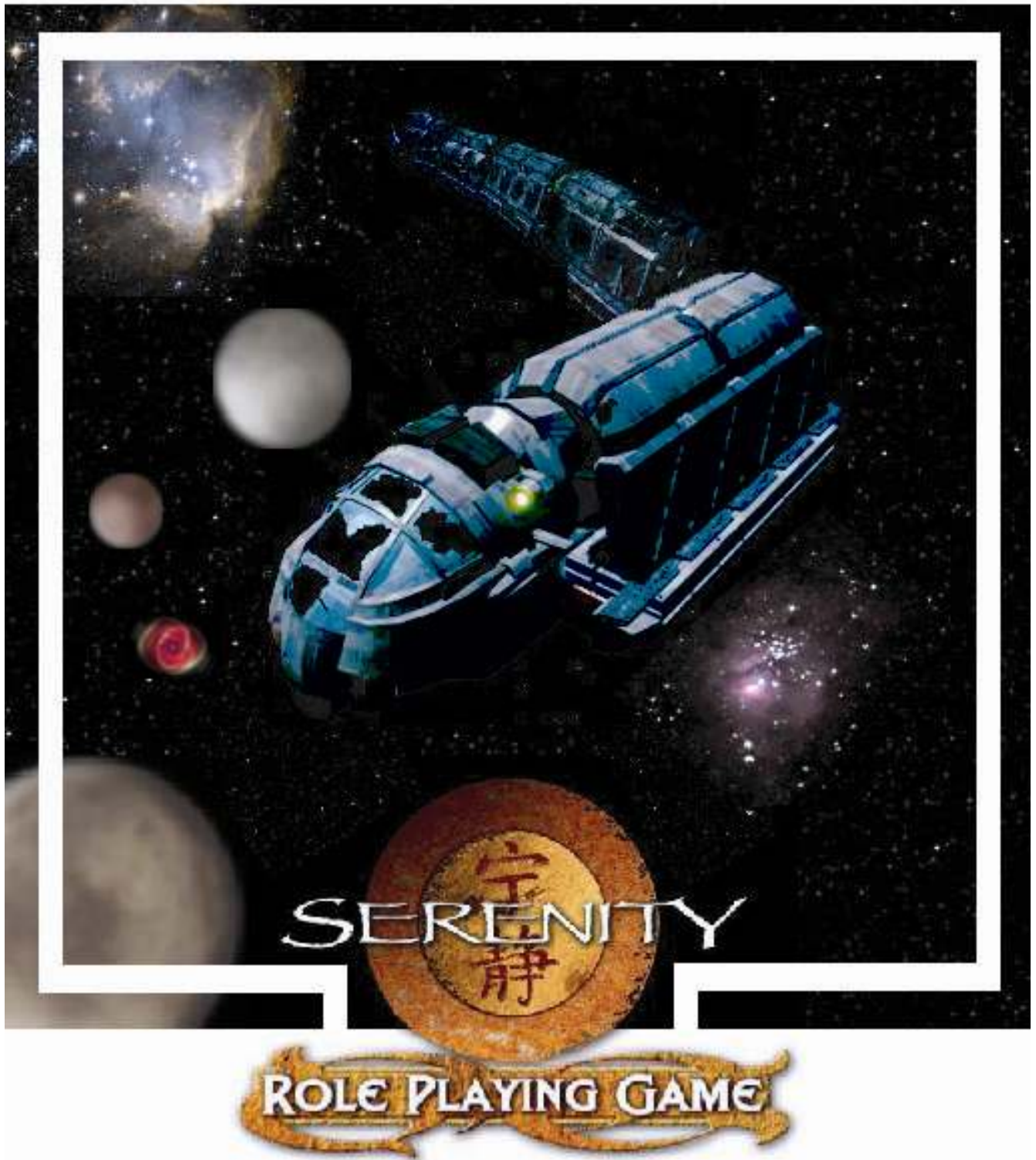


— Into The Lion's Den —



SERENITY ROLE PLAYING GAME

— Into The Lion's Den —

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY
Michael Chumbler and Jan Hendrik Friedrich

Proofreading: Laura Gullett • **Illustrations:** Jason Morales and Laura Gullett

For Becky and Kathrin
Serenity © Universal Studios. All Rights Reserved

HERE'S THE STORY

A job is a job on the Rim and if it happens to be legal, well then the Feds won't be able to interfere for a change, gorrarn meddlers! However, when a shipper wants to pay more coin than is the goin' rate...well, while it might not be time to look a gift horse in the mouth, it is time to be on your guard cause no one on the Rim gives away coin out of the goodness of their heart.

While en route to their destination, the Crew comes across an escape pod and who it contains is something that no one thought was even possible. Even more incredible, is the offer that this improbability offers. An offer that could lead to untold wealth or a death so gruesome that being dead is actually the good part!

GAME MASTER NOTES

This adventure is a cautionary tale that forces the players into a deadly choice between greed and survival. The story unfolds with a completely legitimate offer to carry a cargo that comes with a time crunch to get it to its destination and getting underway, an encounter in deep space, a hard decision, a fight for their very lives, some careful modifications, avoiding a mistake, a terrifying journey, an even harder decision, and a reckoning with the owners of their original cargo. Act One is in three parts: *A Time Sensitive Cargo*, *Meet the New Guy*, and *REAVERS!* Act Two also contains three parts: *A Little Body and Fender Work*, *A Case of Mistaken Identity*, and *You Can't Get There From Here*. The Final Act consists of two parts: *The Lion's Den* and *Service Without a Smile*.

ONE MAN'S TREASURE IS ANOTHER MAN'S TRASH

Reavers! The terror of the Rim; folk on the nice, safe Core Worlds think Reavers are only ghost stories. However, to those on the Rim, they are the worst form of truth. They have existed since before the Unification War and have continued to spread ever since. Hundreds of ships and even whole towns have been raided and wiped out. The stories of what the Reavers do are beyond the stuff of nightmares, they defy description by any form of sanity.

Little is known about what the Reavers do when they aren't on raids or even where they go after a raid. The truth is, the Reavers have a pack culture and when a pack completes a successful raid, they take those captured and throw them into pens to await a horrific fate as a combination of meal and entertainment.

The Reavers are extremely practical in what passes for their society in that they take every captured ship and either convert it, if in decent condition, into a new raider, or, if too badly damaged during capture, it is stripped for parts to keep other raiders functioning. The worthless personal belongings, to include jewelry and cash are dumped into the captured ships that have been so completely gutted and stripped that they are essentially floating garbage dumpsters. During a legitimate cargo run, the Crew discovers a key to finding and obtaining the leavings of a dozen years of plundering. The payoff is staggering, but the consequences of failure are not just terrifying, they are unimaginable.

