty by one step. A Botch means that not only have they failed, but they have also been spotted by guards monitoring the system. On a success, the camera is disabled, but every ten minutes, there is a chance that a guard monitoring the system will notice that the camera is out, if they succeed on an **AVERAGE (7) *Alertness (d8) + Perception / Sight (d8)*** roll. On an extraordinary success, they have not only managed to disable the cameras direct feed, but also loop back its footage so that it will not be detected until maintenance carry out a full system inspection.

As it is late at night, most of the household staff are either asleep or have gone home for the day, including Atherton Wing, so there is little chance of encountering anyone outside of their rooms.

One of the first rooms that the PCs can investigate after coming in through the back of the house is the kitchens, where they will find a meal list on the wall, detailing what guests are expected, who is staying and what meals are required and when. This has details of which rooms are occupied and by whom, including Sun Mei, who has been put down for breakfast to be taken to her room in the morning.

With some luck and skill, the PCs will hopefully reach the rooms where Sun Mei is mostly likely being held, and if they asked **Bai Lian** for help or checked the kitchens, they will know exactly which one she is to be found in.

Guessing which room she is being held in can be narrowed down to one of two rooms, as they are the only two which are currently locked from the outside. In one is Sun Mei, in the other is another young oriental lady that was also purchased that day, but she is an actual indentured servant and accepts her place in things. She has no desire to go with the PCs as it will bring shame on her family and they would

have no way to pay their debt, but neither will she alert anyone to their presence, unless they try to force her to come with them.

Bypassing the rather complicated electronic locks that normally require a special 'door handle' key to open is an **AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Open Locks*** roll or a **HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Electronics*** roll. Electronic lockpicks or an electronics tool kit is necessary to bypass the lock and they do not offer any bonuses because of this. On a success they get the door open, while on a failure they do not, though they can try again, but the difficulty increases to **FORMIDABLE (15)**. On a Botch, not only do they fail to open the lock, but they also trip an alarm that alerts the guards at the gatehouse.

If the PCs just do not have anyone who can bypass the lock, or they just cannot seem to get it open, they do have the option of breaking the door down, it's just that this will neither be subtle or quiet. Breaking open the door requires a **HARD (11) *Burst of Strength*** (*Strength + Strength*) roll and two PCs can try this together with the use of Direct Assistance. If successful, the door breaks open in an explosion of splinters and with a loud crash that will alert the guards. On an extraordinary success, the PCs not only break open the lock on the door, but do so with minimal noise and do not alert the guards. On a failure, they have not opened the door, but have been quiet enough not to alert the guards, while on a Botch, the door holds firm and they make so much noise that the guards are alerted. Should the PCs have made too much noise and alerted the guards, they will have three minutes (60 Turns) before the first guards arrive. One way or another, the PCs will have hopefully got the door to Sun Mei's room open. Read:

You step into an expensively decorated, but sparse room, with only a single bed, small dressing table and a chair to furnish it. Cowering in a fetal position upon the bed is a young oriental woman dressed in a fine jade green gown. She looks up at you with sad green eyes; her gaze locking with yours, her manner sorrowful and downcast, but only moments later a bright smile illuminates her face, gracing it with an almost unworldly beauty.

"You have come to free me, to take me home to my family?" She enquirers in a delicate, charming voice, her intuitive way of already knowing your intentions is astounding.

"Yes, I am Sun Mei and as I have no possessions to bring, I am ready to join you." She follows, almost answering your questions before you have thought to ask them.

Sun Mei gracefully uncurls herself from the bed and slips her small feet into a pair of flat shoes before standing ready to leave, her bright smile radiating warmth and gratitude.

The PCs may seem at little disconcerted that Sun Mei seems to know their intentions before they have even said a word, this is because she is a reader. Still, she will listen attentively to anything they have to say, or should they choose to explain their intentions or actions to her. If they check the picture they were provided with, it is definitely Sun Mei, just in case there was any doubt.

Her natural beauty and grace should be impressed upon the PCs, so that they can get the sense of why anyone would pay so much to try and own her. Sun Mei is charming, graceful, and respectful, possessing an allure of which few can match.

Now the PCs finally have Sun Mei, they can make good their escape, which providing they did not alert the guards, is no harder than breaking in, possibly even easier if they disabled the cameras.

Unfortunately, if the PCs alerted the guards by tripping an alarm or making too much noise, the way out will be a whole lot harder. For a start, guards will now be searching inside the house for intruders and they will have alerted and woken Atherton Wing. For every turn it takes the characters to leave the house, roll a d6, and on a result of a 1, the characters have encountered two guards. If the PCs get to act first on initiative, they can try and put down the guards before they call in backup to their location, otherwise all fifteen guards at the estate will know exactly where the PCs are and they will try to subdue them.

Ultimately, the PCs will want to get out into the rear garden and over the wall, at which point they can easily lose any pursuers in the woods. If the PCs do not make it and are caught by the guards, they will be handed over to the Feds on the charges of breaking and entry and kidnapping, not to mention possible assault or murder, so their future will not be looking all that rosy.

Once out of the woods, so to speak, the PCs can get Sun Mei back to their ship and prepare leave for Santo and Emerald River.

Before the PCs finally get onto their ship and away to Santo, there is one more encounter for them to face, as someone else has gotten to their ship before them, but this should only be played out if they have Sun Mei with them. Read:

It has been a long day, a very long day, but at last you have rescued Sun Mei and can rest easy on the return trip to Santo.

As your ship comes into view among the chaos that is Eavesdown Docks, berthed between two large freighters, you note two men standing outside, seemingly waiting for you, though they do not look like Feds or Tong.

The men are tall, bald, and very pale, dressed in smart black suits and are oddly wearing what appear to be thin blue gloves. They both smile together as you stop outside your ship.

“Please excuse our interruption to your business Captain, but we were wondering if we may speak with the young girl for a moment?” One of the blue-handed men enquires.

“Yes, we have an educational opportunity for her.”

The other adds immediately.

They both smile, and somehow it does not make you feel at ease, there is something sinister in those smiling faces.

In case you had not guessed, the ‘Hands of Blue’ have somehow found out that Sun Mei has reader abilities and wish to collect her for the academy, but this is not their primary purpose for being at Eavesdown Docks, so they will not be forcing the issue this time.

No doubt the crew will not want to deal with them, but most likely they will not know who they are. If they enquire as to whom they work for, they state that they are employees of a Core World academy that grants scholarships to particularly talented individuals and that Sun Mei could qualify for this.

If the PCs ask as to how they came to this conclusion, they will only say that they had some referrals that they were following up on.

In all likelihood, the crew will say no, and should they ask Sun Mei, she will be quite certain that she does not want to talk to these men; in fact she looks very nervous and frightened, as she gets a very bad feeling regarding their intentions.

Should the crew refuse, they will smile politely and take their leave, with an “As you wish.”

If the PCs actually let them talk to Sun Mei, she will be very distressed by this, but the Hands of Blue will only ask a few short questions as to her name, age and education and then they will, once again, smile and take their leave, with a “Thank you Captain, you have been most helpful.”

Either way, the Hands of Blue will leave both Sun Mei and the crew in peace after only a few short minutes and nothing more will come of this encounter...at least for this adventure.

So finally, with Sun Mei safely in their hands and back at their ship, the PCs are now ready for the return journey to Emerald River and this scene draws to a close, after what has no doubt been a very long day for the crew.

The PCs should be awarded one to six plot points for their actions in Wing and a Prayer, as well as one advancement point for their heroic deed in rescuing an innocent young woman.

Scene 3: A Heroes Welcome

“Home...now there is a word that brings joy to my heart. For many folk, it can mean many things, from

that patch of dirt to which they were born all hollerin' an' kicking, to the thick hull of some boat or another. To me, my boat is more like a big sister that looks out for you and keeps you warm, protecting you from the big black of the 'Verse an' tellin' you when something is wrong. In my eyes, home is a place where you can unwind, a place to relax and not be havin' to look over your shoulder all the time, as there will be folk doing that for you. Home is that place you head for when the job is done, a welcoming place where folk are pleased to see you and there is a warm bed waiting for you, and a good woman to warm it too, if you is all kinds of lucky. For me, having some place to call home is what makes those long months out in the black worth the blood and sweat...if not just for those first sweet breaths of fresh air."

- Jackson 'Cowboy' Brown, veteran pilot, Eavesdown Docks, Persephone

Hopefully, after everything the PCs have been through, they now have Sun Mei and they are bringing her home. If they don't have Sun Mei when they return, you, as GM, will have to decide how this all ends, as may be the case if they used the *Long Arm of the Law* to get her freed from Atherton Wing. Heading back to Santo is much the same as the trip out, with the pilot making an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation* roll to know it's still only a short 250 hour trip for a Speed Class of 1 vessel, so for most ships that'll be a day or two.

