
TRAVELLER

THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

Written By Gareth Hanrahan

In *The Pirates of Drinax*, the players play a band of adventures who are entrusted by the King of Drinax with a letter of marque, permitting them to prey on 'illegal' trade within the borders of the vanished kingdom. The King hopes that this piracy will give him the leverage he needs to restore Drinax to its former glory, and intends for the characters to win back all the planets lost over the last two centuries – but the King's plans are just the starting point for this campaign.

Once the characters have their letter and their ship, it's up to the players what to do next? Will they stay loyal to their patron and help restore Drinax? Will they turn rogue and create their own kingdom? Will they be heroes or monsters, pirates or privateers? Will they make their fortune amid the pitiless stars, or will the cold depths of the Trojan Reach be their grave?



To run this campaign, you need a copy of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* and *Alien Module 1: Aslan*. Other books that are not strictly necessary, but are highly recommended are:

Career Book 6: Scoundrel, for the expanded rules on piracy, fencing, intrusions and crime.

Central Supply Catalogue, useful in any *Traveller* campaign

Traders and Gunboats for a greater variety of prey

Merchants and Cruisers for larger prey

PLAYERS' SECTION

This section should be read by all players.

Creating Player Characters

In *The Pirates of Drinax*, the player characters are given a letter of marque by the King of Drinax and ordered to cut a swathe across the Trojan Reach. The player characters must therefore be adventurous, hardy spacefarers. They do not have to be blood-thirsty rogues – they could be, but they could also be loyal warriors of Drinax, or travellers seeking employment, or adventurers with a grudge against the Imperium or the Hierate or both. As long as they have the daring and the skill to fulfil King Oleb's mad dream, then they will be offered a place on board ship.

Non-Humans: Drinax is right on the border of Aslan space, so Aslan exiles or adventurers are the obvious choice. Aslan *ihatei* often turn pirate. There are a few Vargr corsairs operating in the Reach, too, and one of them might travel coreward far enough to end up on Drinax.

Origins

The 'unusual' origins (The Floating Palace, the wasted surface of Drinax, and Asim) offer special homeworld skills and Life Event tables that replace those from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for such characters. Player characters from the Imperium, elsewhere in the Trojan Reach or the Aslan Hierate use the normal background skills and event tables for those cultures (from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or *Alien Module 1: Aslan* respectively).

Drinax (Floating Palace): You are a noble of the Kingdom of Drinax, just like everyone else who lives on the Floating Palace. You grew up amid the decaying wonders of the citadel, learning the history and the glorious deeds of your ancestors.

Characteristic Changes: -1 Strength, -1 Endurance, +1 Education, +1 Social Standing

Likely Careers: Noble, Scholar, Navy, Entertainer

Homeworld Background Skills: Carouse 0, Social Science 0, Diplomat 0

Floating Palace Life Events

Roll 1D6	Event
1	New Contact: You befriended one of the figures in the court of Drinax. Pick one of the NPCs listed in section 3 as a contact.
2	Family Affairs: Roll 1d6. 1-2: Someone close to you gives birth, complicating the line of succession and taking one of your inherited titles away. Reduce your Social Standing by 1. 3-4: A marriage is arranged for you by your family. Gain 1 Social Standing if you go through with it, but you don't get to meet your new spouse until the ceremony. 5-6: Someone close to you dies, and you inherit their estate and titles. Gain an extra Benefit roll or increase your Social Standing by 1.
3	Romantic Entanglement: You become romantically involved with another courtier. Roll 1d6 to see how it turned out. 1: Amicable breakup. 2: Nasty breakup. 3-4: Ongoing relationship (gain a contact). 5: Marriage. 6: Tragic death or disappearance.
4	Misfortune: You suffer an unfortunate accident. Roll 1d6 1-2: A wicked uncle steals your family inheritance and titles. Lose 2 Benefit rolls, reduce your Social Standing by 2, and gain an Enemy. 3-4: While trading with the Vespexers of the surface, you contract a disease left over from the Aslan attack. Reduce your Endurance by 1. 5-6: You fight a duel of honour with another noble, and the cur cheats. Gain a Rival and Melee (blade 0), and lose either 1 Benefit roll, 1 Social Standing, or 1 Endurance.
5	Good Fortune: Fortune smiles upon you. 1-2: Rachando the merchant offers you a good price for a family heirloom. Gain 1d6 x 10,000 Credits. 3-4: You inherit a place in the Star Guard. You can sell this commission on for 1d6 x 10,000 Credits, or you may automatically qualify for the Navy career and automatically gain a promotion in your first turn. 5-6: You find an antique weapon in the armoury of the Floating Palace. Gain either an ancient rapier or a laser pistol.
6	Unusual Event: Roll 1d6 1-2: You're psionic! Roll to test your Psionic Strength immediately, and gain a +4 DM to the roll. 3-4: Great expectations. Before the fall of Drinax, your family owned large estates on a planet. Roll 1d6: 1: Paal 2: Torpal 3: Clarke 4: Asim 5: Banks/Khusai 6: One of the old Sindalian worlds – pick any planet in Sindal Subsector 5-6: You discover that you are actually the bastard child of King Oleb.

Asim Life Events

Roll 1D6	Event
1	New Contact: You have the ear of someone at court. Pick Cleon Hardy, Rachando, Kisayl or Lord Wrax as a contact.
2	Family Affairs: Roll 1d6. 1-2: Your family has thrived since the reconquest. Gain +1 Social Standing. 3-4: A Drinaxi noble killed your father during the war. Gain him as an Enemy. 5-6: Your family still live in desperate poverty on Asim. You may lose one Benefit roll to relieve some of their suffering; if you do so, gain a +1 DM to your next Advancement roll.
3	Romantic Entanglement: Roll 1d6. 1-3: Your family holds to the old ways, and practises the breeding program developed by the Foundation. You have been married off despite your objections. 4-6: You travelled to Drinax to seek your fortune, and found something else instead. Roll 1d6 to see how it turned out. 1: Amicable breakup. 2: Nasty breakup. 3-4: Ongoing relationship (gain a contact). 5: Marriage. 6: Tragic death or disappearance.
4	Misfortune: You encounter difficulty. Roll 1d6. 1-2: Your low-tech backwater homeworld did not prepare you for the wider galaxy, and you run into a damaging misunderstanding. Lose 1 benefit roll or lose a Contact or Ally. 3-4: You are injured while travelling. Roll on the Injury table. 5-6: Aslan Slavers! You are kidnapped by slavers from the Glorious Empire, a renegade Aslan state that practises slavery (see the <i>Alien Module 1: Aslan</i> sourcebook, page 157). Roll 1d6 to see where the Slavers put you: 1-2: Navy; 3-4: Army; 5-6: Scout. While enslaved, you cannot gain a Commission or gain Benefit rolls. You may try to escape after each term either by rolling 8+ on 2d6. If you fail to escape, roll on the injury table.
5	Good Fortune: Luck is on your side. Gain a +2 DM to any one Benefit roll.
6	Unusual Event: Roll 1d6 1-2: You travel in the Aslan Hierate for some time. Gain a Contact among the Aslan. 3-4: A mentor of yours is a secret member of the Foundation, and inducted you into their conspiracy. Your mission is to spy on the court at Drinax and report back to your secret masters on Asim. If you refuse, your family will be killed. 5-6: You're psionic! Roll to test your Psionic Strength immediately, and gain a +4 DM to the roll.

Wasteland Life Events

Roll 1D6	Event
1	New Contact: You are not without friends. Pick Rachando, Chieftain Galx, Sal Dancet or Prince Harrick as a contact.
2	Family Affairs: Roll 1d6. 1-2: Someone close to you gives birth, and the tribe cannot feed another mouth. Either the child dies, or you must leave your current career and strike out as a Drifter or Rogue. 3-4: Your tribe is struck by disease, and someone in your family dies. Gain their possessions as a bonus Benefit roll. 5-6: One of your kin is accused of a crime and exiled from the tribe. He has not been seen since – perhaps he vanished offworld. Gain him as a vengeful Enemy, should you ever meet him again.
3	Romantic Entanglement: The tribe must grow, and you are married off. Roll 1d6 to see how it turned out. 1-2: Partner died.. 3-5: Ongoing relationship. Gain your spouse as an Ally, and you've got 1d6-3 children. 6: Tragic death or disappearance.
4	Misfortune: You suffer an unfortunate accident. Roll 1d6 1-2: You are framed for a crime and exiled from the tribe. Gain your persecutor as an Enemy and reduce your Social Standing by 1. 3-4: While exploring a ruined city, you contract a disease left over from the Aslan attack. Reduce your Endurance by 1. 5-6: You are wounded while hunting, and worse, your hazard suit is torn. Lose one Benefit roll to pay for its repair.
5	Good Fortune: Fortune smiles upon you. 1-2: Rachando the merchant offers you a good price for a relic recovered from the ruined cities. Gain 1d6 x 10,000 Credits. 3-4: A travelling merchant or smuggler offers you a place on board his ship. You may automatically qualify for the Rogue or Merchant career. 5-6: Your tribe prospers. Gain an extra Benefit roll.
6	Unusual Event: Roll 1d6 1-2: You're psionic! Roll to test your Psionic Strength immediately, and gain a +4 DM to the roll. 3-4: You find the wreckage of an Aslan ship that crashed on Drinax, and recover a mysterious chest from its cargo hold. You've never managed to open the chest, but it bears the symbol of the Syoisuis assassin-clan. 5-6: When you were a child, the tribe's wise-woman cast broken stones over your crib and declared that you were the <i>Hlax Kur Eaisa</i> , the messiah who would avenge the Vespexers upon the Aslan who ruined their world.

Drinax (Wasteland): You are a Vespexer, one of the tribes who wander the blasted surface of Drinax. Two hundred years ago, the Aslan wiped out your world and condemned your ancestors to a living hell. The King in his floating palace may claim you as one of his subjects, but the Vespexers kneel to no-one.

Characteristic Changes: +2 Endurance, -1 Education, -1 Social Standing

Likely Careers: Army, Citizen (settler), Drifter, Rogue, Scout

Homeworld Background Skills: Survival 0, Recon 0

Asim: The minor agricultural world of Asim is the only province left to the Kings of Drinax. Prior to the reconquest, the Asim were ruled by the cryptic Foundation; life has improved marginally for the peasants since then, but the planet is still a low-tech backwater.

Characteristic Changes: +1 Endurance, -1 Education

Likely Careers: Army, Citizen (settler), Drifter, Entertainer, Marine.

Homeworld Background Skills: Animals 0, Seafarer 0, Trade 0

Elsewhere in the Reach: Pirates can come from anywhere in the Trojan Reach – the lawless central subsectors are known for piracy and bloodshed. The ‘pirate planet’ of Theev in Sindal subsector, for example, is home to tens of thousands of criminals. Closer to Drinax, any of the old vassal worlds could be home to a player character.

The Imperium: Characters from the Spinward Marches might end up on Drinax, and in need of employment. A band of travellers with an old scoutship or far trader could start of exploring the Trojan Reach, then suffer engine failure and have to land on the Floating Palace. Alternatively, pirates and criminals who flee the Imperium’s justice often end up taking refuge in out-of-the-way parts of the Outrim Void.

The Hierate: King Oleb would gladly employ a few Aslan outlaws or outcasts. Even wandering *ihatei* still in good standing with their clans could join Oleb’s privateering scheme.

Careers

While any player character can participate in these adventures, the obvious careers for prospective privateers include Agent, Navy, Marine, Rogue, Merchant or Drifter. Drinax produces far more than its fair share of Nobility. If you have access to the *Scoundrel* book, then the Pirate, Intruder and Scavenger careers are all ideal.

Ship Shares

Unlike normal *Traveller* games, the player characters start with a ‘free’ ship – the Drinaxi Harrier. There is no mortgage on this ship; it remains the property of the King of Drinax, who expects the characters to pay him a tithe and to follow his plan to unite the independent worlds under his banner. Player characters do not need to buy their ship with Ship Shares; instead, Ship Shares are used to upgrade the battered old Harrier. See page 5 for details.

The Ship

The Drinaxi Harrier-class commerce raider (her original name was *V’Hurg*, but the player characters can change this) was constructed at a TL15. Her internal systems are extremely advanced, although battle damage and two centuries of neglect means that there are some glitches and damaged components.

Externally, the Harrier-class resembles a bird of prey, with swept-forward wings and a stern prow. The ship has two weapons hardpoints, one on each ‘wing’. When she was first launched from Drinax, her hull was painted with the heraldry of the Star Guard, but now her hull is bare grey metal without identifying marks. She is streamlined and has landing gear, so she can land on planets. Fuel and cargo scoops are located in a recess under the prow.

While the bulk of Humaniti struggled through the Long Night between the fall of the Second Imperium and the rise of the Third, the Empire of Sindal (and, later, the Kingdom of Drinax) continued to make scientific progress. While their development was not so abrupt or so dramatic as that of the Darrians, the Sindalians advanced to TL13 throughout much of their Empire, with a few worlds reaching the heights of TL15. All these wonders were lost over the centuries, but the Harrier contains the fruits of this scientific achievement. Her jump drive and power plant are considerably more compact than those of the Imperium, allowing her to pack in Jump-2 range and an impressive 5-gs of thrust. Her hull is similarly impressive, using smart materials and synthetic compounds to give it nearly twice the resilience of a comparable Imperial hull. Unfortunately, there are microfractures throughout the damaged keel of the ship, so the Harrier is only half as tough as she should be.

Inside, the Harrier is a baroque beauty. Her original fittings are mostly intact, and the Drinaxians delighted in luxury and opulence. Every surface is gilded or engraved. The staterooms have red velvet cushions and soft beds; the bridge consoles are covered in dark oak and the controls are brass and crystal. She has eight staterooms; four for officers with double beds and four for crew with bunks. There are also eight low berths adjoining the cargo hold. These were originally intended for prisoner transport, but can be used to store frozen crew or as emergency life support.

The Harrier has just under forty-four tons of cargo space.

Healing The Wounded Ship

The Harrier suffered grievous damage during the Aslan attack 200 years ago, and with the loss of the starport on Drinax, full repairs cannot be made. The technicians of the Scholar's Tower have done their best, but there are still numerous problems and drawbacks. The characters can alleviate some of these drawbacks by spending Ship Shares.

Once the campaign starts, upgrades to the Harrier can be purchased at the rate of MCr.0.5=1 Ship Share.

Microfractures: When built, the Harrier had Hull 8 and Structure 8 thanks to its advanced hull design and metamaterials. Repairing these fractures is possible, but costly. Each ship share spent on repairing the hull increases the ship's Hull or Structure by 1, to a maximum of 8.

Maintenance Costs: The ship's maintenance costs are unusually high, due to the exotic high-tech components it needs. Normally, the Harrier would cost 15,860 credits to keep flying; currently, it costs 31,720. Each Ship Share spent reduces the increased cost by 20%, to a maximum of 5 ship shares.

Missing Hardpoint: The starboard hard point was targeted by the Aslan attackers. A direct hit from a fusion bay destroyed the hardpoint and the ammo feed mechanism. Reactivating the hardpoint costs 3 Ship Shares.

Once the hardpoint is reactivated, weapons can be purchased for it using starting funds.

Unreliable Jump Drive: The Harrier's jump drive *mostly* works, but is inaccurate. It has a -2DM to all jump checks. Each Ship Share spent reduces the DM by 1.

