Tales of the Forlorn Hope

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A Series of Savage Tales By:

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Requires the Savage Worlds rules, available at www.greatwhitegames.com.

GM Overview

Within these pages are three short but detailed Savage Tales revolving around the crew of an independent merchantman called the Forlorn Hope.

Each adventure should take only a few hours to play. Once you've done playing, you can use these characters and situations to create your own Savage sci-fi adventures.

Background Data

Mankind has expanded beyond the solar system and now rules a vast space empire spanning thousands of worlds and embracing dozens of alien species.

Ruling over most of the worlds is the Republic, a legislative body formed from the member states. For the most part the Republic allows member states to set their own laws and police their own worlds. Only when things get out of hand does the Republic make its presence felt.

Travel between the stars is handled by faster-than-light (FTL) hyperspace tunnels, opened by a spacecraft's hyperspace engines. A spacecraft can travel as many light years in a single day as its Acceleration.

Forlorn Hope

The Forlorn Hope is a Gamma-class merchantman. Slow and poorly-armed, she is a workhorse rather than a combat craft.

She comes with four small staterooms for her crew, and five larger staterooms for paying passengers. Her cargo hold can accommodate 35 tons of cargo. Like most merchant ships, she is capable of atmospheric flight.

Acc/Top Speed: 20/FTL; **Climb:** 20 (if in Atmosphere); **Toughness:** 30 (10); **Crew:** 4+5; **Cost:** $30M
Notes: 4 x AMCM, Atmospheric, Spacecraft, Heavy Armor
• 1 x 20MW Pulse Laser (Range 75/150/300; Damage 3d6+2; ROF 1; AP 10, Heavy Weapon)
• 2 Deathstrike missiles (Range 200/400/800; Damage 4d8; ROF 1-2; AP 8, Heavy Weapon)

Game of Chance

Mining Station Epsilon, located on the remote world of X-467-B, may not have much in the way of night life, but the miners need regular shipments of food, and your last haul has covered this month's repayment on the Forlorn Hope with a week to spare.

Contact has been made with the local mining director, and he hopes to have a cargo for you by tomorrow. Until then, there's little to do but gamble and drink.

A few miners, grateful for your delivery, have invited you to join in a low-stakes game of Boke, a dice game popular on many worlds. Having little else to do, you joined them.

Use the standard gambling rules in *Savage Worlds* to handle the game. The three miners in the game have Gambling at d6. The stake is $20.

None of the miners cheat, but the GM should ensure that one of them ends up owing money to a character. He can't cover his debts with cash, and instead offers the characters an outdated diagnostic robot in payment. The unit appears to be fully functioning.

Characters wishing to check out the robot can make a Repair roll. With a success, they discover the unit is in working order. Possessing the robot would be a big aid to Xani, especially as the engines are long overdue an overhaul. The robot adds +2 to Repair rolls to any system it is plugged into (which is pretty much anything involving electrical circuitry). The unit has a value of twice what the miner owes the character.

The miner is not what he appears to be. He is actually a Republic Intelligence Service operative stationed here to gather dirt on the activities of the corporation running the mine. He has uncovered evidence of illegal practises but believes his cover has been blown (it hasn't yet, but it will be by the time the characters leave). To get the data off-world without raising suspicions he has placed the files in the repair robot, which he has now passed off to the characters. A timed message in the robot is set to broadcast his plea to the crew during their escape.

Don't panic if the characters refuse. The agent smuggles the robot aboard the characters ship with the next cargo they take.

Cargo for Sale

Shortly after the game ends, a representative from the corporation approaches the characters. He explains that his boss has just received word that the head office needs an urgent shipment of ore and no company

vessels are due in the system or the best part of a week. He is authorized to offer the characters $20,000 if they can ship 30 tons of ore to the processing facility on Korwald.

Have each character make a Common Knowledge roll. With a success, the characters know that Korwald is only five days away from the facility. The money would go a long way to paying off next month's repayment.

If they accept, the official informs them the cargo will be ready for loading shortly after dawn tomorrow. He then bids them good night.

Time to Leave

An hour before dawn the following day a large delivery truck arrives at the characters' ship. Cargo robots load the ore onto the ship. If the characters want to inspect the contents of the canisters, the driver puts up a fuss, saying it is very unorthodox and interferes with his schedule.

A successful Persuasion roll or a bribe of $100 convinces him to allow inspection. Inside the canisters are chunks of raw mineral ore, as expected.

Loading takes two hours, during which time the characters are given their flight clearance and wade through a mountain of routine paperwork. As standard, payment is received on delivery.

Once the cargo is loaded, the characters can prepare for lift off. As they are boarding the ship, they see the miner who gave them the repair robot running toward them across the landing pad, chased by corporate security guards. He has just enough time to yell, *"Get out of here now! They're onto you!"* before he is cut down in a hail of bullets.

As if to emphasize his words, the security guards open fire on the characters. A burst of bullets rips into the landing pad at their feet. Time for initiative.

What's going on? The agent's cover was broken last night but he managed to give security guards the slip. Unfortunately, security tracked his whereabouts over the previous days through surveillance footage.

They saw him handing over the robot and deduced correctly that he was smuggling out data in the unit. The agent, realizing the hand-over would be discovered, rushed to warn the heroes and paid with his life.

Security Guards (4)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d4, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9
Gear: Ballistic vest (+4 vs. kinetic weapons), SMG

Surrender

If the characters surrender, they are arrested and charged with espionage. After brief examination of the repair robot, the security forces discover the data. The characters are sentenced to 20 years imprisonment under false charges of drug smuggling (all evidence of the corporation's crimes is destroyed, so the heroes have no friends at RIS). Unless you want to design a prison escape adventure, this tale has ended.

