
TRAVELLER

THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

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ADVENTURE 1

HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

'This is the free trader Beowulf, calling anyone... Mayday, mayday, we are under attack...'

The raiders didn't bother stopping to loot the free trader. They had bigger prey in mind. Three ships shot past the crippled Beowulf, flipping over as they did so. Their grav-plates bloomed with energy, slowing their headlong flight towards the looming planet ahead. As the ghostly tendrils of the outer atmosphere began to heat their hulls, two of the ships turned again to dive into the planet's gravity well. The third ship aerobraked and moved itself to an overwatch orbit, its turret-mounted weapons ready to defend its cronies as they landed to loot the planet below.

'Mayday... losing cabin pressure... calling anyone... please help.'

There was no answer. The radio bands were empty except for the coded screeches of the pirates, and the endless hiss of the void.

And soon, there was only the void.

Honour Among Thieves is the first adventure in the Pirates of Drinax campaign. If you are a player in this campaign, **STOP READING NOW!** If you're a Referee, then you should first read *The Pirates of Drinax Campaign* document to get an overview of the campaign.

This adventure takes place in the Tliowaha and Sindal subsectors of the Trojan Reaches. The year is assumed to be 1105. The assumed starting point is Drinax, but the characters can begin the adventure in any system where rumours can reach them.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Two worlds near Drinax – Torpol and Clarke were recently attacked by raiders. While both these planets are on the Florian Trade route, and so see a lot of piracy, these attacks were not piratical attacks on shipping. They were raids on the planets themselves. The governments of both worlds are furious, and are offering rewards for information leading to the capture of these raiders.

Both Torpol and Clarke were once part of the Kingdom of Drinax, and King Oleg's daughter Rao believes that if Drinaxian heroes were to bring these raiders to justice, it would help move both worlds closer to an alliance with their old rulers. The player characters are contacted by agents of Drinax and sent to visit Torpol and Clarke.

The characters find that some of the ships involved in the attack could only make Jump-2, limiting the number of systems they could have reached to only a handful. The characters quickly determine that the raiders fled to Borite.

Searching that system, the characters discover that one of the raiders was abandoned by his former compatriots and exiled to a barely-habitable moon. After rescuing the raider, a Vargr called Krrsh, he reveals who the raiders were, and guides the characters to the pirate world of Theev. The raiders were under the command of an upstart named Ferrik Redthan, who is trying to form an alliance with one of the pirate gangs of Theev.

On Theev, the characters must negotiate a truce or alliance with the gangs if they are to capture Ferrik. Ferrik's right-hand woman, Miria Silver, is negotiating on his behalf on Theev, and through her the characters need to engineer a situation where they can ambush Ferrik's ship and capture him – dead or alive...

1. THE TOUCH OF THE KING

The characters are contacted by Princess Rao in person if they are on Drinax; otherwise, she sends them a holographic message via Sal Dancet, who tracks the characters down wherever they are. Her message is brief and to the point if delivered by holo, but if the princess speaks to the characters directly, she is more conspiratorial and presents the scheme as a clever way to manipulate the politics of the subsector instead of an order from the king.

Rao explains that two nearby worlds, Torpol and Clarke, were both hit by the same raiding party. The raiders initially landed on Clarke, then headed to Torpol. They then jumped out and have not been seen since. Both governments want to punish the raiders, and have put a price on their heads.

The provost merchant-princes of Torpol are moderately friendly towards Drinax; the insular Psychopomps of Clarke are much less trusting, but have lately made overtures towards King Oleb's court. Rao believes that if the player characters capture the pirates and turn them over in the name of King Oleb, it would tip the balance towards Drinax. She urges the characters to head to Clarke and Torpol with all speed.

Rumours and Secrets

Checking with contacts and allies, sleuthing around starport bars with Streetwise and Carouse, or simple past experience gets the characters some possibly relevant rumours:

- Virtually all the pirates in this region of space are either based at or regularly visit the 'pirate world' of Theev.
- However, getting to Theev is tricky. Those who land there without permission from the Lords of Blacksand City end up dead. To visit Theev safely, you need a pirate's code, and none of the characters have such a code.
- Raiding a planet with such a small force is unusual for pirates. Either they were looking for something in particular, or they were trying to make a name for themselves.

The Bounties

The bounties on the pirates posted by both worlds are slowly filtering out into the wider Reach; there is no Xboat network outside the Imperial subsectors, so news travels only as fast as tramp ships carry it. The Clarke bounty is 0.5 MCr, while the Torpol bounty is 2MCr for the pirates, dead or alive, although proof must be provided that these are indeed the raiders who attacked both worlds.

2. THE PSYCHOPOMPS OF CLARKE

Clarke (see page 17) is not a welcoming world. The characters approach the starport through a grey rainstorm, and fly over a million-strong cemetery before they reach a landing pad. The political power on this grey world is held by the Psychopomps, the death-worshipping priests. The starport is neutral ground and controlled directly by the Psychopomps. The port is moderately busy, but few ships spend very long here. Most land, refuel and depart again without trading. Clarke is a stop on the Florian Trade route, but not a popular one. Most ships head for Torpol or the Dustbelt worlds (Oghma, Marduk and so on) as soon as they can, before the mortuary mood of Clarke seeps into their souls.

There is a necrotemple atop the starport, and the characters are directed there if they ask about the recent attacks. The necrotemple is a black pyramid, built from thousands of black monolithic slabs. On close examination, the characters realise that these black slabs are carbon grave markers and each one contains a corpse. The corpses features peer out of one face of the monolith like a bas-relief. They are surrounded by the dead.

Keeper Malos

The starport administrator is also a priest of the death cult, and he attends to his commercial duties with as much zeal as his religious ones. **Malos** wears black robes, and on his back is a ceremonial freezer-tank that contains the carbon-foam spray used to preserve the dead. He is never without this pack; the first and foremost role of the Psychopomp is to catch those who would otherwise 'pass into true death'. Malos is cheery and personable as Psychopomps go, although that just means he's slightly less glum and dour when standing next to another priest.

Like the other inhabitants of Clarke, Malos sees offworlds as 'ephemerals', who will die once and be forgotten instead of receiving the carbon-foam blessing of preservation. As such, he tried to get through any conversation with ephemerals as quickly as he can – why bother squandering time on foolish people who have embraced their temporary nature, who will be gone in an eyeblink?

If asked about the raiders, Malos becomes visibly angry. The raiders *killed* many people before they could be preserved – deliberate killing is the highest sin in the Psychopomp faith. Those murdered by the raiders will never be resurrected on the day of healing. He shows the characters the location of the attack using his computer terminal.

Keeper Malos

Age 42, 6 terms

STR 5 DEX 6 END 8 INT 9 EDU 8 SOC 8

Admin 3, Computers 0, Comms 1, Diplomat 2, Medic 2, Perform (preach) 2, Persuade 1, Social Science (theology) 3

Playing Malos:

- Make lots of morbid jokes. Talk about the rewards the PCs will get if they survive, about how dead comes to everyone, about how fleeting life is.
- Smile with the saddest face you can manage.
- Clasp your hands and bow your head like a monk.

The Relic-quarry

The raiders attacked a 'relic-quarry' – an archaeological dig at the edge of the ruins of Hiewad City, where explorers look for high-tech items and materials that survived the bombardment. The explorers remind the characters of the Vespexers of Drinax, who practice a similar form of scavenging.

The traces of the attack are obvious – blast marks on the ground from weapons fire, imprints in the mud where ships landed, and the remains of the warehouse that once contained relics from the ruined city. The warehouse was blasted with a ship-mounted pulse laser.

An **Intelligence + Investigate check** (Average +0, 1-6 hours) lets the characters reconstruct what happened here. Their findings depend on the Effect of the check. Optionally, the characters can use Sensors or Recon as part of a Task Chain to improve their chances.

No other clues are available on this benighted system. The trail leads to Torpol.

3. THE PROVOSTS OF TORPOL

Torpol has both a HighPort and a DownPort; the HighPort is really just for refuelling, so the characters are directed to the southern polar port where they are to meet by the Provost Martial, **Haddo Farx**. The public sections of the polar port emphasise Torpol's carefully maintained reputation as a watery paradise that's both a safe place to refuel and a wild party planet, with holograms of tropical beaches and sun-kissed seascapes blocking the view of the howling polar blizzards outside. The characters are escorted behind into the grey corridors of the private starport to meet with Provost Farx who fills the crew in on what happened.

The Attack

Torpol's lack of stable land means that many of its industrial facilities are in orbit. The target of the pirate attack was one of these orbital factories, an automated chemical refinery. The factory's onboard cameras transmitted images of the attack just before they were destroyed. The images show two ships approaching from the orbital refuelling dock. A barrage of deadly accurate laser fire severs the refinery's cargo module, and one of the ships swoops in to capture it. The other vessel moves to provide cover, then departs. One of the ships was a Far Trader, the other was a 400-ton Vulture-class salvage hauler.