Nothing really eventful will happen on the trip back, but encouraging some role-play among the crew and Sun Mei is highly recommended. She is extremely thankful to the PCs and relieved to be going back home, her distressing ordeal mostly over. She doesn't seem to think that much of her first ever trip off-world or for the nature of things out in the 'Verse. Due to her gratitude at being rescued, she will make every effort to not take offence to any crude folk among the crew, so long as their thoughts regarding her are not overly vulgar. This could lead to some fun though, if any crew mention what they are thinking and she turns to stare at them, a look of disgust on her face as she picks up their intentions, states something along the lines of "how dare you" and storms out of the room, even though they have not said a word about it. Eventually, they will arrive at Santo and make their approach on Emerald River. Read:

Finally breaking out from the clouds, you bear witness to the vast expanse of farmlands and prairies that form the agricultural heartland of Santo, the beauty of which is awe inspiring. Only a short way ahead, you can once more see the multitude of buildings that shape the large town of Emerald River, a man-made mark against the natural vista.

Off to the east of town, the Emerald River sparkles a brilliant green in the early morning sun, while to the north, the steady rise of hills and

mountains stand tall and proud, thick forests lining their slopes.

You bank the ship around and down towards the landing pads and large fuel storage tanks at the northern edge of town, making for your final approach around the Town's communications and control tower, before steadily setting her down.

For one young woman whose freedom you pursued, with sweat and blood, this is home, a place to be safe among family and friends...maybe it could be yours too.

Pretty much as soon as the PCs ship has touched down, word will be spreading around that they have returned and folk will be eager to know if they have Sun Mei. The crew that work at Jimmy's Service Station will be keeping an eye for the crew as they leave the ship and the moment they see Sun Mei, they'll send a call back to town to let them know the good news.

It is assumed that the PCs will take Sun Mei with them when they head back into town and most likely to the General Store to reunite her with her family.

As the PCs enter the town square, there will be quite a welcoming committee waiting for them, as a large crowd of well wishers has turned out to see them, giving them some idea of just how popular Sun Mei is with the townsfolk. The Sun Family will be outside the General Store and standing on the veranda, waiting to be reunited with their daughter and standing close by are Owen Blake and sheriff Durham. Read:

It is early in the day, with the first rays of sun stretching out over the Town Square, bathing it in warm golden light, almost spotlighting the crowd of people that have turned out to greet your arrival with faces of joy and relief. Up on the simple wooded veranda of the General Store stand the anxious members of the Sun family, eagerly waiting to get a glimpse of their daughter. Standing with them is Owen Blake, a mighty dandy looking gent, and Sheriff Durham, the Town's principle lawman.

As you finally reach the store, Sun Mei steps forward, still wearing the fine green gown from Persephone, it shines brilliantly in the sunlight, creating an almost ghostly air around the young woman.

She steps up to the veranda with a delicate grace, her face struggling to hold back her emotions, to remain dignified and composed, until she stands proudly before her family.

Then the tears come, not just from Sun Mei, but all of the family, as they embrace their daughter, their emotions overflowing at the relief of having her returned to them, unharmed and dignified.

The crowd watches on in silence as the family has this moment, their moment, as they let out their joy and relief at their reunion.

The special moment when Sun Mei is finally returned to her family, stepping gracefully up onto the veranda should be a heart warming and tearful scene, as all of the Sun family shed tears of joy.

Soon after, they will be hugging and thanking the PCs for their gallant deed, expressing their deep gratitude for what they have done. This should be one of those very special moments when the PCs know they have done a good thing, for good people...today they truly are Big Damn Heroes.

With the initial flood of emotions passing, Sun Cai will personally thank each of the PCs for returning his daughter to him and he will offer to restock their ship's galley with fresh food and spices, and even some rice wine the family have been keeping for a special occasion...and he can think of no better occasion than this.

At about this time Owen Blake will approach the Captain and ask for a moment of their time. Stepping aside from the Sun family and out of earshot, he will point out that what the Captain and their crew have done this day goes beyond just the Sun family, but makes the whole damn town proud of them, for they are not just townsfolk and neighbors, but a real community. Owen will also make good by paying the crew their reward, even if they had decided upon the rescue before one was even offered. In no uncertain terms, he makes it clear that all their fuel and port fees will be covered, as well as sorting out their monthly maintenance bill, and he hands the Captain 750 credits (one and a half times more than what may have been promised), such is his gratitude and that of the town. He will also offer the crew a weeks bed and board at the Blake's Tavern, on the house, should they wish to rest up and relax for a while.

Next up, Sheriff Durham will thank them for their efforts and tell them how surprised he is that there are still good folk out there that'd do what they did, as many just wouldn't care for simple farming folk. He'll also hand the Captain a bottle of quality whisky and state that it is from the 'old country', though no one can be quite sure what he means by that. If any of the crew has wounds that need tending to, the Town's doctor, Doc Smith, will also provide his services free of charge.

Finally, the PCs will be pretty much treated as heroes around Emerald River and welcomed back at any time, in a town where folk are happy to see them, where they don't have to be looking over their shoulders, where a warm bed will be waiting for them and if they are all kinds of lucky, maybe even a good man or woman to warm it.

Optional Epilogue: This is for any GMs who would like closure to the Hands of Blue encounter in Eavesdown Docks, but is purely optional and will be covered in a future adventure.

Some time later, the Sun family will receive an unexpected visitor. He will identify himself as a representative of a special academy for gifted children and young adults, and they are sometimes able to offer prestigious scholarships to persons outside of the Core Worlds that come to their attention.

Sun Mei is one of these lucky young people that have come to their attention and he will offer her such a scholarship, which will enable her to gain a degree from a Core World institution, which would open many doors for both her and her family. They are warned that they will not be able to see her very often; due to the fact the academy likes to keep outside disturbances to a minimum, to allow the students to reach their maximum potential, but reassures them that they will be able to write and communicate as often as they like, outside of study time.

He will be very sincere and even Sun Mei will not be able to detect any deceit or danger; the man truly does believe in what he is offering. This is because, as far as he is aware, everything he states is true.

As this seems to be the offer of a lifetime and because the Sun family has always wanted what is best for their children, they accept the scholarship and Sun Mei travels to the Core and a bright future with the academy...or so it seems, but that is a tale for another adventure.

Each PC should be awarded six plot points and an extra two advancement points if they brought Sun Mei back home themselves and for being such Big Damn Heroes.

So ends the first of the Emerald River Tales, hopefully on a positive high, where the PCs have earned the respect and friendship of the townsfolk and have a welcome retreat they can call home.

THE END



FOLKS AND RASCALS

Name: Golden Mantis Tong member (Basic foot soldier)

Agi d8, Str d8, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6;

Life Points 12; Initiative d8 + d8

Traits: Friends in Low Places (minor), Loyal (Tong) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d6 (Stealth d8, Streetwise d8), Discipline d6 (Intimidation d8, Mental Resistance d8), Guns d6, Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6, Perception d6, Planetary Vehicles d6, Unarmed Combat d6 (Tai Chi d8).

Description: These are the basic Golden Mantis foot soldiers. They are extremely loyal to the Tong clan, or at the very least, a particular boss within the Tong. They will fight to the death if they have to, but will most likely run or surrender to the mercy of their attackers before it goes that far. These are the Tong that are encountered in Act 1, Scene 2, as well as the majority of the Tong encountered during the adventure.

Gear: Pistol, rifle or SMG, combat knife, mesh vest.

Name: Golden Mantis Tong member (Veteran)

Agi d10, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 16; Initiative d10 + d8

Traits: Friends in Low Places (minor), Leadership (minor), Loyal (Tong) (minor), Prejudice (Rivals) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d6 (Stealth d8, Streetwise d10), Discipline d6 (Intimidation d8, Mental Resistance d8), Guns d6, Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Knives d8, Swords d8), Perception d6, Planetary Vehicles d4, Unarmed Combat d6 (Tai Chi d10).

Description: These are the ranking member in the Tong, the lieutenants, captains and personal bodyguards to the bosses. They are extremely loyal to the Tong clan and most likely a particular boss within the Tong. They will fight to the death if they have to, but will most likely run or surrender to the mercy of their attackers before it goes that far, unless protecting the life of their boss. These Tong members are the ones mostly likely to be known by rival Tong and are the least accepting and tolerant of their rivals both within and without the clan. These represent the bodyguards of both Tong bosses as well as a few officers that will be found at each warehouse. At least one of these veterans will be guarding the **Tang Lang**, along with the basic foot soldiers.

Gear: Pistol or SMG, combat knife, sword, mesh or plate vest.

