

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES

DEADLY CHANT



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07

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**SPECIAL THANKS TO: MARTA CASTELLANO (MY WIFE) FOR SUPPORTING ME ALL
THE WAY AND FRANCESCA VIARENGO FOR SHE KNOWS EVEN MORE STUFF**



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DEADLY CHANT

This book contains an adventure based around the exploits of four pregenerated, spacefaring heroes.

You can find the character sheets and details of their spaceship, the *Blazing Star*, on the Triple Ace Games website: www.tripleacegames.com. The heroes have no defined gender, thus the players can assign it as they wish.

The characters have all their leveling opportunities mapped out in advance from Seasoned (from which they

start) to Legendary. Each adventure in this series earns the heroes a fixed five Experience Points, granting them advancement after every mission. The players only need to tick the appropriate box on the sheet to start making use of their advancements.

This means you can use the character sheets at conventions and run adventures of any Rank without having to create your own characters from scratch. It also means you can run these tales as pick-up games without any preparation!

Better yet, you will know that when you buy one of our adventures, you can guarantee the adventurers will have all the skills and abilities they need to win the day!

You will also need some gaming stone counters or other markers, a copy of the Space Rules Supplement, and, for this scenario only, a map of the *Blazing Star*. You can download all this material for free from the www.tripleacegames.com website.

Finally, you will find it useful to have some extra copies of the standard Savage Worlds Burst templates to represent obstacles and terrain elements.

BACKGROUND

The Greenbelt is a great asteroid field created by the fragmentation of a huge planet. Different from other

asteroid zones, this one is primarily composed of frozen water and excellent soil. Asteroids have no atmosphere, but this is not a big problem, because all the buildings are inside pressurized domes.

Some years ago, the Shipping Guild promoted the development of the area into a food production system capable of supporting the nearby planets. To accomplish this, the Guild offered loans to colonists interested in building astrofarms on uninhabited asteroids, granting them ownership of the land.

In just a few years, this enlightened policy attracted many hardworking frontiersmen, who erected a great number of these installations. Even a city was founded on one of the larger asteroids — Khuma Bay, central hub of the area and sole starport in the Greenbelt.

Six months ago, a group of Guild researchers made a very interesting discovery. Due to a series of peculiar environmental factors — the quality of the water, unusual levels of space radiation and so on — the soil of the asteroids is perfect for farming Cybo, a plant that is totally inedible but can be easily processed into cheap, though high quality, bioplastic.

The Guild intends to convert all the astrofarms over to Cybo production, a business that could yield millions of credits. And millions can easily become billions if the Guild somehow manages to obtain exclusive ownership of all those farms it helped to build.

To accomplish this, the Directive Committee sent Hanazon Bal, a new Guild Officer, to the Greenbelt with the task of examining the situation and finding a way, legal or not, to wrest the farms from the colonists.

After a couple months, the cunning accountant discovered the means to that end. He became acquainted with Kera Bellon, a local xenobiologist who has dedicated her life to the study of the Xanthi, a wonderful, deep space life form.

The Xanthi are titanic, space roaming beasts, capable of jumping through hyperspace. They are the cosmic counterpart of Earth's whales — they graze on space-bound spores and are natural collectors of stellar energy.

In the past, they were hunted because their synapses were the central components of certain biological hyperdrives. Even today, many races continue the slaughter, because their colossal bodies provide many other valuable resources.

Kera has studied these beasts all her life, becoming particularly proficient in their language - a series of energy emissions capable of reaching extremely intense frequencies.

During a romantic cruise through the asteroids, the woman, who loves talking about her work, revealed to Hanazon that the one thing that can totally enrage a Xanthi is the chant of a space amoeba, the only beast capable of single-handedly killing a spacewhale.

The sly Guild Officer used this information to concoct a devious plot. He stole the recording of an amoeba chant from Kera and had Guild scientists perfect it. Then, he unleashed his evil scheme using the *Backstabber*, a ship cloaked with a special stealth device. The *Backstabber* sneaked in close to a few astrofarms and targeted them using a special harmonic cannon. The cannon itself is harmless; its only effect is that its target comes into resonance, emitting a specific sound based on the cannon's impulse frequency.

The cannon has been programmed to make its target emit the amoeba's chant across all radio frequencies the Xanthi can perceive. This then lures entire pods of enraged spacewhales that attack and destroy the farms with terrible ferocity. To date, more than twenty farms have been besieged. The colonists are terrified, and many of them are selling their property at low prices to make a quick buck and start a new life in some other sector.

Obviously, only the Shipping Guild (represented by the Officer), has offered to buy the astrofarms.

Hanazon's plan seems to be perfect, but two problems have arisen: First, a whole fleet of spacewhalers (grizzled spacefarers that live off killing the Xanthi) have come to the Greenbelt with the goal of slaughtering all the beasts and filling their cargo bays with precious organic components. They must be stopped at all costs or the whole plan will fail. Second, Kera Bellon (made suspicious by the sudden madness of the Xanthi) started investigating and discovered that Hanazon had used her recording to devise his terrible scheme. Luckily for Hanazon, she made this discovery too late — the Officer's goons kidnapped the woman from a remote space beacon and are keeping her prisoner in their secret base.

But Hanazon's plan is not complete; a more terrible step is forthcoming.

How are the heroes involved in the story? Keep reading to find out...

Characters: 55 XP

ACT 1: SETTLING A DEBT

SCENE 1: THE LAST WILL OF JO-

SOUND IN THE SPACE, UH?

As is commonly known, sound cannot travel in space, because it is empty. What we call "sound" in this scenario, referring to the amoebas' chant, is in truth a peculiar radio emission, capable of travelling in the void. We use the word "sound to respect" the "chant" analogy. So, don't undress of your spacesuits in the void to sing a song, it will not be healthy!

RAN BELLON

This scenario starts with the heroes in the thick of the action.

You are in trouble, no surprise there, but this time the troubles are very serious. A gang of shipjackers is targeting all the major starports in the sector, and this time they have stolen the wrong ship — yours, the Blazing Star!

The thieves are highly skilled and protected through many connections, so you have asked an old friend — Joran Bellon, bounty hunter, private eye, and former GEA (Galactic Enforcement Agency) operative — to help you.

Together you have followed the clues to the shipyards of Cabol II, where the thieves overhaul the stolen ships before selling them in faraway sectors, but the gang is too big and organized to be fought in open combat, so, after discovering that your dear old ship is located on platform A-27, you're going for it!

The plan is simple: Board the Blazing Star and flee — fighting consortiums of interstellar thieves is not exactly your type of work.

Now, you are running on a suspended catwalk, below you lie the mists of the lower levels of the shipyards, a long drop, and, further down, the sea.

You can just see your rusty old friend on the next platform over, and damn if those scurvy sons of a Chandran priestess haven't painted her red!

However, a new paintjob is the least of your troubles. Suddenly a group of thieves rushes from the platform to the walkway to block your path, their weapons at the ready.

Take cover because blaster shots will soon be flying!

Deal action cards!

The combat area is a catwalk 6" wide and 24" long.

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The shorter sides are connected with the platforms. The thieves approach from the northern end, where the Blazing Star is berthed, while the heroes cross from the southern end.

The longer sides (eastern and western) border the void (see below).

Place the heroes in the center of the battleground. They are running, so they start with no cover.

At the start of the fight, place 75% of the thieves within 3" of the northern border. They are no fools, so place them behind cover of crates. The thieves' tactic is simple – using their superior position, they only have to stand ground and pin down the heroes until reinforcements arrive.

To spice things up, a few scripted events will occur in certain rounds.

Round Three - Before dealing action cards, read the following passage to the players:

You hear heavy footsteps from behind. There are some other guests at this party and they are led by a Yugon, a giant, twelve-foot tall alien. His octopus-like face sports a mass of slimy tentacles that almost touch the ground. He is equipped with a braced gravity imploder, a big and altogether nasty gun, and he seems to have no problems wielding it.

"Ghoro smash!" he roars, with a voice as deep as the Gatorian oceans.

Place Ghoro, the tentacled alien, and the other thieves within 3" of the southern end of the walkway. Ghoro and his men advance while firing. The Yugon tries to soften the heroes with his gun for one round, before he enters melee.

Round Five - The cavalry arrives to save the day!

Suddenly another blaster roars, but this time it's not directed against you. It's Joran Bellon, your friend, coming to the rescue!

"Sorry I'm late, guys, but I was investigating the base," he says to you. Then, looking at the big Yugon, he continues: "Ghoro, I suspected you were behind all this. Boys, Ghoro and I are old friends. How many times have I put you in jail? I've lost count."

The response from the tentacled alien is a terrible roar of anger.

Place Joran Bellon 6" from the southern edge. He starts on Hold. He is an ally, so let the players control him.

Ghoro hates the bounty hunter so much that from now he will concentrate his attacks on him, almost ignoring the heroes.

Once Ghoro is down, read the section titled "Joran's Death".

★ **Ship Thieves (2 per hero):** See page 27.

★ **Ghoro the Hitman:** See page 26.

★ **Joran Bellon, Private Investigator:** See page 27.

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Crates:** A few metal crates lie within 3" of the northern edge of the walkway. Each crate has Toughness 8 and grants Medium (-2) Cover. Place up to three of them on the battlefield. You can use gaming stones to represent them.

* **Security Lights:** The catwalk is lined with security lights, so that flying vehicles can spot and avoid it. Each security light is in the shape of a hydrant, with a luminous head. They have Toughness 6 and grant Light Cover (-1) but only for crouching characters. A technologically savvy hero can try to jury rig a light to produce a strong flash. It requires a Repair (-2) roll, with a +2 if the character has the MacGyver Edge. In case of success, it counts as a use of the Stun power, centered on the light's position. The hero triggering the device must shut his eyes to be immune to the effects. Jury-rigging always breaks the circuits, so only one attempt per light can be made. Place eight lights, four on each side of the walkway, 6" from each other. To represent the lights, use gaming stones of a color different from the previous ones.

* **Falling Down:** If a character is Shaken or Wounded within 1" of the catwalk's edge, he must make a successful Agility roll or tumble into the void! An Extra missing this roll simply dies in a horrible way. A Wild Card, instead, manages somehow to cling to the edge. He needs a Strength (-4) roll to regain solid ground on his own.

JORAN'S DEATH

With one last blow, the giant finally falls. Being so big, Ghoro stumbles off the walkway, disappearing into the mists. At this point, the surviving thieves run away screaming.

You have won the day!

You rush to the walkway's edge, to look down into the thick fog of vapors below. There is no trace of the Yugon.

"Poor Ghoro," Joran shakes his head, "He surely deserved to die, but not in that way. I'll miss him."

Just then, a vicious tentacle lashes up from below, clasping the investigator's ankle and dragging him down with terrible strength!

It is all so sudden you have no time to react!

Ghoro is not quite dead, yet! He used his long facial tentacles to grapple the metal structure beneath the catwalk, and with the last of his strength, he has managed to drag his mortal enemy down with him!

Joran is clinging to the metal structure now, but his legs are completely enveloped by the tentacles of the dying Yugon. When the hitman finally loses consciousness, his terrible weight will drag your friend down with him.

You see the sudden understanding of his fate in your friend's eyes.

Joran says, "I am doomed. Hear me — I have a son that I have never known. Jim. Jim Bellon. Please, look after him."

Then the two mortal enemies fall to a terrible death.

SCENE 2: AN ASTROFARM UNDER ATTACK!

A month has passed since Joran's demise.

You searched high and low for his and Ghoro's bodies but found nothing, the murky waters of Cabol II have claimed them forever.

So you decided to respect the final request of your friend, and started searching for his son.

Using your contacts and spending a fair amount of time and money, you found mentions of a Jim Bellon in the Shipping Guild's archives. He lives in Khuma Bay, the only city of the Greenbelt, the great asteroid field of the Myan system. Assuming Joran's son is around sixteen years old now, the age certainly matches.

You are now traveling to Khuma Bay, eager to know if this Jim Bellon is your man or not.

Suddenly the Blazing Star's sensors go haywire as communications intercepts a message broadcast on all frequencies, though strangely distorted by a bizarre space anomaly.

"Mayday! Mayday! Tanus astrofarm under attack! Mayday! Mayday!"

The Blazing Star is abruptly thrown out of hyperspace.

You are in the Greenbelt, in the middle of the

asteroids. You're lucky, because jumping out of hyperspace in such a congested area could have been deadly.

Soon, you spot the source of the transmission.