Falx confirms that both ships refuelled at the orbital dock. They conducted their business electronically, and gave false names, claiming to *Argo 1* and *Argo 2*. The ships just bought fuel and departed; none of their crews left the ships.

Effect	Finding
0	Two pirate ships landed here and attacked. They killed everyone present before blasting the door off the warehouse and looting the place. From the warehouse records, they stole primarily recovered computer parts; these parts could be salvaged by a TL14+ culture. Any character with Broker 2+ or an appropriate Trade skill knows that the Florian Empire buys such scrap for recycling.
1 to 2	The pirate ships consisted of a Type-S Scout and a Far Trader, both refitted with extra weapons. Not exactly a terrifying fighting force – if these are the same ships that attacked Torpol, then there must have been a third ship, one with a lot more firepower.
3 to 4	The Psychopomps of Clarke have already visited the attack site, and there are a half-dozen fresh carbon-foam monoliths preserving the dead who might be saved. Examining these monoliths reveals that one of the victims could be revived with high-tech medical equipment. Reviving the victim requires a Very Hard (-4) Education + Medic check; if successful, the victim tells the characters that the pirates were led by a young man in what looked like an Imperial naval uniform. She also mentions that the scout ship filled its hold first and departed several hours ahead of the free trader. If the characters fail to revive the woman, the Psychopomps are furious – in their eyes, the characters have interfered with the sacred monolith. The characters are no longer welcome outside Clarke's starport.
5 or more	The characters discover that the scavenger's radio system recorded several messages broadcast by the pirates. The messages are encrypted (Difficult (-2) Intelligence + Comms to decrypt), but if cracked, reveal that the pirate leader was named Ferrik; there was also a woman called Miria commanding a ship that remained in orbit, and a third captain called Krrsh.

Investigation

Using Sensors (Intelligence + Sensors, Difficult (-2), 1-6 minutes) to enhance the video images gives the characters more information about their targets. The 200-ton Far Trader has two double turrets, both equipped with twin pulse lasers. The 400-ton salvage hauler has two single and two double turrets, and is armed with two pulse lasers, two sandcasters, and two missile launchers. The salvage hauler was recently repainted, but using computer analysis the characters can discern a logo and a registry beneath the paint – the salvage hauler bears the starburst-and-starship of the Imperial Navy! She is actually the Imperial Navy ship *Mercifuge*.

Checking the records with Admin or Computers, or asking around the starport bar with Carouse gets the characters some details on the hauler. According to official bulletins, the *Mercifuge* was part of a flotilla that fled the Imperium under the command of renegade 'Admiral' Darokyn some thirty years ago. The *Mercifuge* is listed as stolen. According to pirate lore, Darokyn is based on the mysterious world of Theev, which most charts place at being somewhere in Sindal subsector. Characters with naval experience or contacts have heard of Darokyn; see the Library Data.

Accessing communications logs with Comms (Intelligence + Comms, Very Difficult (-4), 10-60 minutes) reveals that the putative *Argo 1* – the Far Trader – made a single radio transmission while docked at the refuelling station. It broadcast an encrypted greeting to another ship, a refitted scout, that was landed at the Torpol DownPort. If the characters follow this lead, they learn about the *Sarcomond* incident. Alternatively, if they already know there was a third pirate ship, a scout, at Clarke, then investigating that ship (Social Standing + Investigation, Average (+0), 10-60 minutes) leads them to the *Sarcomond*.

The scoutship, the *Misery's Company*, landed at Torpol a day before the two *Argos* arrived. There, the scoutship's captain, a Vargr called Krrrsh, sold computer scrap material to another trader called **Holmer**. The characters can easily determine that this scrap was the same material looted from Clarke. The *Misery's Company* refuelled and departed. Near the jump limit, it was involved in an incident with another ship, the *Sarcomond*, but no-one other than the *Sarcomond*'s crew know exactly what happened.

The Sarcomond Incident

The *Sarcomond* is a 200-ton Far Trader captained by an Asiman named **Danel Vlaw**. It is an old and battered trader, built in the heyday of the Kingdom of Drinax, but she's still flying. She is currently docked at the Torpol DownPort, undergoing repairs after she was attacked by a scoutship. The characters can easily track down Captain Vlaw in the downport bar, but convincing him to talk is a harder proposition. Vlaw fled Asim when it was conquered by the Drinaxians twenty years ago, and despises

Provost Falx

The Starport Administrator is one of the Provosts, an order of administrators and facilitators who engineer society on Torpol. Falx dresses in bright orange robes and has a tiny golden fez with a scale model of the starport on top of it. He is young and ambitious, and has his eye on the role of Grand High Provost within ten years.

Age 34, 4 terms

STR 6 DEX 4 END 6 INT 10 EDU 11 SOC 9

Admin 2, Carouse 2, Computers 3, Comms 2, Diplomat 2, Streetwise 2, Persuade 3

Playing Falx:

- Everyone's your friend. Be friendly and open. Make them like you.
- Finding these pirates could make your career. Drive the investigation; push the player characters to succeed
- Always have a drink in hand, and make sure the players have drinks too.

the nobles of the Floating Palace. Getting him to talk requires either Persuade, Carouse or Deception + Intelligence; it is Routine (+2) if he does not know they are from Drinax, and Very Difficult (-4) if he thinks they are working for the conquerors.

Vlaw is initially unwilling to discuss what happened between his ship and the *Misery's Company*; he is a hard-nosed, independent trader who has had his own share of shady dealings and opportunistic piracy. If the characters win his confidence, or reveal that the scoutship was involved in a murderous raid on Clarke, then he gives them an account of what happened. As the *Sarcomond* approached Torpol, a scoutship approached on a suspiciously tight course. When she came within range, she flipped over, matched velocity with the *Sarcomond*, and demanded that the Far Trader hand over her cargo.

Vlaw smiles at this point. "My ship, she has surprises. Two pop-up turrets, you see. Bad news for pirates. I burn the pirate amidships, here and here" - he pokes one of the PCs in the stomach and chest, for emphasis – "and she is very, very scared. Over the radio, I hear them calling for the jump. Their captain is Vargr, I think. He orders them to jump for Borite."

Tracking The Raiders

Vlaw's account sends the characters straight to Borite; if the characters fail to track down Vlaw, then a quick check of star charts presents a limited number of systems where the pirates could have gone. Jump-2 from Torpol puts them in range of Clarke, Blue, Drinax, Asim, Oghma, Marduk and Borite. Three of these systems can be eliminated immediately – they know the pirates did not return to Clarke, and the characters have heard no work of pirate attacks on Drinax or Asim.

Daniel Vlaw

Age 50, 8 terms

STR 6 DEX 6 END 7 INT 6 EDU 7 SOC 5

Admin 1, Broker 2, Astrogation 3, Carouse 1, Comms 2, Computers 0, Engineer (jump) 2, Engineer (power plant) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Mechanic 4, Melee (brawl) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Survival 2, Vacc Suit 2

Armour: Vacc Suit (6)

Weapons: Autopistol (3d6-3, Auto 3)

Playing Vlaw:

- Don't trust anyone. The whole universe is out to screw you over.
- Talk in a gravelly, throaty voice.
- Emphasise everything you do with gestures. Make everything physical.

If the characters visit the other systems, see the Worlds of the Reach section on page 17. The trail continues at Borite with *The Castaway*.

4. THE CASTAWAY

Scanning the Borite system picks up something interesting – a very weak distress call emanating from the gas giant. On approach, the characters detect an ancient space station in orbit. The station is more than two thousand years old, and dates back to the old Empire of Sindal. It was once a High Guard outpost of the Sindalian fleet, protecting ships as they refuelled from the hydrogen-rich world below. Now, it is an abandoned antique, crumbling and punctured by thousands of micro-meteorites. It is slowly drifting down into the atmosphere, and will burn up in another five hundred years or so. A successful Education + Sensors roll (Average (+0), 10-60 minutes) in the vicinity of the station picks up several interesting facts.

- The station shows signs of being repaired within the last century, probably by pirates using it as a base, but there is no sign of any present occupancy.
- The distress call is a low-powered automated beacon, consistent with the sort built into a good-quality vacc suit. Someone must have boosted the signal for the characters to detect it. A close examination shows that the suit's communications system has been removed and wired into the station's transmitter dish – the suit wearer now has no way of communicating with the outside world unless he goes back to the communications unit.
- There is some debris floating near the space station; analysis shows it to be hull plating and rivets from a small ship, probably the *Misery's Company*. There is not enough debris for the ship to have broken up; more likely, they docked here to make repairs after being pummelled by the *Sarcomond*.

- Thermal imaging of the station shows at least one heat source on board. From the trace, it is a humanoid, probably a Vargr, in poor health and in a vacc suit.

Attempting to hail the Vargr brings no response.