Name: Golden Mantis Tong boss (*Bai Lian* and *Yu Shu*)

Agi d10, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d12;

Life Points 20; Initiative d10 + d8

Traits: Friends in Low Places (minor), Leadership (major), Deadly Enemy (minor), Loyal (Tong) (minor), Prejudice (Rivals) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6 (Dodge d8), Artistry d6, Covert d6 (Stealth d10, Streetwise d12), Discipline d6 (Interrogation d8, Intimidation d10, Mental Resistance d10), Guns d6, Influence d6 (Negotiation d10), Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Knives d8, Swords d10), Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d6 (Tai Chi d10).

Description: These are the two Tong bosses that are fighting for control of the Golden Mantis. Both are very experienced, are respected leaders and not to be messed with. They control their clan members through both intimidation and promise of rewards; they are skilled at manipulating those that serve them and knowing what is going on around them. Despite this, they are loyal to their clan and will do everything they can to promote and strengthen their influence in the local area and do not easily tolerate their rival's activities. By the time you reach this level in the Tong, you have certainly made a few enemies along the way, which in this case, are one another.

Gear: Pistol, combat knife, sword, mesh vest.

Name: Alliance Fed (Basic grunt)

Agi d6, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d6, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 16; Initiative d6 + d6

Traits: Wears a Badge (minor), Loyal (Alliance) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d4, Discipline d6 (Intimidation d8), Guns d6 (Pistol d8, Assault Rifle d8), Influence d4, Knowledge d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6, Perception d6, Planetary Vehicles d6, Unarmed Combat d6.

Description: These are the standard Fed grunts that patrol the streets and respond to calls from disturbed citizens, as well as arresting those folk that are engaging in criminal activity. They do their duty, obey their orders and follow Alliance law to the letter. They're well-trained, well-armed, and efficient and rarely open to bribery, so best not to try.

These are the guys that will respond to any call for Feds, as well as the officers patrolling the business district and those waiting for trouble around the **Tang Lang**, if they were alerted.

Gear: Pistol, assault rifle, stun baton, body armor and helmet.

Name: Victoria Deveroux (Recruiter)

Agi d8, Str d4, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d10, Wil d12;

Life Points 18; Initiative d8 + d8

Traits: Friends in High Places (minor), Good Name (minor), Moneyed Individual (Major), All Preened Up (minor), Loyal (Clients) (minor), Memorable (minor), Prejudice (Indentured folk) (minor).

Skills: Artistry d6, Athletics d6, Influence d6 (Marketing d10/ Persuasion d10/ Streetwise d8), Knowledge d6 (Culture d8/ Law d8), Perception d6 (Empathy d8), Performance d6 (Dancing d8), Planetary Vehicles d6, Technical Engineering d4, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: Vicky is an attractive lady with long blond hair, usually pulled back in a ponytail, and bright blue eyes which seem to sparkle. Her smile is perfectly sculptured, perfectly white and you can only imagine that this woman has been under the knife more than once to make sure her that no blemish could disrupt her aim for perfection, to ensure her clients will see only beautiful things. She takes this to the extreme of having to make sure she always looks her best before any sort of meeting, as to Vicky, appearance is everything.

She is a sharp business woman and will normally only be found wearing an expensive looking two piece dress suit, or an equally expensive figure hugging dress. Her expert dress sense combined with her impeccable appearance means that Vicky tends to leave a memorable impression on her clients and guests.

She has been in the recruiting business for some time, but only moved onto the provision of indentured servants only in the last few years, yet she has made a name for herself as well as building up a successful and profitable business venture, especially as she values client discretion.

If there was to be a real chink in her character, it would be that she has spent so long trading contracts of indentured servitude and the people bonded to those contracts, that she has stopped regarding these unfortunate souls as people, but little more than a commodity to be bought and sold.

Name: Steven (Victoria's bodyguard & personal assistant)

Agi d8, Str d8, Vit d10, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 18; Initiative d8 + d8 + d4

Traits: Lightning Reflexes (minor), Steady Calm (minor), Credo (Protect the Client at any cost) (Major).

Skills: Athletics d6 (Dodge d8), Discipline d6, Guns d6 (Pistols d8), Influence d6 (Administration d8/ Intimidation d8), Knowledge d6, Perception d6 (Hearing d8/ Sight d8), Planetary Vehicles d6, Technical Engineering d6, Unarmed Combat d6 (Brawling d8).

Description: Steven is a muscular and handsome man that is both Ms Deveroux's personal assistant and her bodyguard. He is well spoken, perfectly mannered, alert for trouble and ready to protect his employer without a second thought. He has worked for Vicky for slightly over two years and knows her habits very well, as well as knowing if anything were amiss to suggest that she may be under any duress. Steven is normally smartly dressed in an expensive business suit that has been personally tailored so as to help hide his 'under-the-shoulder' holster and pistol, for which he has a valid permit to carry even in the business district.

Gear: Pistol, Mesh Vest.

Name: Security Guards (Both at Ms Deveroux's office building and at Atherton's Estate)

Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6;

Life Points 14; Initiative d8 + d8

Traits: None.

Skills: Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6, Influence d6, Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Clubs d8), Planetary Vehicles d6, Perception d6 (Sight d8), Technical Engineering d6, Unarmed Combat d6.

Description: These are the men and women who are paid to keep unwanted folk out of expensive premises or homes. Unlike your warehouse night watchman, these guys are well trained, well paid and dedicated to keeping their employer happy by doing a good job. If they detect and intruder they will

assess the situation and either deal with it themselves or call for backup from their parent agency or from the Feds.

Generally they don't take kindly to intruders or folk who may want to harm their employers.

Gear: Pistol, Stun Baton, Mesh Vest and Uniform. They will have access to Plate Vests, Helmets and Rifles.

Name: Chester Fielding (Atherton's personal assistant)

Agi d6, Str d6, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d8;

Life Points 14; Initiative d6 + d8

Traits: Friends in High Places (minor), Highly Educated (minor), Greedy (minor), Prejudice (Common folk) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Influence d6 (Administration d8/ Bureaucracy d8/ Persuasion d8), Knowledge d6 (Culture d8/ Law d8), Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Sword d8), Performance d6 (Dancing d8), Perception d6 (Empathy d8/ Intuition d8), Planetary Vehicles d4, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: Chester is Atherton's Wings personal assistant and responsible for organizing almost all of his business-related appointments, as well as many of his social engagements. Due to this responsibility, Chester is often quite stressed and under pressure, especially when Atherton doesn't feel the need to attend a meeting and leaves him to clear up the mess and make apologies.

He is smartly dressed, well presented, business-like and well spoken; only doing this job for his love of money and a fat pay-check, not out of love for his employer.

It is Chester's responsibility to know what is going on at all times and have an answer to anything Atherton needs to know, regarding his business affairs, which leaves him little free time for a life of his own.

Name: Atherton Wing (Rich socialite)

Agi d12, Str d8, Vit d10, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d10;

Life Points 20; Initiative d12 + d8

Traits: Friends in High Places (minor), Moneyed Individual (Major), Talented (Swords) (minor), Chip on the Shoulder (minor), Overconfident (minor), Prejudice (Common folk) (minor), Memorable (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6 (Dodge d10/ Riding d10), Discipline d4, Guns d6 (Pistols d10), Influence d6 (Conversation d10/ Persuasion d10), Knowledge d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Sword d12 [+d4 with talented]), Performance d6 (Dancing d10), Perception d4, Planetary Vehicles d2, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: Atherton Wing is rich, handsome, impeccably presented and a very eligible bachelor, but unfortunately he is also self centered, selfish and has never had to do a hard days work in his life, living on a vast inheritance instead.

Atherton likes to surround himself with beautiful things, especially beautiful women, and goes to great lengths to ensure everyone knows he has money and only accepts the very best. As women tend not to appreciate his company for too long, he often hires Companions or other professionals to escort him to social functions, though at times he may resort to using one of his beautiful indentured servants, once they have been suitable coached on how to behave.

Whatever Atherton wants, he gets and if he can't get it, or is refused it, he makes it his goal to make whoever got in his way pay for their mistake.

To Atherton, social standing is everything, so merciful Buddha help anyone who makes a fool of him in public or makes him look bad in front of his peers. In fact, many a man has paid for such a mistake with their life, as he is a talented swordsman and will settle many a slight with a duel.

Despite his gentlemanly manner and glamorous flair, Atherton is little more than a spoilt, spiteful child that has no appreciation for money or the feelings of others, especially those below him...they are just tools to be used and discarded as necessary. Atherton Wing is not a good man.

Name: Sun Mei 'beauty' (Virtuous young lady)

Agi d10, Str d4, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 14; Initiative d10 + d8

Traits: Allure (Major), Reader (minor), Loyal (Family) (minor), Memorable (minor), Prejudice (Bad mannered & disrespecting folk) (minor).