On a nearby asteroid, a domed installation (an astrofarm) is currently under attack by some of the strangest creatures you have ever seen.

They are known as Xanthi, but spacefarers usually refer to them as "spacewhales" — starship-sized creatures capable of jumping into hyperspace. Normally they are peaceful, but now three of them are using their energy breath to assault the farm's dome.

You theorize that the cause of the strange distortion that pulled you out of hyperspace is the terrible energy being generated by their breath.

You have no time for further analysis. The farm appears heavily damaged and you must intervene if you want to save it!

In truth, the space anomaly affecting the Blazing Star's sensors is related to the chant of the space amoebas that the Backstabber is broadcasting. The Backstabber is cloaked by a stealth device and their harmonic cannon makes the chant appear to originate from the astrofarm, so the Xanthi are venting their rage on the agricultural installation. Since the cannon is only a prototype, it is also generating the weird effect that threw the Blazing Star out of hyperspace.

The combat area is a rough square 24" by 24". Each inch represents a SU. Place a Medium Burst Template within 3" of the northern border, to represent the asteroid. On this, place a Small Burst Template, representing the Tanus astrofarm (see below). The astrofarm is considered an ally, so let the players control it in the combat.

Place the three Xanthi 6" from the astrofarm, each one at least 4" from the next.

Let the players place the Blazing Star within 6" of the southern border.

The spacewhales are living beings, but, for ease of use in space combat, they are treated as spaceships. The beasts attack the astrofarm until the heroes begin targeting them. At this point, the beasts ignore the installation and attack the party.

The fight lasts five rounds. At the start of the sixth round, stop the combat and move on to the "Spacewhalers!" section.

YOUNG XANTHI

The Xanthi are a species of massive, though peaceful, spacefaring creatures. They eat interstellar microorganisms and are capable of metabolizing stellar radiation. Their only natural enemies are space amoebas, which ad-

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here to their bodies and slowly consume them. The Xanthi hate these devious parasites so much that the mere chant of the amoeba drives them mad. Some intelligent races hunt the Xanthi too, because their bodies provide many precious organic components. These particular specimens are relatively small.

Top Speed: 6; **Toughness:** 18 (4); **Handling:** +0

Abilities: Piloting d8, Shields d8, Shooting d8

Notes: Heavy Armor

Weapons:

* 1 x energy blast (Range: 12/24/48; Damage: 3d6; ROF 1; AP 6, HW)

Special Abilities:

- * **Living Being:** The Xanthi are living beings, so they ignore the vehicle critical hits table.
- * **Ramming:** A Xanthi in contact with another spaceship will ram it. It is an opposed Piloting roll by the two opponents. If the Xanthi wins, it deals 3d6 damage, AP 8 to the enemy ship. The damage is dealt from an Extra.

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Astrofarm:** The astrofarm has Toughness 18 (6) and can sustain three Wounds before being destroyed. It is armed with laser batteries (Range: 12/24/48; Damage 3d6; ROF 2; AP 4, HW) and has Shooting d6.

* **Ice Debris:** The Greenbelt asteroids are mostly made up of ice. In this area, there is a thick bank of tiny ice chunks. They are too small to damage ships but they

can hinder the combat in other ways. For this combat only, the Innocent Bystander rule is tweaked as follows: Whenever a 1 is rolled on the Shooting die, the weapon's beam vaporizes some ice, creating a cloud of fog. Place a Large Burst Template centered on the shooter to represent the cloud. It grants Light Cover (-1), but also hinders the Piloting rolls (-1) of anyone crossing the template. The effects of multiple clouds are stacked. The clouds stay in play until the end of the fight.

SPACEWHALERS!

In the middle of the fight, another three ships suddenly emerge from hyperspace. They look like modified fighters, with giant space harpoons mounted on their noses. You have heard of these people, they are spacewhalers, spacefarers courageous or mad enough to hunt the Xanthi for their precious organic components!

The spacewhalers enter the fight on your side with daring courage, but they are not here to save you or the farm.

One of them contacts you. He is a burly and muscular man with a blonde mustache and a red bandana.

"This is Khodar, captain of the spacewhalers. What are you doing here? This is our hunting ground! Take your rusty ship and be off with you! You're hindering us!"

In the meantime, the Xanthi, frightened and outnumbered, jump into hyperspace, with one last, angry emission of energy.

"For the cybernetic leg of Ach-ab!" The blonde whaler curses, "You are making them flee! Spacewhalers, follow me!"

Without hesitation, the hunters



jump into hyperspace, following the energy tracks of their prey.

Willingly or not, the spacewhalers have saved the astrofarm.

AFTERMATH

After the battle, you check your ship. Besides the damage suffered in the battle, the strange distortion that dragged the ship out of hyperspace also destroyed the delicate hyperjump condenser. The Blazing Star's hyperdrive is now useless.

The astrofarm is a family-run business. Llaran Tanus, a plump, blue-skinned alien is the elder father of the family (they are polygamous). He arrives on his old spaceboat and tries to do his best for the Blazing Star.

"I'm sorry," Llaran says, "I can do nothing for your hyperdrive, but what I can do for you is tow your ship into hyperspace to Khuma Bay. There is a very skilled mechanic there. If anyone can repair your engine, it's him."

During the trip, the alien tells you that this attack by the Xanthi was not the first.

"More than twenty astrofarms have been attacked in the past month. We cannot understand why these peaceful beasts have suddenly turned so aggressive. Many farmers have sold their lands and beaded off for new suns. I am not happy at all with this solution, but after speaking with the other fathers of my family, we have decided to sell now, before the prices fall."

The alien sighs deeply: "I love this land, but I have no choice."

SCENE 3: THE XANTHI'S FRIENDS

The heroes finally arrive in Khuma Bay. Assuming they do some research on the area, let them make Streetwise or Investigation rolls (see sidebar) to acquire information about where they are.

Khuma Bay is a domed city built on a large asteroid. It is rather old-fashioned, and has a sort of rural appeal lacking in many modern cities.

Llaran takes you to Cutrass, the best, and only, starship mechanic in the city. His workshop is near the docks.

"I thank you for what you have done for us and

DATA: THE GREENBELT

INVESTIGATION RESULTS

Success: The Greenbelt is the largest asteroid field in the whole sector. Originally, it was a huge green planet, destroyed by unknown causes. The asteroids are rich in water and the soil is particularly good, so the astrofarms are the main source of food for the nearby planets.

Raise: The Greenbelt is under the control of the Shipping Guild. Until twenty years ago, it was almost uninhabited. Then the guild decided to transform it into the main food producer of the area. To encourage immigration, they offered excellent loans and granted the ownership of the land to the colonists. The Guild Officer is de facto the governor of Khuma Bay, the only starport in the area.

STREETWISE RESULTS

Success: Before the recent colonization, some independent miners' consortiums had tried to exploit the mineral resources of the asteroids, but it was a failure. The expenses were too high and the profits too low. Nowadays many of these abandoned mines are used as bases by independent smugglers and other shady types.

Raise: Due the great amount of food export, Khuma Bay's starport is an ideal place for starting an illegal trade because Shipping Guild inspectors are renown for being easily bribed. However, for the last few months, a new Guild Officer has been in charge and he seems a very honest man who has put an end to a lot of profitable, illegal trade.

I wish you all the best of luck." The farmer says. "Now, we part ways. I'll go to the Shipping Guild offices. I hope to bargain for a good price. May the Ever-growing Gods bless you."

Then, the astrofarmer shakes your hands and departs.

Cutrass is by far the ugliest alien you have ever seen; all spikes, teeth, and weirdly positioned eyes.

"You are unlucky, strangers," He says. "Your condenser is broken. Dead. Jammed. Without any hope of being salvaged. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"The good news is that I can order one of these babies from Wayland right now. The bad news is that it will be delivered in no less than a week,

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more or less. Until then you can use your ship, but without hyperdrive, you won't get far."

If the heroes ask Cutrass what the cause of the damage might be, he shrugs and admits that it could be many things: A distortion in the hyperspace field, an energy emission of some type, or simply bad luck. He does not exclude the Xanthi's "voice" either. The beasts emit strange, energy-based impulses.

In the meantime, a great starship is coming. It is too big to dock inside the city so it remains in orbit. It is the Slaughterhouse, the spacewhalers' flagship. Slung below the ship is the carcass of a Xanthi. Several whalers in spacesuits are working around the huge carcass in zero gravity, cutting and refining it with their energy harpoons.

A small spacedinghy flies from the Slaughterhouse to the docks, close to where Cutrass' workshop is. A group of whalers exit – they are all rough looking fellows. Khodar, the muscular whaler you spoke with earlier, is among them.

At this point, you notice a small group of youngsters approaching the docks and taunting the whalers: "Assassins! Murderers! Leave the Xanthi in peace!"

One of them, a dark-haired boy, suddenly takes something out of his jacket and throws it at the whalers. It looks like a grenade!

The object explodes releasing a cloud of red paint! The whalers are covered in the disgusting substance, and they aren't at all happy! With a unified roar, they unsheathe their weapons and charge toward the boy.

Cutrass snorts looking at the scene.

"Jim Bellon. That hothead will surely get himself killed one day."

The bomber is the boy you're looking for!

Jim jumps onto his hoverskate and zooms off, but the whalers rush to their boat and start chasing him, clearly with no good intentions!

The heroes must join in the chase to save Jim from a serious beating, but first, they will need to find a suitable vehicle. Cutrass has only out-of-service hovercars, but Jim's friends have hoverskates handy. Obtaining one of them can be done in various ways, though a Persuasion or Intimidation roll is the simplest. Offering at least \$30 grants +2 to the roll, while offering \$100 grants automatic success.

Threatening the boys is also an option. They will flee

on foot if provoked, leaving their skates behind, but this unheroic behavior will cost the hero (or heroes) a benny.

Each hero must acquire his hoverskate independently from the other members of the party, and each attempt requires one round. Once properly equipped, the characters may join the chase.

Jim is in the lead, followed by the whalers at Medium Range. The heroes start three Range Increments behind the whalers, plus one for each round they spent obtaining their hoverskates.

Each Range Increment corresponds to 10" on the tabletop.

The hoverskates are controlled using either Agility or Piloting (player's choice). The Ace Edge also applies.

The dinghy uses a spacewhaler's Piloting skill (Khodar is not driving). The vehicle is considerably faster than the skates, so it grants +1 to all chase rolls, but it is not built to fly in such a cluttered place as a space dock. When it is involved in a miniscene (see below), it suffers -1 to all Piloting rolls.

Jim's tactics are simple; he uses the Push maneuver every time he is not in immediate danger (not involved in a miniscene).

During the chase, up to half of the spacewhalers can shoot either at the heroes or at Jim (your choice). They are not killers, so they set their weapons on stun.

After the heroes attack the spacewhalers, concentrate the whalers' response on the party because Jim must be unharmed in the next part of the scene.

Do not use the standard obstacle rules. Instead, when a driver draws a Club card as his first initiative card from the action deck, run the miniscene described below.

The chase ends when the spacewhalers are within one Range Increment of Jim, or after ten rounds, whichever happens first. Continue with "Scene 4: Dead End!"

★ **Spacewhalers (1 per hero + 2):** See page 27.

★ **Khodar, Spacewhaler Captain:** See page 27.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

OBSTACLES TABLE

Deuce (-4) Crossing Hovercar: A hovercar crosses the character's path! If the chase roll fails, the pilot barely avoids the danger, losing a Range Increment. With a critical failure the two vehicles collide, suffering 3d6 damage from an Extra. If a hoverskate is involved in the accident, the driver suffers all the damage.

Three (-2) Protoplasm Cargo: A hovercart is passing in front of the character. It seems empty, so it can easily be climbed over. In truth, the barge is filled with a huge mass of transparent Umagu protoplasm, a delicious food produced in the Greenbelt but quite a problem for the chase. This round, Notice is the chase skill for the character. If the roll is successful he spots the protoplasm and avoids the cart, otherwise he is mired in the slimy goo! Getting out the protoplasm requires a full round and a Strength (-4) roll. The character cannot continue the chase until he gets free.

Four (-2) Cargo Droids: Two huge, twenty-foot tall

cargo droids are loading several containers, right in the way of the chase. The robots are not very smart and carry on with their job, ignoring the situation. Avoiding them is the pilot's task. If the Piloting roll fails, the character crashes into one of the droids and is Shaken. With a 1 on the Piloting die, the droid literally knocks the poor character off his skate! He also loses two Range Increments (three in the case of the dinghy).