Unreliable Manoeuvre Drive: The Harrier has a powerful manoeuvre drive, but it has a habit of cutting out at exactly the wrong moment. If a double 1 is rolled for any Piloting check, the ship loses all thrust for one round. This problem can be removed at the cost of 2 Ship Shares.

Repair Costs: The Harrier was built at Technology Level 15, far about the tech level of most systems in the Trojan Reach. This means that finding suitable spare parts is very difficult. Structural repairs to the ship (see the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 143) cost MCr.1 per point. Unlike the other drawbacks, this problem cannot be fixed with ship shares.

Locations on Board

Main Airlock: The Harrier's main airlock is located on the belly of the ship. It is large enough to transfer four people (or two marines in battle armour) at per cycle. A real pirate ship would have a breaching tube (see page 88 of *Scoundrel*) instead.

Cargo Hatch: The cargo hatch between the grav plates is used to load and offload cargo. The cargo hold can be depressurised so the hatch can be used in vacuum.

Cargo Scoop: Cargo scoops use magnetic fields to grab nearby metallic objects like cargo canisters. A scooped canister is dragged into a smaller airlock and deposited in the hold. To pick up a cargo canister, the pilot must make a successful Pilot check; failure means the ship rams the cargo canister.

Cargo Hold: The hold of the Harrier is cramped despite its size, with low ceilings and insufficient lights. The stern faces of past kings of Drinax stare from the ornamented bulkheads, keeping watch over the cargo (the eyes of these carved faces contain micro-cameras).

Crew Staterooms: The crew staterooms are comfortable and well-appointed, if although their glory has faded somewhat. Each crewman has a bunk bed and a locker; there is a shared fresher and a workdesk in each room. Above the door is a weapon's locker and storage for vacc suits.

Officer Staterooms: The officer staterooms look more like accommodation on board a luxury star liner than rooms on a warship, with all the benefits of high technology—grav-suspended beds, emotionally intelligent interfaces, environmental controls, and food dispensers.

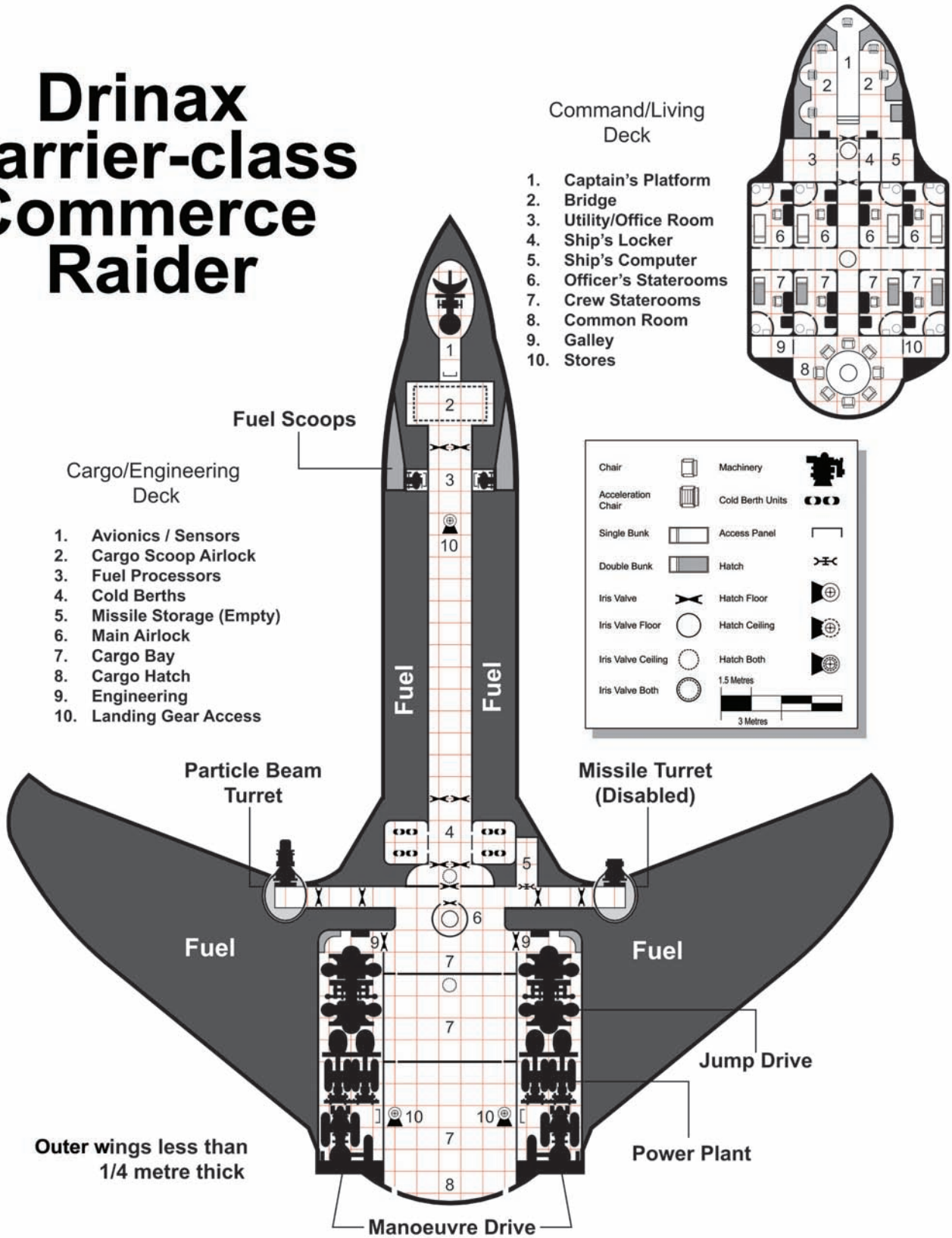
Port Turret: The port turret is fully operational. The whole turret mechanism is built into a rotatable section of the hull, so the turret can be moved from a dorsal position to a flank or ventral position, giving it a wide field of fire. The double turret is equipped with a TL15 Accurate High Yield Particle beam; this weapon has a +1 DM to hit, and any dice that roll a 1 or 2 for damage may be rerolled.

Starboard Turret: As described above, the starboard turret mechanism was destroyed and has not been repaired. The space is now used for storage.

Common Area: The crew lounge and meeting room. The large table has built-in holographic projectors connected to the ship's library.

Computer Room: This small annexe to the bridge contains the ship's computer core and an immersive holotank for examining sensor data.

Drinax Harrier-class Commerce Raider



			Tons	Cost
Hull	200 tons	Hull 8 (4)		13,200,000
	Streamlined	Structure 8 (4)		
Armour		Crystaliron (4)	10	6,600,000
Jump Drive	B	Jump 2	11.25	50,000,000
Manoeuvre Drive	E	Thrust 5	9	20,000,000
Power Plant	E		12	80,000,000
Bridge			10	1,000,000
Computer	Model 3	Rating 15		2,000,000
Electronics	Advanced		3	2,000,000
Weapons				
	Hardpoint #1	Double Turret	1	500,000
	Accurate, High Yield	Particle Beam		8,000,000
	Hardpoint #2	Disabled		
Fuel	1 Jump-2, 4 Weeks of Operation		60	
Cargo			43.75	
Ammunition			1	
8 Staterooms			32	4,000,000
8 Low Berths			4	200,000
Extras		Cargo Scoop	2	500,000
	Fuel Processors		1	50,000
Software				
	Manoeuvre/0			
	Library/0			
	Jump/2			200,000
Maintenance Cost (monthly)				15,860 (31,720)
Life Support Cost (monthly)				16,800
Total Tonnage & Cost			200	189,520,000

Bridge: The ship's bridge. In common with the traditions of the Star Guard, the ship's commander stands on a walkway that runs the length of the bridge, while the crew work from computer stations below.

Crew

A fully crewed Harrier carries twelve personnel – the captain, two pilots, a navigator/sensor operator, two engineers, two gunners, a medic and three marines. Ideally, the marines are qualified to double up on other assignments. At minimum, the ship needs a pilot and an engineer to fly her.

THE REACH

The Outrim Void. The Trojan Reach. The place where empires die.

Between the Spinward Marches and the ever-advancing Aslan Hierate is an expanse of wild space called the Trojan Reach. A narrow ribbon of stars, the dust-spice trade route, links the two empires. Every day, ships brave the perilous crossing from Imperium to Hierate, navigating a circuitous route from Fist (Tobia 0508) to Tyokh (Tliowaha 0606). Between these two worlds is a sea of lawless, dangerous planets.

The Reach is where empires run aground and mortally wound themselves, and where fortunes can be made on trade and commerce. The First Imperium never conquered the Reach; the Second Imperium left isolated colonies across its expanse, and even the Third Imperium claims no more than a sixth of the systems here.

During the long night, another petty empire arose here – the Empire of Sindal. The Sindalians were barbarian raiders who crowned themselves kings and conquered several dozen worlds before their subjects rose up against them. Today, Sindal is a ruined world of a few hundred dirt farmers whose ancestors once ruled all the night sky, and the Sindalian empire is remembered in confused tales of a golden age and of wars amid the stars.

When the Empire of Sindal collapsed, outlying regional capitals became the seat of even lesser kings, and the longest-lasting of these was Drinax (0603 Tliowaha). Drinax's kings claimed half the worlds in their subsector for generations. The Drinaxians were wiser than their cousins; they learned to hide the iron fist of orbital bombardment behind a velvet glove of trade and protection. Drinax itself became a garden world, fat and plump, an oasis of culture and technology in a dangerous and barbaric sector. The floating palace of Drinax – a huge citadel of beauty and art, suspended on a grav platform of prodigious size – was a wonder of the galaxy.

Then, another empire came to the Trojan Reach. The Aslan were numerous, hungry, aggressive and confident, and the Empire of Drinax was fat, lazy and wholly unaware of the sheer numbers and might of the Hierate. The Aslan trade routes to the Imperium ran through the Kingdom of Drinax, and the kings became greedy. They demanded tolls, taxes, bribes... and the Aslan were incensed. In a single bloody war lasting less than a year, the Aslan shattered the last surviving remnant of the old Empire of Sindal. Drinax's subject worlds were either conquered by the Aslan or revolted. Drinax itself was blasted to ash, leaving the floating palace as the only remaining property of the King of Drinax.

One palace... and a few ships.

That was two hundreds years ago.

Today, the trade ships from the Imperium and the Hierate pass by broken, beggared worlds. The worlds once claimed by Drinax realise they have exchanged one master for another, and that the Aslan have even less regard for them than the kings did. The Imperium and the Hierate pretend to be friends while they jockey for position. The sector stands on a knife edge. The right pressure could push half the Trojan Reach into the claws of the Aslan, or force an already overstretched Imperium to extend its forces deeper into the sector, or permit Drinax to rise again – or carve out a new kingdom in blood and steel!

Now is the time for corsairs and privateers, for rogues and empire-builders. The King of Drinax offers a small band of trusted, resourceful bastards the chance to make their fortune. He gives them a ship and a letter of marque. They are to go adventuring in the Trojan Reach, to prey on shipping and to build up support in the worlds once held by the Kingdom of Drinax, and to play the two great powers off against each other. If they succeed, they will become princes in the renewed kingdom.

If they fail, the stars will be their grave.

The Kingdom of Drinax

In the days of its strength, the Kingdom of Drinax – or, to give it its proper title, the Star Dragon Empire of Sindal in Exile – ruled many worlds across Tliowaha subsector. Tliowaha, of course, is the Aslan name; old charts still call it Drinax subsector. The heart of the Kingdom of Drinax was the arc of planets first named by Solomani settlers in the age of the Second Imperium. These worlds were named for the great visionary writers of old Terra – Banks (now Khusai), Stross (now Kteiroa), Asim, Pourné, Hilfer, Paal, Torpal, Clarke and Blue. Beyond these core worlds, the Kingdom also had a presence in two dozen other systems across the subsector and beyond.

Of course, the Kings of Drinax also claimed to be the heirs to the vanished Empire of Sindal, and if one were to accept *that* right, then half the sector legally belongs to them. That Empire of Sindal arose in the year -2000 and ruled for 600 years, although for much of the last 200 years it was riven by internal dissent, rebellions, and brutal punitive attacks on its own vassals. The Sindalian Empire finally fell around -1400, when the imperial seat at Noricum was bombed to oblivion.

Half a dozen regional dukes proclaimed themselves Emperor or King, and the Kingdom of Drinax was the longest-lasting of these pretenders. From -1400 until the year 902, a span of more than two millennia, the Kings of Drinax ruled over their domain, guarding their vassal worlds from invaders and pirates. For most of their reign, the Kings were wise and well loved. It was only around the year 700, under the disastrous reign of Glaco IX, called the Vengeful, when Drinax started using the old tactics of Sindal and bombed their vassals to keep them in line. The Kingdom became increasingly unruly in the face of the growing Aslan threat, and the outer worlds broke away from the cruel yoke of the kings.

Matters came to a head in 884, when King Oleb XIV placed a tax of 20% on all trade between the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate that passed through the Kingdom. The Aslan response was swift, deadly, and all too fitting for the descendants of Sindal.

They bombed Drinax from orbit.

The Few & The Forgotten

Few travellers visit Drinax today. According to the charts of the Imperial Scouts, the planet still has a Class-A Starport, but the charts are centuries out of date. Drinax is a dead world. There are no settlements on its surface, only the scars left by the Aslan when they bombed the cities from orbit. The once-fertile grasslands were seared to deserts; the forests where the kings of old hunted were razed. The seas bloom red with algae after they were boiled to death. No-one lives *on* Drinax anymore.

They live above it.

A sense of irony is shared by both Humaniti and Aslani. The Hierate's invasion force spared the famous floating palace of the Kings of Drinax. They blasted the cities and laid wait to the countryside, but did not touch the golden grav-platform or any of the palace's elegant domes or delicate towers. They exterminated millions of commoners, but let no harm come to the nobles, servants, sycophants and courtiers on the Floating Palace.

The survivors of the invasion, numbering a scant few thousand, had to adapt to survive. The glorious Hanging Gardens, said to be a wonder of the sector, were cleared of their exotic blooms

Timeline

-2000: Rise of the Empire of Sindal
-1600: Sindalian revolts begin.
-1400: Fall of Noricum and collapse of the Empire. The duke of the regional capital of Drinax claims the imperial title.
-1000: Aslan first cross the Great Rift to the Trojan Reach
500: Aslan expand into Tliowaha Subsector. Trade between Imperium and Aslan grows.
700: King Glaxo bombs rebel worlds.
884: King Oleb XIV establishes the Drinax tax. Harrier ships are built to enforce payment of this tax.
885: **Fall of Drinax.** The Aslan, led by the Ahroay'if clan, bomb Drinax.
1085: Reconquest of Asim.
1105: Current year. The Drinaxi harrier ship is recovered and rebuilt.

from a hundred worlds and turned into hydroponics bays. Delicate nobles who had never worked an honest day in their lives suddenly found tools thrust into the hands. The early years were not easy. Blood stained the diamond tiles of the King's Seraglio, and the ancient Scrolls of the Prophet Zaol used for kindling. Still, the people of the Floating Palace survived. In the months before the invasion, the King had ordered the staff of the great university to transfer their best scientists and equipment to the Scholar's Tower, so they were able to retain the bulk of their scientific knowledge. The Drinaxi still have Technology Level 15-era knowledge, although they lack the mineral resources to put it to use. With most of the world below still radioactive, diseased or simply scorched beyond use, all the knowledge in the galaxy is useless when you have no copper or steel or rare earths with which to forge your wonders.