Skills: Artistry d6, Athletics d6, Discipline d6 (Meditation d8), Influence d6 (Persuasion d8), Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Swords d8), Perception d6 (Empathy d8), Performance d6, Unarmed Combat d6 (Tai Chi d8).

Description: Mei is the family jewel and her father and elder brother are very protective of her. With a mere look from her deep green eyes, Mei could melt the heart of any man. To say she is beautiful would not do her justice; she is elegant, graceful, charming and has an inner beauty that radiates into her

physical presence, all combining to give such allure to which very few can compare. She is in her early twenties and though she is charming and sweet when spoken to, she prefers quiet solitude.

Most of the time, Mei can be found dressed in traditional Chinese attire and working dutifully at the Post Office counter. In fact, many of the male customers who often come to send post to old friends, which may or may not exist, do so just to get a glimpse of her and carry that vision with them for the rest of the day, hoping that they do not appear too obvious.

On the other hand, Mei is almost always fully aware of their true motives, though she is far too polite to say, all because she has a rare gift that allows her to somehow sense the thoughts and feelings of the people around her.

At first, the gift scared her, but over time she found that she could control it and it allowed her to truly understand her younger brother Jian, due to his mental difficulties. For that reason alone, she considered it a blessing and no longer feared her ability; though it is something she has never revealed to her family or anyone else, keeping it a very closely guarded secret. Her family and most people she meets just consider her very intuitive.

Something that Mei finds particularly vulgar is bad manners and foul language, feeling that they are disrespectful and have no place in honorable society. She will never use rude words herself and is often quick to chastise those that do, though politely of course, and can seem a little haughty around cussing folk. To make matters worse, as she can often read surface thoughts, she struggles with men who have less than clean thoughts regarding what they would like to do with her, considering even these thoughts to be disrespectful, especially as she is a virtuous woman who has no intention of being with any man until she is married.

Name: Sun Cai 'fortune' (Owner of the General Store)

Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6;

Life Points 14; Initiative d6 + d8

Traits: Teacher (Tai Chi) (minor), Trustworthy Gut (minor), Loyal (Golden Mantis Tong) (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Influence d6 (Barter d8), Knowledge d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6 (Knives d8/ Swords d10), Perception d6 (Intuition d8), Unarmed Combat d6 (Tai Chi d10).

Description: Cai is a Chinese man in his early fifties, with grey hair, wise eyes and a long white beard. Though he is short and frail looking, his strength and speed should never be underestimated, neither should his skill of Tai Chi and blades. He is friendly and polite, whilst at the same time a shrewd and clever businessman. He loves his family and is devoted to ensuring they are all brought up well versed in family tradition and with honorable values, as well as instructing them in the art of Tai Chi and melee weapons.

His family is also connected to, and therefore loyal to, the Golden Mantis Tong. The first Cai knew of the family ties to the Golden Mantis was when a man walked into the store one morning and threatened his father. He was equally shocked when his father, a normally peaceful man, threw the intruder to the ground and put a knife to his throat. The man looked shocked too, but after a short conversation he was allowed to stand, bowed to Cai's father and left.

Cai learnt that his father's cousin had once been head of the Golden Mantis Tong and during a time of particular bloody gang fighting, he had asked his cousin permission to take his young family away to a place they could be raised in safety. Permission had been given to his father, partly due to being family, but mostly as he was not in a senior position. Before leaving, he'd been warned that the Tong may one day still call on him for his services. It transpired that on that day, the Tong had come to inform Cai's father that his cousin had been killed and that they didn't expect any family loyalty getting in the way of the new leadership. Of course, his father had politely reminded the man to have some manners and informed him that so long as they were not expected to move, there would be no problem. He then took the time and felt it necessary to teach Cai the ways of the Tong and what part the family played.

So, for the most part, Cai runs the Emerald River General Store as a law abiding and successful business, looking after his family as a good and loving father. In the shadows, they have to do their part for the Golden Mantis, which mainly involves being ready to accommodate and assist any members that may happen into town and report back any activity of rival Tongs, though very few ever pass through Town since the end of the mining boom days.

Cai may not like having to do the Tongs bidding, but as it is a matter of family honor, he'd never desire to bring shame upon the family. So long as the Golden Mantis does not ask for anything more than shelter and news, he can see no reason to defy them, but, unlike his father, he has taken the time to inform his wife and children of their expected loyalty.

Name: Owen Blake (Owner & manager of Blake's Tavern)

Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d10;

Life Points 18; Initiative d8 + d8

Traits: Allure (minor), Friends in High Places (minor), Moneyed Individual (Major), Trustworthy Gut (minor), Hooked (Pain killers) (minor), Loyal (Family) (minor), Memorable (minor), Plodding Along (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d4, Discipline d6, Guns d4, Influence d6 (Leadership d8/ Marketing d8/ Persuasion d10/ Streetwise d8), Knowledge d6, Perception d6 (Gambling d8), Performance d6, Planetary Vehicles d6, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: The real head of the family, the one running the business; Owen Blake is a charming man in his late forties, with chiseled looks, dark hair and green eyes.

He is a shrewd businessman with a knack for spotting talent and is willing to consider any business venture that will further the renown of Blake's Tavern, including shipping over off world talent for both the cabaret and the brothel if it'd turn over a healthy profit.

Owen loves his work and even met his wife Estella in the bar, after she'd performed as one of the cabaret acts. After hearing her sing, not to mention her looks, he fell in love and made it his mission to be with her. After a few weeks of chasing and being continually booked as an act by the management, she finally relented and agreed to a date. A few months later they were married and have been inseparable as a couple for the last ten years. Owen is particularly proud of their young son Jess and hopes that one day; he'll be running the business.

He is one of the few townsfolk that has traveled the Verse a little and visited some of the Border and Core Worlds to see how things are done elsewhere, as well as gaining some contacts off world. This helps to bring in traveling acts for the cabaret and gives Blake's a cosmopolitan feel with its mix of local and off world flavor.

When not working the crowd or keeping an eye on things from a table by the bar, Owen likes to play a hand of poker or go out for a cruise in his hovercraft speedster (a two-seater hovercraft version of a Dodge Viper or any other sports muscle car), this is despite a serious accident a few years back that put him in hospital. Luckily, most of his injuries healed and there were no permanent scars, but damage to his left leg did leave him with a noticeable limp and an addiction to pain killers, so he often walks with an expensive walking cane.

Name: Blaine Durham (Sheriff)

Agi d6, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6;

Life Points 14; Initiative d6 + d8

Traits: Wears a Badge (minor), Straight Shooter (minor).

Skills: Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6 (Pistol d10/ Rifle d8), Influence d6, Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d6.

Description: Sheriff Durham in his early forties and a local man of Irish decent. He stands over 6ft tall and is built like a bear, with fiery red hair and weatherworn skin. He is a keen and fair lawman who really believes that Emerald River should be a happy and safe place to live and filled with good and law abiding folk. At the same time, he is smart enough to know that as long as its good people are mostly law abiding, then that is about as good as it gets. If Sheriff Durham was to have a fault, it's that he don't much mind telling folk what he thinks of them and not sugar coating his opinions.

Gear: Pistol, Rifle, Combat Knife, Mesh Vest.

GM QUICK REFERENCE NOTES

The following is a list of key points that may need to be referenced during the adventure. This is a summary of information that is already provided in the relevant text:

Act 1, Scene 1

- **The crew get paid by Christopher Hardy:** 300 credits.
- **Fuel Costs at Emerald River:** Standard rate of 5 credits per ton.
- **Getting a better deal with the whores:** HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Barter* roll (3 credits an hour as opposed to 4 credits).
- **Playing Poker:** Opposed *Intelligence + Perception / Gambling* rolls.
- **Plot Points Award:** One to three plot points.

Act 1, Scene 2

- **Plot Points Award:** Two to four plot points, as well as one advancement point each if they rushed to help straight away.

Act 1, Scene 3

- **To notice Sun Cai isn't providing all the facts:** HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception / Empathy* or *Perception / Intuition* roll
- **Getting Sun Cai to admit more details:** AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* or threatening that they will not help unless he tells them.
- **Interrogating the Tong:** HARD Complex Action (55) using *Willpower + Discipline / Interrogation* or *Influence / Interrogation* roll, where every roll takes two minutes of time. The PCs may indirectly assist one another with this task. The threat of physical harm will not have any effect, but actually inflicting harm will grant a +1 step Skill bonus on the roll.
- **Plot Points Award:** One to three plot points, depending on how they dealt with the situation. If the PCs agreed to rescue the daughter without any prompting from the sheriff or Owen Blake, they should also be awarded with one advancement point each.