Five (-2) Painters: Some painters are working on the wall of a warehouse, using a levitating platform. If the character fails the roll, he hits the painters, making a terrible mess. He automatically loses a Range Increment and his clothes are soaked with paint, making him appear so ridiculous that, until cleaned, he suffers -1 to tests of will. If he succeeds with a raise, the hero not only manages to avoid the painters, but he also grabs a bucket of paint. It can be used to add +2 to a Distract maneuver or kept for the imminent fight to grant the same bonus to a Trick.

Six (-2) Chicken Stampede: The character is moving among a large number of crates full of Pixarian Chickens, simpleminded, four foot tall beasts. The chickens, startled by the roar of the engines, break free of the crates and start running around the docks! The beasts then join the chase, so add another counter to represent the startled flock. They have Agility d10. A character in the same Range Increment as the chickens suffers -2 to all Piloting rolls. The chickens disperse at the end of the chase.

Seven (-1) Beans From The Heavens: A large silo is discharging all its contents just as the character is passing below! Luckily, the contents are only blue Asteroid Beans, but there is an avalanche of them! Each character in the Range Increment where the miniscene occurs must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d6 damage from an Extra. Having a roof, the spacedinghy ignores this.

Eight (-1) Molecular Fishnet: The Greenbelt asteroids host many interesting microorganisms floating in space. The most common way to gather them is by using large, specially fabricated fishnets dragged by spaceboats. One of these fishnets is currently spread between two containers to be repaired. If the hero fails his Piloting roll, he ends up in the net! He must make an Agility (-2) roll to free himself. Until he is free, the character cannot gain further Range Increments in the chase.

Nine (-1) Rolling Spools: A group of workers is unloading a cargo of fifteen foot tall spools of wire, but something goes wrong and the spools fall out the cargo door, and roll down the street! Place a counter on the Range Increment where this miniscene takes place. Each character in the same Range Increment as the spools must make an Agility (-2) roll to avoid being hit and suffering 2d8 damage from an Extra. At the start of each round, the spools move one Range Increment backwards, until there is no other character behind them.

Ten (-1) Religious Group: A procession of Melanite monks is crossing the docks, making for their spaceship. There are twenty of them, with long, ritual staves in their hands. The character can either choose to let them pass, losing a Range Increment, or cross the procession. In this case, he uses Persuasion or Intimidation as his chase

roll. In case of failure he angers d4 monks who attack him with their staves (Fighting d6, Damage: d6+d4 from an Extra). If the roll is a critical failure, they also benefit from Ganging Up.

Jack (0) Slipway: A slipway leads to the service tunnels under the docks. A hero can choose to navigate these passages to gain some advantage. In this case, he uses Smarts as the chase skill for this round. Being familiar with the place, Jim rolls with +4. Otherwise, run the chase as normal.

Queen (0) Cargo Shortcut: A large container stands in the way, its front and back doors open. The hero can choose to go through it. If he succeeds in the chase roll, he gains an extra Range Increment thanks to the shortcut. If he fails, he must make an immediate Spirit (-2) roll or be Shaken. If the character does not go through the cargo container, run the chase as normal.

King (0) Xamanian Flour: There are some open crates of Xamanian red flour exactly where the character is passing. The vehicle's engine kicks up a great red cloud. The character is in Darkness until his next action.

Ace (0) Ramp: Ramps are a hoverskater's best friend. The character can choose to use the ramp to gain extra ground. In this case, for each success and raise on the chase roll, he gains an extra Range Increment, without limit to how many Increments he can gain. In case of failure, he falls badly, suffering 2d6 from an Extra and damaging the hoverskate, which from now has Handling -1. The dinghy ignores this result.

SPACEDINGHY

Spacedinghies are very adaptable vehicles, used for short trips within a planet's atmosphere and in space. Many large ships carry at least a couple of them, to be used as auxiliary vehicles.

Acc/Top Speed: 12/50; **Toughness:** 14 (2); **Handling:** 0; **Crew:** 1+6

Notes: Atmospheric, Spacecraft

HOVERSKATE

Hoverskates are the natural evolution of skateboards. Plastic or metal boards fitted with a powerful repulsor field, they are very common among teenagers and youngsters.

Acc/Top Speed: 6/12; **Toughness:** 7(2); **Handling:** +1; **Crew:** 1

Notes: Max height 5", very stable (half the penalty for unstable platform). A hero can take another passenger on his hoverskate in emergencies, but it suffers -2 to chase rolls.

SCENE 4: DEAD END!

Jim suddenly turns left to shake off his pursuers and goes straight down a narrow passage lined with containers.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

But this was not a very good idea!

The passage ends in an open area, completely surrounded by high walls of crates and containers, too high to be climbed over on a hoverskate. The boy frantically looks for an opening, but there is no way out.

Just then, the spacewhalers arrive and leap out of the spacedinghy.

"Look at him, guys. He's trapped." Khodar says.

"Let's help him." Another grizzled spacewhaler snarls.

You notice that they all wield strange energy weapons with nasty points on them – space harpoons.

You push on the accelerator to reach the boy as fast as you can.

Combat is imminent!

The combat area is quite large, 36" by 36". The perimeter of the battlefield is completely surrounded by a wall of crates. There is only a 6" opening at the center of the southern wall, through which the combatants have entered.

Place the spacewhalers in the middle of the battlefield, within 3" of their dinghy (see below).

Jim is positioned in the northeastern corner of the area.

The heroes do not automatically join the fight during the first round. They arrive after one round for every two Range Increments they are behind the spacewhalers.

When the party enters the fight, place them within 3" of the southern edge.

Both Jim and the heroes start the fight aboard hoverskates (unless they have lost them), which use the standard vehicle rules.

The spacewhalers' tactics are pretty straightforward. They want to capture Jim and give him a serious beating, so they will use their harpoons' special ability to grapple his hoverskate, but they are not killers. Unless the party uses lethal force, the spacewhalers set their blaster weapons on stun and use the harpoons' tips only for Tricks or against hoverskates.

Jim is weaponless, so he tries to find an improvised weapon (see below), and to avoid a direct fight, he remains on his hoverskate.

The fight lasts exactly six rounds and the enemies are the survivors of the previous chase. At the start of the seventh round, run the section "Deadly Avalanche".

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Big Crates:** Some enormous containers are scattered about the area. They grant Full Cover (-4) and have

Toughness 12. They stand about 12' tall, so a Climbing roll is required to scale them. Hoverskaters can try a stunt to jump onto them with a Piloting or Agility (-2) roll. Place up to four crates on the battlefield. You can use Medium Burst Templates to represent them.

* **Hoverskates:** Hoverskates are the big advantage the heroes have over the opponents. They use the standard vehicle rules and can be used to ram into an enemy. Remember that the skates hover 5" from the floor, so they can easily fly over many small obstacles.

* **Mechanical Lifter:** A big mechanical lifter stands nearby. It is typically used for moving very big and heavy containers, but crafty heroes can use its huge mechanical claw in the fight! The mechanical arm counts as Medium Cover (-2) and has Toughness 12 (2). It is also fitted with a claw that deals d12+d6 damage, Reach 8. The character uses the lower of his Piloting and Fighting skills to attack. The huge vehicle can move, but very slowly, it has only Pace 3. Use a Large Burst Template to represent it. Place the vehicle in the northwestern corner of the battlefield.

* **Small Crates:** The area is also packed with small crates, both sealed and opened. Each crate grants Light Cover (-1) and has Toughness 7. On top of the sealed crates there are various objects (boards, hammers, wrenches and so on) that can be used as improvised weapons. A hero can grab a Str+d4 weapon with an action, or he can spend a full round searching and making a Notice roll. With a success, he finds either a Str+d6 weapon or a very balanced one (Str+d4, no Fighting penalty for improvised weapon). The open crates, instead, contain various wares that can be used as props for Tricks. Each round, a player can grab a prop of his choice (with the GM's approval) from an open crate. Use gaming stones of two different colors to represent the sealed and open crates. Place up to ten sealed and ten open crates on the battlefield.

* **Spaceboat:** The spaceboat is 6" long and 3" wide. It offers Medium Cover (-2) and has Toughness 14(2).

DEADLY AVALANCHE

At the start of the seventh round, something unexpected happens.

The wall of containers surrounding the battle area trembles and quickly starts collapsing in a deadly avalanche of cargo. You must duck for cover, but wait; Jim is standing still, frozen in terror. You haven't come this far to see him crushed! You must save him!

Deal action cards as normal to Jim and the heroes. Each card has two meanings: it decides when the hero acts and it describes the type of danger he faces during the round (see table below).

At the start of an action, the character can decide to look for cover. It requires a Notice roll. Once under cover, the hero is protected from the avalanche and suffers no further damage for the rest of the scene. If he fails the

Notice roll or chooses not to make it, he must make an Agility roll modified according to the table or suffer the described damage. This roll does not suffer from the multiple action penalty. All damage is dealt from an Extra.

Why should a hero choose not to look for cover?

Unlike the heroes, Jim is Surprised for the entire scene and cannot search for cover on his own, he can only make the Agility roll to avoid damage. A hero must first drag him down, with a Strength (-2) roll, and then find cover for both with a Notice roll. Doing both actions in the same round incurs the standard multiple action penalties.

Grant a benny to the character who saves the boy.

The avalanche lasts for four rounds. Being crafty types, the spacewhalers survive on their own, though battered and bruised.

Card	Agility Roll Modifier	Damage
2-5	0	4d6
6-10	-2	3d6
Jack-Ace	-4	2d6

If the heroes survive the avalanche, read the following:

When the deadly avalanche ends, you and the spacewhalers leave your improvised refuges. A terrible scene surrounds you. Crates and containers lie wrecked all around and you are engulfed in a cloud of thick dust that makes you cough.

You quickly discover out what caused the terrible event – a forklift, driven at ramming speed against the wall of containers, which now lies abandoned. Was it an accident or did someone just try to kill you?

While you ponder this, the sirens of the Shipping Guild's police are getting closer and closer.

The "accident," in truth, was a murder attempt. Gan Zun, one of Hanazon's dangerous henchman, was following Jim because his master is worried about what Kera, Jim's mother, might have revealed to her son.

The chase and subsequent fight would have offered him the occasion to wipe out both the pesky boy and the annoying spacewhalers' captain, but luck was not on his side.

If a hero examines the forklift, a successful Notice roll reveals hints of a strong, "swampish" odor on the seat. This is Gan Zun's bodily odor.

ACT 2: LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

SCENE 1: I HAVE NO FATHER!

Jim, the heroes, and the spacewhalers are all taken into custody by the Shipping Guild's police (this is not really customary in pulp, but we need the heroes to meet the villain of the story).

A gruff Shipping Guild police sergeant takes you, Jim, and the whalers' captain in front of the Guild Accountant Officer, de facto ruler of Khuma Bay.

"I am Hanazon Hal, appointed by the Guild to govern this city." The man speaking is a Tuathan of pleasant and sophisticated appearance, dressed in simple but elegant robes.

"I know Jim Bellon and captain Khodar, but I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you, strangers."

The heroes must introduce themselves, and then Hanazon continues.

"You are all in serious trouble. The report here says you started a brawl, vandalized half the docks, and had a serious fistfight on an abandoned cargo platform, where your actions almost caused a tragedy. What do you have to say in your defense?"

Jim quickly says the spacewhalers attacked, but captain Khodar replies that they were provoked, and the two begin quarreling. Then it is the heroes' turn to explain their involvement in the matter. Let them do some roleplaying before Hanazon interrupts the quarrel.

"Silence! Your behavior was shameful, Jim! Only my friendship with your mother prevents me from sending you to jail, but you must face the consequences of your actions. You must pay a fine of \$500. While you, captain Khodar, you are not a boy, and I would have expected a little more sense from you. I'm afraid you have to pay for all the damage caused this afternoon plus an additional fine in the amount of \$2000. Let me add that in dire times such as these, your behavior was very inappropriate. You are dismissed."

After Jim and Khodar leave the room, exchanging enraged looks, the Officer addresses the party.

"I must thank you. Without your intervention, we would now be counting the dead. I think I should have been harsher with the boy, but I am a close friend of his mother, Kera, and I know he has grown up fatherless. I'll speak to her about the problem. Now, if you would excuse me, I am very busy."

In truth, Hanazon is not happy at all. He wanted Khodar and Jim dead, but the party ruined his plans.

Outside the office, the heroes meet up with Jim, who is having trouble paying his fine. It is the right time for the party to help the boy and speak to him.