Race to Safety

Once airborne, the characters can begin preparations for the hyperspace trip. Due to gravitational interference, the hyperspace engines cannot function until the ship is clear of any solar bodies, and that means almost an hour's flight. Shortly after takeoff, read the following text to the characters.

Without warning, the internal communicator's blare into life. A voice you recognize as that of the miner who gave you the repair robot can be heard.

"Listen carefully, your lives are in danger. My name is Ren Martell and I'm an agent for the Republic Intelligence Service. The robot you are now in possession of is carrying proof that the corporation is involved in illegal mining activity. You must get it to the nearest RIS base. A reward of $50,000 awaits for the safe delivery of this data. If my reckoning is right, the corporation will kill to retrieve this data."

Right on cue the radar emits a warning beep—two fast moving objects have entered radar range: no doubt corporate system defense fighters.

Now What?

It should occur to the characters that they are in serious trouble. If they deliver their cargo, there is a good chance a corporate messenger ship will have informed the facility of what is occurring. They are likely to be arrested the moment they try to land.

If they decide to avoid the facility, the corporation is very likely to issue an alert to nearby law enforcement agencies that the characters have defaulted on their contract and stolen the cargo. Worse still, they are carrying data the corporation will likely kill for.

To make matters worse, a warning light on the main bridge console alerts the heroes to the fact that the hyperspace engine is on its last legs. It should be good for one trip, but without extensive repairs it stands a good chance (read: guaranteed chance) of exploding if put under any more stress.

Have each character make a Common Knowledge roll, with Althorp getting a +2 bonus. With success, they know that there are just three worlds within current range—Korwald, Dracin (another corporate mining world), and Luxos (a member state of the Republic but one with a strong corporate presence). Of the three, Luxos is the most promising.

If Althorp scores a raise on this roll he knows there is a small RIS office on Luxos, though he isn't sure how to find it.

The characters know (and should be told) that the RIS is not like the modern FBI. They work covertly to ensure the Republic runs smoothly and do not advertize their presence, even on member state worlds. Most planetary officials have no idea if the RIS is operating on their world or not. The only people who usually know are the local underworld, many of whom also work for the RIS on the side.

Space Battle

With just ten rounds to go before the hyperspace engines can be initiated, the fighters enter combat range.

The ship's communicator bursts into life amid the hiss of background radiation. "Attention merchantman Forlorn Hope. You are being hailed by corporate security forces. Power down your weapons, come to a halt, and prepare to be boarded. If you refuse, we will open fire."

Assuming the characters have no wish to be boarded and caught red-handed with the agent's data, run this as a Chase with a range increment of 100. Draw for initial distance as normal.

The pilots are under orders to stop the Forlorn Hope entering hyperspace and fire their missiles once they enter long range. If the missiles fail, they try to close and finish her off with their cannons.

Any time after the 10th round, assuming the engines have not been destroyed (requires two Critical Hits), the Forlorn Hope can enter hyperspace. This requires a Piloting roll with modifiers if the ship has been damaged.

Fighters (2)

Acc/Top Speed: 200/1200; **Climb:** 50 (if in Atmosphere); **Toughness:** 16 (4); **Crew:** 1; **Cost:** $1M
Notes: 5 x AMCM, Atmospheric, Spacecraft.
- Mass driver (treat as 20mm cannon) (unlimited ammo)
- 4 Deathstrike missiles (Range 200/400/800; Damage 4d8; ROF 1-4; AP 8, Heavy Weapon)

Crew (1 per fighter)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Piloting d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Gear: Spacesuit (+2)

Luxos

During the four day trip to Luxos the crew can learn more about the planet through the ship's library computer. Read the following text to the players.

Luxos is a heavily-industrialized planet with a population of just under two billion. With no axial tilt, there are no seasons—the equator is always hot and the polar regions are always cold. Most of the population lives in the temperate belt. The largest city, New Gala, has the only starport on the planet.

Despite being a Republic member state, Luxos has strong affiliations with the corporations, most notably those owning worlds close by. Many government officials are corrupt, and payment of a bride is essential for visitors conducting any form of business.

The world is classified as a safe zone—citizens may carry pistols, but are banned from carrying rifles or automatic weapons. Security is lax in many cities, giving the planet the feel of a frontier world.

Unless the crew wants to be chased by planetary security, they have little option but to land at the main spaceport in New Gala. Landing clearance is granted as a formality, and after an hour maneuvering through the outer system the *Forlorn Hope* settles into her landing bay.

As soon as the ship lands, have the characters make a Notice roll. On a success, they see they have landed next to a corporate courier ship, capable of covering vast distances at high speed. In fact, the ship has not come from X-467-B, but without checking with a spaceport official the heroes have no way of confirming this.

Once the landing sequence is complete customs pay a visit to the ship. Two officials arrive at the main boarding ramp and ask permission to come aboard. After a perfunctory glance at the manifest, the officials begin to find minor discrepancies with the state of the ship, such as loose panels or faulty emergency exit lights. Given the warning in the library data, the characters should catch on to what is happening—the officials want a bribe.

Payment of $50 completes the inspection with a clean sheet. Failure to bribe results in a long list of minor faults costing a total of $200 (half of which the maintenance crews give to the customs men and half they pocket).

The characters may choose to ask the officials where the RIS office is located. The officials don't know, but advise the characters to visit a bar in downtown. Strangely, until they receive another $20 they can't remember the name of the bar. Once another bribe is handed over they suddenly remember it's called The Scarlet Woman. It's a gathering place for people who want information of a sensitive nature.

Suspicious characters may refrain from mentioning the RIS to the officials, in which case they need to decide who to talk to about the secretive organization.

Connections

Althorp has a wealth of connections from his own days in RIS. He even has one here. If the player asks, tell him that a former smuggler by the name of Tami Song supposedly retired here several years back to set up a legitimate import/export business. Although not an RIS operative, she worked for the organization from time to time. If anyone knows where the RIS office is, it'll be her.