Act 2, Scene 1

- **Travel Time from Santo to Persephone:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation* roll to know it is a short 250 hour trip for a Speed Class of 1 vessel.
- **Gathering Info on the Golden Mantis via contacts:** *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* roll. The difficulty starts at EASY (3), with each additional piece of information increasing the difficulty by one step.
- **Gathering Info on the Golden Mantis via actual street knowledge:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* roll to recall the information. Again, for each difficulty level step, they gain another piece of information.
- **Gathering Info on the Golden Mantis via actual Tong connection:** EASY (3) *Intelligence + Knowledge / Culture* or *Knowledge / Family* roll instead. Again, for each difficulty level step, they gain another piece of information.
- **Hacking the Cortex for flight info:** To access the traffic control computer via a remote link requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. Once the hacker has got the link, they then have to find the correct data files, which requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* or *Computer Operations* roll. Now that they have the files, they need to bypass the security and encryption to finally get the data, this requires another FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. After this, the hacker will now have the information that is quoted above, but they still need to log off the system undetected. This requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll to break the connection without alerting any security programs. It takes 3d10 + 5 minutes to find the correct data files.
- **Plot Points Award:** Two to five plot points each, plus if any PC spent two or more plot points on *Friends in High or Low Places*, that person also receives one advancement point.

Act 2, Scene 2

- **Port Fees at Persephone/Eavesdown Docks:** Port fees at Eavesdown Docks are set at a fixed 2 credit landing charge, plus 1 credit per 100 tons of ship per week, to a maximum of 50 credits per week. This charge includes administration costs, power hook-up, septic flush and fresh water fill. Fuel must be purchased separately, but it is cheaper here than at many other docks, due to fierce competition among vendors, so fuel is charged at 4 credits per ton.
- **Getting info on the street about the Golden Mantis Tong:** AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* or a HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* or *Discipline / Intimidation* roll.
- **Finding the Tang Lang once in the docks:** This requires a physical search of the docks and is a HARD (55) Complex Action requiring either *Alertness + Perception / Search* or *Perception / Sight* to find the ship for themselves or *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* to convince people to point them in the direction of anything that matches her description. Each roll takes 20 minutes of time, but eventually they will discover the correct docking bay.
- **Getting word to the Tong for a meeting:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* roll and it generally takes d4 + 1 hours to arrange a meeting, after which time a dozen Tong members will arrive to escort the PCs to the meeting place.
- **Plot Points Award:** Two to four plot points.

Act 2, Scene 3

- **Plot Points Award:** One to five plot points.

Act 3, Scene 1

- **Finding a listing for Ms Victoria Deveroux on the Cortex:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Speciality* or *Influence / Administration* roll.
- **Finding a listing for Ms Victoria Deveroux on the street:** HARD (55) Complex Action, requiring *Willpower + Covert / Streetwise* or *Influence / Streetwise* roll, where the PCs can provide Direct Assistance. Each roll takes ten minutes of asking around by the crew.
- **Fine for carrying weapons in business district:** If you are caught with any weapon, other than a derringer, on your person, you will be immediately fined 100 credits and you will be escorted out of the district, and that is only assuming the weapon is officially licensed. If you are caught with a weapon drawn, including a derringer without good reason, you will be taken into custody and either fined 200 to 1000 credits or given a custodial sentence, usually depending on the nature of the weapon.
- **Getting to the Business District via Shuttle:** It will require permission from local traffic control, and take about ten minutes to organise.
- **Getting to the Business District via Planetary Vehicle:** No time to organise, but all entry roads have toll points. The PCs will be requested to stop and asked the nature of their business, as well as their destination. Once they give satisfactory answers, there is a 1 credit toll for the vehicle, and they are then free to continue. All of the vehicles occupants will be reminded to leave their weapons, if any, in the vehicle. The trip to Victoria Deveroux's office will take about forty minutes.
- **Getting to the Business District via Maglev:** Tickets costs 0.5 credits each and are valid for the whole day. It will take the PCs about twenty minutes to get to the business district, but they initially have to wait half an hour for the next train. When they arrive at the station, they will spot the 'no weapons' notices at all exits, but find that there is a weapons locker service available where they can store their weapons for 1 credit a day. It would seem that even the Alliance expects people who travelled from Eavesdown Docks not to have done so unarmed.
- **Getting to the Business District via Taxi:** Costs 2 credits in total, but can travel directly to Victoria Deveroux's office in forty minutes and yes, it is expensive, but so is a taxi licence that gets you free transport around the business district. As a law abiding citizen, the taxi driver will remind them about the district's weapons laws.
- **Climbing over the wall:** Actually climbing over the wall is a AVERAGE (35) Complex Action using *Strength + Athletics / Climbing*, with each roll taking five minutes, but having proper climbing gear available provides a +2 step Skill bonus, while just having a rope only provides a +1 step Skill bonus. The PCs can provide Indirect Assistance to their companions, so long as they

are not in the process of climbing over the wall themselves. Reaching the offices on foot will take around an hour.

- **The Weapons Scanner:** For the purpose of detecting weapons, the scanner has a d10 Alertness + d6 Perception and successfully detects weapons and explosives on an Average (7) roll. Every weapon carried should be rolled for separately, as any one of them could set off the alarm. Noticing the scanner before entering the building requires a HARD (11) *Alertness + Perception Search or Perception / Sight* roll. Disabling or spoofing the scanner requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Intelligence + Covert / Disable Device or Technical Engineering / Technical Security Systems* roll.
- **Plot Points Award:** Two to five plot points.