Docking with the station is tricky (Dexterity + Pilot, Difficult (-2), 1-6 minutes) due to the extreme age and fragility of the station. Doing anything like ramming it, cutting through the hull or firing ship-mounted weapons is likely to cause parts of the station to break off.

The Slumbering Horror

The old Sindalian station was indeed used by pirates as a refuge and refuelling station for many years, until His Grace showed up. His Grace was a pirate who claimed to be the illegitimate son of the Duke of Tobia, and amused his crewmates with his lordly airs and graces. In keeping with his noble heritage, he was a collector of art and curiosities from across Known Space. One of his most prized acquisitions was a sculpture that he believed to be a petrified Hiver specimen (and when he found out that Hivers look nothing like folded-up tarantulas, he began to claim it came from a semi-mythical 'Hiver Queen'). In fact, the sculpture came from Foreven Sector.

Every traveller knows what happens when you bring a mysterious alien artefact onto an isolated space station, especially if the merchant you bought it from swears that it is completely dormant and harmless.

His 'sculpture' awoke, drawn by the heat of human bodies and the psionic trace of their emotions. It unfolded, insectoid limbs stretching out obscenely like chitinous origami. Deposits of petrified acid flaked off, revealing razor-sharp mandibles. The Chamax Hunter's first victim was His Grace. It stalked the rest of the crew through the space station, killing them one by one until the last survivors escaped. Deprived of fresh prey, the Chamax returned to its slumber.

Since then, the space station has been almost completely abandoned except for a few pirate crews who use it as a means of ceremonial execution. If the crew decide that one of their number has failed or betrayed them, they bring the unfortunate victim to the Borite system and abandon him on board the nameless station.

It happen immediately, or it may take several hours, but the presence of heat and life awakens the Chamax...

Chamax Hunter

A Chamax is a hostile xenomorph from a world deep in Foreven sector. It resembles a tarantula the size of huge dog, and possesses the ability to secrete a powerful molecular acid from its jaws. On their native world, the creatures are an unstoppable marauding horde that sweeps across the planet, devouring everything in their path. Fortunately, this particular specimen is a sterile Hunter, not a fecund Maternal Chamax that could produce thousands of offspring.

Hunter Chamax

Pouncer Omnivore **Any Habitat**

STR 10 DEX 14 END 15 INT 2 INS 10 PAC 0 PSI 8

Recon 3, Stealth 4, Melee (bite) 3, Gun Combat (acid spray) 0, Survival 4, Telepathy 3

Armour 3; any damage dice rolled against the chamax that do not roll a 6 are ignored, as the creature is composed mainly of undifferentiated tissue and has few vital organs.

Bite: 2d6+2 damage

Acid: The chamax may spit or vomit acid on its victims. An acid spray inflicts 3d6 damage; furthermore, permanently reduce the protection of the victim's armour by 1 for each die that rolls a 6.

Life Sense: The chamax is telepathic, but is only smart enough to use the *Life Detection* form of the talent.

Radio Sense: The chamax can hear and speak in the radio spectrum.

The Prisoner

The Vargr on the station is Krrsh, former captain of *Misery's Company*. His crewmates abandoned him here after he impetuously ordered the attack on the *Sarcomond*. He knows that being cast away on this station is a death sentence, and has heard legends that the monster is drawn to radio signals. By wiring his suit communicator to the station's transmitter dish, he has managed to boost the chances of his distress call being detected and also lure the monster away from him. The one downside is that his rescuers are walking into a trap...

When the characters rescue Krrsh, see page 9 for Krrsh's Tale.

Krrsh the Vargr

Age 34 – 4 terms Pirate

STR 6 DEX 8 END 7 INT 4 EDU 5 SOC 3 CHA 10

Astrogation 1, Comms 1, Computers 0, Deception 0, Engineer (jump) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Mechanic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Persuade 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 1, Sensors 0, Space Science 0, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1

Vacc Suit (4)

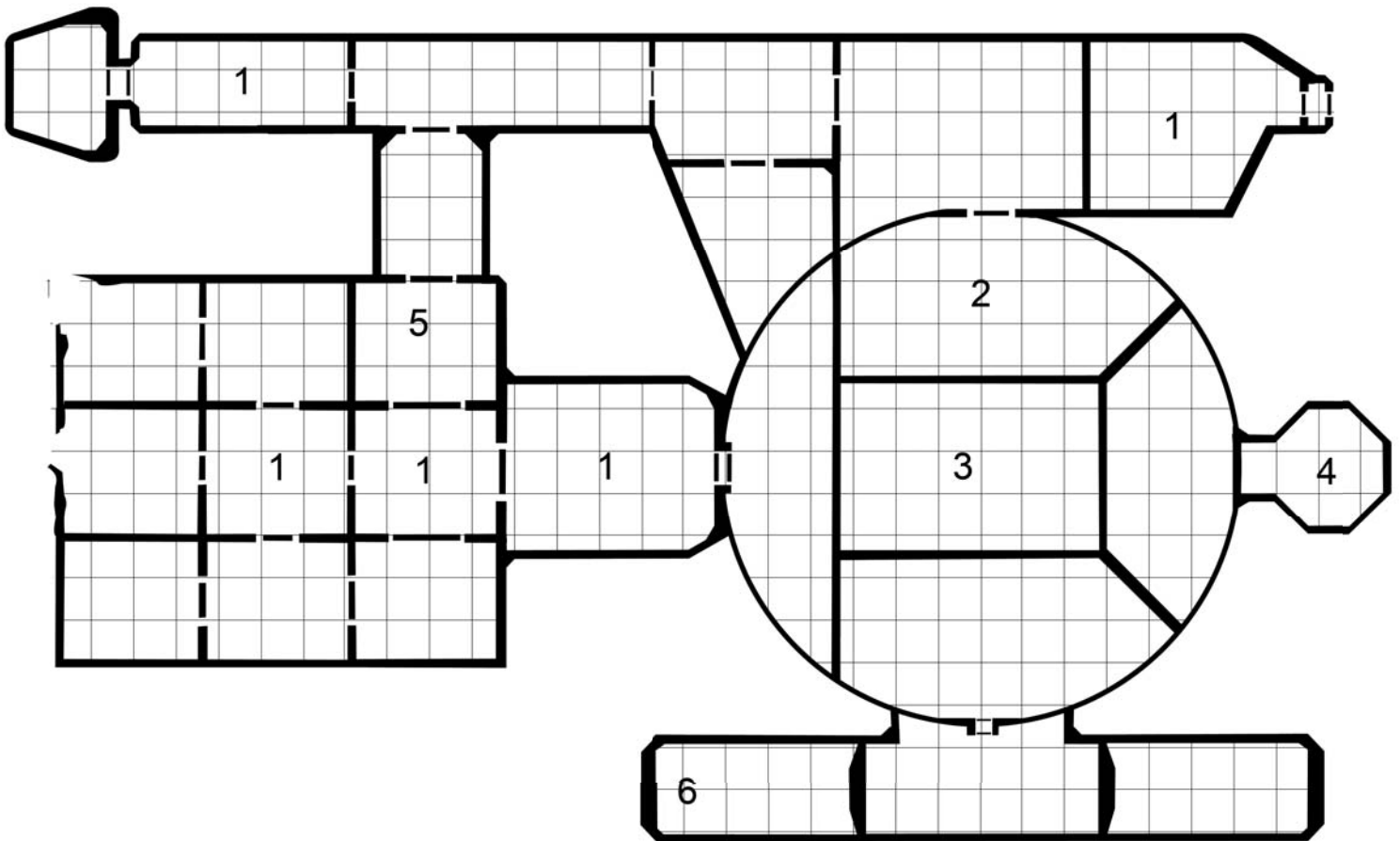
Cutlass: 2d6+4

Playing Krrsh:

- You're really not that bright, but you are used to barking orders and getting your way.
- The loss of your ship humiliated you. You feel broken and defeated, so you're looking for a strong leader to take charge of you.
- Bow your head, hunch your shoulders, whine like a whipped dog.

The Station

Most of the ancient station is completely non-functional. No light, no gravity, no air, no heat, no functioning computer system, no automatic doors or airlocks – the characters have to use vacc suits and operate all the doors manually to move through the station. A few areas have light, heat and thin air, powered by nuclear batteries.



The station is divided into several zones, as shown on the map. Assume it takes one minute to move through a zone, and ten minutes to search a zone with Intelligence + Recon. Most of the zones are just stretches of empty corridor and abandoned rooms, but some have locations of interest.

1. Manual Airlocks: On the far side of these airlocks are the few parts of the station that are still inhabitable. The Chamax can survive in vacuum for brief periods, but prefers the relative warmth and comfort of pressure. It is intelligent enough to work the airlocks in a fumbling way.