Behold, then, the Floating Palace – a flying city, an aerial pleasure-dome of surpassing beauty, of endless wonder... and of utter despair.

The King & The Starship

Stand on the Parapet of Glory, a mile-long balcony along the starboard side of the Floating Palace, and look out across the dusty skies of Drinax. Those dots that circle like birds of prey are the Hawk Warriors, held aloft by grav-belts. King Oleb XVI flies at their head, although he must wear three grav-belts to carry his tremendous girth. The King is... well, his courtiers call him 'Magnificent', his enemies dismiss him as 'loud, fat and impetuous', and an unbiased observer would certain deem him 'energetic'. Perhaps he should have been born a hundred generations ago, when he could have led the Star Guard Navy to battle across the stars. Instead, he rules a dead world and a crumbling palace.

The King loudly proclaims his love for strong wine, red-haired women, and glorious battle, but despite his bluster, he is also a subtle and clever ruler. All his life, he has harboured ambitions of restoring the Kingdom of Drinax to its former glory. All he needs is a little leverage. All he needs is one good ship...

... and the Star Guard of Drinax just found one. She's an old Drinaxi harrier from the great days of the Kingdom. She jumped in to defend Drinax from the Aslan attack, but her drive malfunctioned as she arrived in-system. Her crew were blasted with a lethal dose of radiation, and the ship drifted crewless and rudderless through the system's Oort cloud for two hundred years until she was recovered. She is as close as Drinax has to a working warship.

PRIVATEERS!

King Oleb offers you – and the other player characters – a chance for glory!

He will give you the Harrier as your ship, and more, he will give you a letter of marque and reprisal. This document gives you the right to prey on merchant and military shipping within the borders of the old Empire of Sindal that does not carry the proper documentation. "Of course", says the king with a grin, "no-one's carried those papers in bloody centuries. Every ship in space is your legal prey – but I don't want cutthroats and murderers. I want thieves."

He gestures at a map of the Trojan Reach. On one side, there's the great red expanse of the Third Imperium. On the other, the golden glow of the Aslan Hierate. Between the two are dozens of points of light, each marking a different independent star system. Threads of commerce and trade run between the two empires like arteries.

"Once, every world along that trade route shared in the bounty. The traders paid taxes to use our space and our starports. Then, because my ancestors were greedy bastards, everything fell apart. The Kingdom collapsed, and that meant those cold-blooded Vilani snakes picked the Trojan Reach apart. It's every world for themselves out there right now, and solitary worlds can't bloody hold out against a godscursed empire!"

He throws himself heavily into the armoured bulk of the Dragon Throne. "So, here's what we're going to do. You take the Harrier and you cut a bloody swathe across the stars. Attack shipping, raid starports, hit fuel depots. Take what prizes you can. Don't kill anyone you don't have to, though – we want to bleed the merchants until they go crying to the Imperium, not start a bloody war. Pirate's part one of the plan.

Part two is all those worlds out there. We make them our allies. Sell stolen goods there, defend 'em from raiders, recruit crew, give them a taste of wealth, and bring them back under the banner of Drinax. When the time comes, we offer the Imperium a deal – the pirate attacks stop if they recognise the Kingdom of Drinax and give me my rightful due." He slams his meaty fist into the arm of the throne.

"We do this right, and we'll show there's life in this old empire yet."

"Now, the terms. We keep this a secret from the Imperium for as long as possible – and that means you keep that letter of marque hidden until we sign a peace. The ship's being loaned to you – you're responsible for repairs and maintenance, but she's coming home at the end.

Ten percent of any money you make goes to me. Spend as much as you can spare on the colony worlds and curry favour with them. We'll need them on our side if this isn't going blow up in our faces."

He leans back in the throne. "If this works... then you'll be made dukes of my court. And..." The king glances at a side door. "Get in here, daughter. This whole scheme was your idea."

The Crown Princess of Drinax slips into the room. "Do I have to explain the whole 'clandestine' part of this scheme to you again, sire?" She smiles at you, and you can't tell if she's amused or furious.

What Good Is A Letter Of Marque?

Piracy is punishable by death. The old *Ziru Sirka* of the Vilani punished it with spacing; captured pirates were hurled naked out of an airlock to freeze to death in the vacuum, while pirate captains were permitted the honour of a spacesuit, prolonging their suffering for hours. In the vanished Sindalian Empire, pirates were hung by the neck until dead, and their bodies were preserved in a silicon sheath and attached to the hull of pirate hunter ships. The modern Third Imperium, more prosaically, permits suspected pirates a trial before they are imprisoned or executed by firing squad. As for the Aslan... the lord of each territory personally carries out execution with his own dew-claws.

If you are captured, you are bound for death. The letter of marque will not save you – unless the Kingdom of Drinax is restored. If Drinax's flag is raised again over a dozen worlds, then your crimes are retroactively negated – you were never devilish pirates, you were always licensed privateers, carrying out the king's commands!

Saving Drinax will also save your own necks...

The King rises from his throne and takes his daughter's hand in his huge fist. "If we are going to save this kingdom, daughter, we shall have to trust these travellers." He gestures towards you. "After all, if they succeed, you're marrying one of them."

The Mission

- Go privateering across the Trojan Reach.
- Disrupt trade between the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate.
- Establish alliances with independent worlds and factions.
- Make your fortunes and rebuild the Kingdom of Drinax!

LIFE IN THE FLOATING PALACE

Imagine you are a craftsman, an artist, a scientist, an engineer, the best in your generation. You trained for years, studying under the previous masters, honing your talents with endless practice. You produced works of surpassing excellence, works combining wild genius and perfect technique, until you were ready to make your masterwork, your legacy to the ages. You worked for ten years - ten sleepless, obsessive, glorious years - ignoring the outside world, ignoring everything except the fire in your soul that drove you to this act of creation. Finally, exhausted and emotionally shattered, your masterwork was done, and you proudly presented it to the King of Drinax.

Now, between all the possible fields of creation and study, from sculpture and painting to weapon-smithing to astronomy to molecular biology, let us assume that there are a dozen such masterworks in every generation across a single planet. These masterworks are things of such staggering genius that they will be remembered for centuries. A dozen from each generation of artists and creators... from every one of thirty worlds that owed fealty to Drinax... for more than fifty generations. If you take, say, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or Taj Mahal as your baseline, then the Floating Palace of Drinax is crammed with around 20,000 such works of staggering genius, along with ten times as many lesser works and treasures from across the stars. Add onto that all that they looted from the Sindalian empire and from other worlds, including the *Ziru Sirka*.

Walking into half the rooms in the Floating Palace is like being hit in the face by a firehouse of baroque beauty. Where do you look first? At the onyx floor inlaid with a map of the subsector made from artificial diamonds that are lit by hidden lasers to perfectly match the colours of every star, or at the dozen Hiver scented sculptures imported at great expense from the far side of Charted Space, or the first printings of the entire works of the Sindalian poetess Shing Za Zoha that spill from the bookcase that was carved from the living heart of a genetically engineered amber-plant, or the vaulted ceiling decorated with animated holograms of the Seven Glorious Deeds, the Nine Celestial Virtues and the Eight Seasons of Drinax?

The splendour is so great that it distracts you from the absurdity. The Floating Palace is absurdly overcrowded. Every ballroom and feathall is home to a dozen families; children play among the works of art and technological wonders. The people 'make do' amid the greatest collection of art in the whole subsector, stringing washing lines between golden statues, and using ancient tapestries as blankets.

When the Aslan destroyed Drinax and the survivors crowded into the Floating Palace, the divide between noble and commoner vanished overnight. Back then, there were some twenty thousand survivors, split evenly between the titled aristocracy, courtiers and other nobility, and the servants and lower classes. Two hundred years of interbreeding grew the population to some forty thousand, and every single one of them has inherited at least one title. These titles are not used from day to day, but Drinax clings tightly to formality and ritual, so every plumber and hydroponic farmer in the Floating Palace can list their lineage and titles.

The Floating Palace is the size of a city, a flying Gormenghast of plas-steel and carbosamite. It is easy to get lost in the endless maze of hallways, monumental chambers and spiralling towers. The palace mixes the wonderful and the absurd at every side. To take a prosaic example, the bathrooms are all made of shimmering silver, with delicate fountains sculpted by microgravity generators in the walls into the shape of nymphs and dolphins, with baths large enough to drown in that that sing to you as you bathe - but because the Floating Palace is no longer visited by water-barges from the planet below, the inhabitants must collect rainwater in barrels to fill the ornamental lakes and reservoirs. Similarly, the Palace had a hundred ornamental gardens but no farmland beyond the hydroponics; a hundred palatial galleries and ballrooms but no factories beyond a few small workshops. The inhabitants of the Floating Palace may have all the ball-gowns, starched military uniforms and glittering jewellery they desire, but there's a distinct lack of vacc-suits and engineering overalls.

Notable locations on board the palace include:

The Dragon Throne: Looted (or so the legends say) from the Sindalian Throne World of Noricum before it fell, the Dragon Throne is older than the fabled Iridium Throne of the Imperium (a fact that the courtiers of Drinax never fail to point out to visiting ambassadors). The Dragon Throne is made from fragments of fused hull-metal from ships defeated and captured by the Star Guard over the last three thousand years; even though every ship only contributes a scrap of metal, the throne has still grown into a huge, ugly monstrosity like a dragon's skull. King Oleb only drags the thing out for formal occasions, preferring a more comfortable grav-couch most of the time.

The Throne Room: The old Throne Room was converted into a hangar, so King Oleb's throne room is now a much smaller affair. The walls are laser-etched platinum showing the deeds of his ancestors, and there are long low benches on either side for his 'courtiers'. As almost everyone on board the Floating Palace can claim a noble lineage of one sort or another, the king's actual courtiers and advisers are chosen for their practical knowledge and wisdom, not their family connections.

The Scholar's Tower: Drinax maintained its high level of technology by sheer chance – the best academics and a full copy of the planet's scientific corpus were moved to the palace mere weeks before the Aslan attacked. Of course, with such a small population to draw from, the Scholars of the intervening two centuries have made no new discoveries, but they have preserved the knowledge of the ancients. The small staff of the Scholar's Tower are easily the best university in the subsector; students come from across the stars to learn here, and their fees are one of Drinax's few sources of income.

Rachando's Bazaar: After the King, the most powerful figure on the Floating Palace is one of the few without noble blood. Rachando the merchant sells high-tech gadgets, art and relics offworld and imports vitally needed supplies. He came to the Floating Palace five years ago on board his *Beowulf*-class free trader, the *Invisible Hand*. The king begrudges every treasure that he sells to Rachando, but he has little choice in the matter. Every trade Rachando makes diminishes the past glory of Drinax to preserve its fragile future.

The Starport: The Aslan destroyed the original starport of Drinax, but the King's personal starport qualifies *almost* as a Class A port. It lacks a shipyard, but can repair any ship that lands there and has absolutely luxurious fittings for both crews and vessels.

The Underlinth: The underlinth refers to the network of access corridors, drains and secret passages that riddle the huge platform that supports the Floating Palace. It is the shadow side of the palace, used by spies, smugglers and conspirators.

Gravity Dungeons: The dungeons are on the lower side of the platform. The huge anti-gravity generators that hold the Floating Palace suspended above the ground are so powerful that they create zones of intense gravity within themselves. Prisoners held within the gravity dungeons are held in cells by three or more gravities. The closer to the anti-grav generators, the more intense the field; the deepest cells are under a bone-crushing twenty gs.

The Vespexers

The Vespexers are tribes of humans who live on the surface of Drinax. Most are the descendants of survivors; others are exiles from the Floating Palace. The Vespexers are a hardy folk who subsist primarily by hunting and gathering, although they have farms in a few sheltered valleys. They wear protective hazard suits made by the craftsmen of the Floating Palace to protect them from the dangers of Drinax. The Vespexers are technically subjects of the King of Drinax, but obey no laws except those of the tribe. The Floating Palace trades hazard suits and other worked goods for food and raw materials.

The Scorched World of Drinax

Below the Floating Palace, Drinax is a wasteland. The Aslan dropped rocks from space on much of the planet. Dust clouds choked the skies for years, plunging the whole planet into a long impact winter. Major population centres were blasted with plasma weapons and disease bombs; millions died at the claws of the conquerers.

Two hundred years later, the planet is slowly healing. Green shoots cover the impact scars, and new forests are growing in the ashes of the old. It will be another thousand years before the planet is close to its former vitality, and some wounds will never heal. The spores of the Aslan biological weapons still sleep in the overgrown ruins of the cities, so Drinax may never be safe for human occupation.

The Chattel World of Asim

Twenty years ago, King Oleb led an invasion of the neighbouring world of Asim, after the hydroponics bays suffered a catastrophic failure and the harvest was lost. To avoid starvation, Drinax sent a dozen small ships to obtain food from the peasants of Asim. When the Foundation of Asim refused to co-operate, the King angrily ordered his ships to take the planet by force. Although the Asimi outnumbered the forces of Drinax several thousand times over, they were completely outclassed technologically. Rifles and rockets are no match for plasma rifles and FGMPs.

Today, Asim is the only vassal world belonging to Drinax. King Oleb privately regrets the conquest, and life has changed little for most of the peasants of that grim agricultural world. Instead of paying tithes to the Foundation, they now give their tithe to the grain-ships that visit from Drinax once every year. Some Drinaxi whisper that the king should move the whole court to Asim, and that the Floating Palace should be abandoned in favour of a living world, but it is a brave man indeed that would openly make such a suggestion to the king. Oleb will sit on his ancestor's throne until he dies (or until it collapses beneath his growing weight).

Asim is a non-industrial TL6 world with a population of around five million. The planet is physically similar to Earth, with an almost identical mass, a close match in terms of atmospheric composition, and a comparable land/water ratio, yet there is something missing. Asim lacks the vitality of a true garden world. The planet is overwhelmingly brown; the local equivalent of chlorophyll is a brownish chemical, so Asim has brown fields and brown forests growing from brown soil. The former government of Asim was called the Foundation, and was an assembly of elders and wise men from the cities. The Foundation claimed to have a thousand-year plan that would bring Asim – an obscure world in the middle of nowhere with no technological base or mineral reserves worth a damn – to dominate the Imperium. For two hundred years, the Asimi toiled to support the Foundation's grand design, never realising that it was a scam to keep the sages and bureaucrats in charge.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Over the course of *The Pirates of Drinax*, the characters will likely return to the world of Drinax again and again. The key figures at court are described below. They are excellent Allies, Contacts (or Rivals, or even Enemies) for player characters; some will also play important roles in later adventures.

King Oleb XVI

King of Drinax, Dragon Emperor of Sindal-in-Exile

Age 105 (Apparent age mid-50s)

King Oleb, Sixteenth of his name, is the ruler of the Kingdom of Drinax. He's also, as he puts it, the '*bumpty-umpth emperor of Sindal, lord admiral of the Star Guard, protector of the whatsit and duke of the other thing*'. The only titles that Oleb really takes pride in are his awards for boxing and swordfighting. The king was a wild man in his youth, and spent years as a freebooting adventurer and sometime pirate before returning home to take the crown. Anagathic drugs have preserved his youth, but not his figure; the courtiers politely refer to the king's 'imposing frame' or 'vigorous presence'. The king is more direct - '*I may be fatter than a gas giant, but I am still the godsdamned king*'.