Jim does not know his father. Joran abandoned Kera, Jim's mother, when he was very young, and Jim has very bad feelings towards him. So, after discovering the heroes are friends of Joran's, he refuses to talk with them.

This is a good moment to do some roleplaying. The group did save Jim's life and the boy has a big problem now, so in the end he tells the heroes the whole story.

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"I have always lived with my mother, Kera. She is a scientist who has dedicated her life to studying the Xanthi. She is convinced that they are not simple beasts but a very intelligent race. They have always been peaceful, so she was totally shocked when, a month ago, they started becoming aggressive and attacking the astrofarms.

"Ten days after the first attack, these damn whalers arrived, promising to solve the problem with the Xanthi. Mum and I hate these men; they are just killers without any respect for such an amazing form of life!

"But the people here cheered their arrival, so Mum secluded herself in her laboratory investigating the facts. She was sure the answer to the mystery could be found in the sounds the Xanthi make to communicate. You see, they are capable of emitting sounds and energy impulses on several frequencies, and she started analyzing all of them.

"When Mum is in this mood, she is completely dedicated and can spend whole days without sleeping or eating, but now it's been three days and she hasn't come home yet, her wristcomputer is turned off and her spaceboat is missing. I went to her lab, but the door is locked and I don't have the key. I'm very worried and I fear for her life. Maybe I'll return to her lab and break in to look for clues."

One legitimate question the characters can ask is why, if he is so worried, he has not mentioned the matter to the Officer.

"Mum and Hanazon had a relationship." Jim reluctantly admits. "They broke up two months ago but they remain friends. I don't want him involved in my family's business."

The best thing the party can do now is to go and check the woman's laboratory with Jim. They are heroes and a locked door should not stop them.

SCENE 2: KERA'S LABORATORY

Kera's lab is in the lower part of Khuma Bay, in a building directly adjacent to the external walls of the city dome, because she needs access to the powerful receivers on the dome's exterior to catch the voices of the Xanthi without interference.

When you arrive at the lab, you realize that something bad has happened here — the door's lock is broken.

Worried by the mess Jim has made, Hanazon has or-

dered Gan Zun, his main minion, to check Kera's lab, to make sure the woman has not left any dangerous evidence behind.

The party arrives just as Gan Zun is deleting all the data from Kera's computers, while some hired thugs keep watch.

Kera's lab is like a tower — three rooms on three different floors, connected by a stairwell.

Use three Large Burst Templates to represent the floors, placing a Small Burst Template in the center of each one to depict the stairwell.

Reading the floor maps clockwise, place a door 2" wide at six o'clock on the first floor. This floor is used as a library but it also has a small kitchen and a bed, because Kera often stays in the lab for several days.

The second floor is where Kera usually works and there are computers lining the walls.

On the third floor there is a locker containing some spacesuits and a pressurized door at nine o'clock. This is the access to a service corridor leading to the dome's external surface.

Place all the thugs but two on the first floor. They are active sentinels and make group Notice rolls for spotting purposes.

If the heroes are not explicitly moving in silence or if they fail their Stealth roll, the goons start on Hold and two of them have the time to hide at either side of the door. In this position, if they win a Stealth roll opposed to a character's Notice roll, they get the Drop on him. The hidden thugs wait until at least two heroes are inside before springing the ambush.

If the heroes are stealthy enough, place the goons at random positions in the room and check for their surprise.

Gan Zun and the two remaining thugs are on the second floor, wiping the computers of all the data. The evil alien needs three rounds to accomplish the task from the start of the fight, so he orders his two underlings to hold back the heroes on the stairwell while he finishes his work.

After erasing the data, he leaves his men to face defeat and runs to the third floor, using smoke grenades to cover his trail. It is likely the party cannot see him now, being on a different floor, they only hear his voice. Therefore, Gan Zun is described in the next section.

It is necessary for Gan Zun to escape. If need arises, use the Recurring Villain rule to let him flee to the third floor.

At this point, after the goons are defeated, run the section, "Decompression!"

★ **Gan Zun, Criminal Henchman:** See page 25.

★ **Thugs (1 per hero +1):** See page 27.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Computers:** The second floor's walls are completely lined with computers, which are likely to explode when hit by a stray blaster shot. On this floor, tweak the

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Innocent Bystander rule slightly: When a 1 is rolled on the Shooting die, the shot misses and hits a computer on the wall behind the target, causing an explosion. Place a Small Burst Template centered on the wall where the shot has hit a computer (use common sense to determine this). Any character under the template suffers 2d6 damage from an Extra.

* **Generic Furniture:** As it is impossible to detail every piece of furniture in the lab, as a rule of thumb consider each piece as granting Light Cover (-1) and having Toughness 6. You can use gaming stones to represent the furniture. A single gaming stone represents something small (e.g., a chair), two stones within 3" of each other represent something medium (e.g., a table), while three stones within 3" of each other depict a big piece of furniture (e.g., a bed). Place up to ten gaming stones on the first floor and up to five on the second and third.

* **Stairwell:** Each flight is 10" high. Shooting from one floor to the other through the stairwell is possible, with a -2 modifier. In melee, being at a higher position on the stairwell is definitely an advantage and it grants +2 to Parry. Conversely, being at a lower position subtracts -2 from Parry.

DECOMPRESSION!

"Hey!" Jim shouts: "He's escaping!"

It's true, the thugs' leader is fleeing to the upper floor! You must stop him!

You run up the stairwell just in time to see him go through a door in the western wall. The room in which you are now seems to be a sort of warehouse. It's almost empty; there is only a metal locker along the southern wall.

The heroes are now on the third floor of Kera's lab. Let them do a Common Knowledge roll. Characters with a spacefarer background or similar add +2 to this roll. If successful, the heroes recognize the symbols on the door, indicating a corridor that leads outside the dome. There must be an airlock at the end of the corridor and the way out into space is surely protected by codes known only to the city's security forces.

In the locker, there are some spacesuits (one for each character). Donning a spacesuit requires six rounds, but an Agility roll lowers this number by one for each success and raise. Being impatient, Jim spurs the heroes to chase the alien without hesitation. The heroes do not actually need to hurry; instead, in this

particular case, losing time wearing a spacesuit will be worth it later.

When the party goes through the door, continue with the following:

You are in a rather long corridor, ending with an airlock door. The fleeing alien is frantically trying to open it, without any luck. He is trapped!

At this point, without dealing action cards, ask the players what they want to do. Any hero that runs or charges towards the alien will start at one lower Range Increment in the following situation. Then, before the players can act, go on with the description below.

The thugs' leader turns towards you, so you can see him clearly for the first time.

He has a third bionic arm on his right side and a funny looking turtle-like head, but his eyes are those of a killer.



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His swampy stench fills the corridor.

Heroes that have previously found this clue will recognize the odor from the forklift at the docks!

"Well, my friends, I am very happy to meet you again, but now I need my... space!" He laughs.

Then, with a mighty blow, his bionic arm smashes the window on the airlock door, which opens into the void!

Only now you notice that the alien's armor is a fully functional spacesuit fitted with magnetic boots and a force field generated breathing mask.

The evil alien says something else but you can't hear because the air is being sucked out of the room, and you are being pulled towards the opening, as well! He waves his hand and moves off onto the dome's surface, leaving you to die.

The situation is critical. When the window was smashed, the door through which the party came in automatically closed to avoid decompression in a larger area. The heroes seem doomed, but they still have a chance to save their skin; near the door, there is an emergency panel that can generate a temporary force field in the area near the airlock. The problem is that the characters are being sucked out into the void – they must use all their strength to reach the panel.

Handle this situation as a chase, with some modifications.

Place ten Range Increment markers on the table. The first represents the airlock and the tenth represents the emergency panel. Place the heroes on the fifth segment (or the fourth if they previously declared their intention to charge Zun Gan).

Strength is the chase skill. Every round a hero succeeds with his roll, he gains Range Increments as normal, but any failure causes him to be sucked back one Range Increment or two with a critical failure.

A hero dragged below the first Range Increment must make a Strength (-4) roll each turn to avoid being thrown out into space where he meets a horrible death.

Instead, the first character who reaches the tenth segment can activate the emergency force field, stopping the decompression. Doing this also unlocks the door to Kera's warehouse, ending the chase.

The standard obstacle rules are ignored. Instead, whenever a character draws a Club as his first initiative card, it means he suffers the effects of oxygen deprivation. He must make a Vigor roll (-2 if he draws a face card) or gain a level of Fatigue. He recovers from Fatigue at the end of the scene.

Heroes fitted with spacesuits ignore the Club card effect, have +2 to Strength rolls, and, if sucked out into

space, they will be recovered, unhurt, at the end of the scene.

Help from Outside. If a character has not gone down the corridor, he can help his mates from outside. There is a second, more complex control panel in Kera's warehouse. As this is a very stressful situation, activating the emergency force field from here requires two successful Smarts rolls (with each raise counting as an extra success).

A HINT

Once the party is out of danger, Gan Zun has already disappeared beyond the dome's curve and following him is impossible.

Any surviving thugs provide no useful information. Gan Zun hired them at the docks a couple hours ago to have some extra muscle handy.

Kera's computers are totally wiped of all data, so they are of no help.

However, there is another clue that can be found with a successful Notice roll. To effectively monitor the Xanthi, Kera set up some receiving stations on various asteroids. Being a neat and organized person, she stored the electronic keys for all the stations in a panel in the kitchen area.

All the keys are in the right place except for the one to Vendellmann station, which is missing.

Usually Kera visits the stations every month or so to check the instruments and to download the recorded data. Vendellmann station is placed in proximity to the scene of many Xanthi attacks, so it might have recorded something interesting.

The woman has gone there to investigate and if the party wants to find her, they must head to Vendellmann too.

If the heroes fail to discover this hint, Jim automatically finds it.

SCENE 3: THE BLACK ONE

You set off for Vendellmann station. Using your hyperdrive, this would be a short trip, but with sublight engines only, the voyage takes four hours. You have almost reached Vendellmann's asteroid when you hear a strange sound echoing throughout the Blazing Star! It has no clear origin, and it seems to radiate from the whole ship! It is the same sound your sensors detected when the Tanus astrofarm was attacked.

The party is about to fall into a deadly trap – even if they do not know it yet, the sound they are hearing is the chant of the space amoebas.

What is worse is that the sound propagates through space at enormous speed, summoning enraged Xanthi.

And it is all the Backstabber's doing.

The cloaked ship is here to intercept the heroes and eliminate them. The Guild's cruiser has the firepower

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to take down the Blazing Star, but Hanazon wants the destruction of the group to be instrumental to his goal, spreading terror among the colonists, so why not cause a little Xanthi attack in the process?

After a few moments, you notice something on the sensors. A shape. A Xanthi. A big one. It is approaching so quickly that you can see it through the portholes now. It isn't big. It is HUGE! About the size of a capital ship. Its skin is so dark that the creature looks like a moving black hole heading straight for you.

"Oh shit!" Jim curses, "It is the pod leader, the Black One."

The beast opens its enormous mouth. It doesn't simply want to destroy you. It wants to eat you!

You must flee through the asteroids if you want to avoid it.

This is a chase, and a potentially deadly one!

The Blazing Star starts at Medium range from the Black One. The beast has Piloting d6 and is considered a Wild Card. It is so massive that there is no sense in shooting it with the Blazing Star's weapons. The only chance for the party is to gain ten Range Increments, so they will be out of the Backstabber's cannon range, and the Black One will lose interest and go away.

Each Range Increment corresponds to 10" on the tabletop.

The Black One is treated like a capital ship and its attacks are counted as battery fire.

THE BLACK ONE

1 x Energy beam (Range: 30/60/90; Damage: 3d6; ROF 1; HW; AP 4)

The beast has Shooting d6.

1 x Huge Bite (Range: must be in the same range increment; Damage: 3d10; ROF 1; AP 8)

The Black One does not use any chase maneuvers, it simply follows the heroes and fires at them, but, when it reaches the Range Increment the heroes are on, it tries to bite them.

For this chase, do not use the standard obstacles rules. The area is full of small asteroids and debris. Whenever the pilot and the Black One draw a Club card as their first initiative card, it means they have to avoid an asteroid, as per the table below.

The Piloting Roll modifier is the penalty to the chase

roll. In case of failure, the Blazing Star suffers the stated damage, but before trying to avoid it; a gunner can attempt to destroy the asteroid. To do this, the gunner must make a Shooting roll at short range (taking into account the To Hit modifier) and score sufficient damage to beat the asteroid's Toughness. If the asteroid is destroyed, the pilot suffers no penalty!