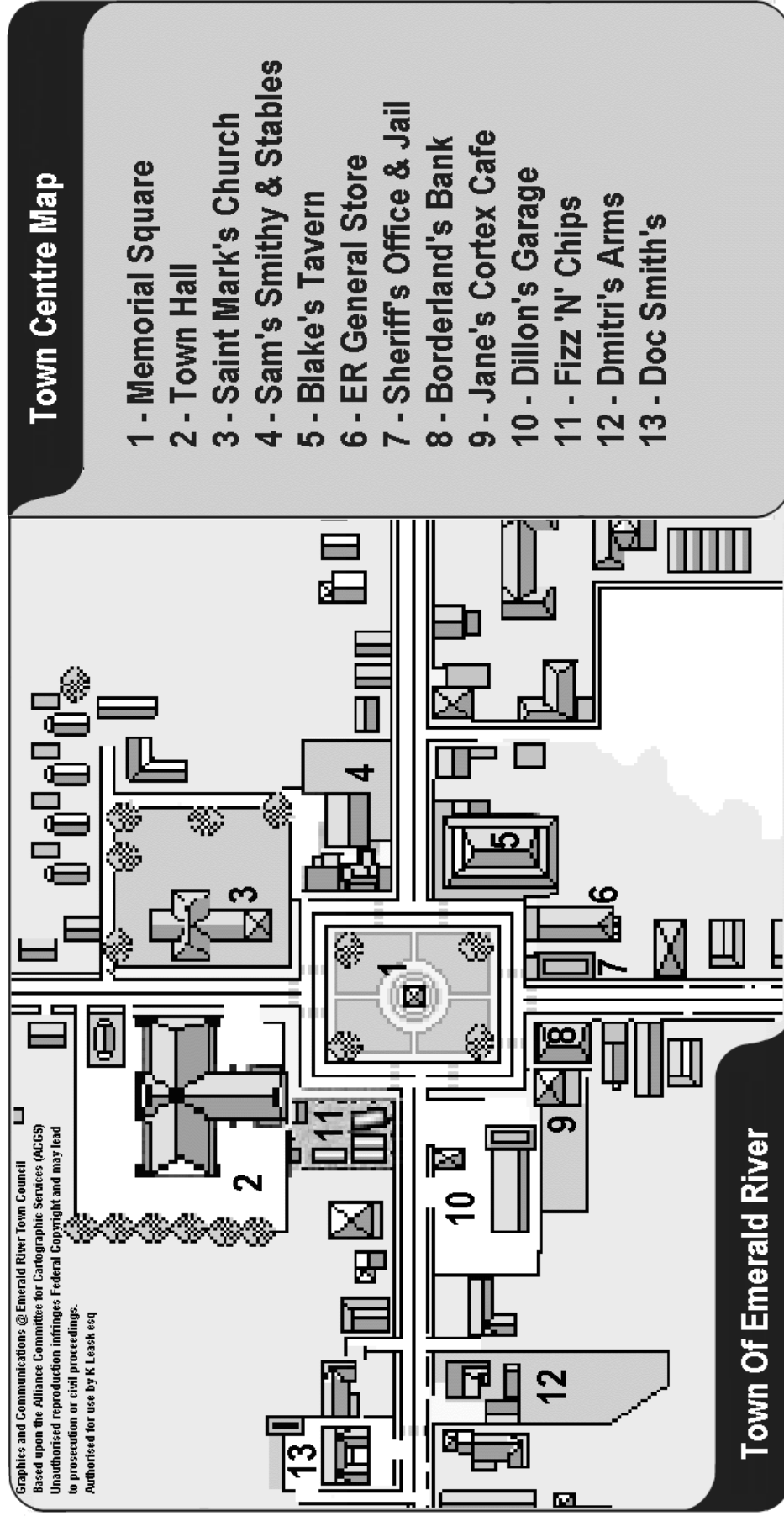
Act 3, Scene 2

- **Knowing how to arrange a meeting with Atherton:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Influence / Appropriate Speciality or Knowledge / Appropriate Speciality* roll.
- **Arranging a meeting with Atherton's assistant:** HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Speciality* roll.
- **Weapons Scanners (hand-held):** For the purpose of detecting weapons, the scanner has a d6 Alertness + d6 Perception and successfully detects weapons and explosives on an Average (7) roll.
- **Convincing Atherton to release Sun Mei with credits:** HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Barter* roll.
- **Convincing Atherton to release Sun Mei through talk:** Trying to persuade Atherton of the benefits of releasing Sun Mei requires a HEROIC (19) *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion* roll, while trying to intimidate him with threats of calling the authorities and such like requires a FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower + Discipline / Intimidation or Influence / Intimidation* roll.
- **Hacking the Cortex for building plans:** Accesses the local building registry files requires a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. Once the hacker has got the link, they then have to find the correct data files, which requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking or Computer Operations* roll. Now that they have the files, they need to bypass the security and encryption to finally get the data, this requires another HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll. After this, the hacker will now have the plans to Atherton's estate, but they still need to log off the system undetected. This requires an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Hacking* roll to break the connection without alerting any security programs. It takes d10 + 5 minutes to find the correct data files.
- **Plot Points Award:** One to six plot points for their actions in Wing and a Prayer, as well as one advancement point for their heroic deed in rescuing an innocent young woman.

Act 3, Scene 3

- **Travel Time from Persephone to Santo:** AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation* roll to know it's still only a short 250 hour trip for a Speed Class of 1 vessel.
- **The Reward:** All their fuel and port fees will be covered, as well as sorting out their monthly maintenance bill, plus 750 credits (one and a half times more than what may have been promised). Owen Blake will also offer the crew a weeks bed and board at the Blake's Tavern, on the house, should they wish to rest up and relax for a while.
- **Plot Points Award:** Six plot points and an extra two advancement points if they brought Sun Mei back home themselves and for being such Big Damn Heroes.