Finding her business requires only a successful Streetwise roll. Whether she's available, and the help she can give, depends on the success of a Persuasion roll.

With a success, she knows the RIS use a bar called The Scarlet Woman in downtown as a drop-off point. She doesn't know any of the agents. On a raise she reveals that slipping the bartender a $50 bill marked with two "X's" gets their attention.

Other Sources

The Republic has several overt offices in the city, none of which know the location, or existence, of the RIS office. Officials are very happy for the characters to hand over a report, and any evidence they may claim to have, but are advised it might take as long as a month to hear back from the regional RIS office.

If the characters elect to hand over the repair robot the corporation quickly finds out (it has large sums of money to bribe Republic officials) and retrieves it. The characters are arrested before they leave planet for stealing a cargo. Five years in prison awaits them.

The Scarlet Woman

This seedy bar is frequented by locals of an unsavory nature. Aside from poor quality drinks, it serves high-quality information. All manner of spies and agents, not to mention criminal gangs, use the bar as a meeting place. It is known locally as Snitch's.

Unfortunately for the heroes, by the time they reach the bar a corporate courier has arrived with their description. Rather than let local corporate security handle the matter, which may alert the Republic forces, they've paid local criminals to do their dirty work. The criminals know where the characters are likely to go for information and are waiting at the bar.

Handing the bartender a $50 bill marked with two crosses results in him pointing the characters to a trio of scruffy individuals sat in a corner booth. Bribing him with $500 has a similar effect. The characters
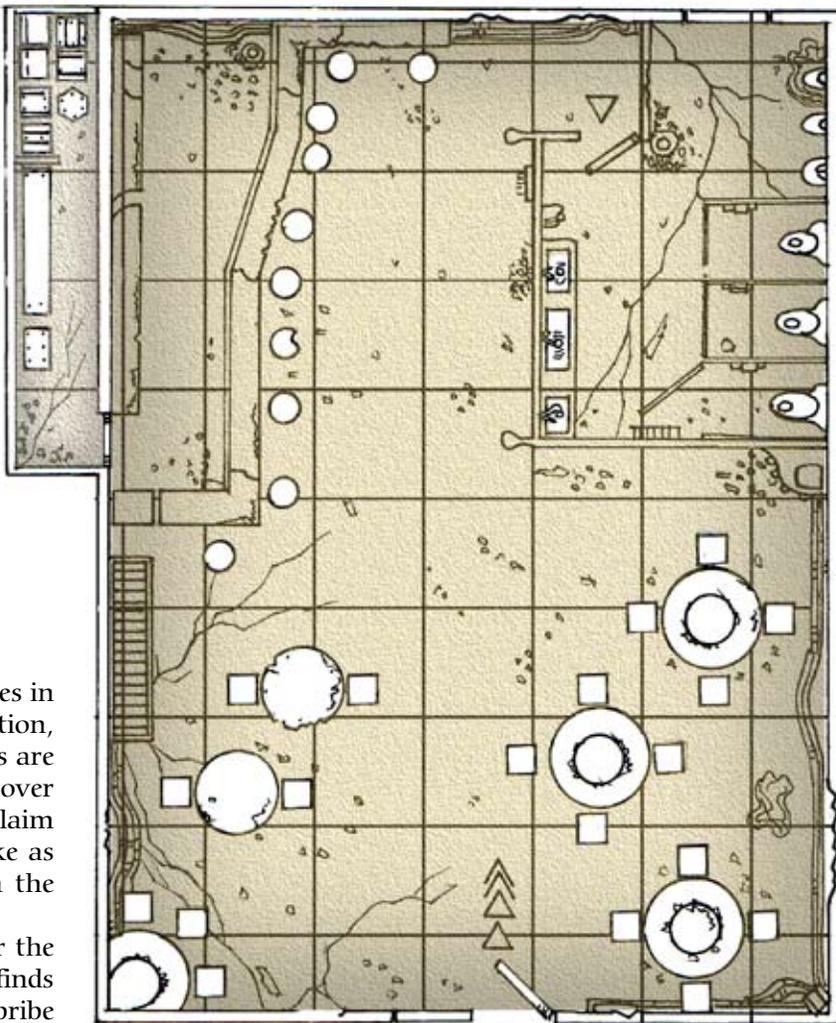
might opt for a more straightforward approach—such as shouting out they have secret data for the RIS.

Showdown

As soon as the bartender points out the agents (or the characters start calling for the RIS to reveal themselves), the local thugs make their move, eager to stop the characters reaching the agents before the RIS realize the characters are looking for them.

The final scene of this adventure involves a bar fight as the thugs launch their attack.

Criminal Thugs (10)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4, Shooting d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Gear: Molecular knife (Str+3), autopistol (as Glock)

RIS Agents (3)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d4, Shooting d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9
Gear: Molecular knife (Str+3), laser pistol

Endgame

Once the fight is over, the agents identify themselves and take possession of the repair robot. The characters' wounds are treated at a top class hospital (+2 Healing). While convalescing, the RIS agents inform the characters they will be paid $20,000 for delivering the information (regardless of the previous offer). If the heroes protest, they agree that the organization will cover the cost of refitting their ship with a newer hyperspace engine. In addition, Give each character two experience points.
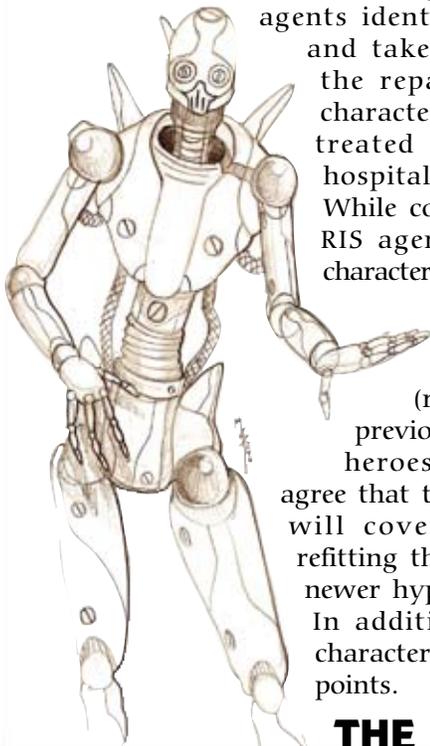
THE END

Derelict

This adventure can follow directly from the last or wait until the heroes have been plying the space lanes for a little longer.