2. Deranged Ravings: One of the previous castaways scrawled messages into the wall here with a shard of metal. The messages speak of *'the ghost'* and *'the voice on the radio'*, but mostly just repeats *'it's coming'* over and over again. Nearby, the characters find the acid-scorched remains of a vacc suit – something melted through the chest and devoured everything within. A successful Animals, Life Science or Medic roll suggests that the occupant of the space suit was partially dissolved and then sucked out. The suit was fitted for a Human, not a Vargr – this clearly isn't a fresh kill.

3. Painting of the Emperor: The wall here is decorated with an ancient painting, preserved by the vacuum. It depicts some long-dead Emperor of Sindal, wearing the traditional crown jewels of the Sindalian Empire – the lanthanum-alloy crown, the Thalassan Pearl, the diamond-encrusted rings of Kether and the fabled Eagle of Sol.

4. Communications Dish: The communications system from Krrsh's suit is here, wired into the dish and endlessly broadcasting its distress call.

5. The Chamax's Lair: The Chamax slumbers in this air vent when not hunting. The vent is covered with resinous secretions to make it a comfortable nest for the horror. Digging through the nest turns up a few indigestible remains of victims, like cybernetic implants or artificial teeth.

6. Krrsh's Hiding Place: The Vargr is hiding here until he runs out of oxygen. When his supplies run low, he heads back to the nearest airlock to refill his suit.

Bug Hunt

The Chamax hunts using three different senses – it can detect heat, it can psionically sense the presence of life, and it has an internal organ that 'sees' and 'speaks' in the radio spectrum. It uses all three of these sensors to pick its targets. The life sense awakens it when prey arrives at the station; the heat traces allow it to detect weapons and movement, and the radio-spectrum organ allows it to determine which of the targets is the most dominant. It can also transmit its own radio transmissions; it can use this to create bursts of static that jam communications, or it can mimic the frequency of a distress call. It is not intelligent enough to mimic human voices.

The bug is fast and agile enough to cross two zones in the time it takes the player characters to move through one. It can only spend a maximum of six minutes in vacuum; if kept in vacuum beyond this time limit, it takes 1d6 damage per round. It tries to target player characters who are alone and unarmed. In vacuum, it may use its acid to breach their vacc suits and then drag their corpses back into the habitable zones.

- **Hearing the bug:** Intelligence + Recon, Impossible (-8) in vacuum or Very Hard (-4) in atmosphere, 1-6 seconds.
- **Detecting the bug:** Needs suitable equipment such as a motion tracker. Intelligence + Sensors, Difficult (-2), 10-60 seconds.
- **Tracking the bug:** Intelligence + Survival, Very Hard (-4), 1-6 seconds
- **Fighting the bug:** Any explosions or projectile weapons may damage the fragile space station. If any attack misses the Chamax and inflicts 10 or more damage, then the station takes a hit. In the pressurised section, a hit causes part of the station to decompress; in the vacuum sections, damage to the station causes a hull breach and can even cause a part of the station to break off from the rest.

The Chamax's primary aim is to kill as many player characters as possible; in an ideal world, it would also escape on the player character's ship afterwards, but it does not have the intelligence to plan towards this eventuality.

The Vargr Krrsh has 10 minutes of air in his suit when the characters arrive. He heads to the nearest habitable section when his air runs low, and stays there while refilling his suit (one minute in the habitable area gives him another five minutes of air).

Krrsh's Tale

The Vargr is pathetically grateful for the rescue, and confesses everything over a bowl of food and a bottle of rum or four. His account is rambling and slightly confused, but covers the following major points:

- He was the captain of *Misery's Company*, and part of the retinue of a human pirate called Ferrik Redthane.
- His crew abandoned him at the station. They turned on him after he ordered an attack on a freighter that turned out to have more guns than expected. One of his crew was killed in the attack.
- He was also part of the raiding party that hit Clarke.
- Ferrik Redthane was formerly part of the pirate gang commanded by Admiral Darokyn, one of the pirate lords of Theev. Krrsh does not know what happened, but Ferrik and Darokyn quarrelled, and Ferrik now has a price on his head.
- Ferrik needs the protection of one of the other pirate gangs. He launched the raids on Torpol and Clarke to show how dangerous and competent he is.
- As Ferrik dare not set foot on Theev, he's probably sent his trusted lieutenant Miria Silverhand to negotiate with the other gangs on his behalf. Krrsh and Miria hate each other, and Krrsh does not know which gangs she will approach or where she is on Theev.
- If the characters give him passage to a safe world, or offer him a place on their crew, he swears to serve them loyally.
- He knows the secret routes to Theev, and will gladly hand them over. Not only does he know a safe landing code, he also knows the location of a refuelling station in an empty region of space approximately one parsec from Theev. This station means the characters can use the jump-2 to get to Theev.

Refuelling Dump

So, after trusting their astronavigation to a drunken, traitorously incompetent Vargr pirate, the characters jump into empty space. Jumps like this are always nerve-wracking – if the jump is inaccurate, the characters will end up in deep space, with many years of sub-light travel ahead of them if they ever hope to see civilisation again. A bad jump here would be disastrous.

On arrival, a successful Sensors or Comms check immediately detects a weak beacon signal (if the check fails, make the players sweat for several hours of game time while they scan). The fuel dump – assembled at great cost over many years – is almost invisible, as it is the same temperature as the space around it and there is no light except distant starlight to illuminate it. The dump consists of hundreds of 4-dton hydrogen drums linked by pipes. Krrsh tells the characters that some of the drums

are booby-trapped with 'poisoned' hydrogen – floating in the hydrogen are heavy compounds that damage the interior of a jump drive or automatically cause misjump. He advises the characters to always use fuel purifiers on hydrogen from such a fuel dump, even though it might seem to already be refined fuel.

Once the characters have refuelled, they can make another jump to the Theev system.

5. BLACKSAND CITY

Using Krrsh's code, the characters can pass the watchful eyes of the Skull and land at the Theev DownPort. The port looks like a swarm of titanic black scarabs from above – every landing has huge bay doors that close overhead when a ship is docked there, to conceal the visitor from watchful eyes and protect them from the dust. The city itself consists of hundreds of skyscrapers that rise from a network of canyons. The skyscrapers are linked by covered walkways.

On arrival at the starport, the characters are met by a young woman who introduces herself as a Widow. She has clearly benefited from genetic and cybernetic augmentation, and may even be a clone. She wears loose black robes that could conceal any number of weapons. The Widow explains the simple laws of Blacksand City. Here, in the starport, or the Upper City, or any building marked by red flags, the Law of the Lords holds sway. The Law of Lords is no murder, no weapons fire, nothing that offends the calm and tranquility of the city. Anywhere else on the planet surface, anywhere in the canyons below, anywhere not marked by red flags, there another law holds sway – the Law of the Street. The only restriction is a ban on any weapon that might breach the city's environmental containment. The punishment for breaking either law is the same – death.

The red flag zones move, so some buildings in the Lower City are protected on one day, and left open to the Law of the Streets the next.

The Upper City

The 'safe' parts of Blacksand feel like a corporate enclave or a high-quality hotel. Pristine corridors lead to comfortable meeting rooms and entertainment suites where businessmen and diplomats can meet and discuss matters of importance. Everyone in the upper city speaks in circumlocutions, as if embarrassed to admit they are discussing piracy and murder.

The Widows of Blacksand

The Widows are the law enforcement of this lawless world. No-one is sure how many there are – black-robed, hooded figures can be seen on every street, but are all of them genetically augmented assassins? The Widows are all linked by cybernetic implants; it is debatable whether they are individuals or a single entity that occupies multiple bodies. They enforce the Laws with perfect lethality.

Blacksand Widow

Age 16 – 4 terms (vatgrown)

STR 10 DEX 14 END 12 INT 7 EDU 10 SOC 9

Athletics (co-ordination) 2, Comms 1, Computers 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 0, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 3, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 3, Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (brawl) 3, Persuade 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 2, Neural Comm, Subdermal Armour (3), Enhanced Vision, Lightweight Polycarapace Armour (12), Stunner (3d6), Laser Pistol (3d6+3), Gauss Rifle (4d6)

Playing the Widows:

- Never say a word; just smile like light glinting off a razor-edged knife.

Upper City Encounters

- This is an excellent place to meet patrons like Varik Nirgal (see page 19).
- A trio of Widows burst in and barge through wherever the players are. They cut a hole in the window, and one of them steps through while the other two seal the environmental breach. Outside, the third Widow – showing no signs of discomfort in the thin atmosphere – assembles a sniper rifle and shoots someone on the streets far below.
- A spy named **Gesh** questions the players about their association with Drinax.
- The characters are invited to dine with Admiral Darokyn (see page 16) at the Rose Pavilion. He has heard about their inquiries in town, and wishes to discuss the matter of Ferrik Redthane.