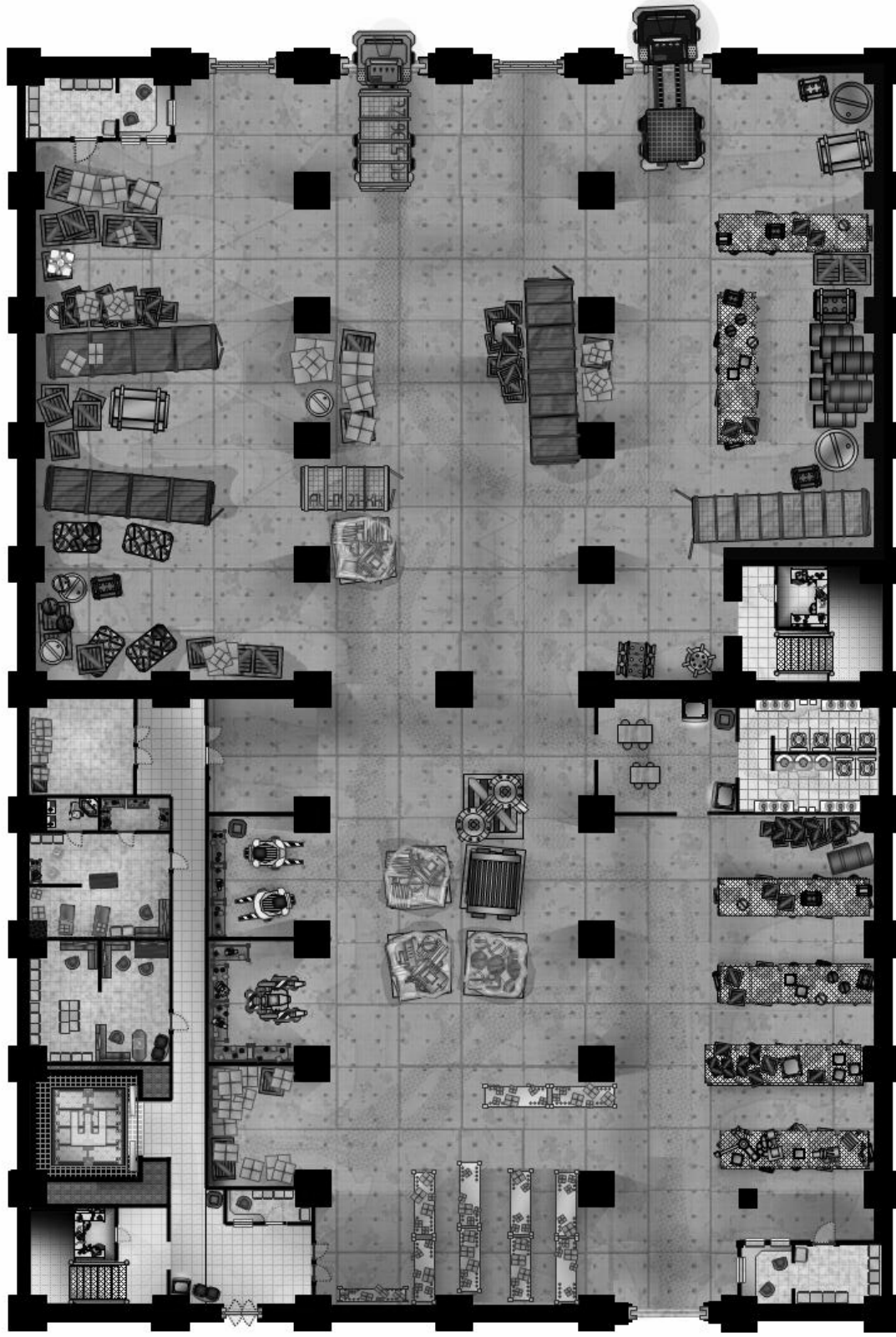
PLAYER HANDOUT: EMERALD RIVER TOWN SQUARE



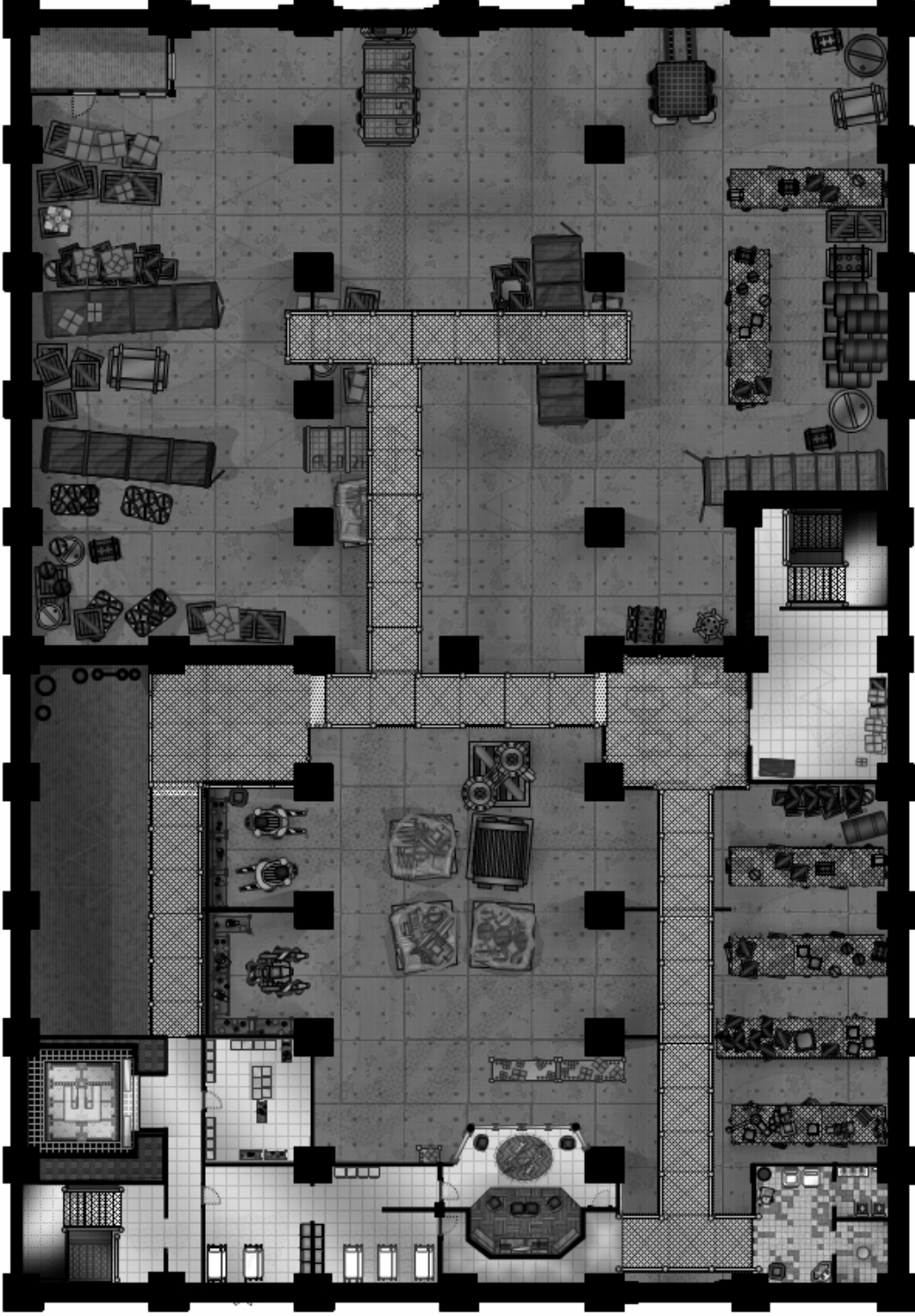
PLAYER HANDOUT: A FAMILY PHOTO OF SUN MEI



FONG WAREHOUSE

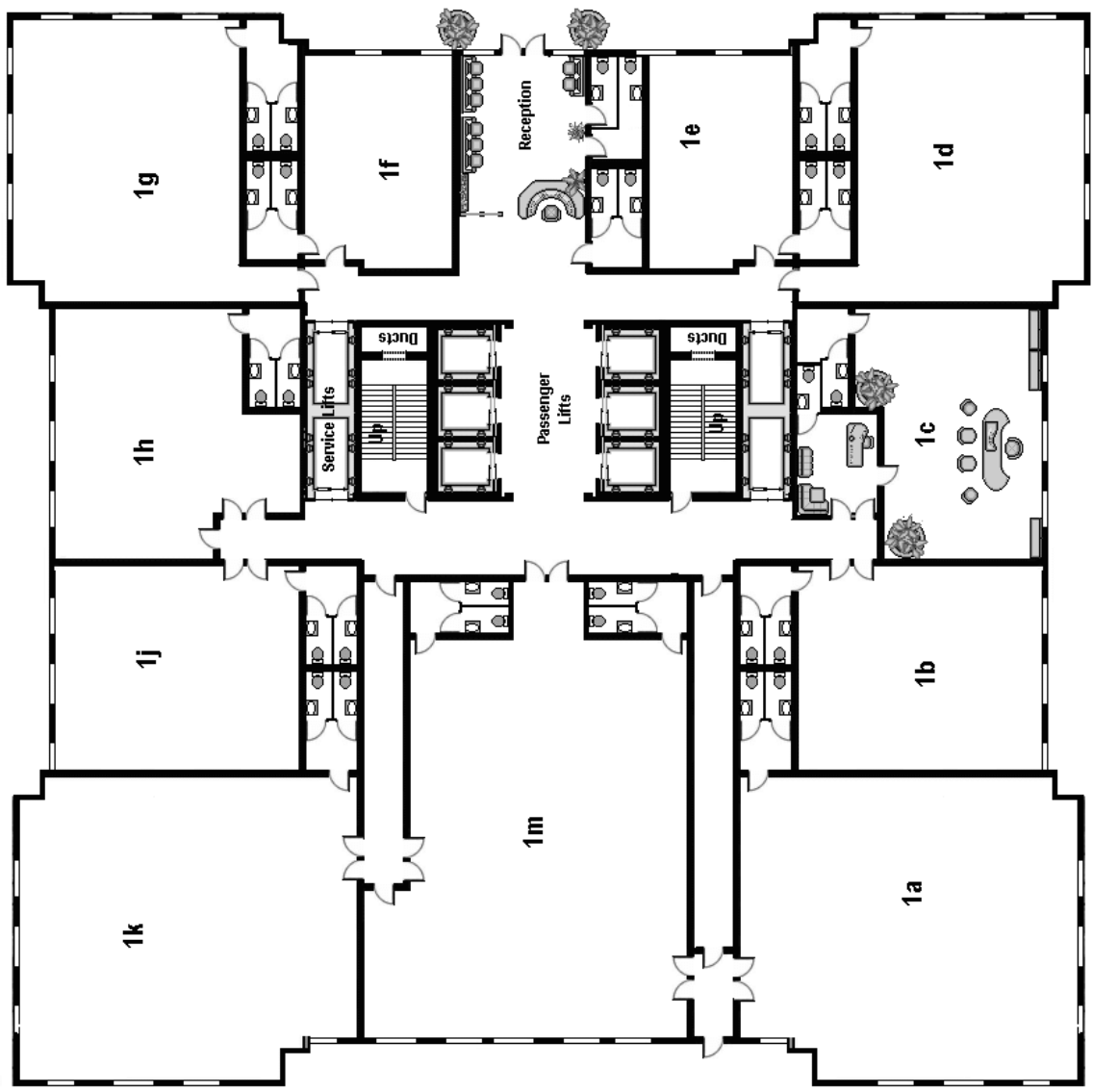


GROUND FLOOR