These rules fully apply only to the heroes' ship. The Black One is too big to be damaged and is only mildly annoyed by the asteroids. It suffers only half the Piloting penalties (rounded down) and does not try to destroy the asteroids. The good thing is that its beam attacks also suffer the Piloting penalties (rounded down).

When the party finally shakes off the huge beast, they also notice that the strange "sound" the Blazing Star was emitting has ceased. This is because the Backstabber's cannon is not accurate enough to stay locked onto a fast moving target.

Finally, they reach Vendellmann station.

SCENE 4: DEADLY CHANT

Vendellmann is a medium-sized asteroid where, well before the colonization of the Greenbelt, the Shipping Guild had placed a radio beacon to help the few ships travelling in this space sector. The radio beacon became obsolete and was decommissioned, but the domed installation remains. It seems totally uninhabited, but a small space dock is still functional. There are no apparent signs of Kera's presence here.

Kera obtained permission from Hanazon to place one of her receivers here when the two were lovers.

The landing dock seems to have been used recently, a small ship landed leaving traces in the dust, and the main access porthole is unlocked. You reach the beacon control room, where Kera placed her receivers and a set of computers. All the machines are switched on and are operative, but there is no trace of Kera.

Let the party make a Notice (+2) roll. With a success, they find a cup of Chandran tea on a desk. Jim's mother is particularly fond of this exotic beverage, as the boy knows. It is a clue that the woman was here, but she left in a hurry, because the cup is almost full, and a few days old.

The reason for such a hasty departure lies in the recordings database. The heroes can find the following information by examining the computers with Jim's help.

CHASE TABLE

Card	Piloting Roll Modifier	Damage	To Hit	Toughness
2-5	-4	2d6	-4	6
6-10	-2	3d6	-2	7
Jack-Ace	-1	4d6	-1	8

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The computers reveal that Kera has isolated some specific parts of the recordings — they are filed as “space amoeba chants”.

“Space amoebas are the only natural enemies of Xanthi, apart from spacewhalers.” Jim says. “These nasty parasites adhere to the Xanthi’s bodies and consume them with corrosive digestive fluids, resulting in a very painful death. They emit a sort of sound, a “chant”, to call other members of their race to join in the banquet. This chant is the only thing that can enrage a Xanthi enough that it would cross an entire solar system to kill a chanting amoeba.”

The date and the position of the source of every recording correspond to the Xanthi attacks on the astrofarms. It seems that amoebas were chanting in all the spots destroyed by the Xanthi.

“This is really strange.” Jim continues, “Space amoebas are very rare. I have never seen one in the Greenbelt.”

If the heroes listen to one of the recordings, they notice it is very similar to the strange sound the Blazing Star emitted in the previous scene, before the Black One attacked them. Someone is imitating the amoeba chant to provoke the attacks on the astrofarms! But how can the sound be made to originate from a specific target?

The heroes may start making suppositions, but they are suddenly interrupted.

It seems you are going to have guests.

The beacon’s monitors display the clear image of the Slaughterhouse, the spacewhalers’s capital ship. It is orbiting around Vendellmann while a couple of whaleboats are now docked at the base, beside the Blazing Star.

Some burly fellows are entering the room now.

“Ub-ob...” Jim says, “We’re in trouble.”

ACT 3: THE ENEMIES OF OUR ENEMIES...

SCENE 1: THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

“What a nice surprise! Our old friends!” Khodar’s voice thunders.

“Our sensors detected an enormous whale in this area. We came here, but we can’t seem to find it anymore. What a pity, it means we’ll have to skin you instead of the big beasts you love so much. Spacewhalers, let’s teach them a lesson!”

The spacewhalers are not the true villains of this story, but surely, they want to spill some of the heroes’ blood for the embarrassment they caused in Act 1, Scene 4. As before, not being killers, they use weapons set on stun, as long as the heroes does the same.

The combat area is the Vendellmann beacon control room. It is a square, 18” by 18”.

There is only one means of access to the area, a 3” wide opening in the middle of the southern wall.

In the center of the room is the computer hub (see below).

The enemies start within 3” of the opening.

Place the heroes by the hub, at least 8” from the spacewhalers.

The whalers prefer to enter into melee, but they do not object to a few blaster shots to soften the party.

This fight is not destined to reach a resolution, because after five rounds, something terrible happens. Stop the combat immediately and run the next section, “Unavoidable death”.

★ **Spacewhalers (2 per hero):** See page 27.

★ **Khodar, spacewhaler captain:** See page 27.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Computer Hub:** A large circular desk full of computers, receivers and so on. It counts as Medium Cover (–2) and has Toughness 8. Use a Medium Burst Template to represent it and place it in the center of the room.

* **Energy Conduits:** Four energy conduits, running along the ceiling, power the computer hub. Draw four random straight lines from the computer hub to the room’s perimeter. Place a gaming stone in the middle of each line. The lines represent the conduits and the gaming stones are energy nodes. A Called Shot (–2) damaging a node (Toughness 6) causes it to explode, dealing 2d6 damage in a Small Burst Template.

UNAVOIDABLE DEATH

The beacon’s receivers start wailing. It is the amoeba’s chant again, but now many times stronger!

All of you, heroes and spacewhalers alike, stop fighting.

The sound is originating from the Slaughterhouse. The crew calls Khodar on his wristcomputer:

“Captain! Captain! This sound, it is emitting from

the Slaughterhouse itself! We don't understand how it's happening, but it's the truth! Wait... there's something on the sensors. A Xanthi, incoming! No, there are two... Three... A dozen! For all the galaxies, they are coming towards us!!!"

Dozens of spacewhalers, a whole pod of Xanthi, appear on the monitors and throw themselves against the whalers' capital ship with blind rage.

There is nothing anyone can do. Within moments, the Slaughterhouse is destroyed, leaving only space debris in the area.

"No!" Khodar shouts, his voice full of desperation and anger.

Despite being grizzled spacefarers, Khodar and his shipmates are totally shocked. Their ship is destroyed and their friends are dead, and it all happened in a flash.

With the destruction of the Slaughterhouse, the deadly sound fades and the Xanthi, after a moment of confusion, appear to relax before moving away.

At this point, an area of space shimmers and a spaceship appears. It is a medium sized cruiser, with a strange, long cannon protruding from its nose. The ship was cloaked under some sort of stealth field!

There is an incoming transmission. On your screens, you see the three-armed alien you encountered before.

He speaks in a deep voice: "I am Gan Zun, captain of the Backstabber. You have seen what we are capable of doing. Just as we destroyed the Slaughterhouse, we can destroy Vendellmann station. However, you are lucky, my master wants you, and wants you alive. So drop your weapons and surrender, otherwise you will soon sample some of the other features of our harmonic cannon."

The heroes should surrender and persuade Khodar and his men to do the same. Accomplishing this requires a Persuasion roll.

If they decide to resist, the Backstabber blasts the beacon with a stun ray. It is not at all pleasant, and both the heroes and the whalers quickly fall unconscious. In the next scene, they will be Fatigued. They can then recover from this condition with a successful Vigor roll, to be attempted at the start of every scene.

When they awaken, they are aboard the Backstabber. The soldiers search the heroes and remove all their useful equipment (weapons, armor and assorted gear), but the characters might be able to hide something (see sidebar).

HIDING OBJECTS

If the heroes surrender, they have a few moments before being captured to hide some useful objects on their persons. These must be very small items, like lighters or pocketknives. Make an opposed roll between the character's Stealth and the average soldier's Notice (d6). In case of success, the object goes unnoticed. A hero can try to hide more objects, but every additional item requires another roll and inflicts a cumulative -2 to all rolls.

SCENE 2: THE CYBO

A group of soldiers, all wearing nondescript gray uniforms, captures and restrains you with security handcuffs.

"Just to be on the safe side." Gan Zun grins.

You notice that the other spacewhalers, apart from Khodar, are not restrained. The alien quickly glances at his men, who suddenly shoot them dead!

"You bastard!" Khodar shouts. "You promised to spare our lives!"

"I lied" Gan Zun shrugs and, speaking to his men, continues: "Bring the prisoners aboard, under strict surveillance, and put their ship in the secondary hangar. We don't want to leave any traces."

The soldiers obey silently.

The Backstabber is not a very big ship, but it is a true jewel of technology. Some guards watch while you stand on the main deck. You wonder who is behind this whole thing, because surely he has amazing resources at his disposal.

You don't need to wait very long. The trip is brief and you can see your destination through a porthole – a barren asteroid, completely uninhabited.

But wait, there is a large crater and you are heading straight into it. The asteroid is hollow, and it hosts a series of pressurized caverns and domes, where people are working.

You are in the enemy's secret base!

"It must be an old space mine," Jim whispers.

"Silence!" Gan Zun orders.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

The alien and an entourage of soldiers bring you before their master in the main control room. Finally you will meet your enemy!

He is the tall figure who is busy observing a huge, entirely cultivated cavern through a glass wall.

Upon your arrival, he turns and you can finally see him. It is Hanazon Hal, the Shipping Guild officer!

With a little smile, the Tuathan speaks: "My friends" he says, "You have given me a lot of trouble, but finally we have managed to arrange a little family meeting."

Two guards come in, leading a prisoner, a woman. It's Kera, Jim's mother!

"Mum!" the boy shouts.

Mother and son try to embrace, but the guards stop them.

"I suppose I owe you an explanation." Hanazon continues, "Yes, I am working to destroy the astrofarms and spread general fear throughout the area. Why? The motivation is simple and lies in the crops beyond that glass wall, look at them with your eyes."

The field is entirely planted with black-leaved plants, carefully tended by small, cloaked aliens.

"You know those plants, don't you?" the Officer asks.

Let the heroes make a Common Knowledge roll to recognize them. Otherwise, Hanazon himself will explain.

"They are Cybo saplings, a recently discovered plant, totally inedible but capable of producing excellent bioplastic.

"Our little aliens, we call them the Agronomists, made quite a discovery some months ago. Due to some unique environmental properties, the Greenbelt's soil is excellent for growing Cybo. More than excellent. The plants grow ten times faster and the quality of the resultant plastic is ten times better. It is a business worth millions, but they can easily become billions if the Guild manages to seize all the astrofarms from the colonists! We paid them once to colonize this area... Well, now we want our asteroids back!

"Good Kera here unwillingly gave me the right idea. The Xanthi are relatively common in this area, and it is wonderful what these space giants

can be tricked into doing with the help of a little amoeba's chant. They go mad and destroy everything in sight!

"Thanks to the Guild's scientists we used a prototype weapon to accomplish this, the harmonic cannon. This weapon is practically harmless, but it emits a beam that makes its target generate sound waves, controlled by the cannon's frequency. And guess what sounds we make it produce?"

"Using this little trick, we have destroyed several astrofarms and the colonists have reacted by selling off their estates at very cheap prices and leaving the sector, but it is a slow process. Too slow. We are losing money with every passing moment. We need something more... spectacular... to inspire all of them to abandon the area.

"Something like a pack of Xanthi utterly destroying Khuma Bay! It will cost the Guild quite a lot to reconstruct the city afterwards, but it will be a worthwhile investment, I can assure you!

"Today is the Balabala, a religious festival. Many farmers are in Khuma Bay with their families, praying in the temple to stop the Xanthi's madness.

"A few thousand deaths will help us reach our goal, and I have no time to properly deal with you right now. Gan Zun, throw them into the fertilizer depot, then have the Backstabber ready to take off. Little Kera and I will be in the first row this time, to enjoy the show! Be well until my return!"

The guards drag Kera away from Jim and escort you all to the fertilizer depot.

SCENE 3: ESCAPE FROM THE SECRET BASE

You are in a damp warehouse full of crates and sacks of agricultural chemicals and you are still handcuffed. If you want to save Kera, your own lives, and Khuma Bay itself, you must find a way out, and quickly!

The handcuffs are the first problem. They are very big and cumbersome, completely restraining both arms and hands. Breaking them is impossible, as is lockpicking them. Even if the heroes have managed to smuggle some lockpicks, they simply do not have the fine manipulating skills to accomplish the task.

The road to freedom lies in the crates and sacks in the room. If a hero examines the wares, let him make a Common Knowledge roll.

DEADLY CHANT

Heroes with a background in chemistry or with the MacGyver Edge roll with +2. With a success, they recognize Abernate, Balianix, and Cynderium, chemicals that, mixed, can produce a strong acid, capable of corroding metal!