The Lower City

The unflagged flag zones of the Lower City are exceedingly dangerous; they are dark, filthy and crammed with all sorts of depravity. On street level, it is a tangled mess of bars, brothels, flop-houses and cheap entertainments for those on shore leave. Behind the cheap stalls, there are more exotic and expensive pleasures – alien drugs, strange churches, illegal technologies.

The Lower City is in a canyon; with a breather mask, you can step outdoors here, as long as you don't stay outside too long.

Lower City Locations

- **The Scrapheap:** A massive junkyard of stolen goods and wrecked ships at the edge of the city. Some people even live in the burnt-out hulks of old ships.
- **Brain Dimming:** The name is a reference to the old practice of 'jump dimming', where the lights on a ship are temporarily lowered to divert power to the jump engines. At Brain Dimming, you can buy any drug you can name, as well as lots more you never heard of, still more you can't pronounce, and even some you can't metabolise. The den caters for addicts of all species and tastes.

Blacksand Justice

Of course, the Widows are not the only danger on Blacksand. The streets enforce their own justice. If the players start causing trouble, then the pirate gangs push back, and there are lots of them and they have lots of guns. Causing trouble on Theev gets you killed unless you are part of a pirate gang or have allies there. That is why Ferrik Redthane dares not return to Theev after being banished from Admiral Darokyn's following – he needs allies, or he'll end up with his throat cut in some Lower City alleyway.

Upper City Locations

- **The Grand Hotel:** Rising like the Sword of Damocles over the city, the Grand Hotel is the biggest and best hotel on Theev. It caters primarily to visitors from the Imperium; there are other hotels owned by the same consortium for pirates and thieves.
- **Cliff District:** The corporations based in this area specialise in illegal weapons, mercenary forces, banned technologies and other... questionable activities. It's a one-stop shop for revolutionaries and war criminals. 'Going off the cliff' is Blacksand slang for resorting to illegal methods.
- **Kallos Shipyards:** The front company for the Skull's shipyards. They supply weapons and ships to pirate gangs, and recycle stolen ships for scrap.
- **The Rose Pavilion:** An expensive and exclusive restaurant with many private booths for private discussions and deals.
- **Murghen Consortium:** A mercenary group based on Theev; the Murghen Consortium has its own ships and nearly a thousand trained soldiers. It is commanded by Johanna Murghen.
- **Asharden Camp:** There are people who arrive on Theev without the money to pay the extortionate prices of the Upper City, and without the grit and fighting skills to survive below. The lucky ones end up in the Asharden Camp, a refugee camp on the edge of the upper city. Many of the denizens end up in virtual slavery in the lower city.

- **Church of the Traveller:** This cult has many adherents on Theev, especially in the Lower City. The cult believes that God is travelling the universe incognito in human form, spying on Humaniti in order to judge the species. Some believers practice charity and kindness, in the hopes that one of their beneficiaries will be God in disguise; others believe that serial murder is literally the best way to find God.
- **'Tuk's:** One of the better – or at least safer – bars in the city, the owner 'Tuk is a K'Kree bartender from the far side of the Imperium. Some of the toughest pirates have turned vegetarian after months of eating at 'Tuks. The bar has only one bouncer – 'Tuk herself.
- **The House Without Questions:** A cryptic establishment, the House Without Questions is said to be older than Theev. It is a place of last resort for travellers. One may go to the House if you have nowhere else to go, and they will take you in, clothe you, feed you and protect you, no questions asked. You may also go to the House and hire them to perform a task. If it is possible, they will quote a price, and if you pay the price, they will somehow accomplish your desired goal – again, no questions asked on either side. In effect, it is halfway between a charity and an assassin's guild.
- **Blood Pit:** A bloodsports arena, where sophonts fight to the death against monsters or each other. Gladiators, prisoners fighting alien predators, steel cage matches against killer robots, running gun battles – anything goes in the Blood Pit.

Lower City Encounters

- The characters are attacked by one of the many roving 'Blood Gangs' – scavengers who attack and murder visitors to the city, and survive by selling stolen goods and organs. The Blood Gang may flee if the characters show sufficient firepower.
- A refugee called Vii Lon begs the characters for passage offworld. She came to Theev as part of a corporate team from Tobia subsector to hire mercenaries, but her employers were killed by assassins in the Lower City, and she's now penniless and homeless on the streets.
- A band of pirates spotted the players' ship landing at the Theev starport, and intend to steal it. As most starships have high-tech security systems, their approach to theft is a simple and direct one – kidnap one of the crew, then chop bits off him until he hands over the codes.
- The players run into one of their contacts, who is in need of help – he is being harassed by thugs, threatened by pirates, or has a mission that needs doing.

Investigations in Blacksand

Asking direct questions in Blacksand City gets you stabbed – unless you look tough enough to be the one doing the stabbing. There are several ways to find information in the city; the amount of information gained depends on the Effect of the check:

- **Threats & Intimidation:** Strength + Persuade, Difficult (-2), 1-6 hours. If successful, the characters find an informant who tells them what they need to know. If unsuccessful, the characters make more trouble for themselves.
- **Gossip & Rumours:** Intelligence + Carouse or Streetwise, Difficult (-2), 1-6 days. Slow, but pretty safe.
- **Bribery:** Social Standing + Broker, Average (+0), 1-6 hours. You could buy someone's grandmother for five credits; buying information is pricier, averaging at Cr. 5,000. Fail, and they rip you off.
- **Krrsh's Contacts:** The pirate Krrsh knows the gangs on Blacksand – mainly because he's annoyed most of them in the past. He can point the characters towards Admiral Darokyn. He also knows about Miria Silverhand.
- **Encounters:** If the characters wander around Blacksand for long enough in the Upper City, Darokyn will contact them.

Thugs

A few generic thugs to throw at your players.

Big Bruiser

STR 10 DEX 4 END 10 INT 4 EDU 4 SOC 3

Athletics (strength) 2, Melee (brawl) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 1
Persuade 1, Streetwise 1

Jack (Armour 2)

Heavy Cudgel (2d6)

Mack The Knife

STR 7 DEX 9 END 5 INT 5 EDU 4 SOC 3

Melee (small blade) 2, Recon 1, Streetwise 1

Jack (Armour 2)

Monofilament Knife (1d6+2, ignores half armour)

Gunman in a Trenchcoat

STR 6 DEX 6 END 7 INT 5 EDU 4 SOC 3

Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Stealth 1, Recon 1

Jack (Armour 2)

Body Pistol (3d6-3)

Alley Kat

STR 5 DEX 5 END 7 INT 4 EDU 4 SOC 3

Melee (brawl) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 0, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2

Jack (Armour 2)

Small Cudgel (2d6)

6. THE GIRL & THE GANGS

While there are dozens of pirate crews and gangs on Theev, four in particular are important to this adventure. One we have already encountered – the small band of pirates working for Ferrik Redthane who attacked Torpol and Clarke. The second is one of the most powerful, and certainly the best organised, groups – the retinue of the pirate Admiral Darokyn. Up until recently, Ferrik was one of Darokyn's followers, but now Darokyn wants Ferrik dead (see page 15 for the details on why!).

The other two gangs are almost as powerful as Darokyn's, and both are hungry and eager to recruit new blood. One gang is led by Petyr Vallis, a raider with a grudge against the Aslan and a habit of attacking planets. The second is commanded by an Aslan named Hroal Irontooth, a fearsome pirate. Ferrik needs to convince one of these two gangs that he is worth protecting from Darokyn.

Without protection, Ferrik cannot come to Theev. He is hiding out in another system, and the characters will never find him... unless they can lure him out, or convince someone to tell them where he is.

The Girl: Miria Silverhand is Ferrik's lieutenant and emissary. She arrives on Theev a few hours after the players. She heads into the Lower City and makes her hiding place in part of the Scrapheap. Through her spies and contacts, she approaches Hroal Irontooth and Petyr Vallis and makes Ferrik's case to them. Miria knows the city very well – the players have next to no chance of finding her on their own. She rarely leaves the Scrapheap. Instead, she pays beggar-boys and penniless pirates to run errands for her and bring her messages to Hroal and Petyr.

Finding Ferrik

There are several ways for the players to track down Redthane, and they all go through Miria:

- Admiral Darokyn can tell the characters where Miria is, if he feels they are trustworthy.
- So can either of the two other gangs, but the players will have to pay dearly for that information.
- If the characters infiltrate or spy on the gangs, they can identify Miria's messengers and follow them back to her hiding place.
- The players could pretend to be a new gang that is willing to ally with Ferrik, and lure Miria into making contact with them.

Once the players have located Miria, there are three ways they can handle the situation:

- Travel to the Scrapheap, capture her and force her to talk (see page 14)
- Travel to the Scrapheap and search her room there for the location of Ferrik's ship (see page 14)
- Meet her in the Lower City in a red flag zone and convince her that she should betray her current employer
- Meet her in the Lower City in a red flag zone and trick her into telling them Ferrik's location
- Sneak onto Miria's ship, which currently docked at the Skull – she flies the 400-ton armed salvager *Mercifuge*. See page 14.

