

**WORD ON THE STREET:  
TRIADS, FOLK WHAT MAKE LIFE MORE COMPLICATED THAN IS HEALTHY**

In the spaceport tavern where the young client originally met his contact, the up and coming young smuggler waited uneasily as his contact was uncharacteristically late, which was to say most unusual, as his contact had never been late. However, before he could actually get worried, Frankie ‘Twice-Pipe’ Whitaker entered the tavern, spotted his client and, after stopping to get his usual from the bartender, slid into the booth looking perturbed, which was also unusual as Frankie always seemed to be in a state of perpetual tranquility.

“Hey young’un, sorry to keep ya waitin’, had a bit of a run in with a low rent street punk on the way what thought an old man alone would be easy pickins. Can’t say that I can fault his logic, cause up front, I reckon I do look a might soft to someone what don’t ken me. Where the kid went wrong was not lookin’ past the obvious and that’s what separates the wannabes from real operators. Ya see, if’n what looks like an easy mark is someplace where they don’t fit, but don’t seem concerned about bein’ out of place, then maybe that mark ain’t so easy. I’ll give the *sha gua*<sup>1</sup> this, once I introduced him to my trusty companion here.” Frankie said patting the custom cut down double barrel shotgun that had given him his nickname. “The little snot knew he was out of his league and made himself right scarce, right quick and is crystal clear on exactly who I am now.

“Since I’m late, I’ll get right to the point and my little encounter is a good startin’ point for what I was gonna talk to ya about. As I’ve told ya before, there are all kinds of folk in the ‘Verse and the folk what make up the darker side of the law are just as varied. Ya gots yer low rent thugs like the clown I ran into tonight and ya gots yer hard cases. Now the hardest cases ya can meet in the ‘Verse are the *xiong meng de kuang ren*<sup>2</sup> what call themselves Triads. Now I know that sounds like Tong and to the folk what don’t run the Black, the difference between a Tong and a Triad seems hard to see, and in some ways, them folk is right. The main difference between the two as I first told ya lo those many months ago is that Tongs started out innocent enough as a group of folk what banded together to protect each other from unfriendly outsiders and kinda gravitated into crime over time. While most Tongs have become criminal organizations, there is still some Tongs what are still just into protectin’ their own.

“The main difference when it comes to the Triads is, they started out rotten and went downhill from there. Just like the Tong, the Triads began on Earth-That-Was. Originally they was a bunch of rebels against one of the Chinese Dynasties, the *Qing* Dynasty to be specific, but that don’t matter none now, anyways, problem was they had took to livin’ on the outside of the law for so long, that when the dynasty they was rebellin’ against was finally overthrown, the rebels decided to move on to thievin’, mainly cause they’d grown to like bein’ troublemakers too bloody much. Since they had openly taken to bein’ bad guys, they figured they might as well be the baddest of the bad and make sure everyone kened that little fact. And by bad I mean, if’n it weren’t for the Reavers, I’d call ‘em nightmares. As it is, a riled up Triad is enough to give any one with enough smarts to find their own *pi gu*<sup>3</sup> without needin’ both hands and a mirror pause to wonder if’n

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<sup>1</sup> fool

<sup>2</sup> violent lunatics

<sup>3</sup> bottom

another line of work might be in order. Nothin' is off limits for a Triad racketeerin', extortion, kidnappin', and even contract killin' is all business as usual to one of these packs of stone cold killers. Truth be told, the Triads is so fierce that they give regular crooks a bad name.

“So now I'm sure yer first question is ‘how do I ken a Triad when I see one?’ The short answer is, even though nothin' is 100% sure in the ‘Verse, but since Triads are all so fired up proud to be the thugs they are, they are also all too quick to advertise their membership and the most popular way they advertise is with tattoos. I'm tellin' ya son, ya'll never see more tattoos on one person in yer life as what ya'll will see on just one Triad foot soldier. Now the reason these *xiong can sha shou*<sup>4</sup> is called Triads is based on what them as were the original rebel group known as the *Sanhehui*, or the Three Harmonies Society used for their symbols. They considered the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Man to be central to their cause and this fixation on triangular imagery is what got all of 'em tagged with the Triad handle. As ya'll can probably suss out on yer own, most of the tattoos they like to sport is based on triangles, but they are also fond of spicin' up those triangles with anythin' what represents death, and from what I've seen, intertwined snakes, skulls, and scorpions is the most popular frills.