MAKING ACID

Concocting an acid requires accurate timing because, once opened, the components need to be quickly combined. So the party has only six rounds to create the acid, otherwise they must restart the process. Luckily, inside the room there are enough supplies to allow them limitless attempts. The first two steps can be performed cooperatively and scoring a raise means the action is carried out without spending a round.

* **Breaking the Abernate Sack.** Abernate is a powder, contained in a sack. The hero must break it, using his teeth or whatever else. It requires an Agility (-2) roll. A critical failure fills the hero's mouth with the substance, causing 2d4 damage, from a Wild Card.

* **Throwing the Balianix Barrel.** Balianix is a liquid contained in a big barrel. With a good kick, the character can let it fall on top of the Abernate powder. This requires a Strength (-2) roll.

* **Spraying Cynderium.** Cynderium is gaseous and is stored in a large spray can. This is the most delicate step, because the hero must spray it onto the mixture once the Abernate and Balianix are well mixed. It requires a Smarts (-2) roll.

* **Using It.** Now the acid is ready! It will be effective only until the sixth round. Each round the heroes can try to use it to corrode their handcuffs. It requires an Agility roll, -2 for each additional character if more than one hero tries to free himself in the same round. With a success, the hero is free. With a failure, the character suffers 2d6 damage from an Extra from exposure to acid.

Once free, a hero can help his comrades, automatically freeing one of them each round. The acid making process does have one side effect - it produces clouds of thick smoke, attracting unwelcome attention!

THE AGRONOMISTS

Four rounds after the smoke starts spreading, the warehouse door opens and three little aliens, the Agronomists, enter.

They are not fighters, but they will do to their best to defend themselves.

The fighting area is a square of 12" by 12" with a 3" wide door on the northern wall.

Place the Agronomists within 4" of the door, and while the heroes may be placed wherever the players wish, they must be at least 6" from the nearest enemy.

Remember that from this point to the end of the scenario, Khodar is on the party's side, so the players can use him as an ally.

The Agronomists' tactics consist of fighting for two rounds, then, from the third round on, one of them

attempts to leave the room to sound the alarm, pushing a button placed on a wall 15" from the depot. If the Agronomist manages to trigger the alarm, a patrol of Gray Soldiers will arrive to investigate in five rounds. The same thing will happen if the fight lasts for more than five rounds.

★ **Agronomist (3):** See page 25.

★ **Gray Soldier (1 per hero):** See page 26.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

★ **Khodar, Spacewhaler Captain:** See page 27.

QUESTIONING THE SURVIVORS

If the heroes spare some of their enemies' lives, they can interrogate them for vital information. Below, you will find answers to some of the most likely questions the party could ask:

Q: Where is our spaceship?

A: You mean the merchant ship? Gan Zun took it as spoil of war. It is on the Backstabber now.

Q: Are there other spaceships handy in the base?

A: Yes, there are the two captured whaleboats. They are in hangar Alpha.

Q: Where is our equipment? (Only Gray soldiers know the answer)

A: In the control room. Now that Hanazon and Gan Zun are away, the guards on duty are gambling for it.

FINDING THE WAY

To reach the control room, the heroes must make a group Stealth roll and a group Smarts roll. If both rolls succeed, they find the room without any problem. If the heroes questioned a prisoner about the location of the room or, best of all, if they have an Agronomist or Gray Soldier to guide them, they can skip the Smarts roll.

If one of the two rolls fails, they run into a patrol of Gray Soldiers after a turn in the corridor.

The corridor is 4" wide and L-shaped. Place the heroes at the corner and the enemies within 6" of them. The Soldiers must check for surprise. If the heroes fail to wipe them out within five rounds, at the sixth round, and every further sixth round, a patrol of equal size joins the fight.

★ **Gray Soldier (1 per hero):** See page 26.

THE CONTROL ROOM

You reach the control room where you met Hanazon before. The automated door opens silently.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

Some guards are sitting at a table focused on a game of Wo Ka, a very popular card game, while on the other side of the glass wall you can see the Agronomists tending to the Cybo. The soldiers are beaten and verbal, and you gather the stake of the game is your equipment, which lies on another table nearby! There are many computer and surveillance monitors on the walls and there is another door, on the opposite side of the room. If you remember correctly, it should lead to the space docks!

The room is a 12" by 12" square with two 3" wide doors on the southern and the northern walls. The heroes have come through the southern door. The soldiers are placed around one of the two tables at the center of the room.

They were focused on their game, have no weapons drawn and must now check for surprise.

The heroes are mostly unarmed, except for the few things they have taken from the Agronomists, so their priority should be retrieving their weapons as fast as they can.

The first thing the soldiers do is call for help via their wristcomputers. Then they fight as best they can, defending the northern door and awaiting reinforcements, which will arrive after six rounds (see below).

★ **Gray Soldier (1 per hero +2):** See page 26.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

★ **Khodar, Spacewhaler Captain:** See page 27.

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* **Tables:** The tables are 4" long and 2" wide. They are placed in the middle of the room, parallel to the northern wall. On the left table is the party's equipment, while the soldiers are sitting at the table on the right. Grabbing a weapon from the table counts as an action, but it can be done for free with a successful Agility roll. Each table grants Light Cover (-1) and has Toughness 8. With a Strength roll, it can be upended to create a barricade, granting Heavy Cover (-4).

* **Glass Wall:** The east wall is made of duraglass. It has Heavy Armor against blasters but if hit by an energy weapon, it reflects the energy as a flash of white light. Every target within 6" of the wall suffers the effect of the Stun power. Hitting the glass wall can be voluntary or accidental (you can tweak the Innocent Bystander rule to have the glass wall hit in case of a 1 on the Shooting die).

* **Computers:** The northern wall hosts various computer consoles. Place up to five gaming stones by the wall to represent the different consoles. Each computer has Toughness 5 and grants Light Cover (-1). They are also useful to block the enemies (see below), but only until unarmed!

ENEMIES INCOMING!

After six rounds, read the following passage to the players:

You hear the sound of boots running up the corridor behind you. There are more guards coming!

"We have to find a way to give us time to reach the hangar or we're doomed!" Khodar says.

Add a new part to the combat area. From the southern door draw an 18" long corridor, and place a new patrol of guards within 3" of the far end.

The guards run toward the heroes while firing, half of them using Suppressive Fire.

A new patrol arrives every three rounds. The players must find a way to block the soldiers, or they are likely to be stormed.

Here are three ways to accomplish this result, but others can be devised at the GM's judgment:

Block the Control Room Door. The doors are automated, so the southern one can be blocked. This requires standing near the door and rolling two successes in Lockpicking or Repair (-2) rolls. A raise counts as an extra success.

Hack the Fire Sprinkler System. This must be done standing near the computers and requires two Smarts (-4) rolls. Characters with a security or thievery background add +2 to the rolls. Also, in this case, a raise counts as an extra success. The result is that the fire fighting system turns itself on and floods the corridor with foam, totally blocking the Gray Soldiers' way.

Activate the Localized Security Force Fields. The corridor has several security force fields, which are activated to compartmentalize the base in case of danger. They must be triggered via the computers. It requires two successful Shields (-2) rolls, a raise counting as an extra success. The effect is that three powerful force fields block access to the control room.

All the previous solutions block the corridor for six rounds each, so the heroes have time to dispatch the enemies inside the control room.

When there are no more enemies in the room, the group can run to the hangar.

★ **Gray Soldier (1 per hero):** See page 26.

TO THE HANGAR

"Come on!" Khodar shouts. "This trick won't hold them back for long."

You follow the muscular spacewhaler through the northern door, until you reach the hangar.

The two whaleboats are here.

"They're piloted exactly like interceptors." Khodar says in response to your quizzical stares, before jumping into one of the cockpits.

Normally whaleboats carry three people, but the entire group can squeeze into one of them, if they want.

Khodar suggests taking both. He will pilot one of the two boats. The group can split if they want, but be sure to know who is on which boat before the next act starts.

You cram onboard and take off just in time to see the Gray Soldiers storm into the bangar.

"All the ship's systems are operational." Khodar says.

"Khuma Bay, here we come!" Jim shouts.

ACT 4: XANTHI ATTACK!

SCENE 1: THE BATTLE OF KHUMA BAY

You drop out of hyperspace near Khuma Bay.

The situation is bad and it will soon get worse. The radio frequencies are completely dominated by the amoeba's chant and a whole horde of Xanthi, dozens of them, are attacking the domed city. There is some resistance from Khuma Bay, ground batteries are opening fire, but they are too underpowered against the rage and sheer numbers of space titans.

The city can resist only for a little while longer.

There is only one way to resolve this situation — locate the Backstabber and destroy it. It can't be that far.

But first, you have more immediate problems, the Xanthi have noticed your arrival, and they aren't happy at all. Some of them are actually turning away from the city and rushing towards you!

The heroes know the Backstabber is nearby, because the amoeba's chant is originating from the domed city. The cannon must be running at full power to make the whole structure resonate, so its energy can be traced! The heroes must accomplish two different tasks now: The whaleboat pilots must keep their ships safe, while the rest of the heroes must find the Backstabber and take it down. If the players do not think of this solution, let Khodar suggest it to them.

For simplicity's sake, the pilots' role is detailed in "Surviving the Battle" and the other heroes' part in "Dealing with the Backstabber".

For this scene only, ignore the normal initiative rules. The pilots (in any order) act first, then the other characters perform their actions. At this point, the turn ends and another one starts, until the whaleboats are destroyed or the Backstabber is discovered.

SURVIVING THE BATTLE

The pilots' task is a difficult one. They must keep the whaling boats safe in the middle of the battle. It means making a Piloting roll every round. The roll is influenced by how prudent the pilot's attitude is. Staying on the margins of the battle is safer, but it also makes the work of the gunners more difficult, because the Backstabber is very near the center of the battle. In terms of rules, this means the pilot must choose a modifier to his Piloting roll, from +4 to -4. The same, but opposite number modifier is applied to rolls dealing with the Backstabber (see below).

For example, if a pilot chooses to be very daring, suffering -4 to his Piloting roll, his mates will have +4 to their correspondent roll to deal with the Backstabber.

Here are the effects of the Piloting rolls' results. All damage is dealt by an Extra. Characters with the Ace Edge can normally use it to absorb the damage. Shields can be used in this fight, but only for their Armor power.

Critical Failure. Very bad news, the ship is seriously hit and suffers 3d8 damage, AP 8.

Failure. The ship is hit by some Xanthi energy shots. It suffers 3d6 damage, AP 4.

Success. Only minor damage. The ship suffers 2d6 damage, AP 4.

Raise. All the enemy's attacks are avoided.

Two Raises. Excellent job! Not only are all the enemy's attacks avoided but the amazing maneuvers of the pilot grant +1 to the rolls of the rest of the crew for this round.

WHALEBOATS

Whaleboats are interceptors, heavily customized for Xanthi hunting.

Top Speed: 10; **Toughness:** 12 (4); **Handling:** 0; **Shield Pods:** 2; **Crew:** 1+3

Notes: Fixed Weapon, Heavy Armor, Improved Stabilizer, Spacecraft

Weapons:

* 1 x forward-firing laser (Range: 12/24/48; Damage: 3d6; ROF 1; AP 6, HW)

* 1 x energy harpoon (Range: 20/40/80; Damage: 3d10; ROF 1; AP 12, HW), 1 reload

DEALING WITH THE BACKSTABBER

A sequence of four actions must be performed in the following order by those characters not directly involved with the piloting of the ships. There is no fixed time to accomplish this, but, for everyone's safety, the faster the better!

If the heroes have two whaleboats, the two crews can try to find the Backstabber independently. The first boat to reach the enemy ship will communicate its coordinates to the other boat, allowing both of them to attempt the fourth step. Remember that the following rolls are influenced by the pilot's choices (see above). All rolls can be cooperative.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

* **Triangulate the General Area:** When evaluating the strength of the amoeba's chant, the heroes must first define the general area where the Backstabber is likely to be. It requires a Smarts (-2) roll. Characters with background as a ship's gunner or the Target the Engines Edge add +2 to this roll.

* **Identify the Engines' Signature.** Now that the heroes have located the general area, they must find the energy signature of the Backstabber's engines, which cannot be fully obscured by the cloaking device. It requires a Notice (-2) roll.