If the players do not act, then Miria negotiates a place in Petyr Vallis' organisation for herself, Ferrik and their two ships. With Vallis' backing, Ferrik has the protection of a powerful gang and a fleet of nearly a dozen ships. Vallis leads them off to raid Aslan planets in the spinward parts of Tliowaha, Goertal and Nora's subsectors, beyond the characters' reach.

Admiral Darokyn

A former Imperial officer (see *the Campaign Overview, page 15*), Darokyn is a cultured, refined gentleman. He is in his late sixties, though judicious use of anagathics has kept him in fighting trim. He wears a crisp naval uniform without any insignias other than a silver skull-and-crossbones and a golden D. He may be a pirate, but he acts like a model naval officer.

Playing Darokyn:

- Be charming, urbane, cultured. You're better than everyone around you. Talk like you are at a dinner thrown by the Emperor in your honour, not a pirate in a den of thieves.
- Keep your posture ramrod-straight.
- Never admit directly that you want Ferrik killed – above all else, conceal *why* Ferrik fled your employ (see page 15).

Meeting Place: Darokyn meets the players at his preferred table at the Rose Pavilion restaurant in the Upper City.

The Organisation: Darokyn's gang is clearly divided between his trusted lieutenants, many of whom are also ex-Imperial navy officers and crew, and his pirate hangers-on. The pirates try to mimic the naval discipline of their fellows, but usually fall short. The organisation is extremely efficient and well trained for a pirate group, and has a reputation for getting the job done with minimal loss of life.

The Fleet: Darokyn commands a flotilla of nearly thirty ships, more than half of which he took with him from the Imperial navy when he fled. None of the stolen ships were more than a thousand dtons, and were primarily small interceptors and support craft, but it was still a major blow to Imperial pride.

Negotiations: Dealing with Admiral Darokyn requires a Difficult (-2) Social Standing + Diplomat check to impress him, or a Social Standing of 10+. If he decides to trust the players, then he explains that Ferrik was once part of his retinue, but after a... difference of opinion, they parted company. He would not weep if Ferrik were to perish. He hints that he could find out where Miria is, if the players promise to ensure that Ferrik dies quietly and thoroughly, and that they do not return to Theev within the next year – long enough for the city to forget that Ferrik Redthane ever existed.

Petry Vallis

The first thing the players notice when they meet Petyr Vallis is his eyes, pale blue and colder than the deepest space. His face and hands are marked with a lattice of tiny faded scars. He moves like a cat, balancing on the balls of his feet, always in motion. He has a strangely compelling, charismatic personality, but any character with Social Science (psychology) or a high Intelligence can tell that Petyr is a borderline psychopath.

Petry hates the Aslan pirate Hroal Irntooth, and would do almost anything to see him brought down.

Playing Petry:

- Smile at all the wrong times.
- Petyr suffered horrible injuries at the hands of Aslan slavers from the Glorious Empire, and his wife and child were killed by them. He is determined to wreak bloody vengeance upon all Aslan. Let your absolute hatred of the Aslan seep into every sentence.
- Don't let anyone push you around. You have built your criminal empire from nothing using only your willingness to hurt others and never give up.

Meeting Place: Petyr's base is in the lower stories of a tower. It is a red-flagged zone, and even a crazy psychopath like Petyr won't cross the Widows. If he has to kill a player, he invites them to step outside onto the balcony – which *isn't* covered by the red flags.

The Organisation: Petyr has recruited a band of *motivated* cutthroats. They all want money, but they prefer to take it from the Aslan Hierate. Some are just pirates who are willing to fight against the Hierate, but most have grudges or other reasons to fight back. Like their leader, they are all extremely violent and quick to use force. The organisation is unstable, and will likely collapse in a few years when revenge becomes a tired lure and some of the members decide they want money instead, but right now, the Vallis gang is a knife aimed at the Hierate colonies.

The Fleet: Petyr and his followers prefer fast, heavily armed raiders. In fact, the *Harrier* represents their ideal sort of ship. He has only eight ships, but they include two Fiery-class 400-ton gunship and two 600-ton corsairs.

Negotiations: Dealing with Petyr is simple. If the players are willing to give him support against the hated Aslan, then he is willing to deal on fair terms. Otherwise, he wants money – lots of money. If the players are unwilling to meet either of these demands, then he has no time for them.

For Miria's location, he wants either 50,000 Credits or a promise that he can use any Havens that the players have relationships with as launching platforms for his war with the Aslan.

For his help apprehending Fezzik, he wants Mcr. 1, or the promise that the players join his war against the Aslan.

Allying with Fezzik reduces the players standing with the Aslan Hierate by 1D.

Hroal Irntooth

The Aslan Irntooth is the most conventional of the three pirates – he's in this for the loot. He left the Hierate in search of power, glory and wealth, but now misses home. He refuses to admit this to anyone, and sublimates his instinctive desire for territory into violence and savagery.

Playing Hroal Irntooth:

- Don't talk. Roar.
- Don't negotiate. Demand.
- Be all the pirate you can be. Your Aslan blood cries out for territory, but your human followers would never understand your desire for dirt.

Meeting Place: Hroal holds court in a low-down dive called the Bilge Pump.

The Organisation: Hroal commands a gang of some fifty blood-thirsty bastards. It is a mix of species – Human, Aslan, a few Vargr, a pair of Yonts and even an uplifted ape named Blackfur. They target Imperial shipping along Borderlands subsector.

The Fleet: The jewel of Hroal's fleet is his flagship, a 1,200 ton Aslan pocket battleship. His other ships are a motley mix of converted freighters, armed scouts, and salvage-patched monstrosities.

Negotiations: The players need to impress Hroal with their determination and strength; this is a Difficult (-2) Strength + Persuade check. He will give them Miria's location or even help them hunt down Ferrik if they give him what he secretly wants – land. He will *never* ask for this directly, but if the players promise to convince King Oleb to give the Aslan territory when

the kingdom of Drinax is restored, then Hroal will help them. Otherwise, the players can win his aid in finding Miria if they offer him something of value worth at least 50,000 Credits.

Heading Into The Scrapheap

If the players cannot lure Miria out, then they must find her in the Scrapheap. Picking their way across the landscape of shattered ships and the hills of rust and trash leads the characters to a small complex of wrecked hulls that have been welded together. A dozen scrapped ships make up this bizarre structure – Miria’s somewhere inside that maze of corridors, staterooms and cavernous hulls.

Red flags flutter at the entrance, but a close examination shows these are fake flags – the poor denizens of the Scrapheap use these flags to scare off thugs from the Lower City.

If the players sneak into the Scrapheap, they can make their way to Miria in disguise; however, if they arrive openly, she knows they are coming and may set up an ambush if she has reason to believe they are coming to attack her.

Miria’s lair is on the upper deck of a downed Fat Trader. The lower cargo deck is flooded with a toxic swamp of chemical waste and heavy metals, but the upper deck is still liveable. The wreck connects to the rest of the Scrapyard via the aft ceiling iris valve. Miria is waiting in the bridge with an Advanced Light Autocannon (see *Central Supply Catalogue*, page 105) resting on the captain’s chair in the middle of the bridge. The doors down the main corridor of the deck are rusted open, giving her an uninterrupted field of fire.

If severely injured, Miria activates a self-destruct suicide bomb built into her cybernetic arm; this blast does the same damage as a frag grenade and has a one-round countdown.

The location of Ferrik Redthane’s hiding place can be found among Miria’s personal possessions.

Miria’s Crew

STR 5 DEX 7 END 5 INT 7 EDU 6 SOC 5
Comms 0, Computers 1, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Gun Combat (turret) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 0, Recon 1
Vacc Suit (Armour 4)
Body Pistol (3d6-3)

Miria Silverhand

Miria started out as a steward on board an Imperial passenger liner, on the profitable Floriani route, taking care of rich aristocrats on the Spinward end of the Grand Tour. The Ancient ruins on Floria attract many visitors. Her ship was attacked, and the rest of the crew murdered by pirates. Miria was captured by the raiders, and proved to have previously unknown determination and ruthlessness. Within a year, she went from slave to lieutenant; within four, she had her own ship.

Her right arm was crippled in the attack; she had it replaced with a cybernetic limb.

Age 30 – 3 terms

STR 6 (18) DEX 9 END 8 INT 8 EDU 8 SOC 6

Admin 0, Astrogation 2, Carouse 0, Comms 1, Computers 2, Deception 1, Engineer (power plant) 1, Flyer 1, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (slug pistols) 1, Gunner (turret) 1, Heavy Weapons (light autocannon) 1, Leadership 2, Melee (brawling) 1, Persuade 0, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Sensors 1, Steward 1, Stealth 0, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Improved Boarding Vacc Suit (Armour 12)

Light Autocannon (6d6+4, Super Armour-Piercing) or Gauss Pistol (4d6)

Cyberarm: Miria’s cyberarm has armour 14 and gives her Strength 18

Sneaking Onto The Skull

Alternatively, the characters can travel up to the HighPort and locate Miria’s ship, the *Mercifuge*. Security in the Skull is not especially tight (an Average (+0) Dexterity + Stealth check gets the players to the ship without being seen), but the whole asteroid is a red flag zone under the protection of the Widows.