REAVER SOCIETY

After the initial ravages of the transformation into the subspecies known as Reavers, had passed the survivors of the PAX experiment settled into a brutal pecking order based on physical strength and cunning. Although no human has ever survived to report on Reaver behavior, the parallels to the Earth-That-Was species known as the North American Grey Wolf are stunning. Each pack consists of five to twenty members operating in a cooperation to hunt, for protection, and to defend territory.

Each pack has leaders known as the Alpha male and Alpha female, the second in line are the Betas, with the bulk of the pack being roughly equal and the weakest member of the pack being known as the Omega. This pecking order determines who eats first, mating, plunder selection, and every other aspect of a pack. The only way to improve one's position is by defeating a superior in combat.

The addition of a brain capable of planning to the instinctive cunning of the wolf creates a powerful killing machine. Each Reaver ship is run by a single pack. On the larger Reavers ships, packs can reach up to fifty members. Alliances of convenience will spontaneously form between packs to combine the numbers necessary to hunt stronger prey, such as a raid on a town or to attack a large ship like a liner.

Another aspect of Reavers is their tendency to hoard everything taken in a raid. The most useful items such as weapons, parts, fuel, and all other items critical to maintaining their spaceborne lifestyle are distributed on an as needed basis by the Alpha of the pack. Every item captured during a raid is carefully sorted and collected in piles based on the value of the item to the pack.

Reavers are masters of improvisation and eventually just about anything taken is eventually used or converted into something the Reavers find useful. However, items deemed useless are retained regardless of need as polluting their territory by dumping them indiscriminately only results in a hazard to navigation. These useless items are kept in the only thing that passes as a storage bin in their possession, namely the abandoned hulks of captured ships already stripped of everything useful. These junk holding hulks results in the creation of essentially for all intents and purposes floating landfills.

The dozen years since the PAX disaster has given the Reavers time to amass large collections of objects that are of no use to a completely self-contained cashless culture. Old wrecked ships are filled with piles of shoes, clothes, books, and other personal belongings of thousands of victims taken by the Reavers. The sorting of these personal effects has unintentionally resulted in the creation of large stores of coinage, credits, and jewelry, that the rest of the 'Verse considers valuable, but are considered the most useless of nuisances to the Reavers.

ACT 1

SCENE 1: A TIME-SENSITIVE

CARGO

"Ah Eavesdown, now there's a place to have a spot o' fun! Persephone ain't like one o' them pretty Core Worlds with every lookin' all shiney and in its proper place. Bein' only a Border Planet, Persephone is halfway between those la-de-da Core Planets, and the hou zi de pigu¹ of the 'Verse livin' you got out on the Rim. Eavesdown is where them as what live in the Black thrive. Ya see, Eavesdown is where folk lookin' for a job go as to find them. Some of it is all right an' proper, but most jobs outta Eavesdown is what folk would call other than legal, an' a certain number of them jobs ya'll just don't talk about too loud..." Frankie 'Twice Pipe' Whitaker, information broker

While on the Border world of Persephone, a low-level, but legitimate go between named Porfirio Calanche is out walking the Eavesdown Docks looking for a ship. He says he's got 300 tons of agricultural Genseed that needs to get to the Rim planet Aberdeen and they need it fast. Calanche's opening offer is 10% above the standard rate and with a FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower + Influence* roll, he can be talked into paying 20%.

The cargo is exactly what he claims it is and on agreeing to take the load, Calanche immediately makes a call to have stevedores begin loading the cargo as quickly as possible. The ship is ready to leave in just under four hours with a delivery date of twelve days, thus this makes the distance variable as the time is fixed at

twelve days regardless of the speed of the Crew's specific ship. The required delivery date gives them one extra day of flexibility to arrive in time (the cargo has to be delivered in no later than thirteen days and the travel time is twelve). PCs will have to make three DIFFICULT (15) Skill rolls: *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation* to plot a course, *Alertness + Influence / Leadership* to get cargo loaded right, and *Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty* to get ship ready in time. The results are as followed:

Botch	Lose four hours
Failure	Lose two hours
Success	On time
Extraordinary Success	Gain two hours

Each hour delayed comes out of the twenty-four hours of flexibility they have in their schedule.

A FORMIDABLE (15) *Alertness + Perceptions* roll (or HARD (11) if a PC has a *NOSE FOR TROUBLE* or a *TRUSTWORTHY GUT*) will get a vibe that all is not as it should be with the deal. Calanche is smooth and spins a believable story about a grain blight that has to be planted quickly to avoid famine. This is an opposed *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty* Skill roll against Calanche. If Calanche fails this opposed roll, depending on if the PCs are being paid 10% over normal, he will bump the bonus to 20%. If the PCs have already negotiated the 20% bonus, he will pay 25% and say the goods are legal, but "laundered from a less than legal source." Given how much money the run is worth, the story should be sufficient to allay any PCs' fears.

¹ Monkey's Butt

Unknown to the Crew, the reason for the bonus is that Reavers have been reported along the way and no one else has been willing to take the cargo. Genseed is engineered to be hardy, but it does have a shelf life and that time limit is rapidly approaching. Calanche has had the bags brilliantly doctored to hide the original "use by" date to reflect a new date of six months out, but the truth is the date is twelve days from the day the PCs depart. Calanche is facing a time limit of his own before his cargo becomes worthless and is thus not only lying about the need for a speedy delivery, he is playing both sides against the middle with a cargo less valuable than he claims.

ACT 1

SCENE 2: MEET THE NEW GUY

"You live your life 'knowing' certain things, like on all the planets and moons, the sun rises in the east, or mankind came to the 'Verse from 'Earth-That-Was' and that kinda stuff there. Then every once and while something happens that just doesn't fit with what you 'know' to be true. Its times like that ya'lls got to have somethin' you believe in to get you through to face the next day and if you're real lucky, you do. And sometimes, may the Buddha be merciful, it would have been far luckier not to make it at all." Gus Jacobsen, itinerant spacer as interviewed by the author Jiang Hu Long for his highly successful fictional series 'Verse Stories'

En route to Aberdeen, the PCs pickup a signal. The wave is badly garbled (an AVERAGE (7) *Alertness + Perception / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll will also figure out that the speaker also seems to have an odd lisp of some sort) and weak as the PCs' ship approaches. An INCREDIBLE (23) ships' *Alertness + the pilot's Technical Engineering / Sensors Skill* roll will detect a debris field, and if noticed, the field is either that of one very large ship or two smaller ones. Nothing is salvageable or of value can be found in the floating wreckage.

The survivor in the pod voice has the ragged edge of panic as he desperately asks for help. He says that he was mutilated in the fight that destroyed his ship and he doesn't want to scare the crew if they are kind enough to rescue him. "I know I am at your merthy, but in exth-

change, I can offer you a way to become wealthy. My thip and crew were involved in an illegal talvaging operathion and I know the locathion of a hoard of plundered loot. As I have nothing else to offer, I freely will thow you how to find this wealth, but you can only do so with my help."