* **Locate the Cloaking Device Anomalies.** The cloaking device is a particular type of energy shield; it works by generating space distortion. Finding the origin of the distortion means being very close to the Backstabber's actual position. A Knowledge (Shields) (-2) roll is necessary to accomplish this step.

* **Target Locked!** Using the information gathered in the previous step, the crew can now lock onto the Backstabber. It can be done with a Notice (-2) or Shooting (-2) roll.

When the target is finally locked, go to the section "Revenge of the Black One".

REVENGE OF THE BLACK ONE

You open fire...

And you successfully score a hit!

The cloaking device must have drained away all the ship's energy because the Backstabber hasn't raised its shields, leaving the ship completely unprotected. The impact is very strong, and the cloaking device fizzles out.

Now the cruiser can be seen.

The shot had another terrible effect. It hit the delicate tip of the harmonic cannon damaging it in a dangerous way — its resonating effect has created a new target, now the Backstabber itself is emitting the deadly chant!

The Xanthi slowly turn away from Khuma Bay — they have found a new, more suitable target.

The Backstabber attempts to flee at maximum speed, but just then, a huge monstrosity, the biggest Xanthi of the pack, crosses the path of Hanazon's ship.

It is the Black One, the creature you barely avoided during your initial trip to Vendellmann station!

With a single, tremendous bite, the beast destroys the Backstabber, splitting it into two parts. He

swallows one of them, while the other half drifts off into space dumping people and air bubbles into the void.

Jim cries out in horror: "Mum!!!"

SCENE 2: INSIDE THE BEAST

After some moments of astonishment, a distorted radio transmission is intercepted: "Help! Help! We are alive! We are... inside!" The transmission ends abruptly.

It was Kera speaking!

Kera, Hanazon, and the precious Blazing Star have not been destroyed; they are in a section of the Backstabber swallowed by the Black One!

How can the heroes rescue them? Without expert help, they cannot, but Khodar is in his element now — he is the best whaler in the sector. He takes charge of the situation, giving the party precise instructions.

"Calm down boys! We can do it! It's not the customary way we hunt spacewhales, but it's the only chance we have. Do you see those two strange bumps on the Xanthi's back? Those are membranes protecting the Xanthi's "nose". We must fire at them with the magnetic harpoon, grapple, and land exactly on them. There are spacesuits below your seats; I suggest you put them on."

To land on the Xanthi, the heroes must make successful Piloting and Shooting rolls. Then, wearing their spacesuits, they will enter the living conduit that is the Black One's "nose".

While it certainly could be interesting to entirely map out the interior of the huge beast, this is not the way pulp works. Instead, the heroes will use the chase rules to abstractly represent their dangerous journey to the stomach of the beast.

First, put eleven markers on the table, each of them representing a Range Increment. Place the party on the first one. When they reach the eleventh marker, they have arrived at their destination, the beast's stomach. At this point, you can run the final scene of the scenario, "Deadly Flight".

The party must choose a leader who will make the chase rolls using Smarts. This roll is cooperative, so the heroes can help. If they choose Khodar as leader, the grizzled spacewhaler adds +1 to the roll due to his knowledge of Xanthi anatomy.

With a success, the group gains a Range Increment, and with a raise, it gains two. A critical failure means the heroes have taken a dead end, losing a Range Increment.

Every round, before rolling, the leader draws a card

from the action deck. If the card is a Club, run the corresponding miniscene below, applying the modifier to the Smarts roll.

If they want, the heroes can split into different groups, but this can be very dangerous.

OBSTACLES TABLE

Deuce (-4) Energy Conduit: Xanthi generate bio-energy beams. The party is so unlucky that they enter one of the bone corridors where this energy flows just moments before a massive discharge. First, they must make a Notice roll to detect (on their wristcomputers) the sudden surge of energy in their surroundings. Then they will see the bone itself become luminescent. This is the moment to run away! Escape requires an Agility (-4) roll, +1 for each success and raise scored in the previous Notice roll. With a success, they manage to reach a safe area before being blasted. With a failure, they suffer 2d8 damage from a Wild Card, 3d6 with a critical failure.

Three (-2) Divided!: The beast releases a tremendous mass of goo through a roof pipe, just in the path of the heroes. Let them make a Spirit (-2) roll, and split the group into two according to the results. Put all those who missed in one group, all those who succeeded in another. The group that failed their rolls loses two Range Increments, and from now on, it must draw cards and move in the chase independently from the other. The two groups will reunite when they are again on the same Range Increment. The most advanced group can choose to wait (they do not roll or draw a card for that round), or to use their successes in chase rolls to move *backwards* along the Range Increments markers in order to find their comrades.

Four (-2) Membrane: A leathery membrane blocks the heroes' path. They have three possible choices to overcome the obstacle: First, turn around and lose two Range Increments. Second, attempt to stimulate it open as the membrane responds to certain chemicals and energy frequencies and it can also be manipulated with a Healing (-2) roll. Third, the party can use brute force. The membrane has Toughness 10 (2), but at the end of every round in which they try to pry it open, draw a card from the action deck. A Diamond card means that a group of enraged Xanthi Sweepers arrives at the start of the next round. The combat area is 6" by 12" and the enemies start 10" from the heroes.

★ **Xanthi Sweeper (1 per hero+2):** See page 28.

Five (-2) Twisting Corridor: The heroes are inside a conduit of flexible bone that suddenly starts twisting! Each hero must make an Agility (-2) roll to avoid losing his balance. With a critical failure, he falls so badly that he suffers bumps and bruises until the end of the scene. After this delay, run the chase as normal.

Six (-2) Meat Shaft: A large depression lies in the way. The heroes must jump over it to reach the other side. This requires a Strength roll. Failure means clinging to the edge of the opposite side. Only with a Strength (-4) roll can the hero recover. A critical failure in one of

the two rolls means the character falls down for several yards suffering 3d6 damage from an Extra. The party can also avoid the shaft, but it means they forego the chase roll this round and they lose two Range Increments due the additional footwork.

Seven (-1) Dangerous Parasites: The heroes have disturbed a nest of dangerous Xanthi Sweepers, aggressive symbiotes that live inside the body of the Black One. They attack immediately! The combat takes place in an 18" by 6" corridor. Place the creatures at least 12" from the party.

★ **Xanthi Sweeper (2 per hero):** See page 28.

Eight (-1) Auditory System: This strange, sloping corridor has a very smooth floor, almost like the skin of a drum. It is part of the Xanthi's delicate auditory system. With a successful Common Knowledge roll, a hero recognizes this area and warns his comrades to be very quiet while walking in here. All heroes must make a Stealth roll. In case of failure (or if a hero walks carelessly) an energy discharge inflicts 2d6 damage, AP 2 from an Extra. Run the chase as normal.

Nine (-1) Meat Ropes: The heroes' path ends suddenly at the edge of a deep crevasse. They may turn around and go back losing a Range Increment (and missing the chase roll) or they can choose to climb down using strange meat "ropes" that descend deep into the chasm. It requires a Climbing roll by each hero. If anyone fails the roll, they discover the true function of the "ropes" — they are vocal cords and they immediately start vibrating and emitting an intensely high-pitched sound. Any hero failing a Vigor roll suffers the Hard of Hearing Hindrance (Minor) until the end of the scenario. Characters who already have the Hindrance suffer the Major version. After these rolls, run the chase as normal, but the party gains an additional Range Increment due the shortcut.

Ten (-1) Digestive Beast: The heroes have disturbed a huge creature resembling a large transparent puddle. It is a parasitic bacterium that aids the Xanthi's digestive process. The creature has Smarts d4 (A), Stealth d10, and Heavy Armor, so the party cannot damage it. It slowly pursues the heroes, trying to engulf them in its corrosive juices. Each round the beast is on the same Range Increment as the party, it quietly tries to envelop the heroes' feet. This is an opposed roll between the beast's Stealth and a random hero's Notice. In case of failure, the character suffers 2d6 damage, AP 2 from an Extra. If the beast wounds the hero, he also suffers the effect of a critical injury to his legs. The puddle joins the chase on the Range Increment where the heroes are and continues following their tracks until the end of the chase.

Jack (0) Crossroads: The heroes have reached a huge cavern where several physical parts join, so there are many corridors that can be taken. The leader must make a Tracking roll that cannot be cooperative. With a success, he takes the right path to the main stomach cavity, gaining +2 to the next three chase rolls. In case of failure, he takes the wrong corridor, suffering -2 to the same rolls.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

XANATUR, A RELIC FROM THE PAST

The heroes have found an ancient relic from a forgotten past! Xanatur, identified by the inscription written in ancient Standard, is a unique vibrosword of great power, constructed with lost technology. It deals Str+d8+2 damage, AP 2 and grants +1 to Fighting. Note which character wields this weapon because it will have a small (optional) part to play in a future installment of the series.

Queen (0) Carcass in the Acid Pool: The heroes find a secondary stomach, where, in a pool of bubbling acidic juices, they spot the half-corroded wreck of a small spaceship of unknown origin. In the cockpit, a figure wearing a spacesuit is still visible. Clearly the ship has been here for many years, perhaps even centuries. Reaching the ship requires two successful Agility rolls. In case of failure the hero falls into the acidic juices suffering 2d8 damage from a Wild Card. Inside the small ship, everything is destroyed and the alien's body, a strange humanoid, is unrecognizable. An ancient-looking sword lies at his side (see sidebar).

King (0) Antibody Turret: There are delicate parts of the Xanthi where parasites must not go, so the beast has generated a bone turret that attacks any intruder with energy beams. It starts attacking at 18". The turret has Shooting d6, range 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6 AP 1, ROF 3. It does not suffer multiple fire penalties and has Toughness 12 (4). A hero can find Light Cover (-1) in the area with a Notice roll, Medium Cover (-2) with a raise. If the party decides to avoid the turret, they lose two Range Increments.

Ace (0) Heart: The heroes arrive at the beast's heart! Khodar insists on destroying it, killing the Black One, while Jim is against it. The heroes must decide what to do and make an appropriate Persuasion roll to sway one of their two comrades. If they decide not to kill the beast, this heroic act grants each of them a benny. Destroying its heart will kill the beast but, given its titanic dimensions, it will be a long process that will produce effects only in the final scene. Run the chase as normal.

SCENE 3: DEADLY FLIGHT

Finally, you reach an enormous cavity. It's the Black One's stomach. In the middle of a lake of gastric juices and assorted debris lies Hanazon's ship, looking like a broken toy.

You hastily move through the lake, avoiding the more dangerous points, and climb aboard the cruiser.

The Backstabber is devastated. Only the independent pressurized compartments saved the ship

from total destruction. All around lie the bodies of the crew and the alarms are sounding, because fires are quickly spreading. In the end, you reach the main deck, where Kera lies wounded on the floor. The woman is badly shaken, but still alive.

"Mum!" Jim cries, running to her side.

"Hanazon..." she says, "...they have gone to the bangar. To your ship..."

The bad guys are going to escape on the Blazing Star!

You have to run if you want to catch them!

Ask the players for some Agility rolls, but ignore the results. They will arrive in time to stop Hanazon's escape, but a little suspense will add some spice to the scene.

Just in time!

The Blazing Star is here and its engines are starting. In the docking bay, you see the last surviving Gray Soldiers boarding your ship. You must hurry if you don't want to be left behind!

For this fight, you need the map of the Blazing Star.

The fight is divided into two parts: In the first part, the heroes need to board their ship before it takes off, and in the second part, they have to retake her and dispatch their enemies.

Place the Blazing Star's map on the gaming table, and put three Gray Soldiers on the cargo ramp.

The hangar is quite big. Place the heroes 12" from the soldiers. They have only three rounds to board the Blazing Star. At the beginning of the fourth round, the ship starts moving! She moves 6" the first round, so latecomers can reach her by running and making a successful Agility roll. This roll can be cooperative, but only heroes on the cargo ramp can assist late arrivals.

The heroes have until the sixth round to board the Blazing Star.

Jim does not take part in the first stage of the fight as he is busy helping his wounded mother walk to the cargo ramp. When all the heroes are aboard, place Jim and his mother on the ramp and go on with the second part of the fight, in which the boy actively aids the party.

In the second part of the combat, the party engages the rest of the enemies aboard the ship. If you are playing with miniatures, place only the enemies the heroes can see from their current position.

Hanazon is in the cockpit, attempting to pilot the ship. Gan Zun is in the Spacesuit Storage room. The henchman remains hidden here until he gets the opportunity to sneak up behind a hero. Place the other enemies as you wish throughout the battle area.