“Now, the next obvious question, after bein' able to ken who is and who ain't in a Triad, is ‘what do I do about it?’ As with most things in the ‘Verse, it depends on the situation, but usually, the best answer is to give 'em as wide a berth as ya can. I know that's easier said than done as a Triad is all about their territory and, even with seventy worlds spinnin', it don't seem sometimes like there's enough room in the ‘Verse for anyone if a Triad is on the move. As I said, Triads operate in clearly defined territories, that is to say, clear to them. Thing is though, while they ken the limits of their territories better than one of them uppity rich folk kens how much cashy money they gots in their tight little fists, but it's regular folk what have a much harder time kennin' what area belongs to who, mainly cause the borders always seem to be in a constant state of flux. Only real way to know the difference is to look for their tag cause each Triad likes to make sure that they keeps their territory clearly marked for all to see. So if'n ya is smart, ya makes sure ya learns how to figger out those tags right quick. Once you can ID them, ya can steer clear of a specific Triad fairly easy like, just don't make the mistake of gettin' the tag wrong and call them by the wrong name, they don't like that much. [1]

“The next most obvious question is ‘how do ya deal with a Triad?’ A lot of how ya go about that depends on the size of the Triad. If'n ya has to deal with one of the smaller Triads, things are a might easier as they are still open to direct negotiations. First, ya ID their tag and locates one of their foot soldiers. Ya make sure ya is polite as ya know how to be and even then ya better treat 'em like they was a badger with a toothache. Seriously though, if'n for some reason ya gots to have a dealin' with 'em, once ya find one of their foot soldiers, ya use the sweetest words ya ken and ask to see the *Shan Zhu*<sup>5</sup>, that there is their boss. Havin' a consideration won't hurt yer cause none, but credits or coinage ain't the way to go. For some fool reason, even though they is about as crude a set of folk breathin', the *Shan Zhu* always tries to act like they got class, so if'n ya want to make a good impression, ya gotta feed that delusion. Rather than money, ya has to bring a bottle of high end wine, fine cut leaded crystal, or even a delicately tended bonsai tree is the sort of thing ya will have to bring to the meetin'. Once ya is escorted to the *Shan Zhu*, ya speaks

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<sup>4</sup> bloodthirsty killers

<sup>5</sup> Mountain Master

yer words and hope they buy off on what ya wants. Despite bein' a bloodthirsty bunch, they are businessmen and they do see profit as a means to grow, so they aren't impossible to talk to, ya just gotta make sure yer deal is worthwhile to 'em. However, if'n they say no, ya smile and thank 'em for their time and go, cause the *Shan Zhu*'s word is law and their decisions are final. [2]

“That plan works fine with one of the small fry, but if ya has to deal with one of the big fish like the 24K what just about owns Paquin or the *Lie Quan*<sup>6</sup> which is responsible for the slavin' out of Bernadette, then ya gotta take a slightly different path. First off, unless ya is offerin' somethin' worth millions, ya ain't likely that ya'll get to talk to the *Shan Zhu* of a Triad as big as the 24K. Ya still gotta find a foot soldier, but on Paquin at least, ya don't have to worry about figurin' out what Triad is runnin' the show. Most always small time operators, and that means a young'un like ya'll kid, will have to make their pitch to the *Shan Zhu*'s assistant the *Fu Shan Zhu* or even the *Hong Gan*<sup>7</sup> who is kinda like a battle captain what leads foot soldiers. Regardless of who ya end up makin' yer pitch to, the consideration is the offered the same way.

“Last thing to remember is, if'n ya'll is thinkin' that ya can stiff a Triad...don't, cause unless ya happen to have an Alliance company commander in yer back pocket what can come to yer rescue, ya just ain't got the juice to fight a Triad. These thugs don't play and will kill ya dead just for the fun of it, let alone if'n ya go and do somethin' stupid like givin' 'em a reason. About the only good thing about runnin' afoul of a Triad is they are bound to their territory. Ya Hard Burn out of their area fast enough and ya is golden, but unless ya happen to think bein' skinned alive is a pleasant way of spendin' an evenin', do not ever be caught in that Triad's territory again cause the skinnin' part is just how the story starts. The endin' part ain't fit to talk about by any kind of civilized folk. [3]

“One final thing is, while ya can work with a Tong, hell, ya can even be friends with one, a Triad on the other hand is to be avoided whenever and wherever possible. If'n things don't play out right and ya end mixed up with one, makin' yerself scarce is about the only thing most folk can hope for what don't end ugly.

