

## **WORD ON THE STREET: SALVAGING MADE EASY OR AT LEAST NOT AS HARD AS IT COULD BE**

The young man spotted his contact, with surprising difficulty, watching a work crew from a secluded overhang dismantling a piece of equipment so completely stripped that he himself could no longer identify. As a test of his own skills he attempted to steal up on the older man without being detected and while the work crew completely failed to spot his movements, his contact turned with a smile to face him before he could get within twenty feet.

“Nice try there young’un, ya gots decent sneak skills, but ya don’t get to be my age by not knowin’ what’s happenin’ around ya.” Frankie Twice-Pipe Whitaker chuckled. “Ya can keep on tryin’ but not much gets by me these days. Now, onto a more important topic, I got word from Kaili the Hand that ya’ll has done right fine with slippin’ those three loads of entertainment discs past the Feds on Beaumonde. He says ya got the gift, which ain’t no surprise to me young feller, but glad to see others ken it now and especially that ya’ll ken it yer own self.”

Despite his best efforts, the young man flushed with so much pride and gratitude at the older man’s praise that he almost missed Frankie’s next words.

“In fact, Kaili was so jazzed by yer work that he said he’d cover yer consideration this time, so next time ya see that old reprobate, be sure to tell him that I said hi and to lay offa the rice wine before he puts a dent in his own profit margin.

“Anyways, we’re here in this lovely stretch of Hell’s Half Acre to put eyes on one of the best kept secrets in the business of makin’ money what the Feds can’t tax and that there secret is summed up in one word, salvage. Now I ken, from here especially, that all that pile of *gos se*<sup>1</sup> ya see down there, what them upright hard workin’ stiffis is doin’ don’t look the part, but there’s more coin to be made in that pile of *gos se* than the average man can spend, if’n ya ken how to get at it that is.

“Ya see son, one of the things all citizens of the Alliance is good at, is generatin’ junk what we don’t need no more. Thing is, a lot of that junk has bits and pieces of precious on the innards what most folk never see. Its those fiddly bits what is worth enough to recycle, but the thing is, just as our adorin’ Alliance is a monopoly on what gets done to who and how it gets done to ‘em, when ya talk salvage, there is only one name to ken and that name is Unified Reclamation. The stuffed shirts what owns and runs that there organization has got a lock on the salvagin’ market tighter than a miser’s fist on a sack of platinum. [1]

“Bein’ the only show in town, they do not play well with others and make damn sure that no one else can even get started, let alone big enough to be competition. The kindly folk at ‘You-Are’ is the only source for a salvagin’ license and they make sure ya both ken it and ken what happens to ya if’n ya gets on their bad side. Never been anythin’ ever proved by no one, but folk what cross Unified Reclamation too much have a tendency to disappear faster than a politician can lie. Never forget that if’n ya ever decide to apply for a license. If’n ya got the coin and the time, ya

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<sup>1</sup> Garbage

can either apply with yer local government, but for most folk, the costs are so high, ya can just barely break even and ya better have a 'Plan B' to keep yerself fed for the year and a half it takes for the application to be processed. Now, if'n ya go straight to Unified Reclamation it goes a might faster, but ya is still lookin' at a good six months and that's if'n yer lucky. [2]

“The real money when it comes to salvage, just like with everythin’ else we’ve talked about, is made off the books. Now don’t get me wrong, the Feds frown hard on illegal salvage, real hard, but even the most hard nosed Fed won’t make ya disappear if’n ya get pinched like a Unified Reclamation enforcement squad does some times to some of the folk they catch. The reason that the enforcement arm of Unified Reclamation drops such a heavy hammer sometimes is make an example outta a few to keep anyone else what is thinkin’ of stealin’ from ‘em from doin’ anythin’ more than thinkin’ about it. Right lovely bunch of *hulang*<sup>2</sup> they are, so make sure ya know who the real threat is a’fore ya decide to get into the salvagin’ business, cause kennin’ that little detail is the difference between gettin’ an all expenses paid trip to a penal colony versus an up close and personal view of the Black without the benefit of a space suit.