King Oleb delights in drink, in women, in food, in flying with his hawk-men, and in conquest, but given the state of his faded kingdom, the last pleasure is denied him. The forces of Drinax are too diminished to easily conquer any other worlds, and the Aslan threat is growing.

Others may dismiss the king as a buffoon, but he is actually a cunning statesman and can be diplomatic when he has to be. He just doesn't enjoy it half as much as shouting and blustering.

Prince Harrick

Age 54

Prince Harrick is the prince of Drinax and a potential heir to the kingdom. He led the assault on Asim twenty years ago, when the agricultural world was conquered by Drinax. His attack shuttle suffered an engine malfunction and crashed, and Prince Harrick was mortally wounded. His body – little more than a charred husk – was placed in a low berth and shipped back to the Floating Palace. The scientists of the Scholar's Tower took him into their care, and they rebuilt him cell by cell.

For twenty years, Prince Harrick floated unconscious in a tank while scientists tried to restore him to life. The outcome was uncertain, and many rumours about his death circulated through the palace. At one point, when it seemed as though the procedures had failed and Harrick was about to die, King Oleb quelled fears of instability by naming Princess Rao his heir.

He emerged from the tank only six months ago. His features bear little trace of the horrific injuries that robbed him of half his life, but his movement is oddly stilted and his skin is just a little too perfect. The scholars refuse to discuss the technicalities of his resurrection, but most courtiers believe the prince is more machine and cloned tissue than mortal man.

Princess Rao

Age 28

When her elder brother Harrick was gravely wounded, King Oleb realised that his daughter was likely to inherit the throne. Previously, Rao was most ignored by Oleb, who entrusted her upbringing to his courtiers and attendants. She became the king's foremost counsellor and diplomat, and is highly influential at court. She dreams of a grand alliance of worlds – either the Kingdom of Drinax reborn, or a more equal and progressive league to provide a bulwark against the great imperial powers. Bringing the advanced technology of Drinax back to her former subjects could bring about a golden age.

Her detractors claim that the princess is overambitious and blind to the perilous circumstances of Drinax, and that any such grand alliance would only serve to anger the Aslan.

Lord Wrax commands the Star Guard, the naval forces of Drinax. The Star Guard has only a handful of ships, and while they have the benefit of advanced technology, none masses more than 400 tons, and only the 100-ton scoutships have jump drives. The Harrier would have been the flagship of the Drinaxi fleet if Wrax had his way. He has little time for the king's scheme of piracy.

Scholar Voha is the elderly master of the Scholar's Tower, chancellor of the university, and unofficial court sage and prognosticator. Voha sees his role as protecting the knowledge of the ancient empire of Sindal, and is wary of any action that might endanger the Floating Palace.

Kasiyl of the Ahroay'if is an exiled Aslan from the Hierate. The Ahroay'if clan are the dominant power in Tliowaha Subsector. Why a prince of that family fled the Hierate is a mystery, and he refuses to speak of his past. He ended up on Drinax several years ago. The Aslan noble is a mighty warrior and a superlative pilot, but as a male he has no idea how to use technology or handle money, so he was little more than a beggar when he arrived. He sought a place on the Star Guard, but Lord Wrax refused him. Since then, Wrax has found work as a bodyguard and interpreter.

Imperial Consul Thao Poloc represents the Third Imperium at court. Capital is very, very far away from Drinax; even the Imperial governor at Pax Rulin is many weeks away. The court of Drinax is not high on the Imperium's list of plum assignments, even though Emperor Strephon does send greetings every ten years to his 'beloved cousin' the King of Drinax. The consul's role usually involves dealing with lost merchant ships and a little light spying. The current consul, Thao Poloc, is a historian who travelled here to study the last remnants of Sindal. His presence is a reminder that these are probably the final days of a once-glorious empire.

Lady Hil: An influential noble in court, Lady Hil has little time for anyone who cannot trace their lineage all the way back to the old empire of Sindal. Sometimes, with her emphasis on protocol and noble titles from long-lost worlds, it appears as though Hil is in denial about the current state of the kingdom. She has a great many supporters in court and on the Floating Palace, and in a culture dominated by the weight of the past, her insistence on proper behaviour and tradition gives her power.

Rachando: The trader Rachando has no noble title or aristocratic lineage; he arrived on board a battered freighter a few years ago, but has somehow become the lynchpin of the economy of the Floating Palace. He controls Rachando's Bazaar (see page 12).

Sal Dancet: A free trader and smuggler, Dancet uses the Floating Palace for repairs and as a hiding place. She can obtain rare goods and commodities from across the Trojan Reach, and is also an excellent source of rumours and information.

Cleon Hardy: When King Oleb conquered Asim, he overthrew the corrupt Foundation and instead put his own nobility to rule over the planet. To ensure the loyalty of the Asim, he invited the inhabitants to elect an ombudsman to bring their concerns to court. Cleon Hardy is their representative; back on Asim, he was an economist and broadcaster. He is out of his depth in the strange court of the Floating Palace, but he's learning rapidly.

Chieftain Galx: A representative from the Vespexer tribes of the surface, Galx visits the Floating Palace when it passes over her territory. Even in the climate-controlled halls of the palace, she insists on wearing a full-body hazard suit.

POWERS OF THE TROJAN REACH

Along the trade route, only a dozen parsecs separate the Third Imperium of Humaniti and the Aslan Hierate. Those two great imperial powers may control less than half the space of the sector, but their political gravity wells perturb affairs far beyond their borders.

The Third Imperium: The great Empire's expansion has ground to a halt. It controls parts of four subsectors, protected by the 'rampart worlds' of Pax Rulin and Tobia. While the Imperium shows little interest in extending its borders – the cost of protecting more worlds against the Hierate is prohibitive – there are several potential 'client states' that the Imperium is cultivating as a buffer against the Hierate.

The Imperium is a lazy giant until provoked. The Imperium's interest lies elsewhere right now, but if the Aslan advance or a pirate lords makes too much of a nuisance, the Imperial Navy will be dispatched to enforce the will of the Iridium Throne.

The Hierate: To humans, the Aslan Hierate looks like an impossibly frozen tsunami. At any moment, the Aslan horde could jump over the border and conquer the whole reach. The Aslan are certainly an intimidating race. Physically, they are larger and stronger than humans, and while their technology level is not quite on a par with the Imperium, they make up for this with weight of numbers. External observers miss the deep divides in Aslan society; the Hierate is a loose alliance of warring clans, and only act rarely act in unison. The Aslan drive for territory means they will inevitably expand into the Trojan Reach. The only question is *where* their next advance will come.

The divided Hierate is much more likely to act than the Imperium. Each clan – and there are dozens of them – has its own navy and can react to pirate attacks or vulnerable worlds with alarming alacrity. No human can predict what the Aslan will do next.

The Trade Route: The trade route between the Hierate and the Imperium is important enough to be considered an independent entity. The Imperium exports primarily manufactured goods and dust-spice in exchange for raw materials and Aslan goods; many of the Imperium's exports are resold by the Aslan to independent worlds across the Reach. It takes 7 or 8 jump-2 jumps (depending on the course chosen) to cross wild-space, a journey that takes approximately 60 days. Imperial escorts usually follow ships as far as Acrid; the Aslan pick the convoys up at Techworld, while mercenary and corporate escorts follow convoys along the whole route.

Pirate activity varies along the route. Most of the attacks happen in the Borderlands subsector, where travellers must navigate an unpromising series of systems. In general, both the Imperium and the Hierate tolerate a low level of piratical activity, as long as most of the attacks hit independent, small-scale merchants. Once the losses impact on a megacorporation's bottom line, though, the fleet is sent out to scour the stars and the pirates are driven out of the Borderlands for a few months.

General Development Company: The General Development Company (GeDeCo) is not the largest Imperial corporation operating in the Reach, but it is one of the most widespread. The company was originally founded to improve conditions in colonies and independent worlds throughout the Reach, but has become a major political player. GeDeCo advisors have the ear of many rulers of the independent worlds.

Independent Worlds: Most of the independent worlds in the Trojan Reach were settled by exiles or wanderers from the First Imperium, or by long-range colonisation efforts by the Second Imperium. During the Long Night, the Sindalian Empire was the great power in the sector; even the worlds that were not conquered by the Empire were under its influence. Today, the worlds of the Reach are isolated, visited only by a few traders. Their technology declines, their cultures calcify, and they turn in on themselves. The Aslan will pick them off, one by one.

Pirates of Theev: The free pirates of the Reach use Sindal subsector as their base of operations, especially the 'pirate world' of Theev. As of 1105, the best-known pirates are:

Admiral Darokyn: A former Imperial navy officer who fled the Imperium and made his name as a pirate. He operates out of Theev and commands a fleet of pirate ships, said to number more than fifty vessels. Other tales claim that he still has allies in the Imperial Navy who protect his followers from hunters.

Peytr Vallis: A newcomer, Vallis has had great success preying on Aslan traders along the border. Other pirates are said to be less than happy about Vallis stirring up the Hierate's wrath, but the young captain has a vendetta.

The Ghost: A legend among pirates of the Reach, the Ghost is more thief than pirate. Whenever a ship vanishes without a shot being fired, the Ghost is held to be responsible.

Hroal Irontooth: An Aslan outcaste, Hroal fled the Hierate with a retinue of a dozen warships, including a *Halaheike* pocket warship. His name comes from his cybernetically-enhanced jaws that are strong enough to bite through battle dress.

Dread Ashan: The reaver Ashan is perhaps the most feared pirate in the Reach. She rarely strays into the Borderlands, preferring to attack independent worlds with her band of cutthroats.

Zuekhvi the Corsair: A Vargr born and bred to space, Zuekhvi has escaped Imperial hunting patrols time and again. No-one knows the trade route worlds better than him.

The Glorious Empire: A splinter state of Aslan, the so-called Glorious Empire practices human slavery on a massive scale. Their slave ships are a threat throughout the Reach.

The Florian League: On the far side of the Trojan Reach dwell a strange race of humans called the Florani. They are extremely xenophobic, and even more conservative than the Vilani. The Florani trade a little with the Imperium; the trade route to the League is also beset by pirates.

CAMPAIGN RULES SECTION

This section must be read by the referee, but players will also find much of interest here.

The Pirates of Drinax is an episodic campaign. The ten set adventures (see page 34) are interspersed with wandering, raiding, thieving and the Referee's own scenarios. However, the choice of course is up to the players. The Trojan Reach is your sandbox – King Oleb intends for his newly-minted privateers to disrupt Imperial shipping and give him leverage to rebuild his kingdom, but that's just the starting point. The players may choose a different course!

Travelling the Trojan Reach

The Pirates of Drinax starts when the player characters receive their letter of marque from King Oleb. From there, they can go anywhere, but the bulk of the action takes place in Sindal, Tliowaha, Borderlands and Pax Rulin subsectors. Library data entries in the forthcoming ten adventures detail all the independent worlds in those four subsectors, describing patrons, encounters or hazards for each planet.

PORTS & HAVENS

Pirates need places to put in for repairs, to refuel, and to sell their ill-gotten goods. Unlike a legitimate trader who can do business at any port, pirates either frequent lawless worlds, or else establish networks of contacts and fences who can handle stolen goods at otherwise lawful starports. Remember, unlike the civilised Spinward Marches, the Imperium does not control the starports of the Trojan Reach. Each world's port is its own affair.

Starports are classified not only by their letter rating (A-E), but also by their relationship with the pirates. Ports can be Havens, Friendly, Tolerant, Neutral, Suspicious, Unfriendly or Hostile.

Havens ports are either part of the pirate's organisation, or count the pirates as their own ships. Not only are pirates able to land here, the port's System Defence Boats and the local population will defend the pirates against enemy ships and pirate hunters. At the start of the campaign, only Drinax counts as a Haven.

Friendly ports are willing accomplices in the piratical trade. While they will not take up arms to defend the pirates in open battle, they will do everything else they can to help the crew, such as repairing battle damage without asking questions, providing replacement crew, and fencing stolen goods.

Tolerant ports are willing to turn a blind eye to fencing goods, and may even provide repair facilities without too many questions, but are otherwise not involved in piracy. The characters can land here freely, but must keep a low profile.

Neutral ports are willing to take the characters' money, but offer no protection. If the characters bring trouble with them, the port authorities will turn on them.

Suspicious ports are law-abiding and have reason to suspect the characters are pirates. Everything is more difficult at suspicious ports. The characters can still land here, but can expect to be searched or detained.

Unfriendly ports do not tolerate pirates. Landing here is not permitted; if the characters land here, they will be arrested. If they linger in the system, system defence boats will be deployed to chase them away.

The pirate ship will be fired upon as soon as it arrives at a *Hostile* port. The characters' faces are on wanted holograms throughout the starport; the sensor profile of their ship is logged with every listening post and System Defence Boat in the system.

Port	Fence %	Recruitment	Risk Arrest	Risk Spies	Protection
Haven	30%	3+	-	12+	3+
Friendly	25%	5+	-	12+	7+
Tolerant	20%	7+	12+	10+	11+
Neutral	10%	9+	12+	10+	-
Suspicious	10%	11+	10+	8+	-
Unfriendly	-	12+	10+	8+	-
Hostile	-	-	-	2+	-

Fence %: The characters' share of the goods sold at the port. For example, at a Haven, the pirates get 30% of the normal value of the stolen goods. Optionally, the more detailed fencing rules from *Scoundrel* can be used when disposing of loot. See *Division of the Spoils*, page 18.

Recruitment: The chance to recruit replacement crew at that port. Note that this roll just determines the presence of willing volunteers, and goes not guarantee they have the necessary experience and skills.

Risk Arrest: When the pirates land at this port, the Referee should roll 2d6 against the listed target number. If the roll succeeds, then the local authorities will attempt to detain the pirates.

Risk Spies: When the pirates depart the port, the Referee should roll 2d6 against the listed target number. If the roll succeeds, then a spy at the port reports their presence and heading to the pirate's enemies, if any.

Protection: If the characters are attacked in the space controlled by the port, roll 2d6 against the listed target number. If the roll succeeds, the port's defences help protect the pirates.

Starting Levels

- Drinax is the only Haven at the start of the campaign.
- Theev is the only Friendly port at the start of the campaign.
- Any Aslan ports are Unfriendly.
- Other ports have their status determined by Law Level.

Law Level	Attitude
2-	Tolerant
3-5	Neutral
6-9	Suspicious
10-11	Unfriendly
12+	Hostile

Upgrading Ports

Over the course of the campaign, the characters can alter the attitude of a port towards them, by:

- Making contacts and completing patron missions
- Spending money in the port on improvements, upgrades, repairs or bribes.
- Donating captured ships and equipment

The costs for doing so vary from port to port.

Crew

While the starting Drinaxi Harrier can be flown with only a handful of shiphands, pirate ships traditionally carry a full complement of crew, and with good reason – when you're boarding an enemy ship, weight of numbers can often carry the day. Pirate ships also need engineers, pilots, navigators and gunners, especially if the pirates intend to capture prizes instead of just looting them.

The life of a pirate is dangerous and likely to be short. The rewards must therefore be very lucrative. Pirate crew are paid twice – they get their normal pay for their regular duties, but are also due a share of any proceeds from looted cargo and prizes. See *Division of the Spoils*, page 18.