You have just finished unloading a cargo of machine parts to the planet Euphrates when a man in a business suit approaches you.

"My name is Lexon Phar and I represent Anmor Chemicals, a local gas refining company. If you and your ship and for hire, I'd like to discuss a business proposition."

Wait until the crew agree to listen before continuing. If they show no interest, the man departs haughtily and there's no adventure.

"Two days ago we picked up an energy reading from inside the upper atmosphere of the local gas giant. One of our survey craft performed a quick fly-by and discovered a ship of alien origin parked in orbit within the clouds.

"All attempts at communication failed. We reported the incident to the Republic authorities and they've declared the ship a derelict, pending an investigation. We don't have the resources to man a full survey of the ship, so we're looking to hire outsiders.

"In return for your services checking out the craft, inside and out, we're willing to offer you 3% of the salvage price. Our analysts estimate it's value, based on equivalent Republic ships, at $50 million. Your share would be a cool $1.5 million.

"The only snag is that as a derelict the Republic has to broadcast it's position as a navigation hazard. There's at least two other interested parties and we need to stake our claim immediately."

Phar is willing to haggle, but only as far as 5%. If the crew get too greedy, he'll simply find someone else to help him.

Assuming they agree a price, Phar gives them the coordinates of the vessel. Have each character make a Common Knowledge roll. With a success they calculate the ship is 100 miles inside the gas giants atmosphere. The trip is likely to be rough as wind speeds can reach several hundred miles per hour. With a raise, they realize that radiation will also be a problem.

Phar is happy to loan the crew six radiation-proof spacesuits if they ask. The suits grant a +2 bonus to resist radiation and provide +2 Armor.

Once the crew is happy, Phar arranges priority flight clearance. The trip takes four hours and is uneventful.

Rough Voyage

On arriving, the ship's sensors detect a weak energy reading from within the gas giant. Have the characters make a Piloting roll to interpret the data. With a success they realize the signal is drifting downward—the ship is succumbing to the effects of the gas giant's gravity field. On a raise, they calculate they have just four hours to bring the ship back to a higher orbit before it is beyond reach—the *Forlorn Hope* is not built to withstand the pressure found within the deeper atmosphere.

If they contact Phar with the news, he immediately offers them an extra 0.5% to save the ship.

Should the heroes think to check the weather, they learn that a powerful storm is approaching. The descent to the ship involves passing through the leading edge, certain to generate a tremendous strain on the *Forlorn Hope*.

The perilous journey takes 20 minutes. For each 5 minute interval draw a card and consult the chart below. The pilot must make a Piloting roll each period, with penalties as shown on the chart, or the *Forlorn Hope* suffers damage from the powerful winds.

Describe the journey in dramatic terms—the ship's violent rocking, the hiss of steam as pipes rupture, the ominous creaking as bulkheads take the strain, and so on. Regardless of any damage the storm inflicts, the characters should believe they are in mortal peril.

Storm Table

Card	Penalty	Damage
2	–4	6d6
3–10	–2	5d6
Jack–Ace	–0	4d6
Joker	+2	4d6

First View

Once the *Forlorn Hope* reaches the position of the derelict they discover it has sunk further than expected—a result of the storm.

At this depth, the *Forlorn Hope* is taking stress over its design tolerances. Unless the characters want their ship to be trapped in the gas giant's gravity well they need to work quickly.

They have just over two hours left to complete their lucrative task.

As Phar reported, the ship is of obvious alien design. It resembles a jellyfish sideways on, with the umbrella-shaped bulb at the front and several thick, rigid "tentacles" at the back.

The hull is dark and shiny—your lights cause rainbow patterns to flicker over the surface, as if it were made of oil. An oval indentation on the side on the umbrella seems to be some sort of docking port.

Level 1

Level 2

7

Several other features become readily apparent if the characters think to enquire. There are no windows or portholes; there are no engine exhausts; the surface does not appear metallic; and the hull seems to be made from a single piece of whatever—there are no signs of joins.

Trying to communicate with the vessel elicits no response. Should the characters perform a sensor sweep, read the following text to them.

The active sensors sweep across the derelict, causing a variety of screens in the bridge to flicker into life. Interference from the gas giant is making interpretation tricky, but there seems to be a breathable atmosphere at standard pressure. At least the hull is intact. The bio-sensors flicker briefly, then read zero. Energy readouts indicate there is power, but it's fading rapidly. No sign of a core breach though. Internal gravity is steady at 1g.

Docking with the derelict requires a successful Piloting roll at –2 (due to the storm). Once the ships are parallel, the crew can extend the docking tunnel and equalize the pressure. The docking tunnel is a thin membrane supported by strong metal bands spaced every 2 yards and held rigid by air pressure.

Aboard the Derelict

The derelict is not entirely devoid of life. The ship does not possess any crew, however—the entire ship is a living organism. Grown by a now extinct alien race, it served as a deep-range explorer, traveling the universe as it saw fit, gathering data, and then returning it home. This specimen exceeded its designers' hopes and journeyed far beyond their sphere of influence.

The ship was grown with chambers to allow for a crew, both to work within its confines and to perform essential maintenance, such as regrowing worn out parts (organs).

Like all living organisms it is subject to aging. Despite living for thousands of years, this one is now in advanced old age and drifted into the gas giant to die. Although its mind is all but dead, its internal defenses are still at work.