Assuming the PCs are at least curious to talk to this guy, they dock with the pod and go to meet him. Since there is a chance for unpleasant surprises, the crew will take the precaution of arriving armed. When the pod opens, they are all in for a shock. The survivor says "Hello" and the PCs must roll *Willpower + Discipline / Appropriate Specialty* as a fright check versus a HARD (11) difficulty when they see the survivor. A Botch means the person is so stunned, that they can not react for a full turn, a fail will mean that PC moves last, while a success means they can react normally. The cowering survivor is dressed in fairly clean, if oversized, spacer's coveralls, but has a face that is severely mutilated. His nose is missing, ragged scars run across his forehead, and several pieces of metal pierce his cheeks. The man is a REAVER! However, unless the PC botched the fright check, they can roll *Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty* at an AVERAGE (7) difficulty to realize that Reavers do not cower or speak in any recognizable way.

Most crews are going to be confused and hopefully not open fire immediately. The idea is to allow the survivor to talk, GMs will have to give their players everyone opportunity to let the survivor speak or the entire adventure will collapse at this point. If there is a NPC involved

with the discovery, the GM is urged to use that character to ask to hear the 'thing' out. Presuming the survivor is allowed to speak, he remains clearly terrified and deferential to the crew in the hopes of being allowed to live.

The survivor, he doesn't remember his name, speaks quickly, if timidly, and the reason for his lisp is his tongue has been split down the middle. He says that he was captured long ago when his ship was taken by Reavers while outbound for Athens. The rest of his crew, he begins to cry and can not say what happened to them. The only coherent thing he can say for several minutes is "they made me wawth."

Here is the first chance for the PCs to reinforce the man's stability, if they are kind to him and let him work past these memories, he gains a Stability Point. If mistreated he makes a *Willpower* + *Willpower* Attribute roll against a HARD (11) difficulty and if he fails, he gains an Instability Point. The GM must keep track of the number of points the survivor gains. After gaining an Instability Point, the GM has to roll over the number of points in order for the survivor's grasp on his humanity to hold. Each Stability Point cancels one Instability Point and can be earned in advance. If the GM rolls under that number the survivor's Reaver nature reasserts itself and he will attack the nearest crewman with the express purpose to escape into the ship's crawl space ala the creature in the original 'Alien' movie. He will strike from ambush and avoid capture giving the crew an "Enemy Within" battle to fight in addition to any other events.

Eventually the survivor calms down enough to say, that he had to live among the Reavers ever since and knows how they operate, think, what they consider to be of no value, and most importantly, where they keep what they consider trash. He explains that victims are stripped of all belongings and the useful is kept and distributed per the 'First One's' decree. The worthless stuff gets dumped into pack refuse piles. The survivor has seen his pack's pile with his own eyes and since he is the 'Omega' of his pack, he's been there several times. He knows the challenge and guttural howling Reavers communicate with and can get the crew to the pile. All he asks for is his life, a cut of the take, and to be dropped in a remote area of the nearest planet. However, the survivor adds one crucially important detail. The bulk of the pack is on the hunt and they only have a small window of opportunity to exploit the hoard. The crew has ten hours or the pack will be back and the hoard will be beyond reach.

Since the survivor doesn't have a name, here is another chance for the PCs to reinforce the man's stability, if they give him a name (even something as simple as 'John Doe') he gains a stability point. If the PCs ignore this or give him an insulting name like Omega, he again has to make a *Willpower* + *Willpower* Attribute roll against a HARD (11) difficulty and if he fails, he gains an Instability Point.

Another chance to gain a stability point is if they have their Medic treat him. He is down two wounds from burns sustained in the fight that destroyed his ship and generally bruised from the brutality of his previous existence. If healed

by a medic in a humane manner, he automatically gains a stability point. If given a set of clothes that fit proper, that is also worth a stability point. If left untreated and in the oversized coveralls, he must again make the *Willpower + Willpower* Attribute roll against a HARD (11) difficulty and if he fails, he gains an Instability Point.

As the crew makes their decisions to trust the survivor, the intercom squawks with the panicked voice of the pilot a ship has been spotted closing fast and it's running without core containment! The PCs can make an AVERAGE (7) *Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty* Skill roll to be aware that Reavers are the only ships in the 'Verse known to run without core containment. The reactions of the Crew will vary, but one thing is of certain, regardless of opinions about their passenger, things have just gotten a lot worse for everyone. GMs are again cautioned to use whatever means they have to restrain trigger happy Crews from executing the survivor.

THE BUSHWHACK SYNDROME

This state of mind is based on the episode "Bushwhacked," this extreme form of the clinically proven "Stockholm Syndrome results when Reavers choose to torment a captive to madness. Sometimes, rather than kill their prey outright, Reavers will force a select member of a group to watch the horrors visited on the survivor's peers. The experience is so horrific that some individuals, in order to cope with the mind-numbing events before them, actually begin to emulate Reavers. This becoming one with the Reavers goes so far as the person mutilating themselves and consuming human flesh.

Typically such victims are left behind to raise havoc among rescuers, but occasionally, if the person survives the initial conversion process, true Reavers will return to find their "cousins" and take them into the pack. However, their status is usually very low within the pack and they are almost always relegated to the role of Omega.

The mental, and the later physical, trauma is so extensive in such victims that none of them will ever be normal functioning members of human society again. In fact, these victims never have the chance to interact with humanity again as humans. However, there are certain extremely rare conditions that can break the Bushwhack Syndrome. The subject must be alone and under direct and immediate threat of their life from a non-fightable foe, such as fire or drowning. As this triggers the flight response rather than the typical Reaver fight response, the victim is capable of fleeing the threat, they must still be alone after escaping the threat, and must make a HEROIC (19) *Willpower + Willpower* Attribute roll. Only these specific circumstances can generate a sufficient enough of a shock to break the programming.

ACT 1

SCENE 3: REAVERS!

"This will be my, and I dare say, that I also speak for the rest of my august peers of the Parliament that this will be their last commentary as well on the subject of 'Reavers.' Ladies and Gentlemen of the 'Verse, despite the lurid tales that continue to be propagated by peddlers of the most puerile of the tabloids, an extensive study by the best minds in the government has yet to discover any form of conclusive proof of 'bogeymen' inhabiting any part of Alliance territory, even after a multi-year and exhaustive investigation. To put things even more bluntly, just as the ridiculous stories of little green men and flying saucers abounded on pre-Exodus Earth-That-Was were proven to be false, so too are these pathetic camp fire tales of men gone mad are just as patently false. Now, if you wish to talk about my latest proposal to fund the building of the newest Tohuku-Class cruiser, then I will be happy to take your questions..." Member of Parliament's comments to press on Reavers

Once the pilot makes his announcement, the survivor is again going to be in extreme danger from trigger happy players. Hopefully the survivor is in the infirmary or quarters when the announcement is made. PCs that confront him will find him curled up in a fetal position mumbling in absolute terror. All that is intelligible is "I won't go back" over and over. This is another stability/instability point moment if he is badly mistreated. As the survivor is in no

condition to assist, the crew will have to figure out how to evade the rapidly closing ship.