Pay Rates per month:

Position	Key Skills	Base Salary
Pilot	Pilot, Sensors, Comms, Tactics (naval)	6,000
Navigator	Astrogation, Sensors, Computers, Comms	5,000
Engineer	Engineering (m-drive), Engineering (power plant), Engineering (j-drive), Mechanic	4,000
Medic	Medic, Zero-G, Life Science, Steward	4,000
Gunner	Gunnery (turret), Mechanic, Zero-G, Sensors	2,000
Marine	Battle Dress, Zero-G, Gun Combat, Melee Combat	2,000

The skill and experience of crew members varies wildly. As a rule of thumb:

- A green recruit has a +0DM for their key skills, and a -2 DM for other skills.
- An average crewman has a +1 DM for their key skills, and a +0 DM for other skills.
- A good pirate has a +2 DM for their key skills, and a +1 DM for other skills. A good pirate may demand extra shares of loot.
- An excellent crewman has a +3 DM for their key skills, and a +2 DM for other skills. An excellent pirate of this sort certainly deserves extra shares of loot.
- A legendary pirate has a +4 DM for their key skills, and a +2 DM for other skills. If you don't give a legendary pirate extra shares, he'll cut your throat and take your ship from you.

Names

11	Black Jack	41	Tom Vargface
12	Cyrex	42	Scarlet Sal
13	Adro Venniser	43	Pete the Stench
14	Penitent Grim	44	Shayra Ventassen
15	Jim Cheese	45	Drax the Knifer
16	Sutton Vries	46	Little Cleo
21	Nosetter Hali	51	Streph Falter
22	William Magnus	52	Clonehand Brimmer
23	Abra Harper	53	Opal Twice-Vacced
24	Scarr	54	Catkiller Targ
25	Ben Parr	55	Fat Florian
26	Kolx Hawk	56	Cerdic
31	Master Dank	61	Old Jaek
32	Golim Gryer	62	Laerte
33	Edd Law	63	Ramsay Grog
34	Kagni Vasiir	64	Sperric
35	Silent Unter	65	Belit the Reaver
36	Wulf Bloodaxe	66	Ed Tech

Morale

Morale is a special Characteristic that applies to the whole crew. The crew's morale starts at 6+1d6. Morale works like other characteristics – it proves a DM to some dice rolls, and can suffer damage.

If the crew's morale drops too low, they become discontented. At morale 0, the crew mutiny and attempt to overthrow the current leadership and seize the ship for themselves.

Checking Morale: To check morale, roll 2d6 + the current morale DM against a target number of 8+.

The Referee should check morale when:

- The ship is endangered (hull reduced to 0)
- The crew are ordered to risk their lives
- The crew have to endure undue hardship
- The captain and pirate leadership are divided or indecisive

Morale Damage: If a morale check is failed, the crew's morale takes 1d6 damage.

Morale also drops by 1;

- For every month that goes by without a division of the spoils.
- For any failed attempt to capture cargo or prizes

Traits

11	Cybernetic leg	41	Bloodthirsty
12	Alcoholic	42	Get space-sick
13	Hungry for revenge	43	Always nervous
14	Always carries a knife	44	Tells lengthy stories about the good old days
15	Multicoloured hair or beard	45	Horribly scarred
16	Once shot a man in District 268, just to watch him die	46	Eyepatch
21	Believes he has psionic powers	51	Sings spacer shanties
22	Wants to be in charge	52	Has a grudge against a PC
23	Cybernetic Hand	53	Former farmer
24	Paranoid	54	Smells really bad
25	Collects alien curios	55	Girl in every port
26	Always hungry	56	Alleged cannibal
31	Demands his own cabin	61	Murderous rogue
32	Ran away to space at a young age	62	Ex-Imperial navy
33	Former barbarian	63	Network of contacts
34	Has a genetically engineered parrot	64	Ambitious
35	Dying of an exotic disease	65	Coward
36	Covered in prison tattoos	66	Bad temper

Restoring Morale: Morale increases by 1 when:

- The ship captures a considerable amount of cargo or a prize
- The pirate leadership reward the crew with shore leave, intoxicants and other pleasures

Division of the Spoils

According to ancient and inviolate tradition, the crew of a pirate ship have a share in any proceeds from their larceny. These shares are divided when the pirate ship is in a safe harbour and any captured cargo has been sold.

The loot is divided as follows:

- First, King Oleb of Drinax demands 10% of the proceeds from any piracy. If the characters refuse him his royal tithe, they lose the benefits of the letter of marque and make an enemy of Drinax.
- Second, work out the total number of shares. Every ordinary crewman has one share; the player characters have two shares each, and the captain has five shares.
- Finally, divide the total value of the spoils by the total number of shares to work out the value of each share.

Retaining Crew: When there is a Division of the Spoils, some of the crew may choose to leave. For each NPC crew member, roll 2d6 + the crew's morale against a target number of 6+. If the roll fails, that crewman chooses to depart the ship at the next Tolerant or better starport.

Standing

There are two great powers who cast long shadows over the whole Trojan Reach – the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate. A pirate ship's standing with these two powers determines how they react to the pirate's activities. Both sides are willing to ignore minor acts of larceny and extortion as long as it does not impact the flow of trade, and both sides are secretly in favour of attacks upon the other by pirates – the fewer Aslan merchants in space, the more likely the Imperium is to dominate the trade routes, and vice versa. However, if the pirates are too brazen and their standing drops too far, the Imperial powers will respond with violence.

Standing with the Imperium starts at 0; Standing with the Aslan Hierate starts at -5.

Stealing Cargo: -1 per incident in which more than Cr. 100,000 is stolen.

Per Infamous Incident: -1d6 for incidents where the pirates steal a large amount of cargo, capture ships, and otherwise 'rock the boat'.

Per Atrocity: -1d6 for incidents where the pirates destroy ships, murder prisoners or otherwise breach the code of the stars.

Per Interference: -1d6 for incidents where the pirates attack Imperial scoutships, couriers or registered convoys, damage starports or refuelling stations, or otherwise interfere with the flow of trade.

Per Heroic Deed: +1d6 for attacking pirates or inflicting significant damage on the other Imperial power.

Per Month Elapsed Without Incident: Over time, standing tends towards its starting point. A crew's standing moves one point towards its starting position (0/-5) after each month in which the pirates do nothing of consequence.

These rolls can be combined. For example, an incident in which a pirate steals millions of credits worth of cargo, destroys an

Imperial escort and guns down fleeing escape pods would qualify as an Infamous Incident, an Atrocity and Interference, so the pirate's standing with the Imperium would drop by 3d6+1. However, the Aslan are pleased by this setback to the Imperium, so the pirate's standing with the Hierate rises by 1d6.

Effects of Standing

Standing	Effects
20+	Ally: The pirates are rewarded for their heroic efforts. All ports belonging to the Imperial power are now Friendly, and the pirates gain +2 Social Standing within the Imperial power's territory.
6 to 20	Tolerated: The Imperial power is willing to overlook the pirate's excesses. All ports belonging to that power are now Tolerant of that pirate.
-5 to +5	Ignored: No effect.
-6 to -20	Irritant: A bounty is placed on the pirate's head of -1d6 x 1,000 cr x the pirate's Standing.
-21 to -40	Infamy: A patrol is dispatched to hunt down trouble in the reach, including the pirate menace.
-40+	Enemy of the State! The pirate is hounded by agents of the Imperial power, ranging from assassins to naval ships. The attitude of any ports not already Friendly or better drops by one level.

Upgrading & Repairing Ships

The Drinaxi Harrier that the characters start the campaign with is a fine ship, but ambitious players may dream of commanding a larger warship, or even commanding a fleet of pirate ships and calling themselves pirate admirals (while miserly pirates might prefer a ship that is less distinctive and cheaper to maintain). Any captured ship can be refitted with weapons and turned into a pirate ship, while the player characters can order new ships like Corsairs at the shipyards of Theev (Sindal 0506). Several of the adventures also include the opportunity to obtain a different ship.

Extra ships can be placed under the control of non-player characters, and can either take part in the player characters' attacks or else sent off to conduct their own raiding. By default, a pirate admiral takes 10% off the top of any loot taken by subordinate ships.

Damage to ships must be repaired at a suitable port (ideally, a Class C or better starport).

PIRACY

Like most dangerous professions, piracy consists mostly of waiting and watching; 99% boredom mixed with 1% terror and violence. These rules skip over the waiting and watching to concentrate on the hunt, the chase and the kill.

The Code of the Stars

There is an unwritten code of understanding between pirates, merchants and the great powers. While stealing cargo is a crime, the cost of hunting down and exterminating such a pirate is far more than the value of the cargo that pirate is likely to steal over the course of a career. Some small-time pirates have survived for years by never taking more than the insurance companies and trading corporations can bear. As long as a pirate only takes cargo (or better yet, accepts bribes to leave a trader pass freely), the great powers will turn a blind eye to the corsair, at least for a few months. A pirate who intercepts a ship, steals a few tons of cargo, and leaves both merchant ship and crew unharmed is not considered a major threat.

Killing crew, stealing ships or attacking Imperial convoys, though, is a different measure. Pirates who breach this unwritten code draw attention to themselves, and must be destroyed! Neither the Hierate nor the Third Imperium can tolerate any challenge to their authority.

Finding Prey

The trade route between the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate is prime hunting territory for ambitious pirates. The cargo ships that ply those routes are heavy with valuable cargo, and the comparative lack of civilised worlds along the way means that the pirates are less likely to run into System Defence Boats or pirate hunters. To avoid attack, most merchants travel in convoys escorted by either military vessels or armed mercenaries, but there are always a few unlucky ships who either can't afford an escort or lose it along the way in a mistimed jump.

Beyond the trade route, the pickings are thinner. While there are always free traders and vagabonds chancing their luck in the backwaters of the Reach, pirates are less likely to find a suitable target in systems off the beaten track.

When a pirate attempts to locate prey, roll on the Prey Encounter Table to determine the most likely target. A result of 'no prey' does not mean that there are no other ships in the system, it implies that there are no other ships that the pirate has a chance of successfully tackling right now, although this may change at any moment if a ship jumps in.

The amount of traffic in the system determines when to roll on the Prey Encounter Table.

Roll d66, applying DMs as follows:

Backwater System: -1DM to first die only

Dangerous World: -1DM to second die only

High-Traffic System: +1DM to first die only

Secure World: +1 DM to second die only

Capital or other key System: +2DM to first die only

Naval Base: +2 DM to second die only

A **backwater system** is one with a Class X or E starport that is off the Imperium-Hierate trade route.

A **high-traffic system** is one with a Class A or B starport and with at least one of the following traits: High Technology, High Population, Industrial, Agricultural, Rich, or a system on the Imperium-Aslan trade route.

A **capital or other key system** is a subsector capital, like Pax Rulin.

A **dangerous world** has an Amber or Red Travel code, or a Law Level of 3 or less, or is otherwise unable to patrol its space.

A **secure world** has a Law Level of 7 or more, and has the technology to protect travellers, or has a naval base present within six parsecs.

A **naval base** in the system offers the best possible protection for travellers.

Prey Encounter Table

00	Traveller	40	Small Freighter
01	Traveller	41	Traveller
02	No encounter	42	Convoy
03	No encounter	43	Heavy Freighter
04	Small Freighter	44	No encounter
05	No encounter	45	No encounter
06	No encounter	46	Liner
07	No encounter	47	System Defence Boat
08	Naval Patrol	48	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol
10	Traveller	50	Traveller
11	No encounter	51	Convoy
12	No encounter	52	Small Freighter
13	No encounter	53	Medium Freighter
14	Small Freighter	54	No encounter
15	No encounter	55	Heavy Freighter
16	No encounter	56	Liner
17	Medium Freighter	57	System Defence Boat
18	1-3: No encounter; 4-6: Naval Patrol	58	1-2: No encounter; 3-6 Naval Patrol
20	Traveller	60	Traveller
21	No encounter	61	Convoy
22	No encounter	62	Small Freighter
23	Small Freighter	63	Medium Freighter
24	Medium Freighter	64	Liner
25	No encounter	65	Convoy
26	Unusual Vessel	66	Rich Freighter
27	System Defence Boat	67	System Defence Boat
28	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol	68	Naval Patrol
30	Traveller	70	Traveller
31	Small Freighter	71	Small Freighter
32	Convoy	72	Medium Freighter
33	Unusual Vessel	73	Convoy
34	Medium Freighter	74	Unusual Vessel
35	No encounter	75	Liner
36	No encounter	76	Rich Freighter
37	Rich Freighter	77	System Defence Boat
38	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol	78	Naval Patrol

Traveller: A vessel other than a cargo ship, such as a scout vessel, small military ship, fast courier or even another pirate. Travellers are poor targets for pirates, as they are unlikely to carry valuable cargoes. They can be looted for parts.

Small Freighter: A far trader, free trader or other 100-300 ton trade vessel. Such vessels are ideal prey for most pirates, as they can quickly be looted and are unlikely to have significant defences.

Medium Freighter: A trader of 400-1,000 tons. Still a good target for pirates, although sorting through the cavernous cargo bay for the choicest items may take more time than the pirate can afford.

Heavy Freighter: This is a freighter of 1,000 tons or more. Heavy freighters of this kind travel with escort vessels or carry their own fighters or defensive weapons, and may be more than the average pirate can handle.

Rich Freighter: Roll 1d6 to determine the sort of freighter encountered. 1-3: Small Freighter, 4-5: Medium Freighter, 6: Heavy Freighter. This freighter is carrying an especially valuable cargo; when rolling for a random cargo, roll twice times and take the most valuable result.

Liner: This is a passenger vessel, colony ship, troop transport or tourist vessel. Such ships may have many valuable items carried by the passengers, but the pirates will be outnumbered if they try to storm on board

Unusual Vessel: A noble's yacht, science vessel, X-boat, mercenary transport, survey ship or other rare type of ship. The vessel may be utterly useless to the pirate or a rich prize, depending on what is on board. It could even be a rival pirate.

System Defence Boat: Roll 1d6. On a 1-5, this is a classic SDB of some sort – a heavily armed, fast-moving spaceship without a jump drive. On a 6, it is a q-ship, a small freighter that has been refitted with concealed weapons as a honey trap for pirates.

Convoy: A convoy consists of 2-12 ships, split between Heavy, Medium and Rich Freighters and armed escorts.

Naval Patrol: The pirate has run into a heavily armed navy ship, ranging from a small escort ship or pirate hunter to a full-size warship.

Morale

Enemy ships have a morale score, just like pirates. The morale for a merchant starts at 1d6+3; for an armed ship, it starts at 1d6+6; and for a naval ship like an escort, at 1d6+8. Morale is reduced by 1 for every Structure Hit, and by 1d6 for a Bridge Hit or if the M-Drive, J-Drive or Power Plant is disabled. A ship with damaged morale may be willing to sacrifice a portion of her cargo in exchange for the promise of safe passage – see *Demanding Surrender*, page 23.

If morale reaches 0, then the victim either jumps out (if possible) or else surrenders.

Encounter Distance & Timing

The 'encounter window' for a pirate attack is a slim one. It takes a ship only a few hours to lift off from a spaceport and pass through the hundred-diameter jump point, or to travel from where it entered the system to the safety of the atmosphere. Within that window, the pirate has to come within range of the target, disable it or force its surrender, match velocity, dock, loot the cargo and then escape.