In the same way the human body produces antibodies to combat foreign bodies, so the ship reacts to the presence of creatures not of its makers' race—and that includes the characters. Fortunately for them, the creature's weakened state means its defenses are not operating at full efficiency.

Once the heroes reach the derelict's hatch, read the following text.

The outer hull of the derelict appears slick, as if coated in Teflon. The hatch doesn't look like anything you've come across before—there are no obvious ways of opening it, and no joins or seals. It almost looks like part of the hull.

The ship responds to bioelectrical signals. Any character touching the hatch, even wearing gloves, causes it to open.

As soon as you touch the hatch a change occurs. The seemingly solid door opens like an iris valve, sliding back from a central point into the hull. Beyond you can see a corridor. It seems airlocks were not part of the design.

The interior of the ship is smooth and rounded, with no discernible angles. Surfaces appear moist and glisten in the light from the helmet-mounted flashlights, though if a character removes his gloves (it is safe to do so) the surfaces are dry, but strangely warm.

All the doors are closed but open to the touch, folding back as with the outer hatch. Let the characters explore as they see fit. Key room descriptions and events are detailed below.

Remember, the characters have a little over two hours before the ship enter the lower atmosphere and the *Forlorn Hope* is too deep in the gravity well to escape. Even if the players aren't watching the clock, you should be. Use common sense to determine how long actions take.

Quick Tour

Use the map opposite and the descriptions below to run the characters through their exploration of the derelict. The heroes enter at point A.

1. Brain Core

The brain core is the nerve center of the ship, acting as central processor for all shipboard systems. The brain is not a single organism, but consists of thin slices of brain-like material set upon fleshy racks in the center of the chamber. Thin strands of strange and alien organic material form a web between the various slices.

A Notice roll reveals that well over half the slices are a different color than the others. Have the characters make a Common Knowledge roll. With success they realize the organic matter is dying.

Touching any part of the brain results in an immediate attack. Use the tentacles from the **Elevator Shaft** event (see page 11). There are twice as many tentacles as there are characters in the room.

2. Bridge

The bridge is a wide open space, seemingly devoid of any instruments or flight controls. A successful Notice roll reveals a series of wall panels with a slightly different coloration. Touching one (even through a spacesuit) causes the instrumentation contained behind the panel to unfold. Unfortunately the instrumentation consists of fleshy nodules and is not labelled. Readouts appear in the form of circular graphs. A Smarts roll reveals the readouts are all hovering above minimum, save for one, which is at medium. This is the ship's antibody level.

As the characters watch, the reading grows stronger. Run the event **Intruders** (page 10) immediately.

3. Staterooms

Each stateroom appears empty when the characters enter. A successful Notice roll reveals areas of the wall of slightly different color and texture to the rest. Touching them causes various features to grow from the wall, including a bunk, wash basin (full of water), bench, storage cupboard, and what appears to be a video screen.

The second storage compartment they open contains an item left over by a living crewmember. The aliens were masters of bio-technology and the item looks very similar to a human kidney.

If touched with bare flesh (i.e. not through a spacesuit), it immediately enters through the skin and grafts itself internally. This causes the subject to be Fatigued for ten minutes. Removing the bio-tech requires major surgery.

The subject can now use the *telekinesis* power using Smarts as the arcane skill. He becomes aware of this automatically. He has 10 Power Points to use this power (only), which recharge at normal rates. If the user already has an arcane background, he can divert his Power Points into the item.

4. Elevators

The elevators can hold three people at a squeeze. On entering, a set of fleshy knobs grow from the wall. To activate the lift, a passenger must hold the nodule corresponding to his destination floor.

The first time the characters use a lift the ship attacks them. See **Elevator Shaft** (p. 11) for details.

5. Maintenance Hatches

The maintenance hatches (marked on the map) open at a touch, revealing a mass of pulsating tubes. These serve the same function as veins, carrying nutrients and blood around the derelict.

The tubes are quite thick and have a Toughness of 8. Should the characters succeed in severing one, purple fluid squirts from the tube for a few moments before the ends seal over. The ship reacts badly to this mistreatment. Run the event **Intruders** (below).

6. Weapon Bays

Like the rest of the ship, the weapon bays are organic. The weapons are massive membranous sacs, but are currently deflated. A control panel nearby has a series of fleshy nodules growing from it, but there is not enough life-force left to power the weapons.

Other Rooms

The purpose of the other rooms is a mystery. None of the panels work, and hacking at the wall only causes the ship to react violently.

A thorough exploration reveals there is no engine room. The ship propels itself through space using its tentacles. The vessel no longer has the necessary power to move, however. Flight controls on the bridge would normally allow a maintenance crew to steer.

Events

Some of these events are triggered by player actions, while others are generated by the GM to maintain the tension.

Hack, Hack, Hack

Unless detailed above, hacking at any part of the ship causes an immediate antibody reaction. The ship generates a series of hollow nodules around the intruders, and then attacks.

Tentacles (3)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Shooting d8
Pace: 0; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Special Abilities
- **Enzymes:** The nodules fire blobs of powerful enzymes. Treat these as the *bolt* power. Each nodule has 25 Power Points. Once expended, the nodule retreats into the wall to recharge.

Intruders

The derelict has sensed the foreign bodies and takes steps to remove them. A number of milky-white pulsating globes, each 2 yards across, emerge from

the walls and attack the characters without warning. These defensive organisms can travel through the ship and give chase to any character trying to flee.

Blobs (6)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities
> • **Envelop:** The blobs envelop their prey on a successful grapple attack. Each round a victim is trapped it is subject to powerful digestive enzymes and suffers 2d6+2 damage. Armor protects as normal but permanently loses one point of Armor each round.

Elevator Shaft

Run this event the first time the characters use one of the elevators.