When they make their move, the pilot will relay one of two answers based on if the PCs failed to detect the debris field or not. If they didn't, now that they are looking in that direction, they now figure out that the radiation from the wreckage masked the raider's drive signature. If they did spot the field, they realize the same thing, but figure out being in the debris field scrambled their sensors enough to allow the raider to get closer than what should have normally been possible.

Regardless of reason for being caught by surprise, the Reaver ship is at Long range and closing fast. The Reaver ship has a speed two points higher than the PCs' ship and running isn't an option. The main ship begins firing a powerful EMP gun at their ship in an opposed PCs' Ship's *Agility* + the pilot's *Pilot / Appropriate Specialty Skill* versus Reaver's *Agility* + *Heavy Weapons Skill*. The GM will ensure that the Reavers' first shot will be a very narrow miss. The reason for this is to cause a coronal discharge that blinds the ship's sensors for three rounds. The Reaver ship fires every other round so there will be an additional shot before the sensors clear. The Pilot or sensor operator will get one ship's *Alertness* + the character's *Technical Engineering / Sensors Skill* roll at a FORMIDABLE (15) level to spot the scout ship racing in at blinding speed. The scout shuttle has a speed twice that of the PCs' ship and is also armed with an EMP gun, albeit a lighter one than the one carried by the main ship.

The GM will contrive for the PCs to gain some distance on the main raider, but the scout will eventually hit the PCs' ship and dock to board. The shuttle carries between six and ten boarders based on the size of the number of PCs. This fight is meant to be a close one, but one the PCs can win with a tough fight at maximum effort. However, as they battle for their lives, the Pilot or anyone near a porthole will see a shadow block out the starlight and going by the size of the shadow, the main ship has caught up and is ready to reinforce the initial boarding party! Things just couldn't be more desperate with the situation looking beyond hopeless. If the GM times things correctly, they can end the first act right here in a classic cliffhanger for the session.

ACT 2

SCENE 2: A LITTLE BODY AND FENDER WORK

"It's that god awful howling that's causing the terror. If they'd just stop howling, maybe it wouldn't be so bad. Right not bad, as if any story that includes Reavers on the ship looking for a meal could be anything other than a nightmare! Ren ci de Fo zu²! Why do you allow these horrors to exist?"

The crew is still locked in battle with the last of the Reavers and despite the hopelessness the arrival of the main Reaver ship engenders, the facts are there isn't anything they can do about the situation. The GM can stretch this scene out based on the size and skills of the crew to maximize the terror of the moment. When it seems like the players have given up hope, give the PCs time to regroup and set up their last stand against off the Reavers already on board. Once they have set their plans, have everyone make an AVERAGE (7) *Alertness + Perception / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll to realize that the Reaver reinforcements should have arrived by now. In fact, the expected loud, booming clang that would have announced the larger ship docking never occurred! The crew races to the viewports and see something they never would have believed they would be happy to see, an Alliance ship!

The Reaver vessel is resisting furiously, but is obviously coming off second best. The main reason being the Fed ship is carrying weapons designed to destroy, while the Reaver ship only

has weapons designed to capture. The EMP guns the Reaver ship carries are largely ineffective against a hardened target, while the cannons of the Alliance ship easily punch gaping holes in the unarmored Reaver ship. However, things do not go the entirely the Feds way, the Reavers launch another one of their scouts and it uses its high speed to plow directly into the aft section of the Alliance frigate. The blow, while serious, isn't a mortal one and gives the Reaver ship enough breathing room to make a break to escape. However, the speed of the raider is no match for the hyper velocity of the projectiles from the Alliance ship's cannons and before the Reavers can make it out of range, their ship takes one more hit than the abused vessel can withstand and the raider disappears in a brilliant actinic flare.

The Alliance vessel hails the PCs' ship, but if the PCs choose to bolt, which they will have to do if they wish to make their deadline, the Alliance ship is damaged enough to be unable to pursue. However, the frigate will attempt to ID them as they flee.

The ability to remain unidentified will be an opposed roll of the ship's *Alertness + the sensor operator's Technical Engineering / Sensors Skill*. If the PCs' win the roll, they pipe out enough static to prevent the Feds from getting an ID of their ship. If the Alliance operator's roll is higher then consult the following tables.

Result	Range Category
EASY (3)	"It was a ship sir!"
EASY (5)	Size of Crew's ship
AVERAGE (7)	Class of ship

² Merciful Buddha

AVERAGE (9)	Ship's name
HARD (11)	Full registry code

The Alliance vessel's sensor operator will make a Skill roll using his vessel's *Alertness* and his *Technical Engineering / Sensors* Skill to detect the Crew's ship. The Difficulty depends on her size, range, as well as the precautions the characters might have taken.

Size

Strength Die Type	Difficulty
d2	HARD (13)
d4	HARD (11)
d6	AVERAGE (9)
d8	AVERAGE (7)
d10	EASY (5)
d12	EASY (3)

Range

Range Category	Difficulty Modifier
Point Blank	-2
Short	+0
Medium	+2
Long	+4

Special Circumstances

Situation	Difficulty Modifier
Ship is running silent	+8
Ship is concealed behind a massive body	+4

All modifiers stack. At short range, for example, it is a HEROIC (21) task to spot a medium-sized

ship that is running silent and hiding behind a large piece of debris.

Being identified at this point of the adventure isn't a catastrophic event as the Crew's actions are merely suspicious and not criminal. The Alliance ship will tag their ship on the Cortex if they get any worthwhile information (Class of vessel or better) for questioning only. The long term effects of this tag is the next time the ship makes port on a Core or Border world or is stopped for any reason by an Alliance ship, they will go through several hours of laborious questioning and will have to pay 1d6 x 10 Credits in fines for various minor code violations.

There is a prize to be won, but time is very, very short. If the crew is to reach the goods, they are going to have to act fast. The players are welcome to try anything plausible to distract or fool the Reavers long enough to reach the target. Among the obvious options are to camouflage their ship to look like a Reaver raider and setting up a "cry baby" beacon to draw off the Reaver patrols.

Altering the ship's appearance is a HARD (55) complex task with each roll taking ten minutes using *Agility + Covert / Appropriate Specialty* and requiring a space walk. Modifying the Pulse Drive to seem like the ship is running without core containment is a FORMIDABLE (75) extended task also taking ten minutes per roll and using *Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty*. The advantages of camouflaging the ship is the PCs will be able to move through Reaver patrols safely as long as they maintain a steady course and speed. The

down side of this option is the modifications can not be done while the ship is in motion and the crew will lose the time it takes to complete the tasks.