The initial encounter distance is set by the Referee; as a rule of thumb, roll 3d6 and multiply it by the diameter of the mainworld (or 1,000km for Size 0 worlds). An arriving ship will arrive somewhere outside the hundred-diameter jump limit, so the values in the Jump Limit Transit Table are the minimum travel times for an arriving ship.

Roll 1d6 or choose the prey's direction of travel. On a 1-3, it is heading towards the planet to land; on a 4-5, it is heading to the jump diameter limit. On a 6, it is stationary or heading towards some other destination, such as a moon, another planet or another vessel.

The Jump Limit Transit Table describes how long it takes a vessel to reach either the surface or hundred-diameter jump limit, depending on its thrust and the size of the planet. Note that it is much quicker to leave a planet and travel at full thrust to the jump limit than it is to fly to the surface, as the vessel must do a turnover at the half-way point (or use atmospheric braking; either way, it must reach zero velocity at the surface or there will be an unfortunate interaction with the ground, termed a 'crash').

Jump Limit Transit Table

Size	1g		2g		3g		4g		5g		6g	
	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down
0 (80,000km)	1hr	1.5hrs	45mins	1.2hrs	40mins	1hr	33mins	45mins	30mins	42mins	27mins	38mins
1 (160,000km)	1.5hrs	2 hrs	1.2hrs	1.5hrs	1hr	1.2hrs	45mins	1.1hrs	42mins	1hr	38mins	0.9hrs
2 (320,000km)	2hrs	3 hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs	1.2hrs	2hrs	1.1hrs	1.5hrs	1hr	1.5hrs	0.9hrs	1.2hrs
3 (480,000km)	3hrs	4 hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs	1.5hrs	2.2hrs	1.3hrs	2hrs	1.2hrs	1.75hrs	1.1hrs	1.5hrs
4 (640,000 km)	3 hrs	4.3 hrs	2.25hrs	3hrs	1.9hrs	2.5hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs	1.5hrs	2hrs	1.2hrs	1.9hrs
5 (800,000km)	3.5hrs	5 hrs	2.5hrs	3.5hrs	2hrs	3hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs	1.6hrs	2.2hrs	1.5hrs	2hrs
6 (960,000km)	4hrs	5.5hrs	2.75hrs	4hrs	2.25hrs	3.2hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs
7 (1,120,000km)	4.2hrs	6hrs	3hrs	4.2hrs	2.4hrs	3.5hrs	2.1hrs	3hrs	1.9hrs	2.6hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs
8 (1,280,000km)	4.5hrs	6.3hrs	3.2hrs	4.5hrs	2.6hrs	3.7hrs	2.25hrs	3.1hrs	2hrs	2.9hrs	1.9hrs	2.4hrs
9 (1,440,000km)	4.75hrs	6.75hrs	3.3hrs	4.75hrs	2.75hrs	3.9hrs	2.3hrs	3.3hrs	2.1hrs	3hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs
A (1,600,000km)	5hrs	7hrs	3.5hrs	5hrs	3hrs	4.1hrs	2.5hrs	3.5hrs	2.25hrs	3.1hrs	2hrs	3hrs

If the ship is located elsewhere in the system, then it can jump out immediately when threatened, assuming it has fuel.

PIRATE ATTACKS

Once the pirate has located a suitable target, the following steps must be taken:

- Intercept the target
- Attack the target
- Prevent the target's escape
- (Optionally) Board the target
- Loot the target
- Escape!

Intercept the target

The pirate faces a difficult task – they must not only get within range of the target, but must also match velocity with it so boarding can be attempted. The target may attempt to avoid the pirate, but any evasive manoeuvres will increase the amount of time it takes to reach the target's destination. Opposed Piloting checks are made when the range drops to Short or less, as the target jinks and dodges to avoid the approaching pirate vessel.

In general, if the pirate has a higher Thrust value than the target, and is within 100,000 kilometres of the target, then escape is very difficult indeed.

As soon as the pirate opens fire, a clock starts ticking. The pirate has a limited amount to breach the target and loot before the authorities arrive (see *Pirate Hunters* on page 26). The Referee should track how long the attack takes, to determine how long the pirates have to loot their prize.

Skill Checks:

Locating a target: Sensors+Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0)

Estimating the likely value of a prize: Broker+Intelligence, 1-6 seconds, Difficult (-2)

Plotting an intercept course: Pilot+Education, 10-60 seconds, Average (+0)

Called Shots

Ships at a range of Short or less may attempt to make called shots with direct-fire weapons. The attacker nominates the location he wishes to attack, and then rolls with a -2DM to his attack. If the attack hits, the Referee rolls on the location table as normal, but then moves one row up or down on the table towards the desired location.

For example, a pirate corsair targets the fuel tanks on a fleeing merchant. He rolls and hits; the Referee rolls 2d6 on the location table and gets a 4, M-Drive. However, thanks to the called shot, he moves one row towards the Fuel location.

Attack the target

Pirates do not want to destroy their target, they want to cripple it. Missile and torpedo attacks may be used to 'soften up' a target, but as soon as the target's Hull is breached, the pirate runs the risk of destroying the cargo he seeks. Most pirates will challenge the target as soon as the first shot is fired, demanding that the prey surrender, heave to and prepare to be boarded.

The ideal results for a pirate are hits to the Manoeuvre Drive (reducing the target's Thrust and making interception much easier) or Fuel (dumping a portion of the target's fuel into space and possibly preventing it from jumping away).

Demanding Surrender: To force a ship to surrender, roll Comms + Social Standing against a difficulty of 8, subtracting the target's current morale as a -DM. Surrenders are rarely unconditional; normally, the merchant demands a promise of safe passage for ship and crew in exchange for handing over part of the cargo. Many merchants keep a few tons of 'sacrificial' cargo on board to keep pirates at bay.

Skill Checks:

Demanding a Surrender: Comms+Social Standing, 10-60 seconds

Attacking engines: Gunner+Dexterity, 1-6 minutes, Difficult (-2)

Docking with a crippled target: Pilot+Dexterity, 1-6 minutes, Difficult (-2)

Board the target

To board the target, the pirate vessel must either dock with it, or send boarding troops across using thruster packs, grav belts, grapple lines or other transport methods (psionic teleportation is ideal for piracy). Once the boarders have reached the target, they need to force open an airlock. Most pirates warn the target before breaching the hull, demanding that the victims open up or lose atmospheric containment. All but the bravest of targets will just let the pirates in at this point.

If the victim intends to fight back, then the situation becomes more complicated. If the defenders are not wearing vacc suits, then just breaching the airlock removes the problem, but no-one is stupid enough to resist boarders without first putting on vacc suits (or closing internal doors, ensuring that a breach at the main airlock or cargo hold will not vent the air from the bridge and crew quarters). Assuming both sides are ready for fighting in vacuum, then the pirates must battle their way onto the other ship and eliminate any resistance. The weapons of choice in a boarding action are cutlasses, gauss pistols and other zero-g weapons.

Ideally, the pirate vessel docks with the target, to allow cargo and other loot to be transferred quickly.

Skill Checks:

Setting a breaching charge: Explosives+Education, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0)

Moving in zero-g: Zero-G+ Dexterity, 1-6 seconds, Average (+0)

Finding the cargo hold: Recon+Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0)

Loot the target

If the pirate has secured its prize, the crew can begin looting. Successful pirates have this part of the operation down to a fine art, hunting down the most valuable items first and dispatching specialised teams to recover specific targets. Security systems must be bypassed or destroyed; the pick of the cargo must be transferred into the pirate vessel; subcraft and other vehicles are cut free and stolen. Looting is as dangerous as any part of the attack – if the pirate captain does not leave promptly, he will be caught by the authorities. Many pirates have been left behind on a crippled merchant ship when their captain abandons them rather than stand and fight. A well-trained pirate crew will leave behind what they cannot safely steal.

Skill Checks:

Opening a ship's locker: Security+Education, 10-60 minutes, Average (+0)

Finding the right cargo: Recon+Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0)

Moving a cargo container manually: Zero-G+ Strength, 1-6 minutes, Difficult (-2)

Escape!

The final challenge for the pirate is to escape without being captured. Once a pirate has taken its prize, it still needs to make it back to the hundred-diameter jump limit to escape. One common mistake made by inexperienced raiders is to chase a target too far into a planet's jump shadow, so they cannot then safely jump out. (Jumping within the hundred-diameter limit incurs a -8DM to the jump check).

Prey Quirks

Every ship hides surprises; roll on the Quirk table to spice up any encounter with a merchant ship.

Quirks

11	Coward: Surrenders easily. Reduce starting morale by 1d6.	41	Heavily Armed: The merchant ship is ready for a fight. Any hardpoints are equipped with turrets filled with lasers or particle beams.
12	Deceitful: Pretends to surrender in order to lure the pirates into docking, then fights back at short range.	42	Berserker: One of the merchant crew is a trained marine equipped with battle dress or a boarding vacc suit and a heavy weapon.
13	Smuggler: The really valuable cargo is hidden in a secret compartment	43	Self Destruct: The captain would rather die than lose his ship. Unless the pirates can stop him, he'll scuttle his ship rather than lose his cargo.
14	Eccentric: The captain is insane, drunk or otherwise eccentric.	44	Mission of Mercy: The ship is carrying vitally needed supplies, like medicine or food, to a troubled colony.
15	No Surrender: The crew won't surrender under any circumstances. Ignore morale.	45	Die Hard: One of the merchant's crew hides when the ship is boarded, and sneaks onto the player's ship to sabotage them.
16	Duel of Honour: The captain challenges one of the pirates to a rapier duel in vacc suits on the exterior hull of his ship.	46	Psionic Defender: One of the crew of the merchant ship is a psion.
21	Noble: There's a noble on board. If ransomed, she's worth considerably more than normal.	51	Unlikely Cargo: The merchant ship is carrying an unexpected cargo – what are they doing out here?
22	Alien: There's an exotic alien like a Hiver on board.	52	Perishable Cargo: The merchant's cargo is valuable, but only if sold within the month.
23	Family: The captain's family travel on board the ship.	53	Dangerous Cargo: The merchant's cargo is dangerous to have on board.
24	Diplomat: There is an Imperial or Aslan diplomat on board, carrying a secret message	54	Living Cargo: The cargo is alive – animals, insects, or even slaves.
25	Stowaway: Someone's hidden inside a cargo container that the pirates just stole.	55	Hot Cargo: The cargo was stolen – and the real owner wants it back.
26	Prisoner: There's a criminal – perhaps a captured pirate – in the ship's brig.	56	Alien Cargo: The merchant is carrying something from a very distant part of space, or even an Ancient relic.

31	Plague Ship: The crew are infected with a potentially fatal disease.	61	Traitor: One of the merchant's crew is willing to betray his shipmates for a large payoff.
32	Dying Ship: The ship misjumped and is running low on food, oxygen or fuel.	62	Infestation: There's something <i>alive</i> on board ship.
33	Damaged Ship: The ship sustained 1d6 hits to internal systems already.	63	Ghost Ship: This ship has been drifting dead for centuries. The characters were attacked by automated weapons.
34	Treasure Map: While looting the ship, the characters find a map pointing to a hidden supply cache, mineral deposit or other valuable treasure.	64	Strange Curio: There's a relic or other strange item in the captain's cabin.
35	Important Document: The ship's safe contains the deeds to a property, a letter of marque, a corporate contract or some other valuable document.	65	It's a Trap: This 'merchant' is actually a disguised q-ship or pirate hunter.
36	Message Pod: The ship carries a 5-dton data drum containing mail. Decoding this data may reveal useful information.	66	Drinaxian on Board: One of the NPCs from page 13 is on board... what are they doing here?

Encounter Complications

11	Solar Flares: The system's primary sun spits out huge flares and high levels of radiation. All ships take 3d6x100 rads per hour.	41	Rapid Reaction: The security forces here respond very quickly – add a +4 DM to the response time roll.
12	Debris Field: The encounter takes place in a debris field. Pilot checks are needed to avoid floating obstacles; on the bright side, there may be some salvage here.	42	Corrupt Cops: The security forces can be bribed to ignore the attack.
13	Ice Field: The planet's surrounded by a ring of ice particles, and the quarry takes refuge there. Direct-fire weapons are limited to Short range.	43	Nearby Asteroid: There's an asteroid close to the battle; the merchant can take there refuge and hide behind it. The asteroid might even be inhabited.
14	Comms Jamming: Something in the system blocks communications. The victim can't call for help.	44	Sensor Jamming: Conditions in the system block sensors.
15	Behind The Moon: There's a nearby moon. What's lurking there? Another pirate? An interceptor? An Aslan spy?	45	Imperial Patrol: There's an Imperial or Aslan patrol in the system, hunting for pirates. They're far enough away that the characters might be able to complete the attack before the first fighters arrive...
16	Incoming Escort: The merchant has an escort, but they haven't jumped in yet. They'll be here any minute.	46	Distress Call: The characters detect a distress call from a stricken ship. Do they call off their attack?
21	Rival Pirate: There's another pirate after the same prize.	51	High Guard: There's an unexpected ship refuelling at the system's gas giant (or at another source of hydrogen, like a lake). Why are they avoiding the starport?
22	Slow Leak: The characters' fuel tank has a slow leak; they're losing 1d6 tons of hydrogen per round.	52	Spy in the System: A spy in the system contacts the characters by radio, offering them useful information about traffic.
23	Out of Control: The quarry loses control of its attitude thrusters and starts spinning wildly. It's now easy to catch but very hard to dock with.	53	Screamer: The merchant ship frantically warns everyone who'll listen about the pirates – not just in this system, but in every other system the merchant visits
24	Cargo Spilled: In a panic, the merchant jettisons most of its cargo, sending an expanding flock of canisters into space.	54	Incoming!: The starport below launches ground-to-space missiles. The first missile hits in five rounds...
25	Collision Warning! Both ships nearly collide with a small asteroid or other piece of space debris.	55	Tricky Calculation: The complex arrangement of moons and planets in this system make jump calculations harder. Apply a -4 DM to any Astrogation checks.
26	Misjump: The first ship to jump out misjumps when they flee.	56	Pull Up!: The merchant doesn't slow down as it approaches the planet – instead, they plan to use aerobraking to slow their dissent.
31	Observer: There's another ship nearby. They steer clear of the dogfight, but they're watching...	61	The Black Signal: The pirates pick up the fabled 'black signal' on the ship; a pattern of radiation burned into the hull, denoting that this ship is an enemy of the pirates of Theev.
32	Bad Jump: This was a bad jump – the pirates have arrived well outside the travelled parts of the system.	62	Familiar Ship: The player characters have encountered this merchant ship before...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>33 Unfortunate Timing: Another ship jumps right into the middle of the battle.</p> <p>34 Crew Dissent: One of the crew on board the PCs' ship is having problems that affect the battle. Perhaps they object to this particular target, or are drunk, or are deliberately sabotaging the attack.</p> <p>35 System Failure: A key system fails on board the pirate ship. Roll 1d3 hits on the internal damage table.</p> <p>36 Escape Pods: The merchant's crew flee their ship in escape pods and small craft. They could be carrying treasure on board those pods – but the pirates have time to only chase down one of them...</p> | <p>63 Aslan Raiders: Several Aslan raiders lead by an ambitious ihatei warlord arrive in the system.</p> <p>64 Under The Shield of the Sunburst: An Imperial patrol jumps in; they're not pirate hunting, they're here to enforce the Third Imperium's will on the planetary government.</p> <p>65 Didn't Expect To Find You Here: A contact (or ally, or enemy) of the player character is on board the merchant.</p> <p>66 Anomaly: The characters run into something unusual, like a wrecked ship or a spatial anomaly.</p> |
|---|--|

PIRATE HUNTERS

Any system with sufficient resources and trade will maintain a fleet of system defence boats and customs vessels. Even on technologically primitive worlds, the government will either hire private contractors or request Imperial aid. These SDBs patrol the space around the mainworld, as well as other key locations in the system such as gas giants or asteroid belts. While the main purpose of an SDB fleet is to protect against invasion, they hone their skills hunting pirates.