“The most obvious question of unlicensed salvage is where to look. The ‘Verse is a gorram big place and while there’s no shortage of junk to be found, findin’ stuff what ya can get to is a completely different thing. The best pickin’ are off of the freshest carcasses, as it were, that is to say, if’n ya can find a target what ain’t been picked at yet and as I said earlier, the ‘Verse is a big place and many a spacer has vanished never to be seen again after takin’ to the Black. While some of those vanished crews got took and et by Reavers, some others had break downs what left ‘em on the drift, and others run into uncharted debris, asteroids, or even old mines left over from the U-War. Thing is there is about a million ways to Sunday for a boat to end up on the drift and they make for prime salvage, but its more luck than skill to find a boat what’s gone dark in deep space. The only thing what makes findin’ yer own hulk to salvage the best option, is if’n Unified Reclamation don’t ken the wreck is there, then they can’t stop ya from gettin’ the goods.

“An option that is easier to find, but harder to get to is to slip into a place where wrecks is kept and boostin’ what ya can find. There are a couple civilian parkin’ lots what gets tagged as ‘the graveyard of ships’ by the over imaginative, but the name does sorta fit. Bunch of wrecks floatin’ in a stable orbit, usually around a LaGrange Point is the most common set up, but thanks to the many dust ups from the Unification War, there are a couple places that got turned into ships graveyards the hard way, probably the most famous of these is the Battle of Sturges with dozens and dozens of shattered wrecks floatin’ where they died. Thing is though, since the good folk at Unified Reclamation kens about those places, they keep a patrol near by to chase off, or worse, anyone what gets to close. [3]

“Now there is one more major means of settin’ up a salvage operation, but it ain’t fit for folk what don’t worm around on their bellies like the snakes what run a Chop Shop or Carrion House. Them *he chu sheng zajiao de zang huo*<sup>3</sup> trap ships with folk on ‘em in a device called a ‘Net’. This evil thing turns the entire hull of the ship into one giant high energy conduit what stuns or cooks the crew. If’n some of the folk manage to survive the net, the cowards pulls the oxygen supply or gas anyone still breathin’ cause they ain’t set for, and don’t want to deal with, survivors. Couple good things with a Net is they are fairly rare as the gear is expensive and the operation has got to get someone on yer boat to disable the pilot and flight controls, reprogram yer course, and then get away in one of yer shuttles, so as long as ya is good and wary about who ya let on yer boat, avoidin’ a Net is a bit easier to dodge than most hazards in the Black. [4]

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<sup>2</sup> jackals

<sup>3</sup> Filthy fornicators of livestock

“As with most things obtained without permission, gettin’ the goods is only the first half of the score. Ya gotta find a way to unload what ya took in order to get paid. Here is where havin’ the necessary contacts what deals in such goods becomes important. Sellin’ goods what ya can’t prove that ya own can be tricky, especially if the merchandise happens to have belonged to the Alliance at one point and is tagged six ways to sundown. Ya find yerself holdin’ tagged goods, yer only choice at that point is to head for the Rim as no fence worth the name will take anythin’ with an Alliance tag. Thing is though, even on the Rim ya can’t expect to get more’n a tiny fraction of what the goods is worth as folk what will take tagged merchandise ain’t got all that much coin in the first place and usually ain’t lookin’ to resell the stuff, so they have to be able to use the goods themselves.” [5]

A whistle sounded in the distance, leading the work crew stripping the unidentifiable wreck to head for the work site’s limited amount of shade to take their lunch break, and also interrupting Frankie’s monolog.

“Well son, I guess that is as good a cue as any to cap off this here life lesson and let ya get back to yer boat. I know ya gotta cargo ya needs to get to Paquin and I don’t want to be the reason ya didn’t make yer rendezvous. I’ll see ya next time kid and since ya’ll is startin’ to make a name for yerself, we can talk about some of the other competition what ya needs to ken about if’n ya wanna keep a rep as a fellah what can get the job done and the Triads is about the orneriest bunch breathin’ what can make life difficult for folk what run the Black.”