Building a cry baby to send a fake distress signal is a FORMIDABLE (75) complex action for *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Communication Systems* with each roll taking fifteen minutes. The advantage of this option is the devices can be built while the ship is en route to the target. The down side is each device built will cost twenty-five credits worth of materials and the number a ship can build will be limited by the parts on hand. This will be determined by a HARD (11) roll against *Intelligence + Technical Expertise / Appropriate Specialty* with a Botch meaning none can be built, a Failure will yield one device, a Success will yield enough parts for two and an Extraordinary Success will scrounge enough parts for three. If by some chance the crew has a known supply electronic parts on hand, then they will have enough for one half of the Intelligence Die Type of the PC building the devices, so a PC with an Intelligence of d8 could build four cry babies.

ACT 2

SCENE 2: A CASE OF MISTAKEN

IDENTITY

"The Victoria-Class frigate is a testament to the power projection capability of the Alliance. Fast, well-armed and armored, this ship is a true multi-role vessel capable of spirited defense and, if need arises, withering attack. The exact weapons configuration is classified information, but it is known to include heavy cannon, missiles, and this organic firepower is backed up with short range patrol vessels. A proven design that withstood the crucible of fire that was Unification War, dozens of these ships serve in the Alliance navy and will continue to do so for decades to come."

- Alliance Navy recruitment brochure

The events of this scene are dependent on actions taken in the last scene. Namely, have the PCs disguised their ship to look like a Reaver raider or not and if not, were they identified by the Alliance ship prior to their escape or not.

Shortly after fleeing the Alliance frigate in the last scene the Crew encounters the same vessel that has managed to repair some of the damage done by the Reavers.

If the PCs have disguised their ship, they are in trouble. The Alliance vessel doesn't bother with hails, they just open their gun ports and immediately turn to engage. This is obviously a bad thing! Fortunately, the crew has two things going for them. First, there is a small asteroid field nearby and second, this is the same ship

that rescued them and it hasn't been fully repaired yet.

The Alliance ship is obviously sluggish when it maneuvers, giving the pilot an excellent chance to minimize the number of shots the Fed ship can take before reaching the cover of the asteroid field. A FORMIDABLE (15) ship's *Agility* + the pilot's *Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* (+ ship's *Athletics*, if any) will allow the PCs' ship to take advantage of the lumbering Alliance ship's damage and only allow a single missile launch, a fail gives the Feds a half salvo of three missiles, a Botch gives the Feds full salvo of six missiles, while an Extraordinary Success will completely elude fire.

The Alliance fire will consist opposed roll of ship's *Agility* + pilot's *Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* (+ ship's *Athletics*, if any) versus the Allied ship's *Alertness* + gunner's *Heavy Weapons / Appropriate Specialty Skill*.

Note to GMs: This scene is meant to be about high action, some fear, and some comic relief NOT to destroy or even heavily damage the PCs' ship. The GM must adjust rolls to provide the intended effects while inflicting the minimal possible damage during the scene if the PCs just can't make the necessary rolls.

Once in the asteroids, the PCs will have to fly three rounds of hair-raising maneuvering to dodge through the field and escape. The first roll is AVERAGE (7) ship's *Agility* + pilot's *Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* (+ Ship's *Athletics*, if any), the second is HARD (11), and the third is FORMIDABLE (15). A Failure will result in one

wound point of damage from a graze, a Botch will sustain 1d4W damage from a direct hit, and an Extraordinary Success will not only avoid fire, it will reduce the level of the next roll by one step (i.e., an Extraordinary Success on the second round will drop the third roll to a HARD (11) task). An Extraordinary Success on the third roll won't give any other bonus other than look really, really cool and earn the pilot a "That was cool!" Plot Point.

Again the PCs' will have to avoid being identified using the same rolls and tables from the previous scene. Being identified at this point is a much more serious problem. This time the Alliance vessel will require the ship's name or their registry code for them to make a Cortex entry on them. In this more extreme case, being identified means the next time they stop on a Core or Border world, or are stopped by any other Alliance ship they will be immediately detained for suspected pirate activity. The resulting trial and fines will result in heavy fines that will be based on how well each character rolls against *Willpower + Influence / Persuasion*.

Result	Penalty
BOTCH	Imprisoned 2d6 months
EASY (3)	2d10 X 100 Credits
AVERAGE (7)	2d6 X 100 Credits
HARD (11)	2d4 X 100 Credits
FORMIDABLE (15)	1d4 X 100 Credits
HEROIC (19)	2d6 X 10 Credits
(23)	1d6 X 10 Credits
INCREDIBLE(27)	1d4 X 10 Credits
IMPOSSIBLE (31)	Charges dropped

If an individual can not pay fine or get someone to pay it for them, they will be imprisoned for 2d6 months if the fine is 500 Credits or greater, or 1d6 months if less than 500 Credits. If no other means is available to pay the fines, the Crew's ship will be seized to pay for any fines the Crew can not pay.

ACT 2

SCENE 3: YOU CAN'T GET

THERE FROM HERE!

"Dozens of lifeless hulks spin in lazy orbits around the equally lifeless moon and each other. The skeletal remains and missing components clearly mark this area as a graveyard of ships. The silence of the macabre sight was only broken by the harsh sounds of the soft breathing of the crew, harsh in that unconsciously each member of the crew was trying to make as little sound as possible, regardless of knowing that the vacuum of space could not carry sound..."

Traveling to the hidden loot is fraught with danger and getting there in time is only half the problem, sneaking past the Reaver patrol has the potential to give a whole new meaning to the word terrifying. There is however a new time constraint, the survivor explains that the bulk of the pack is out raiding and that are due to return in ten hours. If they return, there will be too many ships in the area to be able to reach the hoard. The Crew is within five hours of the target and based on the total amount of time they have used to this point, might even be able to still get to Aberdeen in time to deliver their original cargo in time to get paid the bonus.

There are two primary options to reaching the target based on if the survivor is still helping the PCs or has reverted back into a Reaver. If the survivor is still functional, he knows enough of what passes for astrogation among the Reavers to help the pilot plot a course to his pack's lair.

Translating his rudimentary skill into something the pilot can use however will be a complex action at a FORMIDABLE (75) level with each roll taking ten minutes utilizing *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation*. Once the crew has its course plotted, they can ignite their pulse drive and make their rendezvous with destiny.

Obviously if the survivor is still loyal, he can direct the crew straight to the correct location. However, if the survivor is no longer in the picture, reaching the target becomes much more complicated as the crew doesn't have any leads on how to find the treasure. First, the crew will have to check the Cortex to see what uninhabited moon the survivor could have meant. An EASY (3) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll will find there are three such moons the ship can reach within the time limit. A second such roll at HARD (11) will find a NOTAS (Notice to Alliance Spacers) referring to a higher than average number of missing ships near only one of the moons. A HARD (11) *Intelligence + Pilot / Astrogation Skill* roll will enable the ship to arrive in time. This is a good time to use plot points to make this roll as a failure will close the tiny window of opportunity available to the players.