“Well, my young friend, now that I've scared the *wo de ma*<sup>8</sup> outta ya, I figure that's about enough for the night. I know I didn't paint a pretty picture and that was with good cause as I want ya to be as clearer about Triads than anythin' else I've ever schooled ya about. Triads is just plain bad business and bad for business. The better ya kens that fact, the better I'll feel, as runnin' the Black is a hard enough life and not knowin' what ya'll is up against only makes it harder. Since tonight's topic was so depressin', I'll liven things up next time with the five people that every spacer makin' less than honest coin should know.

“Now that our own business is done, why don't ya tell old Frankie about that trick ya used on the Feds in the Silverhold Colonies to sneak that load of perishable frozen livestock embryos right under the noses of one of the slickest Alliance customs inspectors there is, cause what I heard couldn't be true, but if it is, the details of that little trick, and the story that goes with it, would be more than enough to cover my consideration for the night. As anyone what can pull the wool

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<sup>6</sup> Fiery Fist

<sup>7</sup> Red Pole

<sup>8</sup> mother of god

over old Chief Inspector Prescott 'Rigid' Ridgeway so completely has got information I need if'n I'm to keep my stellar rep as the guy to go to for the word on the street."

Frankie's young client blinked in surprise to be in the position of being the one doing the talking for a change and after a long pull on his beer to gather his thoughts began telling his story...

[1] Spotting a Triad tag requires an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise to know what to look for, an AVERAGE (7) Alertness + Perception to actually locate the tag and a second AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + Covert / Streetwise to identify the tag correctly. If the second Streetwise roll is an Extraordinary Success, that will also yield the Triad's strength (+/- 10%). Failing the second Streetwise roll simply means the PC doesn't recognize the tag at all, a Botch on the other hand has the potential to be very serious as the character misidentifies the tag completely and thus believes the tag belongs to a rival Triad.

The size of a Triad's territory is relative to the strength of the Triad. A typical Triad consists of fifty or so members and controls a few city blocks with one block controlled per ten members as a rule of thumb. The larger Triads can boast memberships as high as 30,000 and control the criminal elements of an entire planet such as the 24K Triad's total monopoly on Paquin.

[2] Successfully speaking to the foot soldier is an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence (or Willpower) + Influence / Appropriate Specialty. Typically, the value of the offering to the Triad leader is based on the size of the Triad and the basic rule of thumb is €10 per 50 member of the group up to a thousand members. Larger Triads take the result of dividing the total members by 100 as the value of the offering, thus the huge 24K Triad with  $30,000 \div 100 = \text{€}300$  for the *Shan Zhu*. However, the character(s) will only get past the *Hong Gan* (who must receive an offering  $1/10^{\text{th}}$  in value of that for the *Shan Zhu*) with an Intelligence (or Willpower) + Influence / Appropriate Specialty roll of FORMIDABLE (15) to speak to the *Fu Shan Zhu*. Obtaining the permission of the *Fu Shan Zhu* to speak directly to the *Shan Zhu* requires an offering half the value of that for the *Shan Zhu* and a second Intelligence (or Willpower) + Influence / Appropriate Specialty roll of FORMIDABLE (15) made with a two-step penalty to skill due the sheer intimidating nature of the *Fu Shan Zhu*.

[3] Angering a Triad results in gaining the Deadly Enemy complication. However, due to the restrictive nature of the Triad's own territorial limits, if the PC(s) can escape the angry Triad's area, they will not be pursued. Escaping the Triad's territory is the GM's purview, but will entail, at the very least, dodging or fighting foot soldiers to reach their ship, lifting from the planet (Landlock should not be an option for the Triad), and evading pursuit out of atmo until getting far enough away from the planet to use Hard Burn.