Three of the five crewmembers are on the ship, doing maintenance and repairs. The ship is locked down and needs Miria’s access codes. It can be hacked, but doing so is Formidable (-6) using Computers + Intelligence. Getting access to the navigation logs is trivially easy, though.

The Jump Location: However the characters get the location, it leads them to Ferrik’s hiding place. He is a single jump away, in the Palindrome system, hiding on the fourth moon of the system’s gas giant.

7. AMBUSH!

The final part of this mission the capture of Ferrik Redthane, alive or dead. He pilots a 200-ton Far Trader, the *Janal Torsk*. She has two double turrets, each equipped with twin pulse lasers, and carries a full crew of ten – five crewmen, four marines, and Ferrik himself.

The *Janal Torsk* is currently landed in the icy methane wastes of the fourth moon, a nameless rock tagged as 540PD-5/4. If any ship approaches, the pirates wait in the hope they go unseen; if the ship then conducts a sensor scan of the moon, the pirates assume they have been detected and either attack or try to flee, depending on how well armed the players are.

Killing Redthane

Killing Redthane is easy – just keep firing at the *Janal Torsk* until she breaks apart. The pirate ship is moderately well armed, but the *Harrier* outguns it, and if the players have brought help from Theev, then Redthane is even more outmatched. If the *Janal Torsk*'s hull is breached, then Redthane makes one desperate plea for clemency – see the sidebar on *Darokyn's Secret*. If the characters keep firing, then the ship is destroyed and Redthane's corpse can be scooped out of space afterwards.

Capturing Redthane

Taking the pirate alive is trickier. The best option is to trick him into surrendering; they could lure him into an ambush if they have captured or deceived Miria Silverhand, or pretend to be a damaged ship that misjumped into the system and let the pirate come to them. Otherwise, they could land on the ice moon, travel across country, and then storm the *Janal Torsk* while it is landed, or cripple the pirate ship and board it.

Wrapping Up

Bringing Redthane back to Torpol and Clarke gets the players the Mcr. 2.5 bounty. It also moves both planets two steps towards Haven status.

If the players bring Redthane back for justice, then the two worlds agree on a compromise sentence. Redthane is frozen in a Clarke-style carbon tomb, then placed in orbit of Torpol as an eternal warning to other pirates who dare offend against the unwritten law of the Trojan Reach.

Ferrik Redthane

Ferrik comes originally from Belgard, a world halfway across the Reach where spacefarers are worshipped as heroes. He dreamed of going into space, and took his chance when a pirate ship landed for repairs. He ran away from home at the age of 12, and has been a pirate ever since. He is a wild young pilot, famed for his daring and willingness to push the boundaries of sanity and safety.

Playing Ferrik:

- Laugh wildly. Everything, even your imminent death, is funny on some level.
- Keep a knife in your hand. Flip it and toy with it.
- Speak fast, think fast, die hard.

Age 38 – 5 terms

STR 6 DEX 10 END 8 INT 8 EDU 4 SOC 6

Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Astrogation 1, Broker 2, Carouse 1, Comms 1, Computers 2, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 3, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Mechanic 2, Melee (brawl) 1, Leadership 2, Tactics (naval) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1
Boarding Vacc Suit (Armour 12)
Gauss Pistol (3d6, Auto 4)

Redthane's Crew

STR 5 DEX 7 END 5 INT 7 EDU 6 SOC 5

Comms 0, Computers 1, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Gun Combat (turret) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 0, Recon 1
Vacc Suit (Armour 4)
Body Pistol (3d6-3)

Redthane's Marines

STR 9 DEX 6 END 9 INT 5 EDU 6 SOC 5

Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Gun Combat (turret) 0, Melee (large blade) 1, Mechanic 0, Stealth 0, Recon 1, Vacc Suit 2, Zero-G 2
Boarding Vacc Suit (Armour 12)
Cutlass (2d6+4)
ACR (3d6 Auto 3)

Darokyn's Secret

If Redthane believes he is in danger of being captured or killed, he contacts the players with a last-ditch offer. He was kicked out of Darokyn's gang because he uncovered Darokyn's secret. He'll sell that secret to the players in exchange for his life. The secret is useless without proof, and he'll tell the players how to get that proof if they spare him.

Redthane discovered that Darokyn is still in contact with Imperial Intelligence. They are secretly supporting his pirate gang, and use the Admiral as their spy and agent in the wilder sections of the Trojan Reach. Redthane managed to obtain proof of this, by intercepting and recording some of Darokyn's communications from the Imperium, but these intercepted files are stored on a secure computer onboard Darokyn's flagship. If the players can get these files, they can either blackmail Darokyn or bring his whole organisation down from within. The files might also give them clues about Imperial anti-piracy operations in the sector.

LIBRARY DATA

Admiral Darokyn: Infamous pirate captain; formerly an Imperial officer, he was found to involved in a smuggling ring. He fled the naval base at Tobia with several other members of this ring, and set himself up as a pirate. The Imperium has not, to date, placed a bounty on his head; the Duke of Tobia said that the matter was one to be resolved by the Imperial Navy and they would punish their own traitors.

Chamax Plague: The alien Chamax overran their home world when the native sophonts eradicated the only predator that kept the Chamax in check. The swarm's population exploded and the Chamax devoured the entire biosphere in a matter of months.

Deep Space Refuelling: It is possible, albeit extremely costly and time-consuming, to build up a cache of hydrogen fuel in interstellar space. A ship jumps in with its cargo holds full of hydrogen, adds most of its hydrogen to the cache, then refuels and jumps out again. These caches are used primarily by the military. Finding a cache without knowing its exact location is almost impossible.

Lords of Blacksand: The mysterious rulers of Theev. It is generally believed that the 'pirate planet' is ruled by a consortium of pirate gang leaders, possibly together with representatives of the corporations who profit from the planet's illegal activities. There is no known way to contact the lords; they contact you.

Red Flag Zone: A region protected by the mysterious Widows of Blacksand.



WORLDS OF THE REACH

Additional tasks and jobs the players can take on during this adventure and after.

Oghma

Oghma is an iceworld, but retains enough of an industrial base to build jump-capable starships. The rulers of Oghma intend to conquer their neighbouring worlds along the Dustbelt by weakening their industrial and technological bases. Over the course of generations, the Oghman raiders have targeted scientists, teachers, engineers and craftsmen in their slaver raids. The Oghmans are savage xenophobes ruled by tribal warrior-kings, where a warrior's worth is determined by how many jump-capable ships he 'rides' and how many soldiers he commands. Oghman Raiders are a common threat in Sindal subsector; they are despised by all civilised worlds.

The starport is run by GeDeCo, and is comparatively safe – the Raiders know better than to attack interstellar shipping, and instead prey on weak backworlds.

Patron: Chieftain Hannigan

Reward: Oghma moves three steps towards 'Haven'

Mission: Most arms dealers refuse to deal with the Oghman Clans – even weapons merchants don't want to hand advanced weapons to crazed, xenophobic barbarian slavers. Hannigan wants the players to smuggle him and two dozen of his best warriors to Theev where they can buy weapons. His trade goods consist of several crates of platinum, worth MCr. 5; the crates are booby-trapped with poison gas.

Torpol

Torpol is a water world, with no surface land. The limited population lives on the ice caps at the north and south poles of the planet, or on huge stilt-supported platforms built in shallow water. The planet's primary industry is, unsurprisingly, fishing and producing hydrogen fuel for the trade convoys that dock here. Despite Torpol's lack of natural resources, the provosts who rule the planet have proved themselves canny merchants, buying and selling goods along the Florian trade route. The eccentric Florian League is a difficult trading partners, as guessing what the Floriani will decide to invest in next is something of an art, and the provosts have studied the demands of the distant League in order to predict which goods will sell to the League in coming years.

Torpol has also made its name as a planet for shore leave, by establishing a string of 'pleasure ports' along the tropics. Torpol's high Law Level is a reflection of the provosts' need to keep the planet's reputation as a safe place to relax. The pleasure ports may feel wild, erotic and untamed, but they are actually the safest place on the planet.

Patron: Provost Shala

Reward: Torpol moves one category towards 'Haven'.