On arrival at the moon, the PCs will have to choose their next move based on what actions they took in the last scene. If they camouflaged their ship to look like a raider, they need only make three HARD (11) ship's *Agility + pilot's Pilot / Appropriate Specialty Skill* rolls to match the wandering almost random course the other

Reaver ships are using. If the survivor is available to "speak" the task drops to EASY (3).

If the PCs went with creating cry babies, they will have to make a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty* Skill roll to figure out best placement for the device. If the PCs have more than one, the difficulty drops to AVERAGE (7) and if they have three or more, the task becomes EASY (3). Once the device(s) are in place, the pilot will need to make a FORMIDABLE (11) ship's *Agility + pilot's Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* Skill roll to move to an area to gain maximum effect from the decoys.

Locating the specific hulk in the scattered field in orbit of the moon is going to be very difficult without the survivor. The slow passive only scan search through the debris field is going to be time consuming and will severely impact the amount of time the crew will have to actually search the wreck once it is located. GMs must play up the tension of the moment to the fullest. Have the pilot or sensor operator roll *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Sensors* as a HEROIC (95) complex action, with each roll using two minutes. The decoys will give the crew (time = average of two minutes over success) remaining to plunder the stockpile.

ACT 3

SCENE 1: THE LION'S DEN

The chaotic field of debris covered a substantial arc of the uninhabited moon's orbit with several active ships prowling in a random pattern that somehow managed to encompass the entire area. The wrecks of several ships were part of

the chaos and drifted cold and empty in the void. On boarding the targeted hulk, the mind is instantly drawn to a half remembered lesson about an era of Earth-That-Was history known as the Holocaust and the piles of belongings once neatly sorted of shoes, spectacles, clothes, and other forms of detritus that marked the passage of thousands. Clearly, the Reavers have been hunting for a long time and may the Buddha be merciful, hunting has just as clearly been very good, too good to want to think about.

After the heart stopping passage through Reaver lines to reach the hulk, the PCs' camouflaged ship docks with the treasure hulk. The wreck is fairly stable and requires a HARD (11) ship's *Agility + pilot's Pilot / Appropriate Specialty* Skill roll to successfully dock. As soon as the airlock seals, the PCs can make their way to the treasure they have risked so much to get. If the survivor is still loyal, he can keep up a running dialog with the other ships of the pack that move randomly around the area. If the survivor has reverted, the PCs only have one quarter the time and all difficulties regarding remaining undetected are two levels higher.

The survivor will not board the hulk, but gives a decent description of how to get to the cargo bay with the goods. Long since stripped of everything useful, the wreck is without power, lighting, or gravity. The airlock leads to the central corridor with six cargo bays on either side. The survivor says the treasure is in the third car from the front and behind the third door on the left. This will result in some confusion when the PCs reach the designated

hatch, open it and find a huge pile of clothes. Some players will believe they have been tricked, but the truth is, every time the survivor docked with the hulk, it was from the opposite direction. The PCs need only turn around and go to the third door on the left while facing aftwards.

On opening the hatch, they gasp at the contents. The cargo bay is twenty-one feet long by twelve feet wide, by twelve feet high or 1,000 cubic yards. The unmistakable gleam of coinage and the sparkle of gems reflect the light of the crew's flashlights. The survivor was telling the truth! Here is a fortune that even someone from the Core would be stunned to see.

Now comes the most critical part of the adventure and the fate of the crew now depends on whether or not the survivor is still loyal or not. If the survivor is still loyal, he can hold the pack at bay for eight minutes after the crew reaches the hoard, as docking with this hulk is only for raiders returning victoriously and this makes the PCs' ship immediately conspicuous. The survivor has to make a progressively harder *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll starting at HARD (11) and increasing a step for every additional minute. Once he fails, the pack will begin to close in to investigate. Moving via spacesuit from the cargo bay to the PCs' ship's airlock takes one minute. This gives the PCs enough time for at least four round trips safely with potentially a few more if the survivor gets lucky. If the survivor is no longer loyal, the PCs only have two minutes total

before the pack becomes curious and thus only have one trip.

Due to the lack of gravity and being in space suits, the treasure is difficult to grab. Taking a normal grab that takes the full one minute plus travel time to the airlock takes a roll against *Agility + Athletics / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll against a HARD (11) difficulty. The degree of success determines how much the portion the character made off with is worth:

Botch	(Character's AGL die type) x 5 Credits
Failure	(Character's AGL die type) x 10 Credits
Success	(Character's AGL die type) x 20 Credits
Extraordinary Success	(Character's AGL die type) x 40 Credits

If the PC is more selective about what he grabs for, concentrating on jewelry or large denomination notes. They will need three full minutes to make the trip to the airlock and again have to make a roll against *Agility + Athletics / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll against a FORMIDABLE (15) difficulty with the degree of success determining how much the character grabs, but the higher value items yield:

Botch	(Character's AGL die type) x 10 Credits
Failure	(Character's AGL die type) x 25 Credits
Success	(Character's AGL die type) x 100 Credits
Extraordinary Success	(Character's AGL die type) x 150 Credits

The pack is more curious than suspicious at this point and only slowly makes their way toward the PCs' ship. The raiders start at long range and close one range band per minute. Again, if the survivor is functional and able to bluff and combined with their camouflage, the Reavers won't close any faster. However, they Reavers will scan the PCs' ship using an opposed PCs' ship's *Alertness* + character's *Technical Engineering / Sensors Skill* versus that same roll for the Reavers. At long range the PCs get a bonus of 10 points. The bonus drops to 5 points at medium range and is reduced to zero at short range. If the Reavers win this roll, they will accelerate and close to point blank range on the stationary PCs' ship in one minute.

The PCs can take the risk of allowing the Reavers to get closer if they choose to get greedy, but eventually they will be discovered. There are fifteen ships in the pack but, only four are closing. However, once the alarm is raised, the entire pack will swarm.

If the PCs wisely choose to escape while the pack is at long range, it only takes an AVERAGE (7) ship's *Agility* + pilot's *Pilot / Appropriate Specialty Skill* roll to move beyond long range and escape. If they PCs wait until the Reavers get to Medium then it is a FORMIDABLE (15) and an INCREDIBLE (23) roll to escape. If the PCs are greedy enough to wait until the Reavers reach short range, then it will take two INCREDIBLE (23) and a RIDICULOUS (27) roll to escape.

ALTERNATE TO REAVERS

The proposed behavior of Reavers may not be to some GM's taste and if the pack or hoarding nature of Reavers poses an insurmountable leap of faith, then following option is provide to allow those GMs to still use this adventure.