Pirate hunting can also be an important duty for the Imperial navy and subsector navies. The Imperial navy only bothers with pirate hunting when training new crews, or when a nest of pirates proves especially troublesome. Many years can go by before the navy bothers to act, but when they do, they use overwhelming force. Imperial navy ships are deployed to besiege and destroy pirate bases.

Subsector navies are much more active when it comes to pirate hunting, and it is one of their primary roles. Subsector navies use much smaller and more agile warships, making them ideal for patrols and anti-pirate operations. Pirates often operate across subsector borders to avoid subsector fleets – the dead hand of bureaucracy is a powerful weapon in the stratified Imperium, and one duke may be unwilling to allow a neighbour's ships to enter his space.

Any of these pirate hunters may respond to a distress call from a merchant ship. Roll on the Response table when the pirate attack begins.

Roll 2d6	Result
5-	No response; roll again in one hour
6-7	A vessel launches from the starport to investigate
8-9	A vessel launches from the starport or from the hundred-diameter jump limit, whichever is closer
10	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 1d6+1 hours
11	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 1d6 hours
12	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 10-60 minutes
13+	A vessel in orbit responds, response time is 5-30 minutes

DMs:

Backwater System: -1DM

Dangerous World: -1DM

High-Traffic System: +1DM

Secure World: +1 DM

Capital or other key System: +2DM

Naval Base: +2 DM

Customs Ships

Customs ships are small, fast-moving lightly armed vessels, designed to intercept smugglers and patrol the spaceways. A customs ship is not designed to get into a shooting match with another vessel, although most could inflict significant damage on a small pirate. Customs vessels are normally the first to respond to a pirate attack, although they will call in support from SDBs if necessary.

SDBs

System Defence Boats vary wildly in size. The largest SDBs are hollowed-out asteroids bigger than any capital ship; these supermonitors are designed to fight off invading fleets, and could swat every pirate in the subsector with a single broadside. The SDBs normally encountered by pirates are much smaller escorts. SDBs are extremely dangerous, as they are faster and better-armed than any pirate ship. They are incapable of jump travel, though, and their crew may not be as skilled as a hardened pirate band, so a clever pirate can avoid or escape a SDB.

Q-Ships

Q-ships are merchant vessels with concealed weapons, used as lures for pirates and commerce raiders. Most subsector navies have a few old q-ships in storage that are hauled out when pirate activity becomes a problem. The q-ship then 'conveniently' jumps into dangerous systems and offers itself a tempting target for pirates. When the attack begins, the q-ship responds by revealing its weapons and launching fighters.

Some worlds use a variant on the q-ship concept, where they send freighters loaded with booby-trapped cargo into dangerous space. When the pirates steal the cargo, the booby trap is activated. High-explosive charges are the most common form of booby trap, but other q-ships have concealed armoured marines, lethal toxins or even nuclear mines.

Naval Vessels

Small naval vessels like the Gazelle-class close escort are ideal pirate hunters. These vessels can outgun or outgun most pirate ships, and unlike an SDB they have skilled crews and can chase corsairs from one system to another. Naval vessels may also carry high-acceleration fighters, which can chase down pirate vessels in the same way pirates chase down prey.

Small naval vessels are the bane of piracy. The only chance for the pirate is to flee to a less well-patrolled subsector and start again. Actually *destroying* the naval vessel is the worst possible course of action, as it ensures that the pirate will be hunted down and exterminated by the navy. At least surrendering means the pirate may survive.

Capital Ships

Massive capital warships are much too large and expensive to be 'wasted' on pirate hunting. Nonetheless, pirates do sometimes encounter capital ships. There are two likely scenarios – either the navy have detected a pirate base, and wish to pound it into free-floating dust, or some influential noble or corporation has made a fuss and the navy wishes to show how seriously it takes the pirate situation. Both scenarios involve a great deal of overkill.

Bounty Hunters

If all the above pirate hunters are unable to deal with a particularly troublesome corsair, then the time-honoured system of bounties can produce results. Putting a price on a pirate's head (or hull) means that every adventurer and bounty hunter in the subsector will be looking for him. Usually, this price ends up getting collected by another pirate.

PIRATE LOOT

Once a target has been boarded, the looting can begin. Each type of loot takes time to recover from the target ship, so pirates must choose what they take carefully. The times listed all assume a single pirate crewman is assigned to the task; assigning more crew will reduce the time required, but cannot reduce the time below the minimum time listed.

Supplies

This covers spare parts, ship components, electronics, food, oxygen and other immediately useful items. Pirates have to go for months without docking at a fully equipped starport, so they cannot resupply and maintain their ships in the usual fashion. Cannibalising supplies allows a pirate to keep flying without resupply. Looting supplies in this fashion takes 10-60 minutes.

Cargo

The merchant's cargo can be the richest prize on board, but handling a large number of cargo containers hastily can be difficult.

On average, a freighter will have 40+1d6x10% of its cargo bay filled. Half the cargo will be of a single type, chosen from either the cargoes available at the world the freighter just left, from those that sell well at the destination world, from the list of goods commonly traded between the Hierate and the Imperium, or by picking one of the six basic cargo types. The rest of the cargo should be rolled for randomly in smaller blocks of 20 tons each.

The number of cargo containers that can be moved simultaneously depends on the size of the cargo bay doors, which varies from design to design. As a rule of thumb, assume that the hatch is one container wide for every fifty tons of cargo at minimum. Only one hatch can be used at a time.

If the pirate has no cargo handling equipment, then each cargo container must be handled individually.

Cargo may or may not need to be fenced, depending on how identifiable it is. Fifty tons of wood or ore can be sold anywhere; fifty tons of brand new TL15 robots are covered in tracking numbers and codes, and have to be sold through a fence.

LOOTING TABLE

Item	Value	Average Time Required	Skills Needed
Supplies	—	10-60 minutes	None
Cargo	Varies (approx. 50,000/ton)		
By hand	—	1-6 minutes/container	Zero-G
By waldo	—	1-6 minutes per container	None
By robot	—	3 minutes per container	None
By grappling arm	—	1 minute per container	Remote Operations
Treasure	—		
Ship's Safe	20,000 Cr/100 tons	1-6 Hours	Recon
Personal treasure	10,000 Cr per high passenger 5,000 Cr per medium passenger 1,000 Cr per low passenger	1-6 minutes per passenger	None
Equipment	1,000 Cr per crew member	1-6 minutes per crewman	None
Prisoners	Varies	1-6 minutes per passenger	Melee
Vehicles	Varies	10-60 minutes per vehicle	Computers, Pilot
What's Not Nailed Down	50,000 Cr/100 tons	10-60 hours per 100 tons	Mechanic, Zero-G
Prize Ship	Varies	Varies	Varies

Roll (2d6)	Imperium → Hierate	Hierate → Imperium
2	Advanced Weapons	Radioactives
3	Live Animals	Uncommon Ore
4	Luxury Goods	Luxury Goods
5	Luxury Consumables	Luxury Consumables
6	Spices	Textiles
7	Basic Manufactured Goods	Basic Raw Materials
8	Biochemicals	Polymers
9	Pharmaceuticals	Crystals & Gems
10	Advanced Manufactured Goods	Uncommon Raw Materials
11	Advanced Machine Parts	Precious Metals
12	Illegal Luxuries	Illegal Weapons

Treasure

This covers cash, gemstones, precious metals, high-value trade goods, software, exotic or alien equipment, art and other small, valuable items. Such treasure will normally be held inside a hidden safe on board. Finding this cache requires a Difficult (-2) Intelligence + Recon roll taking 1-6 hours per hundred tons of ship. The value of the treasure is generally equal to 20,000cr per 100 tons of ship.

Passengers on board ship may also have treasure. Assume Cr. 10,000 for High passengers, Cr. 5,000 for mid passengers, and Cr. 1,000 for low passengers. Treasure is in cash or easily sellable items, and does not need to be fenced. Looting this treasure takes 1d6 minutes per passenger, unless the treasure is hidden in the ship's safe.

Equipment

Equipment includes items such as armour, weapons, computers and other personal gear that can be sold. Assume Cr. 1,000 per crew member. This equipment must be fenced, so the pirate may only get a fraction of the 'real' value.

Looting equipment takes 1d6 minutes per crew member.

Vehicles

Ship's vehicles like boats, launches and shuttles are extremely valuable to pirates. A 20-ton launch is worth 14Mcr, the equivalent of cargo worth 700,000 cr./ton! While these vehicles must be fenced, they are still choice loot if they can be stolen.

If the pirate's cargo bay is large enough to hold the stolen vehicle, then the pirates need only fly it across. If the pirates have no suitable place to stow a vehicle, they may try docking it to an external airlock, although this is risky. Any large object attached to the hull can cause problems when jumping (assume a -2DM for every ten tons of stolen vehicle).

Overriding security systems on a vehicle requires an Average (+0) Security+Intelligence check taking 10-60 minutes. Flying the ship across requires Pilot+Dexterity, Average (+0), 1d6 minutes.

Prisoners

Some pirates take prisoners for later ransom. Ransoming is a difficult process, and should be handled as an adventure. Prisoners are usually thrown into low berths for 'storage'. Forcing an unwilling prisoner onto a pirate vessel requires Melee check and 1-6 minutes (or, better yet, a stunner).

What's Not Nailed Down

It is possible, albeit time-consuming, to strip every valuable item from a captured ship; everything from computer cabling and hydrogen fuel to jump drive components and floor tiles can be stolen. Fully stripping a ship of all easily transportable items takes 10-60 hours per 100 tons of ship. Every hundred tons of stripped ship produces 10 tons of spare parts worth Cr. 5,000 each (or 50,000 Cr/100 tons).

Prize Ships

To escape with a captured ship, the pirates need to have enough crew on board to fly both ships. A determined and charismatic pirate might be able to convince some of the crew of a merchant ship to switch sides and turn pirate.

Selling a stolen ship is virtually impossible – not only is a stolen ship a 'hot' property, thanks to IFF beacons and serial numbers woven into the hull's molecular structure, but few brokers have the ready cash to buy a ship. Some pirates who steal a ship keep it and use it as a cargo store or even as a legitimate merchant; others add it to their pirate fleet. Another option is to donate the stolen ship to a friendly system to curry favour with the government there.

REFEREE'S SECTION

Players should not read this section at all.

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The Pirates of Drinax is intended to be a 'sandbox' campaign. Once the player characters take off from Drinax, they can go anywhere they want reach of their jump drive. Their fate is their own – if they want to follow King Oleb's plan, and build a privateer-funded alliance of worlds, they can. If they want to steal the Harrier and become renegade pirate kings, that's an option too. They may end their adventures ruling the stars, or swinging from a noose.

Early in the campaign, the player characters are based on Drinax, and are likely to return to that world again and again for resupply and aid. Later, they may decide to strike out on their own. The campaign rules in Section 2 cover wandering the stars, preying on shipping, and commanding a crew of pirates. Use this as a framework for your own adventures. There are innumerable ways that a pirate crew could be drawn into a more complicated and perilous adventure. For example:

An old pirate tells them about a fabled lost pirate ship that misjumped with a huge treasure in her hold. Find the ship, find the treasure.

One of the passengers on board an ambushed ship turns out to be a noblewoman in disguise. She is a last-ditch diplomatic envoy between the Imperium and the Hierate on a mission to avert a war. Do the characters aid her, or turn war profiteers? The ship's navigator dies in a tavern brawl, and a replacement is needed. The characters learn of a navigational prodigy, a savant who can calculate the most accurate jumps in an instant – but he's imprisoned in a madhouse on a backwards planet. Can they break into the asylum and retrieve this troubled genius? Spies report to the characters, telling them that one of their old Enemies is on the move. The characters have a chance to intercept their enemy's ship and put an end to him – but to do so, they need to track down his ship, capture it, storm it, and fight a duel with their old foe.

Fleeing Imperial pirate hunters, the characters jump into an isolated system and uncover the ruins of a long-dead civilisation.

In addition to Referee-created adventures, the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign contains ten epic adventures. The first nine of these can be run in (almost) any order, intermixed with the Referee's own creations. The tenth and final adventure determines the success of King Oleb's grand plan and the fate of those who received a letter of marque from his hands.

These adventures are divided into Heists – adventures where the player characters steal something valuable and piratical – and Perils, where the tide of events overtakes the player characters and they must fight to survive.

Heists

Honour Among Thieves

Raiders from coreward struck the old Drinaxian worlds of Torpol and Clarke, looting their orbital factories and destroying their system defence boats. These raiders were no desperate brigands – they had the weapons, technology and discipline that marked them as dangerous corsairs. The Provosts of Torpol and the Psychopomps of Clarke put a combined bounty of the heads of those accursed raiders. Anyone who brings back proof of the raiders' death will be showered in lanthanum and gold.

Tracking the raiders brings the characters to the 'pirate's world' of Theev (Sindal 0506). There, on the walkways and alleyways of Port Blacksand, the characters must find the raiders – but the shadowy rulers of Theev are always watchful. Can the characters complete their mission and escape the pirates' world, or will they have to make alliances with untrustworthy rogues to survive? Bringing the raiders to justice will bring Torpol and Clarke closer towards alliance with Drinax, but at what cost? And what triggered the raid? The shadows of Port Blacksand hide a thousand secrets and a thousand knives...

The Demon's Eye

Techworld (Borderlands 0204) is a bizarre aberration, a high-technology colony where mad scientists carry out experiments banned by the Shield Church clerics of Neumann (Gazulin 0705). Beyond the church's reach, the scientists meddle with dangerous technologies... and something's gone wrong. One of the scientists fell victim to her own experiment, and she is now becoming something inhuman. The characters are hired to capture her before she reaches the Imperium. Exploring the bizarre machine world, the characters learn the strange history of Neumann, and discover that the scientist was working on a solution to save her world from the dissembler plague.

Tracking the scientist brings the characters into Imperial space. They catch up with her on Mirage (Gazulin 0509) where they battle assassins sent by the Shield Church. The scientist begs the characters to help her tame the nano-swarms – but to do that, they'll need to outwit the machine demigod called the Immortal Protector.

Treasure Ship

The crossing from the Imperium to the Hierate winds its way across the Trojan Reach. Every month, convoys of freighters escorted by Imperial warships make the long journey from Pax Rulin to the Aslan worlds. Jump after jump, system after system – and at every step of the way, the convoy risks disruption or attack. The most important and closely protected ships are the fabled ‘treasure ships’. These small, heavily guarded freighters carry the most important cargoes. Dust-spice, anagathics, alien artefacts, sealed letters between the Imperial government and the Hierate, and who knows what else. Capturing a treasure ship is every pirate’s dream.