After the doors close the elevator begins to ascend or descend, depending on the characters' planned route of travel. It doesn't move in a jerky mechanical way, but seems to flow through the shaft.

Halfway between floors it stops and four thick tentacles tipped with a sharp, bony point sprout from the walls and attack the characters. Guts doesn't normally play much part in a sci-fi game, but if you want to be cruel have the characters make a Guts roll now.

The tentacles have a maximum reach of 10", but can only extend or contract by 2" per round. If there are three characters in the shaft, there is a –2 penalty to Fighting rolls due to the cramped conditions.

Tentacles (4)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8
Pace: 2; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities
> • **Grapple:** As well as impaling foes, the tentacles can grapple, wrapping themselves around their prey. They can maintain the hold and impale grappled foes with no multi-action penalty.
> • **Quick:** The tentacles whip about with snakelike speed and redraw cards of 5 or lower.
> • **Spear Tip:** Str+2.

Implosion Imminent

This event should be run three times—once after the characters have spent an hour on the derelict, and then every thirty minutes thereafter.

The increasing pressure begins to take its toll on the *Forlorn Hope*. Each time you run this event the ship suffers an automatic wound, to a maximum of three wounds (in case it already suffered damage during the storm).

Roll on the Critical Hit table each time. If any characters stayed aboard the ship, describe the creaking hull, the bursting of pipes, exploding data panels, and such like. The idea is to remind them rather unsubtly that time is not in their favor.

Random Attacks

Were the ship at full strength it would be able to defeat the characters with ease. Since it is dying, however, it can only make infrequent attacks against the intruders.

Run this event anytime the characters are wasting time or if you think the tension needs to be increased. The idea is not to slaughter the party, just to remind them they are intruders on a vessel that does not welcome their presence.

The ship generates a Cone Template of powerful enzymes from any surface. Characters caught in the Cone may make an Agility roll to avoid the spray. Those who fail suffer 3d6 damage. Armor protects as normal but permanently loses one point of Armor each round.

Escape

Once two hours have passed the *Forlorn Hope* has a safety window of just 30 minutes to escape the gas giant's gravity well. Preflight checks take 15 minutes to complete, but shortcuts can be made.

The pilot must make a Piloting roll to send the ship blasting back to a safe orbit. If he performed the checks, the roll is made at –2. For each five minutes of time cut from the checks increase the penalty by an additional -1. Each failure causes 5d6 damage to the *Forlorn Hope*.

When the ship takes it's fourth wound the maneuvering engine explodes and the ship is dragged toward the core, imploding within a few minutes and instantly killing everyone on board.

Once back on Euphrates, Phar meets with the characters to hear what happened. He is naturally disappointed the salvage operation failed, but is grateful for the attempt.

He rewards the crew with $50,000 for their efforts and has the *Forlorn Hope* repaired at no expense. The crew has made a useful contact.

In addition, Give each character two experience points.

THE END

Passengers

This adventure is a short murder mystery and takes place entirely on the Forlorn Hope. As a mystery, there is very little combat but plenty of problem solving, investigation, and NPC interaction. Don't try to force events along—let them unfold in their own good time.

The characters are transporting a new grav racer to a championship race on a nearby world. Unfortunately, one of the passengers is also a psionic assassin hunting a corporate executive. To cover his tracks, he plans to kill an innocent passenger.

When you're ready to begin, read the introduction text to the players.

Business is booming! Following tense negotiations with Mitsumi Motors, a leading manufacturer of grav racers, they agreed to award you the contract to ship their new racing craft to Morcon, where it will compete in the Ozoni 5000, a famous grav racing championship.

Escorting the craft are the pilot, Lars Wannabee, a mechanic, Bros Tang, and the designer, Petra Ushenko. Two other passengers, a rival racing driver by the name of Troy MacTavish, who missed his scheduled flight, and Claudia Mars, a corporate exec on a routine trip, have booked the last two berths.

With the precious cargo safely stored, the Forlorn Hope *begins the four-day trip into hyperspace.*

The First Incident

On the night of the first day, Lars Wannabee hosts a party for the passengers in the passenger lounge. He is confident of winning the forthcoming Ozoni 5000 and intends to celebrate early. Any crewmembers who want to attend are welcome to do so.

Let the characters interact with the passengers for a while. Generate some personalities for them and a vague background story. Don't go into too much detail—several of them will be dead soon!

The only passenger of interest to the adventure is Bros Tang. See the sidebar for his story.

Toward the end of the evening the peaceful gathering is interrupted when Troy takes a swing at Lars over an insult about his driving skills. The two become involved in brawl during which Troy threatens Lars with the words, *"I'll see you dead before you win the race!"*

Once the fight is broken up (the other passengers intervene if the characters don't), Petra suggests everyone retires for the night. The party mood has certainly been spoiled by the brawl.

Bros Tang

Bros claims to have worked for Mitsumi for years as a mechanic. Two days ago he received a call from his manager (Enri Yokomitsi) saying that Bros was being sent to Morcon for the Ozoni 5000. Apparently the regular mechanic was involved in a car crash and Bros's knowledge and dedication had made an impression higher up the corporate ladder.

Because the ship is in hyperspace, there is no way to check his story. Neither Lars nor Petra have worked with him before, but Mitsumi is a large company with offices on several worlds.

Lars can confirm his regular mechanic was involved in a car crash and that Bros was sent from head office..

It's all a lie, of course. Bros is an assassin–for-hire and is curently contracted to kill Claudia Mars. He caused the car crash that disabled the regular mechanic, then forged papers claiming head office had sent him as repalcement.