First, the survivor and their ship are pirates made up to look like Reavers and the hoard is pirate loot. The pirates encountered a Reaver raider and came off second best. Their ship was taken with the survivor's significant other aboard, who fired off one final salvo of missiles to mask the launch of the escape pod before sealing themselves in a high security vault. This second survivor has limited air and has Reavers slaving at the door slowly cutting their way in. The escape pod survivor is willing to trade entire hoard to save loved one. They got the vector the Reavers took as they fled while in the pod and combined with a Cortex search of nearby planets shows a lifeless moon on that vector. The GM will have to use the survivor-less options for sneaking in and rescuing the person trapped in the vault.

ACT 3

SCENE 1: SERVICE WITHOUT A SMILE

"Look didn't you listen this first time? I told you that most jobs outta Eavesdown is what folk would call other than legal? Unless you are doin' a job for someone you know, iff'n you take a job out of Eavesdown you are taking your chances. Hell, even iff'n you do know the guy you are taken the job from you are taken your chances. That's how life is in the Black, an' if you are too easy a mark to know that, then maybe you need to find somethin' else to do for a livin'!"
Frankie 'Twice Pipe' Whitaker, information broker

After the frantic escape from Reaver territory, the crew has a couple options. First, if they fled with a large sum of money, they may not care about their cargo to Aberdeen. However, if the take from the hoard wasn't a life altering event, they may decide the cash from the cargo run is not something they can skip. Based on decisions made earlier, they may be behind schedule or running on the ragged edge of making their delivery time.

As is typical with most cargo runs, the shipper paid half up front with the second half and the bonus paid on delivery. Whether the bonus is even an option at this point depends on how careful the crew has been with their time. Unknown to the shipper Calanche and the crew, Genseed is genetically coded that if not used by its expiration date it is designed to biodegrade rapidly, this is to allow the no longer viable seeds to be used as a form of highly nutrient

mulch. Since the actual expiration date for the doctored labels on the bags Calanche is shipping is the delivery date on Aberdeen, there is a chance that if the players have taken an excessive amount of time that the cargo has already started to rot. Regardless, even if they can get the cargo to Aberdeen in time, they will have to depart quickly as the buyer will return with several armed friends to discuss the deliberately defective cargo.

While there are dozens of possibly outcomes of this adventure, the following options are based on the two most likely events. Option One is "We're in the Money" and Option Two is "Why doesn't anything ever go Smooth?"

In "We're in the Money," the crew escaped with a large sum of valuables and the Genseed cargo is no longer much of a deal to them any more. Despite the fact that the cargo is of so little consequence that they won't bother delivering it to Aberdeen, there is still a lot of it, 300 tons to be exact. The crew will have to make port in order to unload it and regardless of port they head for by the time they get there, the cargo will already be biodegrading. The rapid decomposition causes the doctored labels to bleed and quickly reveals Calanche's lie.

Faced with a pungent mess filling their hold, the crew will probably decide to make it to the nearest port and dump the cargo. However, they will find this can only be done planet side as no spacestation or skyplex will take so much bio-matter. Even a planet side facility will charge one credits per ton, or a total of 300 credits, to dispose of so much waste matter. If they go to a farming community, the cargo still

has some value and they can sell the mulch for 75 credits.

Once the cargo is disposed, the crew has the option of returning to Persephone for a consultation with Calanche for sending them swinging directly into the path of known Reaver activity and for leaving them holding the bag on 300 tons of worthless cargo. It will take a **FORMIDABLE (15) Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise Skill** roll to locate Calanche's headquarters and once they arrive, they find half a dozen well armed thugs guarding the door with specific orders to keep the crew out. A public confrontation will not end well and it is highly advised that the crew moves along. If the players insist, the GM will have to run the battle, but so public a fight will result in a contingent of Alliance soldiers arriving, a land-lock being placed on their ship, an arrest, and a trial that will end with everyone doing time on a penal moon as the minimum of their problems. The old saying is: sometimes the cat eats the mouse and sometimes the mouse eats the cat. This is one time the PC are going to have to choose discretion and, using their large payoff from the Reaver hoard, go find something else to do with their new wealth.

The second of the main options "Why doesn't anything ever go Smooth," if the payoff from the hoard wasn't all that great, the other half of the cargo run money is probably still looking very attractive right about now. Whether the cargo can still be delivered in time to earn the bonus is totally dependent on earlier PC actions. Even if the bonus isn't an option, the other half of the basic pay is still potentially available, but given the short fuse imposed by the expiration

date, even that may no longer be a viable option.

In order to give the PCs a sense of urgency, have each of the crew make an *Alertness + Perception / Sight Skill* roll and the PC that rolls the highest notice one of the packing labels on the cargo near a vent has started to bleed and revealed the real expiration date. The PCs can potentially race to Aberdeen and unload the cargo and depart before the cargo starts to decompose. If things have gone poorly for the PCs and the expiration date passes while they are en route, then things have truly gone south and the only recourse they have is selling the cargo that now only consists of mulch for 75 credits. As above, the crew may decide to pay Calanche a visit, but the goons will still be guarding his lair and a public fight will end just as badly. The PCs will have to settle for whatever they managed to grab from the Reaver hoard and be satisfied that they are still flyin' as sometimes, in the Black, that has to be enough.

Final note: The GM is welcome and encouraged to use the background of the PCs to full effect and if any mention person in their past that was taken by Reavers, to have that PC find an item that belonged to that person and that the item can itself be a hook that leads the crew directly into its next adventure. Even if none of the crew has such a background, an item found in the hoard can be the central hook to the next adventure.

Non-player Characters

Porfiro Calanche

Stats: Agi d6, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d10, Int d8, Wil d10, Life Points 18, Initiative d6+d10.

Traits: Friends in Low Place (Minor Asset), Trustworthy Gut (Minor Asset), Greedy (Minor Complication), Stingy (Minor Complication).

Skills: Animal Handling d2, Athletics d4, Covert d6 / Streetwise d12, Guns d6, Influence d6/ Intimidation d8 / Negotiation d10, Knowledge d6, Linguist d4, Medical Expertise d2, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Perception d6, Pilot d2, Planetary Vehicles d4, Unarmed Combat d4.

Generic Alliance Sensor Operator

Stats: Agi d6, Str d6, Vit d6, Ale d10, Int d8, Wil d6, Life Points 12, Initiative d6+d10.

Traits: Military Rank (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d2, Discipline d6, Guns d6 / Pistols d8, Influence d4, Knowledge d4, Perception d6, Pilot d2, Mechanical Engineering d4, Medical Expertise d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Planetary Vehicles d4, Technical Engineering d6 / Sensors d8 / Technical Repair d8, Unarmed Combat d4.

Generic Alliance Gunner

Stats: Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d6, Life Points 12, Initiative d8+d8.

Traits: Military Rank (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d6, Discipline d6, Guns d6 / Pistols d8, Heavy Weapons d6 / Repair Heavy Weapons d8 / Ship's Cannons d8, Influence d2, Knowledge d4, Perception d6, Mechanical Engineering d2, Medical Expertise d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Planetary Vehicles d4, Technical Engineering d2, Unarmed Combat d4.