Ambushing such a ship is futile – even a pirate fleet would be hard pressed to capture a treasure ship before the Imperial escorts blasted them to space dust. You’d need more than stealth, cunning and daring – you’d need a huge stroke of luck.

Like, say, hearing the news that an Imperial treasure ship suffered an engine malfunction, and has put in at Arunisiir (Borderlands 0201) for repairs. All the player characters need to do is get to Arunisiir, get one or more agents on board, come up with a plan to steal the treasure, and execute it under watchful eyes of the escort ships...

The Treasure of Sindal

Thousands of years ago, the Sindalian empire collapsed in blood and fire. Where once the Dragon Emperor ruled over a hundred worlds, now there is nothing but ash and crumbling ruins. Still, old Noricum is a legend-haunted planet. They say that, on the night before the capital fell, the last Emperor ordered that the treasury be placed on board a starship and sent to a hiding place.

Could the treasure hoard of the old emperors still be out there among the stars? A chance visit by an archaeologist to the Floating Palace puts the characters on the trail of the hidden fortune – but they’re not the only ones chasing the prize. This adventure takes the characters across the sector on an interstellar treasure hunt! Three rival pirates are also after the treasure, so the characters must play their rival off against each other in order to be the ones who finally recover the treasure of Sindal.

Blood of The Star Dragon

Princess Rao has been kidnapped!

The presumptive heir to the throne of Drinax vanishes from the Floating Palace, and the kingdom is thrown into anarchy. Prince Harrick, the other potential heir, travelled to Asim mere hours before his sister disappeared. Is he planning a coup, or has some other villain taken advantage of the rift between the two siblings to sow dissent? Did Rao’s involvement in

interstellar diplomacy force some enemy’s hand? Or could Rao herself have fled Drinax for some reason? Unable to trust his courtiers, not even the captain of his guards, King Oleb asks the characters to investigate the kidnapping of his daughter.

The quest for the princess takes the characters from Drinax to Asim, and involves both palace intrigue and bloody firefights. Of course, the characters may have their own ideas about Rao’s fate. Holding the princess of Drinax would give the pirates control over the nascent Kingdom...

Perils

Ihatei!

Spies report the gathering of a huge number of Aslan second sons in the camps of Kteiroa, only two parsecs from Drinax. The *ihatei* are an explosive threat – if a charismatic leader emerges, he could lead an invasion across the border. This threat must be defused, so the characters are sent into Aslan space. Their mission is to ensure that no warlord unites the *ihatei* into a fighting force.

The characters learn that the influx of *ihatei* comes from a minor Aslan clan, the Htyowao. For decades, the Htyowao and their rivals, the Hkaaiheir, have been locked in combat over the world of Keaih. After multiple triumphs, the Hkaaiheir seem about to win the way, and *ihatei* who would normally go seeking glory under the banner of the Htyowao are now turning their eyes elsewhere. The best way for the characters to preserve Drinax is to prolong the war...

The Game of Sun and Shadow

Too many bites from insects, and the elephant stirs. A detachment of Imperial warships departs the fleet base at Pax Rulin, heading out into the wild space of the Trojan Reach. These pirate hunters are a threat to every raider and privateer in the sector – including the player characters.

The player characters escape the initial sweep, but dozens of other pirates are captured by the Imperium and taken back to Pax Rulin in chains. If the characters could chase the warships back to the fleet base and break their pirate comrades out of prison, it would make their reputation and tweak the nose of the Imperial powers.

The Vorito Gambit

The characters capture a minor prize – a courier ship. Such small vessels normally aren’t worth a pirate’s time, but this one is different. The courier belongs to the General Development Corporation, a megacorporation set up to foster trade and commerce throughout the sector. Searching the courier, the characters find a hidden cache of documents that reveal the corporation’s sinister purpose – GeDeCo’s agents manipulate worlds across the Trojan Reach to create a buffer against the Aslan. They have spies everywhere – including Drinax! The merchant Rachando is a secret agent for GeDeCo.

Rumours of the Reach

11	An Aslan trade convoy vanished near Acrid. No debris, no reports of weapons fire. Could a dozen ships have misjumped simultaneously?	41	No Aslan raider will attack a ship carrying one of the clan gods. Just get the right figurine and you're safe from then.
12	There's an asteroid in the Sperle system that's 90% gold and platinum.	42	The Ghost of Sindal flies an invisible starship. It's got an Ancient cloaking device.
13	It's bad luck to jump without first praying to the Starry-Eyed God who rules the space between the stars.	43	There's a Solomani colony flotilla still travelling at sublight speeds through the Trojan Reach. Millions of colonists in deep freeze, looking for a home.
14	Blacksand City on Theev is secretly ruled by Hivers.	44	An Imperial noble is travelling the Reach in disguise, hunting exotic animals.
15	The rulers of Byrni want to build a HighPort to control traffic through their system.	45	The rulers of the Ahroay'if clan – the richest Aslan in Tliowaha subsector – are all addicted to dustspice.
16	There are secret Imperial refuelling stations at empty hexes in the Sindal sector, including 0705 and 0708.	46	The Ine Givar are building a fleet of warships in the Trojan Reach. They're going to launch an invasion of Corridor sector and cut the Marches off from the Imperium.
21	Aslan pirate hunters can't detect you if you hide in the upper atmosphere of a gas giant.	51	Any pirate who reveals the jump co-ordinates of Theev is flayed alive and their skin is flown as a flag over Port Blacksand.
22	The solar flares on Pandora block travel through the system once every seven years.	52	There's a Zhodani agent at large in the Reach who'll pay for information about Imperial shipping & defences.
23	The Imperium allows the scientists on Techworld to experiment with illegal technologies.	53	The legendary pirate Scurrilous Dave buried his treasure hoard somewhere on the moon of Homestead.
24	Admiral Darokyn's flagship, the <i>Sorrowful Maiden</i> , has a damaged port sensor array.	54	There's an impurity in the atmosphere of the gas giant in Cordan. If you refuel by scooping, it'll fry your jump drive.
25	There's a secret conspiracy of Aslan females who defy convention and own property on human worlds, working through human agents.	55	The Emperors of Sindal were immortal – they only died by murder. They knew about a perfect anagathic, but the secret was lost when the Empire fell.
26	There's an old woman who runs the Starport bar on Falcon who knows more about freighter schedules and how to rb them than anyone else.	56	If the Imperium capture you, you can avoid execution if you ask for a transfer to the Scout Service instead. They'll send you on the most dangerous, suicidal mission they have, but at least it's a chance...
31	Never trust a Vargr with a gold tooth.	61	There's a lost ruby mine on Paal that was overrun with monsters from offworld.
32	Every ship from the Tobia Commerce Guild carries at least six trained marines on board to repel pirates.	62	The Aslan card game called Lion's Paw is fixed – never bet against a cat holding purple suns.
33	The <i>Yarrow</i> , a 50,000 ton megafreighter that misjumped six years ago, was sighted drifting through deep space near Marduk.	63	The Imperium can track you through jump space if you jump away within 5,000k of one of their ships.
34	It's good luck to leave a cargo container behind after looting a prize.	64	There's a clerk on Fist who can be bribed to learn the cargo manifest of every ship that leaves port.
35	The Jolly Roger hullplate from Scurrilous Dave's pirate ship is somewhere on Pourné.	65	Go to the starport on Camoran. Find the arms dealer. Say 'Never Forget' to her. She'll tell you what to do next.
36	The madmen who live on the space station called The World have strange psychic powers.	66	The Space Kraken is hungry this year...

Behind The Scenes: Why Drinax?

Why lavish all this attention on a single planet that has never played a major part in the *Official Traveller Universe*, especially as the players are likely to leave it at the start of the campaign? Why not just say to the players 'you're pirates – off you go'?

There are three reasons why we chose Drinax as the starting point for this campaign.

Firstly, you'll need a context for piracy. Pirates don't randomly set sail attacking merchants – there are always reasons for the pirates to risk their lives, and reasons for the merchants to be there in the first place. Drinax, with its lost empire and its position between the Aslan Hierate and the Third Imperium, fulfills both these requirements, and making the characters semi-legal *privateers* instead of villainous *pirates* means that any sort of player character, from the most blood-thirsty rogue to an honourable noble can take part in the campaign.

Secondly, Drinax makes a great home base for a pirate, without providing an overwhelming advantage. The characters can retreat there for repairs, shelter or advice, or to sell off their ill-gotten gains.

Thirdly, the fate of Drinax provides the spine of the campaign's metaplot. Whether the characters fight to save Drinax or profit from its doom, the last days or rebirth of the Kingdom drive events throughout the campaign.

Confronting the spy on Drinax, the villain begs for his life. If they spare him, Rachando will help the characters loot the bank vault of the GeDeCo headquarters. Can the characters get past the corporation's defences and break into the vault without being found? What is GeDeCo's real purpose? Was Rachando telling the truth when he turned his coat?

The Prodigal Outcast

The exiled Aslan Kasiyl of the Ahroay'if comes to the characters with a proposal. He confesses his secret shame – he was cast out of his family for accidentally murdering a lord from a rival clan. If the characters help him prove that he was framed for the deed, then he will reward them as only an Aslan prince can. To restore Kasiyl's honour, the characters must travel deep into the Hierate and grapple with the strange rituals and rites of Aslan society.

If they fail, then they will be trapped behind enemy lines with two clans hunting them...

Finale

The lion roars! An Aslan invasion fleet reaches out to conquer the Trojan Reach. With no hope of stopping the invasion fleet in open battle, the characters must use all the skills and contacts they have gathered over the course of the campaign to disrupt the enemy supply lines, capture their couriers, and save Drinax before the Floating Palace falls. If the player characters have made allies across the reach, they can lead a grand alliance of worlds to defeat the Aslan. If not, then all the Trojan Reach will inevitably fall under the claw of the cat!

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Make *The Pirates of Drinax* your own. Add in your own adventures, and let the whims of the dice affect the course of your campaign. If the player characters make a catastrophic error and crash their ship on a deserted planet, don't fudge the result – let them struggle to find a way offworld and back to space. This is a sandbox game where anything can happen!

Refereeing The Pirates of Drinax

This campaign calls for a light touch from the Referee. Encourage the players to buckle their swashes and chew the scenery. Make everything technicolour. The court of Drinax should feel like a Shakespearean drama, with feuding nobles and conniving courtiers. Make the Imperium feel like an invincible, insurmountable and ancient foe by describing its vast size and vaster bureaucracy. Play the Aslan as exotic aliens; play the worlds of the Trojan Reach as isolated islands in a sea of stars. Go for lurid, weird descriptions; draw inspiration from *Dune* as well as *Firefly*. Mix in real-world pirate traditions and slang.

Print out a map of the four key subsectors and pin it to the wall of your gaming room. Let the players pour over the chart and plan their next moves. Track their course and the movements of rival pirates and shipping convoys on the map; note which ports are friendly and which ports want to hang the PCs. By the end of the campaign, the map should look like a tangled web of intrigue and adventure.

Follow the players, not the plot. If the players want to go take over a planet and turn it into their own little kingdom, run with that. If they decide to start a war between the Imperium and the Hierate, let them try. Give the players the freedom of open space.

Building Alliances

Keep the characters' Standing and their relationship with the various ports in the foreground of the game. Pirates don't exist in a vacuum, so to speak; there's no point in stealing cargo if you have no place to sell it and spend your winnings. Encourage the characters to work to win planets over to their side. Every system that becomes a Haven is a victory for the player characters – and always remind them of the impending threat of retaliation from one of the great imperial powers.

Mark the attitude of each port on the map, so the players can see their influence spread. If they have enough allies, they can survive the storm that hits at the end of the campaign.

The Pirate Life

Piracy breeds problems. A repetitive pirate is a dead one. If the same pirate attacks freighters landing at Wildeman six times in as many months, then the seventh freighter will be a q-ship packed with concealed interceptors and a brigade of Imperial marines. Reward the players when they move on to new systems and stay ahead of the pirate hunters; punish them unmercifully if they stick to the same hunting grounds for too long. Success breeds danger; failure breeds mutiny.

Encourage the players to plan their heists, instead of just jumping in and looking for likely prey. The random piracy rules assume no preparation on the part of the player characters, but a good pirate has a network of spies and messengers to provide advance notice of likely targets and approaching dangers.

Remember to characterise the crew. Be broad with your portrayals of the cutthroats and hired guns employed by the player characters – one distinctive personality trait is enough for most of them. If the players take an interest in one of the NPCs, you can develop that pirate's history and personality further. The crew also make obvious replacements for deceased or departed player characters.

Bookkeeping & Finances

Let the players handle the book-keeping – there's usually one player in the group who delights in spreadsheets and tracking credits on hand. The rewards of piracy vary wildly. One rich freighter's cargo can be worth hundreds of millions of credits, and that's even before you get into selling prize ships. The high cost of goods and equipment in *Traveller* means that piracy can be extremely lucrative if the pirates get lucky.

While the basic costs (fuel, maintenance, life support, ammo and repairs) are set and unchanging, you can adjust other economic factors to keep the player characters on the edge of poverty if necessary. If the characters are struggling, then let them gain the support of unaligned worlds cheaply by adventuring. If you need to drain their coffers, then have the unaligned worlds demand expensive upgrades like HighPorts, System Defences Boats, shipyards and automated factories.

Optionally, you can dispense with most of the book-keeping entirely, assume that the characters are making ends meet most of the time, and focus on big, dramatic shifts in their situation. If the characters get a big score, give them a choice of ways to spend it – do they buy a new ship? Upgrade a friendly port? Invest in a legitimate business? Fund a mercenary army?

The Court at Drinax

The court of King Oleb is the character's home base; King Oleb summons them to report on their progress at infrequent intervals. As the characters' piratical endeavours prove successful, they will be courted by the factions at court.

Princess Rao came up with the idea of attacking Imperial shipping under a false flag to force concessions, but she has no desire to marry an uncouth pirate. If any of the player characters intend to accept King Oleb's offer of his daughter's hand, they will need to prove themselves a worthy match for a princess.

Prince Harrick is an enigma. Is he still sane? Is he jealous of his younger sister? Is he a pawn of some other faction, or a hero in waiting who will prove himself in the coming war?

Lord Wrax is an obstacle for the player characters to overcome. He wants them gone from the court; the characters must either prove their worth or else discredit Lord Wrax's objections. Scholar Voha is an exposition dispenser for background about the Sindalian Empire and the Trojan Reach, while the Imperial ambassador Thao Poloc is there mainly for comic relief, as the characters must ensure he never finds out that they are pirates.

Some of the other courtiers all have their own goals and interests that can be advanced with the help of the player characters. Do the characters help the oppressed Asimen, or work with the Vespexers to restore Drinax? If Lady Hil insinuates that she can help the characters at court, what does she want in exchange?

Several of the courtiers play key roles in upcoming adventures; Kasiyl (*The Prodigal Outcast*), Rachando (*The Vorito Gambit*) and Sal Dancet (*Ihate!*) are all important NPCs in adventures to come.

Release Schedule

- Honour Among Thieves
- Treasure Ship
- Ihate!
- The Demon's Eye
- The Treasure of Sindal
- The Game of Sun and Shadow
- The Vorito Gambit
- The Prodigal Outcast
- Blood of the Star Dragon
- Finale