Mission: There is another waterworld in the Trojan Reach – Thalassa (0803 Dpres) – where the inhabitants have built huge cities that float on rafts made of woven organic matter. The plants used to build these rafts were genetically engineered from the native flora of Thalassa, and the Thalassans guard their secrets closely. Provost Shala wants the players to travel to Thalassa, break into one of the Thalassan bio-research facilities, and recover samples of the plant seeds along with data on how to cultivate these plants. Ideally, she also wants them to kidnap the famous Thalassan geneticist, Dr. Thorkan.

Clarke

Formerly a garden world, Clarke was bombed by the Star Guard during the last years of the Kingdom of Drinax. Hundreds of thousands died when the old capital, Hiewad, was destroyed, and millions more starved in the years that followed as the dust clouds caused several years without a summer. Clarke's technology base was similarly crippled; the planet was at TL14, but virtually all the high-technology facilities and services were concentrated at Hiewad. Deprived of the high-tech medical facilities they remembered that could heal the sick and dying, the people of Clarke chose to preserve their mortally wounded in the hopes that when they rebuilt, they could be healed. This practice of freezing the dead quickly evolved into a religion that worshipped the dead. Today, everyone who dies on Clarke is immediately placed into a carbon-weave monolith and stored until the day of healing that will one day arrive. The Psychopomp priests who control the preservation technology rule the planet. The reconstruction of Clarke's technological base has slowed to a crawl; the priests know that if they recover the technology to heal those who were preserved in the monoliths, they would lose their position of authority in Clarke society. Therefore, the planet becomes ever more insular, ever more death-obsessed. Today, the frozen dead on Clarke massively outnumber the living. The dead are everywhere, as the black monoliths are used as building materials in the dark, oppressive cities.

Patron: High Psychopomp Boone

Reward: Clarke moves two categories towards 'Haven'.

Mission: Prince Harrick of Drinax was mortally wounded many years ago, and was preserved using similar technology to that of the Psychopomps until the scientists of the Floating Palace could revive him. Harrick therefore represents the fulfilment of the Psychopomps' promise; he was resurrected from the black slab of death. If Harrick were to publicly join the faith and make it the state religion of a revived Kingdom of Drinax, then Boone would step down and name Harrick his successor as High Psychopomp. Boone knows that it will be centuries before Clarke has the technological infrastructure to resurrect the millions of faithful dead (and even then, fulfilling all the promises of the Psychopomps would require anagathics for everyone), but making Harrick the new leader of the faith would cement the church's power for generations to come.

Blue

Blue was once a rich world, one of the jewels of the Old Empire. Over the course of several centuries, the planet was systematically denuded of all its accessible resources. Today, it is a quiet backwater. The people of Blue are insular and rarely travel, preferring to spend their times in contemplation of religion and art. Rumours insist that there is a secret Psionic Institute somewhere on Blue.

Patron: Metholde Vong

Reward: Blue moves one step towards Haven, Cr. 20,000.

Mission: Vong's daughter Kasah stowed away on board a ship that called at Blue; he wants the players to find her. The ship was a trader, the *Ginnea*, but the characters discover that the ship was attacked by pirates somewhere in Sindal subsector; Kasah was discovered and sold into slavery in the Glorious Empire.

Borite

Some systems were named by their inhabitants, or to commemorate the circumstances of their discovery. Others were named after legends or heroes or myths.

Borite was named for the high concentration of boron-heavy compounds in its surface. That is the most interesting thing about this system. From orbit, it looks like a yellow-brown stain of a planet, and it doesn't even live up to this first impression. The planet is inhabited by several million unfortunate colonists who mine the borite or try to scrape a living out of the soil; it is ruled by the Borite Continuity Authority, a decaying remnant of the old Drinaxian bureaucracy. The BCA control all trade and travel on and off-world – not that many people come here. The planet's Class-E starport sees only a handful of ships every year, mostly traders trying to dodge pirate attacks on the Florian route.

Like Marduk, Borite is often attacked by the Oghman Clans, who target scientists and scholars. Writing is therefore forbidden on Borite except for the few heavily-guarded members of the BCA.

Patron: BCA Administrator Ura

Reward: Cr. 5,000 and Borite moves one step towards Haven.

Mission: One of the atmosphere pumps in the mine has broken down, and none of the planet's surviving engineers has the technical know-how to fix it. The pump can easily be repaired by any competent technician, but it is being watched by spies for Oghman slavers. If the players take the mission, their technician will be targeted by the slavers.

Marduk

This small, Earthlike world has no surviving cities outside the starport shanty-town. The civilisation on Marduk has collapsed due to repeated raids from Oghma and other worlds. The planet's population has broken into several dozen clans, each of which fears all outsiders. The clans all have their own languages and wildly divergent cultures. The starport is operated by GeDeCo and is on an artificial island far away from any of the native-held archipelagoes.

Patron: Anthropologist Maris Enar

Reward: Cr. 10,000 and Marduk moves one step closer to Haven.

Mission: Enar is researching the natives of Marduk, and has come to believe that native beliefs about 'sea gods' have some basis in reality. She suspects there are previously undocumented sea creatures living in the depths of Marduk's oceans, possibly even intelligent ones. According to native legends, these creatures are huge squid-like creatures that dwell in the uttermost depths. Enar has a submarine, but needs a crew to pilot it on a search for these sea gods.

Palindrome

Palindrome's only settlement is the domed town of Astrogo, and everyone on Astrogo works for Lady Yemar. She is a former pirate who set up this little colony with her ill-gotten gains. Palindrome is a clearing house for stolen goods and a waystation for travellers. Yemar uses the profits to pay for her astoundingly expensive life-support needs; she was severely wounded in a raid and exposed to an experimental bioweapon. All of her organs except her brain have been replaced multiple times, and even her brain requires constant maintenance and augmentation. She travels to Theev several times a year for medical treatments.

Patron: Lady Yemar

Reward: Palindrome becomes a Haven.

Mission: Yemar needs a cure for her disease. She believes that only an Ancient device could save her, but it is also possible that the weapons researcher who created the bioweapon could create an antidote. The researcher now works for an Imperial megacorporation on Tobia.

Theev

Theev is a dusty, arid, Mars-like world. The only settlement in the system is Blacksand City, a high-tech city that rises from the sands of the desert like an impossible mirage. The starport – a hollowed-out moonlet – is in geostationary orbit over Blacksand, and is referred to as the Skull, as the empty crates resemble bony eye-sockets. The Skull's shipyards are capable of building ships up to 2,000 tons, and here is where many of the corsairs and other pirate ships were made. The Skull's craters also conceal hundreds of missile launchers and gun emplacements – any ship approaching Blacksand City without permission will be blasted out of the sky.

Theev is an infamously lawless and dangerous port. There is no 'legitimate' government or business here – this is a port run by thieves and pirates, for thieves and pirates. The markets of Theev deal in stolen goods, in illegal weapons, in drugs and contraband and slaves from across the Sector. Not everyone who comes to Theev is a pirate, but they are all here for criminal reasons. They might be Imperial nobles, here to sample the illegal delights of the flesh-pits of Blacksand, or arms dealers hawking their wares, or mercenaries looking to hire on in some petty brush war, or merchants hoping to buy stolen goods on the cheap, or even spies, but everyone here has the same sordid stain that comes from spending time in Blacksand. It is impossible to visit Theev and not be soiled by the atmosphere of the place, which is more insidious than the finest dust from the desert.

Theev's survival is a mystery – how can a world run by criminals survive and even prosper to such a degree. Theev has cutting-edge technology beyond even that available on most Imperial worlds, and can produce TL15 ships, weapons and equipment in its factories. Many suspect that some other great power, possibly the Zhodani Consulate, is behind the Lords of Blacksand...

In fact, the secret power behind Theev is not the Consulate – it is something closer to home. Blacksand City is funded by the General Development Company, a sector-wide megacorporation. For more on GeDeCo, see *Alien Module 1: Aslan*, page 223, and *Pirates of Drinax Adventure 7: The Vorito Gambit*.

Theev starts the campaign as Friendly towards the player characters. Theev can never become a Haven, but can move towards Hostile if the characters cross the Lords of Blacksand.

Patron: Varuk Nirgal

Reward: Cr. 10,000/player

Nirgal is a weapons merchant and information broker based in Blacksand City. Rumour has it that he is actually one of the secretive Lords of the City, but the old man just smiles at such allegations. He looks like a kindly grandfather with twinkling eyes, and his office is staffed by pretty young girls he refers to as his nieces. He is a valuable source of information about potential heists and jobs throughout the Trojan Reach.

To win him as a Contact, the players have to prove themselves trustworthy with a simple little mission. A magistrate on Dolberg ordered a collection of Aslan artefacts from a trader on Salif. Nirgal knows that the goods are being transferred at Vume to another ship, and then being carried onto Dolberg. Nirgal wants the players to plant a high-tech spying device on one of the artefacts. They can accomplish this heist however they wish – ambushing the ship, bluffing their way into the brokerage on Vume, travelling to Dolberg and planting the bug on the cargo in the spaceport, or even breaking into the Dolberg House of Justice.