The Survivor

Stats: Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d10, Life Points 20, Initiative d8+d8.

Traits: Fightin' Type (Major Asset), Mean Left Hook (Minor Asset), Tough as Nails (Minor Asset), Ugly as Sin (Major Complication), Sadistic (Major Complication).

Skills: Animal Handling d2, Athletics d6 / Dodge d8, Covert d6 / Stealth d10, Discipline d2, Guns d4, Influence d4, Knowledge d4, Mechanical Expertise d4, Perception d6, Melee Weapon Combat Clubs d8, Survival d4, Technical Expertise d4, Unarmed Combat d6 / Brawling d8.

Special Note: Although the survivor is not a Reaver anymore, he enjoys pain to a degree. The survivor ignores the effects of the first 4 points of Stun damage, but does suffer Wound penalties from injuries.

The Treasure ship

Haiphong Yards Cuban Modular Freighter

Dimensions: Drive Section 200' x 60' x 40' Cargo Pods 120' x 60' x 40'

Tonnage: Drive Section 4,880 tons Cargo Module 2,880 tons

Speed Class: 2 Cruise / 3 Hard Burn

Crew Quarters: Two double and four single cabins

Fuel Capacity: 2,500 tons (1,600 hours)

Cargo Capacity: Standard Configuration is one drive section and four cargo modules with an empty weight of 16,320 tons capable of carrying a total of 3,040 tons in 38 separate compartments each holding up to 80 tons.

Passenger Capacity: None

Price: €58,560 for drive section, €17,280 per cargo module for a total of €128,000 for the standard configuration.

Stats: AGL d4, STR d8, VIT d8, ALE d4, INT d6, WIL d4, Life Points 12, Initiative d4+d4.

Current State: AGL 0, STR d8, VIT d2, ALE 0, INT 0, WIL 0, Life Points 2, Initiative 0.

Traits: Fuel Efficient (Minor Asset), Slow Throttle (Minor Complication), Everybody Has One (Major Complication).

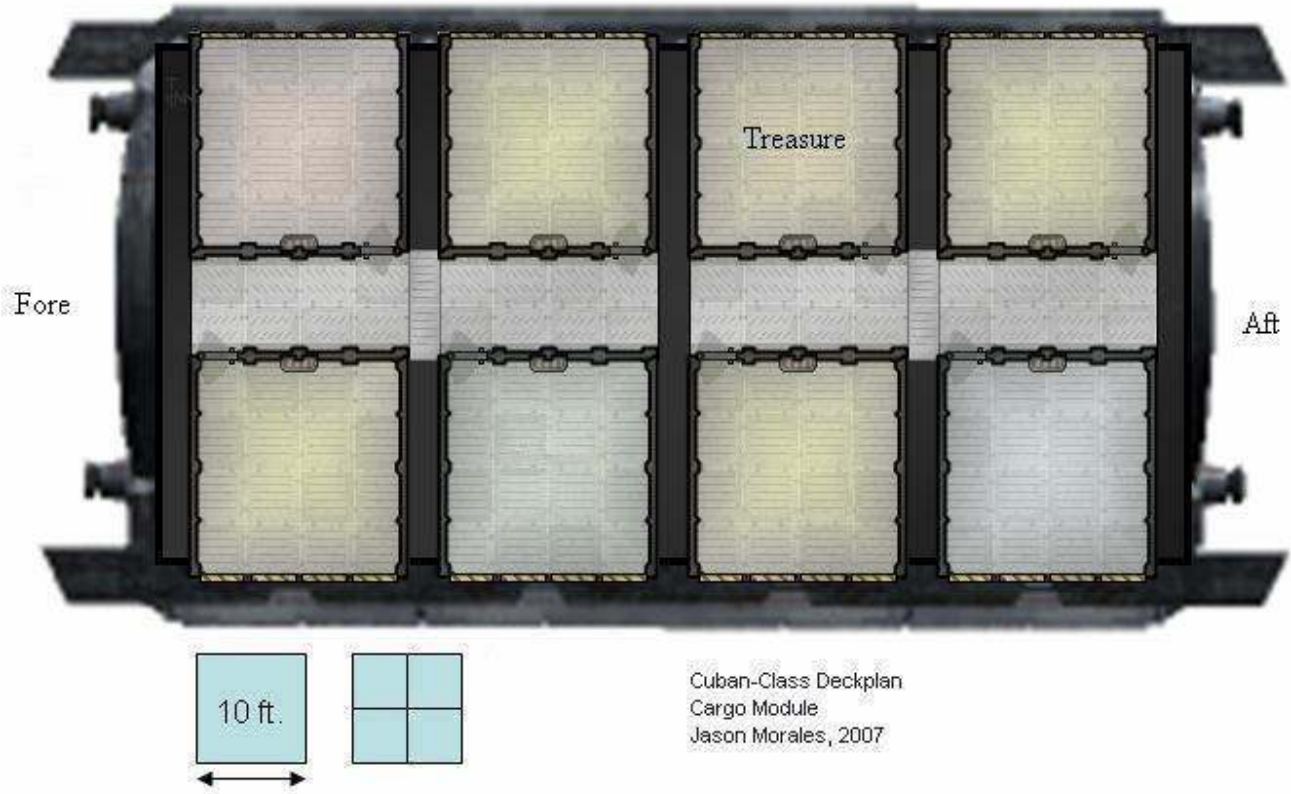
Skills: Aerial Transport Operations d4, Space Transport Operations d4, Perception d4

Complexity: Low

Maintenance Costs: €5,856 a year (€488 per month)

Background: Named after the designer Frank Cuban, this ship is a common sight in the 'Verse. The ability to carry multiple cargos in individually isolated cargo holds is the key to the Cuban's success with over 3,000 of them being built at the Haiphong Yards facility on Beaumonde. The Cuban is a relatively new design and is still in production. The drive section located at the front of the ship operates very much like a locomotive with the cargo modules similar to box cars. Slow and ungainly, the Cuban is equipped with the latest in avionics and other safety features. In addition to the ability to carry multiple types of cargo, the Cuban has a huge fuel tank allowing it to traverse the length of known space between refueling making the ship very economical to operate. The high start up cost of purchasing a Cuban out of the hands of most small operators, the Cuban is very popular with all the major shipping firms of the 'Verse.

Third Cargo Module from the Front



INTO THE LION'S DEN

An opportunity of a lifetime falls into the Crew's lap and the kicker is, it's even legal! However, with times being as hard as they are on the Rim, why is the shipper paying coin like a drunken Alliance sailor? After all, trust is not something that comes easy to them as what lives in the Black, so with a deal this sweet, the first question that comes to mind is what ain't this *hun dan* telling us? The answer is beyond the imagining of even the most experienced spacer and will lead to the chance of a lifetime that is, if they survive, going Into the Lion's Den.