The younger man clapped Frankie on the shoulder with genuine affection before slipping away silently, his mind awhirl with a flood of new facts and opportunities as he was every time he spoke with the information broker with the reputation for always knowing what was the latest word on the street.

[1] The possible types of salvage from a ship wreck is too varied to list in detail, but the most common salvage items include: major components like engines or computers, smaller engine parts like catalyzers or compression coils, and emergency supplies. The GM can either decide in advance on the value found off of a given hulk, but a rule of thumb is to use a vehicle's Strength rating die times 3d6 to generate the value of available salvage while a ship uses Strength rating die times 3d6 times ten. Thus a standard 20 ton shuttle with a d2 Strength would have d2 x 3d6 x 10 credits worth of valuables, while the El Dorado (pg 128) generates d8 x 3d6 x 10 in salvage.

[2] Unified Reclamation has deliberately made obtaining a valid Salvage License extremely difficult and expensive. There are two options available to the PCs, first, is to apply with local planetary government, or second, to apply with Unified Reclamation directly. The local government route is slower, but has the advantage of costing less. The application and interview process requires a successful HARD (11) *Willpower + Influence / Bureaucracy* test, costs €500 and takes up to two years (12 + 2d6 months) to complete. The Unified Reclamation route is faster, but is more costly. The application and interview process is somewhat easier only requiring an AVERAGE (7) test of the same skill. However, the license will cost twice as much, but will be approved much faster, sometimes as quickly as six months (4 + 2d2 months). Either license is valid for three years, costs one half of the initial fee to renew, but does not require a skill roll or any waiting time to renew. The major downside to being licensed is that Unified Reclamation claims one third of the value of anything salvaged.

[3] Sneaking into a Unified Reclamation lot, battlefield, or any other registered salvage site requires several skill tests. First, an Opposed Roll of *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty* to avoid initial detection. A HARD (11) *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Scanner Operations* test to locate a wreck worth salvaging, Once a wreck is located, a HARD (11) *Ship's Agility + Piloting / Appropriate Specialty* to dock with, or get close enough for EVA to reach, the wreck. Scavenging the wreck is an AVERAGE (7) *Alertness + Perception / Search* test to find anything of value, followed by a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Mechanical or Technical Engineering* roll to remove the salvage. Escaping with the goods requires a final Opposed Roll of *Intelligence + Technical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty* to avoid detection during escape. Botching either Opposed Roll results in being spotted by a Unified Reclamation patrol and will require the GM to game out the consequences.

[4] Setting up a Net requires an initial outlay of €5,000 for the controls and Net infrastructure. Any ship passing through a Net has the energy stored in the capacitors (which takes five minutes to charge) transferred directly through the ship's hull causing an intense form of electrocution, not unlike that of what occurs inside a microwave oven. Each PC must make a Resistance roll (*Vitality + Vitality*) starting at AVERAGE (7) and increasing one full level (+4) every round for 4 + d6 rounds. Each round the Resistance roll is failed does 2d6 Stun damage and once the PC is out of Stun, they suffer Shock damage. If by chance any PC survives effects of the Net, the scavengers will either pull the oxygen supply causing the standard damage of suffocation or pump gas into the ship, which causing the normal damage for a poison or chemical agent.

The actions of the saboteur prior to hitting the Net are under the control of the GM and should always be gamed out. Disabling the breakers before the ship passes through the Net requires a Called Shot to a Vital Area versus a stationary target against the breaker's defense of Armor 2 Life Points 4.

[5] Fencing salvage is up the GM and can be as difficult or as easy as is necessary for the game or plot. At a minimum, the PCs either needs Friends in Low Places and to expend a few Plot Points or they must make a HARD (11) *Intelligence + Influence / Streetwise* roll to find a buyer with this task becoming FORMIDABLE (15) on a Core Planet. If the goods are tagged by the Alliance, finding a buyer is two levels harder on the Rim and can't be found on a Core or Border Planet at all. In addition, tagged goods can not be fenced for more than five percent of their normal listed value.