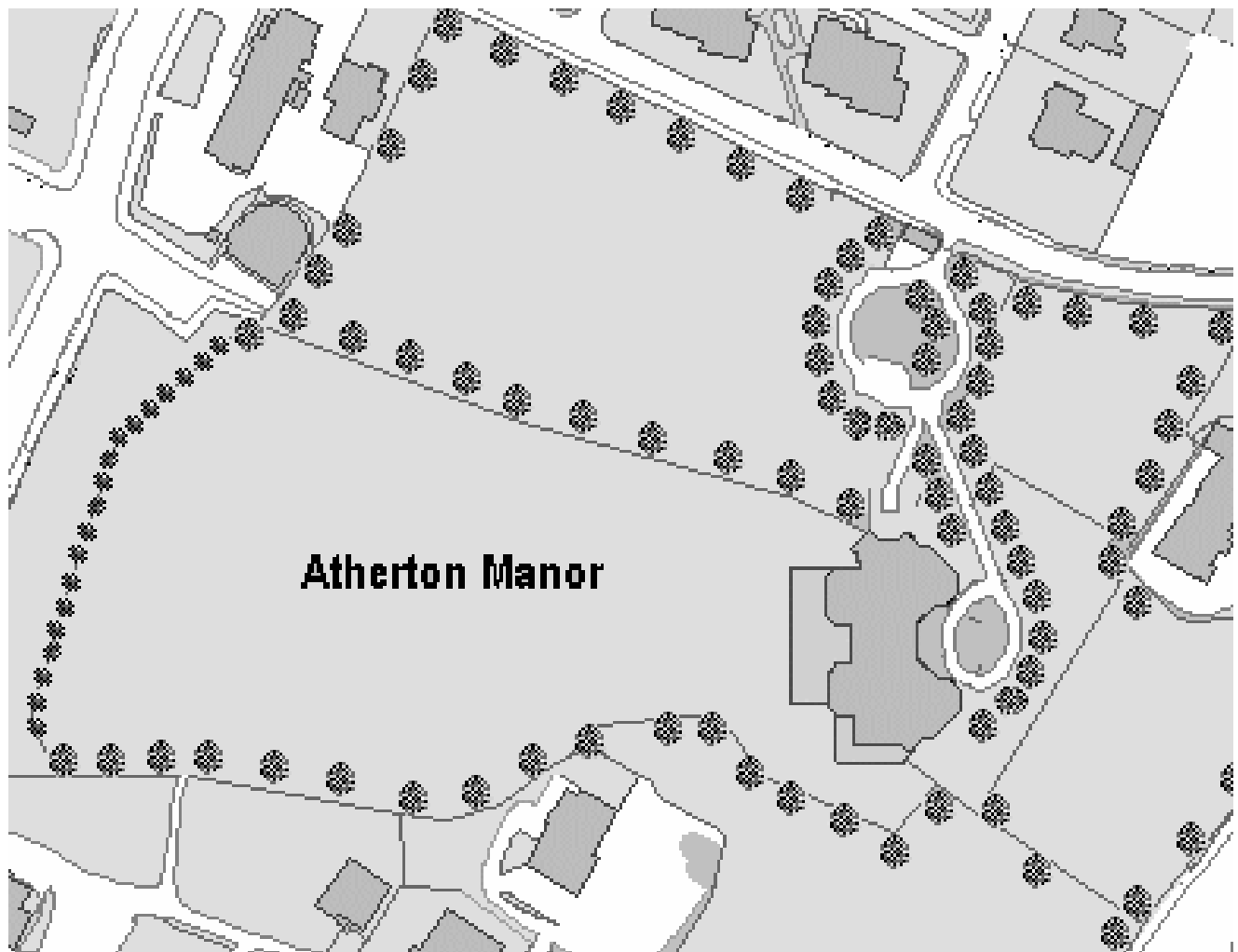


UPPER FLOOR AND GANGWAYS

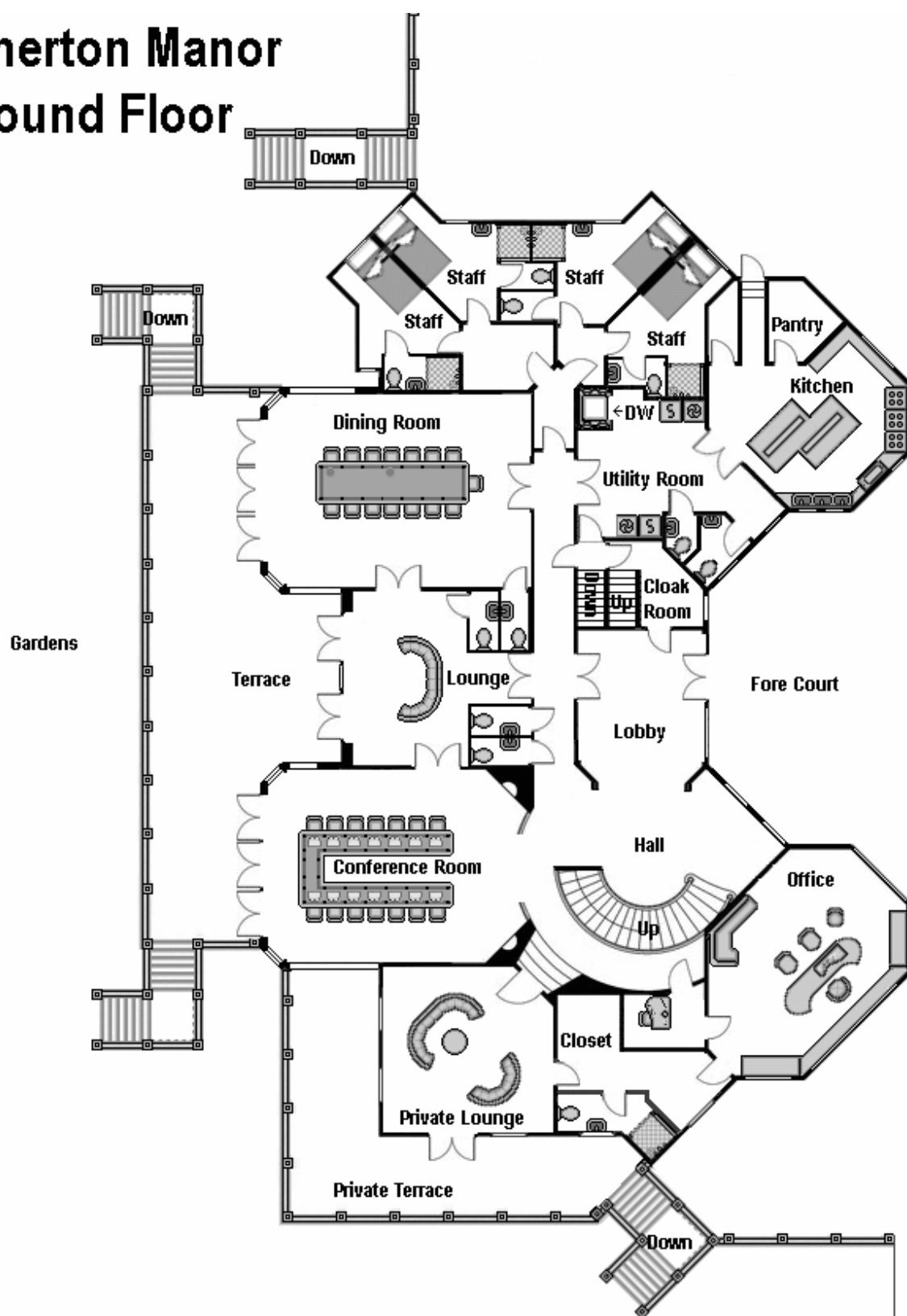
PERSEPHONE BUSINESS DISTRICT OFFICE BLOCK

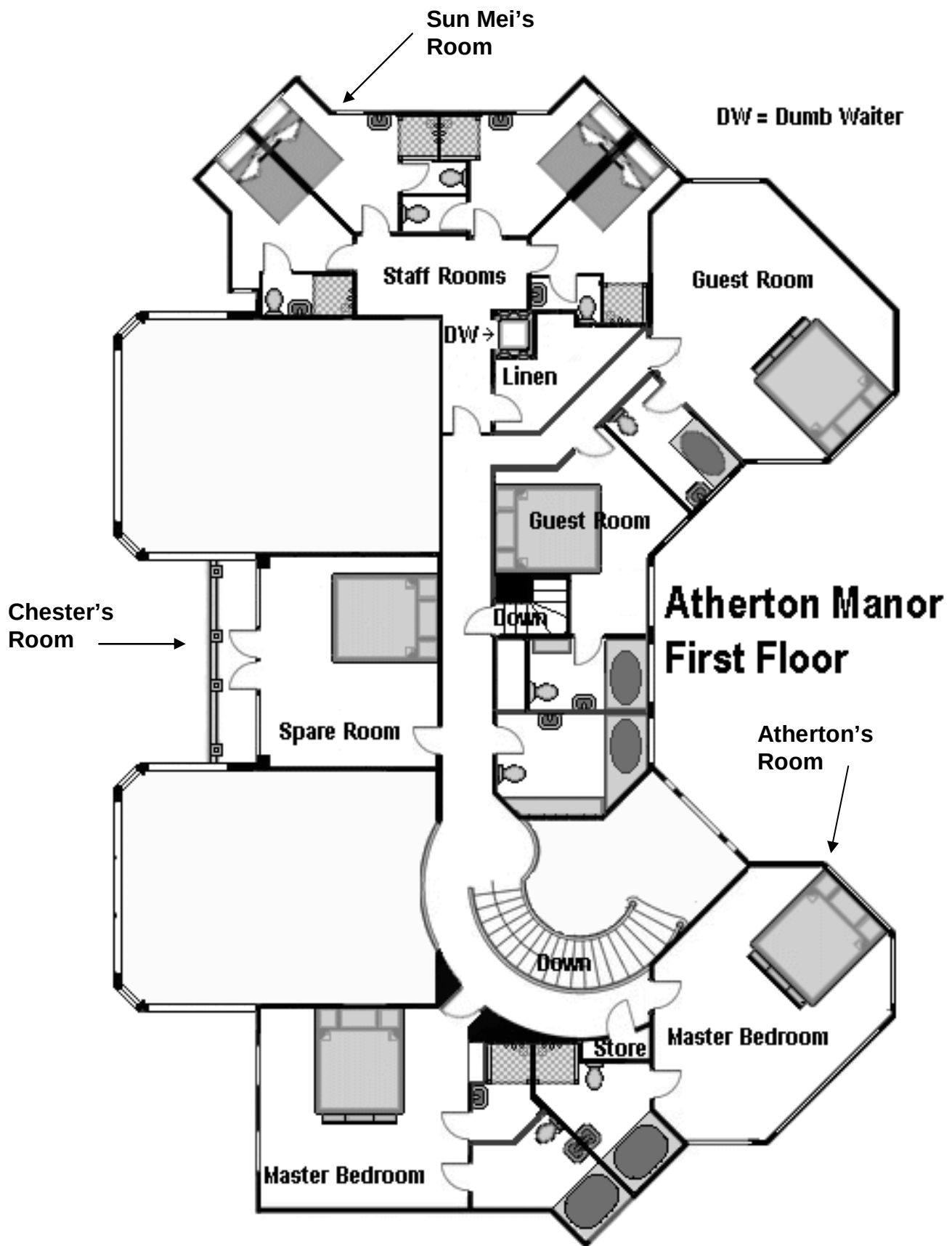


ATHERTON WING'S ESTATE



Atherton Manor Ground Floor





Atherton Manor Basement