He discovered Claudia's schedule a month back and has since been gathering data on her. Her trip to Morcon has given him the ideal opportunity to get close to her without attracting corporate security forces.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Lockpicking d6, Notice d8, Psionics d10, Repair d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Cautious

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Alertness, Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Hard to Kill, Level Headed, New Power, Power Points, Quick Draw

Powers: *Healing, invisibility, quickness, telekinesis, teleport;* 25 Power Points

Gear: Molecular knife (Str+3), two doses of psionic drugs (each restores 2d6 Power Points, to his usual maximum)

Lars is not present at breakfast the next day. Paging his room elicits no reply. Passenger staterooms do not contain security monitors for reasons of privacy. The door to his stateroom is locked, but Klaws has an override key.

Lars lies in his bed and is covered in blood—his throat has been slit from ear to ear.

The ship's security log records the opening of any doors, including the passengers staterooms. Once the passengers closed their doors for the night none of them left their room. The only surveillance cameras aboard the ship are in high-security areas, such as the weapon bays, engineering, and the airlocks.

Everyone has an alibi—they were asleep. Although Troy is the obvious candidate, there is no way to prove he is guilty. Of course, Bros is the true culprit and used the fight between Lars and Troy as the perfect cover.

He activated his knife, teleported into Lars' stateroom (which he had seen when he helped Lars unpack his bags), slit his throat, teleported back, and changed the knife back into an innocuous trophy in a matter of seconds.

Suspicious characters may wonder if Troy has tampered with the grav racer as well. The computer shows no record of anyone entering the hold. Voicing this opinion in front of Bros gives him another idea to divert attention away from himself. See the section **Sabotage** below.

What Next?

The heroes have a murderer on board their ship. Locking the passengers in their staterooms is certainly an option, but not a popular one. Petra and Claudia both protest loudly and threaten legal action if placed under "house-arrest."

Troy could be locked up as a murder suspect. Naturally he protests his innocence, threatening the characters with wrongful arrest charges once they reach their destination. He may not be as famous as Lars, but he has rich backers. Klaws has the necessary access codes to prevent Troy from opening his stateroom door.

Whether or not Troy is arrested, Bros formulates a plan to frame him further. Bros may be highly intelligent, but he is not omnipotent—he is not privy to secret plans made by the characters to catch the killer.

Sabotage

This scene only occurs if the characters have become protective of the grav racer in the hold and made their feelings known to Bros.

If they intend to inspect the racer, he insists on going along. Petra supports this decision, after all, he's the

mechanic and knows the car well (Petra is a designer and never actually gets her hands dirty).

Bros uses his *telekinesis* to break the grav-lift generator as he performs an inspection elsewhere on the racer. He "finds" the fault and alerts the characters. He claims that the grav lift generator would have lasted maybe an hour under race stress and then failed catastrophically. The likely outcome would be the racer plowing into the ground at almost 500 miles per hour, almost certainly guaranteeing to kill the pilot. Only a pilot, or a mechanic, would know how to tamper with the grav generator.

A character wishing to double-check Bros' findings may make a Repair roll. On a success he confirms the story. With a raise, however, he notices the damage is very recent, most likely caused since the racer was loaded aboard the ship.

Second Incident

On the second night, Bros kills Claudia using the same tactic he used to kill Lars. Unless the characters are performing regular checks on the guests or have taken desperate measures (see **Possible Solutions** below), her death goes unnoticed until breakfast. She too has had her throat slit.

If Troy has been arrested and placed under house-arrest then it is Petra who suggests he may be a psionicist. Troy vehemently denies this, but there is no way of proving, or disproving, his assertion. If Troy was being watched around the clock, then he is obviously innocent.

Third Incident

Regardless of security lockdowns, Bros may still be free to carry out his plan to ensure Troy is framed for the double-murders. During the third night he *teleports* into Troy's room, clubs Troy to death, and *teleports* them both back to his room.

He then uses his molecular knife to stab himself before placing it in Troy's dead hand. After a few minutes he activates the fire alarm in his room, which (hopefully) brings the crew running.

What do they find? Bros bleeding from a knife, wound, Troy lying unconscious on the floor, and Bros claiming Troy just appeared in his room and attacked him. Despite his injury, which is quite deep, Bros managed to grab a wrench his toolbelt and strike Troy on the head. Feeling faint, he sounded the alarm to summon help. Computer logs show no doors being opened, but Bros is certain Troy just "appeared" in his room, as if from nowhere. Proving whether Troy was a psionicist is now impossible.

Other Passengers

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6 Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Shooting d4
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —
Gear: Noncombat gear appropriate to profession.

Possible Solutions

So how do the characters catch a *teleporting* murderer? Locking everyone in their rooms has absolutely no effect.

Installing cameras is possible, but unless they place them everywhere in the stateroom, Bros simply goes into the shower cubicle, *teleports* out, commits his crime, then *teleports* back.

One way to foil Bros is by having the passengers placed under 24-hour surveillance by a crewmember. If this happens after Claudia has been killed, Bros does not bother framing Troy. His job is done and no one can pin the blame on him. Taking unnecessary risks is not part of his nature.

Should it take place before he has killed Claudia, he has little option but to remove the character as well as his victim. Again, he uses *teleport* to reach his victim, but this time he is also *invisible*. He tries to kill the character first, but aborts the plan if he takes more than one wound.

He immediately returns to his room, tries to use *healing*, and then pretends to be in bed. If the characters check his room, have them make a Notice roll. With a success, they find spots of blood on the floor. Bros claims he cut himself shaving, but he has no facial injury. Realizing he may have been rumbled, he *teleports* to the cargo hold. Hunting the killer has now become a game of cat-and-mouse.

The quick way to end a dangerous manhunt is simply to vent all the oxygen from everywhere in the ship except one room, in which all the crew and non-homicidal passengers are hiding. Bros has no idea which room is safe, so he's a dead man.

If Bros is dead or captured by the time the voyage ends, local police haul him away for interrogation. Should he still be alive and free, he simply leaves the ship and disappears, leaving the murders unsolved and the heroes with a poor reputation.