The heroes must try to end the fight as fast as they can because Hanazon is a poor pilot and navigating inside

DEADLY CHANT

the belly of a giant space monster is no easy task. See the “Bumpy Ride” rule below.

When the heroes finally reach the cockpit, they find Hanazon busy piloting the ship. The officer is a lousy pilot and is close to crashing! The heroes must drag him away from the controls and save their ship with one final, daring maneuver!

It requires winning an opposed Strength roll with a raise, and then a successful Piloting roll. This roll suffers -4 if the party killed the Black One, due to the shaking of the huge body.

In case of failure, the ship suffers 3d6 damage from an Extra.

At this point Hanazon is the party’s prisoner. Killing him now is not a very heroic act, but nobody will complain if one of the heroes gives him a solid punch in the face!

The party has saved the day once again! Go to “The End!”

★ **Hanazon Hal:** See page 26.

★ **Gan Zun:** See page 25.

★ **Gray Soldiers (2 per hero +2):** See page 26.

★ **Jim Bellon:** See page 27.

★ **Khodar, Spacewhaler Captain:** See page 27.

TERRAIN, PROPS AND SPECIAL RULES

* **Assorted Props:** It is impossible to detail all the furniture and props aboard the heroes’ ship, but the rooms’ names alone give you a good idea of the items they contain. As a rule of thumb, the heroes can grab a prop in each room granting +2 to a single Trick (with GM’s approval). After being used in this way, the room will provide only standard items.

* **Bumpy Ride:** Whenever a character draws a Club card as his first action card, it means Hanazon has made a bad maneuver. Put a Medium Burst Template centered on the character. All targets caught in the template must make an Agility roll, with a -2 modifier if they killed the Black One. In case of failure, they fall and drift away 1d4” in a random direction. A character that is thrown against an obstacle is also Shaken. Whenever a black Joker is dealt, the situation is worse! The ship collides with an obstacle and all passengers suffer 3d6 damage from an Extra.

* **Useful Items:** The heroes (and only the heroes) know where some useful items are stored on their starship. In the medical bay, there is a Medipac (+2 to a Healing roll), in the lavatory, there are a couple of spare blaster pistols, and in the northeastern stateroom, some d4 stun grenades (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: 3d6, MBT, non-lethal). Use gaming stones to represent these items. Grabbing them requires an action.

THE END

You regain control of the ship just in time. The Blazing Star is near the Black One’s mouth, which is now almost closed!

With a last, daring stunt of piloting, you shoot out of the space leviathan’s mouth.

You are outside, in space.

Safe.

Without the deadly chant to enrage them, the Xanthi are peaceful again. A high-ranking Shipping Guild representative reaches Khuma Bay in no time to take charge of the situation and to arrest Hanazon. The Guild refuses to take any responsibility. Hanazon is a madman, who acted on his own initiative, they say.

It may be true, it may be false, but the Guild offers to cover all expenses for Khuma Bay’s reconstruction and pays out large refunds to the owners of any damaged astrofarms. The heroes receive a generous reward of \$10,000 and the eternal gratitude of Jim Bellon and his mother.

With their debt to Joran settled, the heroes start the next scenario with an additional benny.

THE CAST

AGRONOMIST

This short creature wears a long, leathery, hooded vest that completely enshrouds him, except for his mole rat nose that cannot be hidden beneath the hood. Rather peaceful, his real interest lies in agriculture. The Shipping Guild pays him well and lets him cultivate, so he is happy with this arrangement.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Agronomy) d10, Notice d8, Shooting d4, Stealth d8, Throwing d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5 (1)

Gear: Leather vest (+1), sickle or knife (Str+d4), weed killer staff (range: cone template, sprays a weed killer substance that forces any target in the area to make a Vigor roll or be Shaken, 3 shots).

Special Abilities:

* **Size -1:** The Agronomist is only 4’ tall and uses d4 instead of d6 as his running die.

* **Heightened Smell:** He cannot see very well (-2 to Notice rolls if only sight is involved), but he has a very fine nose (+2 to Notice rolls if he can use his sense of smell).



GAN ZUN, CRIMINAL HENCHMAN

Gan Zun is an alien of unknown origin and species.

DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES #07

He has a turtle-like face that might look rather comical on his tall and muscular body, but his bloodshot eyes and evil grin are not funny in the least! In the past, Gan Zun had been a mercenary specializing in dirty work until several years ago when he joined Hanazon Han's entourage and became his right-hand man. He is absolutely loyal.

Cybernetic Arm: Gan Zun has a third cybernetic arm implanted in his right shoulder. The prosthesis is a highly illegal piece of technology constructed by the cyborgs of Wayland, with a nasty device inside. In gaming terms, Gan Zun has several Powers. He uses Vigor to activate them. The evil alien has no Power Points; instead, he can use each Power a fixed number of times in each scene. Powers with a standard duration of (3/1) last three rounds. He has the equivalent of 15 Power Points.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Edges: Block, Brawny, Connections (Shipping Guild) Dodge, First Strike, Level Headed

Hindrances: Loyal, Mean

Gizmo: 2 x *Healing* (combat drugs released by the arm), 1 x *Boost/Lower Trait* (bionic arm's energy boost, only enhances physical traits), 1 x *Smite* (bionic arm energy discharge)

Gear: Blaster pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, ROF 1, semi-auto), armored spacesuit (+2), smoke grenades (5/10/20, MBT, the template area counts as Pitch Darkness).

Special Abilities:

- * **Stench:** Gan Zun emits a foul swampy smell that lingers in the air even after he has left. This causes him to have -2 to all Stealth rolls and -2 Charisma.
- * **Cyberarm:** Gan Zun's third arm grants him extra Strength (already calculated in his stats) and can be used in melee dealing Str+d4 damage. He also has a Blaster pistol built into it (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, ROF 1, semi-auto). Gan Zun can perform an extra attack with his arm each round, without penalty.



GHORO THE HITMAN

Ghoro is a Yugon, a race of giants with octopus-like heads. Usually they are very peaceful and excellent musicians and composers, but Ghoro is totally different. He is a killer at heart, and he loves his job. He hates Joran Bellon because the private eye sent him up the river a couple times in the past.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 12 (2)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Nerves of Steel

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Vengeful (major), Wanted

Gear: Gravity imploder gun (Range: cone template, Damage: 2d10, minimum Strength d8, ignores armor, follow the flamethrower rules), combat armor (+2).

Special Abilities:

- * **Tentacles:** Ghoro can use his tentacles in melee. Place a Small Burst Template centered on the hitman. All enemies in the area are attacked at -2. Hitting with a raise counts as having grappled the target. The attack deals Str damage. Ghoro can also attack with his fists while using his tentacles, with the standard multiple action penalties, but he cannot shoot in the same round.
- * **Size +3:** Yugons are twelve feet tall.

GRAY SOLDIER

Gray Soldiers are the military arm of the Shipping Guild, which sometimes hires them out as mercenaries to third parties in various interplanetary conflicts. They are professionals, but with the bad reputation of being faithful only if well-paid and effective only when they clearly outnumber their enemy. Well, they are quite cheap, so what do you expect?

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Intimidation d6, Piloting d4, Shooting d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Combat vest (+1), blaster machine gun (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, ROF: 3, AP 1, auto), energy shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness against ranged weapons), energy gauntlet (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- * **Strength in Numbers:** While grouped in superior numbers they add +1 to Spirit rolls, but when outnumbered they suffer -1 to the same rolls.



HANAZON HAL

This Tuathan has reached a very high rank in the Shipping Guild hierarchy despite his young age. Handsome, mellifluous, and charismatic, he is ambitious and desires even more power. He has no moral scruples and the lives of others mean very little to him.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Economics) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Piloting d4, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

Charisma: +6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Racial Traits: Agile, Anemic, Low Light Vision

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Connections (Shipping Guild), Iron Will, Noble

Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy

Gear: Fancy clothes.



JIM BELLON

Jim Bellon is very similar to his father, Joran, when he was young. Temperamental, stubborn, and strong-willed. Someday this boy will become someone important, but for now, he is only a young man in big trouble.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Acrobat, Luck

Hindrances: Arrogant, Stubborn

Gear: Padded jacket (+1), hoverskate.



JORAN BELLON, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Joran Bellon is an old friend of the heroes'. Reliable, resourceful, and cunning, he is a good man to have handy when dangers arise. He is very close-mouthed about his past and the heroes only know he was a former GEA operative before opening his own private investigation agency.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Piloting d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: Block, Dodge, Giant Killer, Level Headed, Marksman

Hindrances: Arrogant, Heroic

Gear: Blaster rifle (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d8, ROF 1, AP 1, semi-auto), bounty hunter armor (+2), stun grenades (5/10/20, Damage: 3d6, MBT, non lethal), vibro knife (Str+d4+2, AP 2).



KHODAR, SPACEWHALER CAPTAIN

Khodar is the captain of the Slaughterhouse, the biggest spacewhaler ship in the sector. Strong and muscular, he is not the type of captain who commands his fleet of whaling vessels from the comfort of his captain's chair; rather he is always on the front line, chasing the Xanthi with daring courage aboard his own custom-fitted whaler.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d8, Shooting d8, Tracking d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Edges: Ace, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Trade-mark Weapon (Space Harpoon)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Code of Honor (spacewhalers)

Gear: Energy harpoon (see appendix), light spacewhaler armor (+1).

Special Abilities:

- * **Gotcha!** A spacewhaler never gives up when he catches a target with his energy harpoon. He has a +2 bonus to grappling rolls with the harpoon only.

SHIP THIEF

A tall, skinny humanoid with gray plumage, this thug has rapacity in his blood, as his cruel, hawk-like beak proves.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Wanted

Gear: Blaster pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, ROF 1, semi-auto), light armored vest (+1).

Special Abilities:

- * **Beak:** Str+d4, AP 1.
- * **Strike the Eyes:** If a ship thief hits with a raise using his beak, he hits his enemy in the eyes. The target must make an immediate Vigor (-2) roll or suffers the One Eye Hindrance until healed.

SPACEWHALER

Few spacers have the guts to assault giant-sized beasts like the Xanthi with only small spaceboats and energy harpoons. This grizzled man is one of them. He doesn't only do it for the money, but also for the adrenaline rush that this dangerous hunt gives him.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Hindrances: Code of Honor (Spacewhalers)

Gear: Energy harpoon (see appendix), light spacewhaler armor (+1).

Special Abilities:

- * **Gotcha!** A spacewhaler never gives up when he catches a target with his energy harpoon. He has a +2 bonus to grappling rolls with the harpoon only.

THUG

The scum of Khuma Bay's docks. He knows very few of the aliens that hire him personally and he isn't even remotely interested. He only wants to do his job and get his money.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy

Gear: Blaster pistol (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, ROF 1, semi-auto), light armor (+1), bladed tonfa (Str+d4+1, +1 Parry).

XANTHI SWEEPER

This parasite resembles a mantis made of white crystal and black chitin. They travel in groups and are in a symbiotic relationship with the Xanthi they live on, feeding on the waste and any ailing parts of the host and subsequently keeping it healthy and free of infection.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- * **Bioenergy beam:** The sweeper generates a ray of bioenergy from its mouth. It has Range: 6/12/24 and deals 2d6 damage. It uses Agility for its attack roll.
- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fleet-Footed:** Xanthi sweepers roll d10s instead of d6s when running.
- * **Size -1:** Sweepers are about the size of a dog.

APPENDIX: NEW WEAPONS

ENERGY HARPOON

The energy harpoon is a blaster weapon fitted with a sharp spearpoint, used by spacewhalers as the main weapon and tool of their trade. It is a multipurpose weapon, which can be used in three different ways:

First, it can be used as a blaster pistol capable of shooting energy bolts. Second, it can be wielded in melee as a short spear. Third and lastly, it can fire a single durasteel harpoon. The harpoon is designed to bore into the target and is connected to the handle through a super resistant wire, with a special servomechanism to wind the wire. This action is considered a Grapple that can be done at distance, and inflict Str+d4 damage.

Each round the shooter succeeds in the grappling roll, he can wind the wire up to his Strength die in tabletop inches, dragging the target towards him. For example, a hero with Strength d6 can wind the wire up to 6" each round.

ENERGY HARPOON

Mode of Use	Dmg	Range	ROF	Notes
Melee weapon	Str+d6			
Blaster weapon	2d6+1	12/24/48	1	AP 1
Harpoon	2d8	8/16/24	1	AP 4, 1 shot only, can Grapple at a distance.

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