If the heroes manage to take Bros alive, they each gain two experience points. Reduce the award to one if they kill him while solving the mystery and to nothing if they never figure it out. Assuming they get the racer to their destination, they are still paid—but 25% is deducted for each dead race team member.

THE END
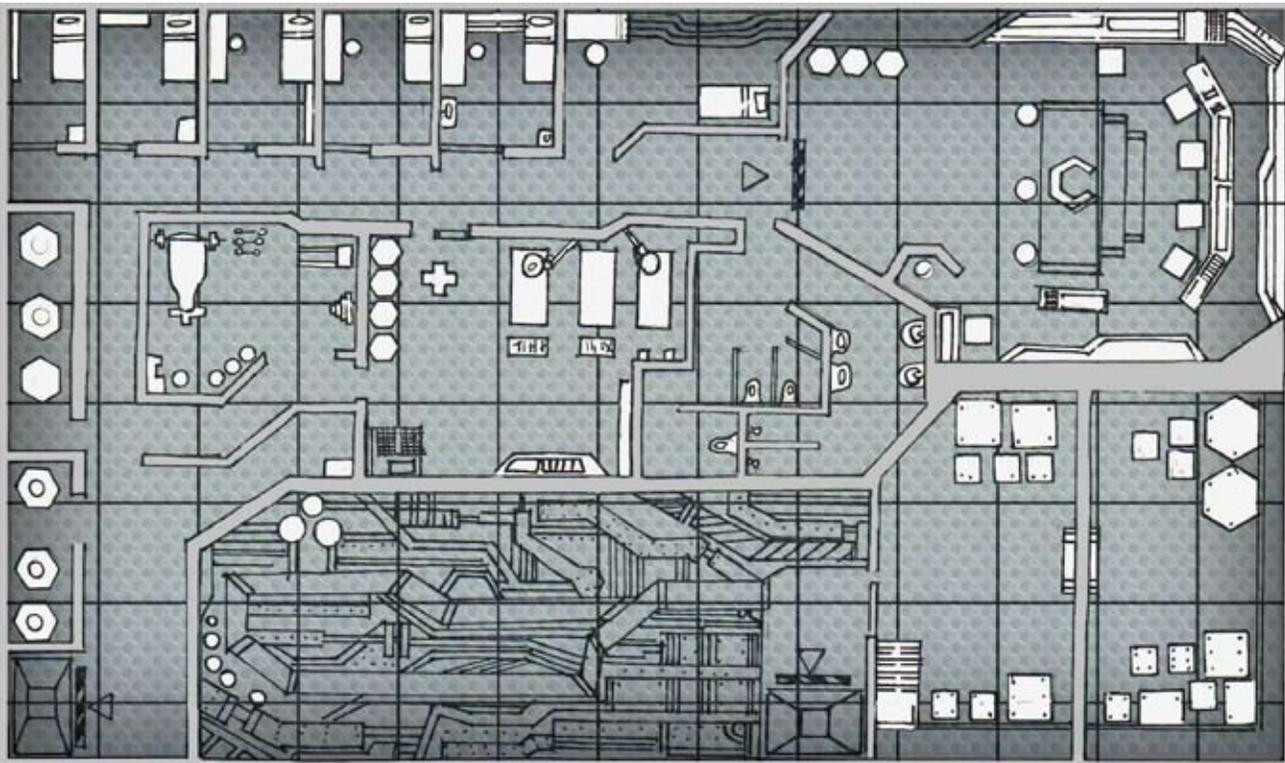
Captain Esteban Zal (Human, Pilot)

Captain Zal, formerly First Officer Zal of the Schliemann Shipping Company, is captain and owner of the Forlorn Hope. Well, technically the bank still owns the ship, but Zal is working hard to pay off the debt. At present he still owes nearly $20 million. Zal may be a good pilot, but he's a lousy negotiator and dislikes meeting clients. He'd rather leave that to his trade negotiator.

When Zal was still working for SSC, the ship he was on was attacked by pirates. Zal doesn't remember much about the encounter—all he can remember with clarity is the missile proximity alarm wailing time after time. Every time he hears a proximity alarm now, he has flashbacks, which impair his ability to take evasive action.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (starports) d6, Notice d4, Piloting d8, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Mean, Phobia (major: being targeted by a missile), Vow (minor: always deliver passengers and cargo on time)
Edges: Ace,
Gear: Flying jacket (+1), molecular knife (Str+3), laser pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 1–3d6, ROF 1, Shots 24, Semi-Auto), 2 spare power packs, $300

Klaws (Rakashan, Gunner/Security)

Klaws isn't his real name. His given name is almost unpronounceable to humans and involves body language as well as verbal articulation. To better fit in among the dominant humans he adopted a nickname. Klaws works as ship's gunner and security chief, overseeing the safety of the ship from the moment it leaves the hyperspace tunnel until it re-enters. He takes his job very seriously.

He never turns down a challenge, but that doesn't mean he's rash. His race developed from hunters, and he knows how that patience brings many rewards. Still, get him angry and he'll slice his foes open with his claws before they can blink. He dislikes handheld laser weapons, preferring to feel the kick of ballistic weapons.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Tracking d4
Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Cautious, Overconfident, Quirk (always drumming his claws)
Edges: Agile, Claws, Low Light Vision, Quick, Steady Hands,
Gear: Ballistic jacket (+4 vs. kinetic weapons), SMG (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, ROF 3, Shots 30, AP 1, Auto), 3 spare clips, handcuffs, security override key for Forlorn Hope, electronic lockpicks, $85

Althorp Barzinski (Human, Trade Negotiator)

Althorp claims to have served in the merchant navy of his homeworld, he even has honorable discharge papers to prove it. Sadly, like much of his life, their fake. The truth is, Althorp is a former Republic Intelligence Service spy. He left on good terms, but wanted to do more with his life. After a string of jobs, he joined the crew of the Forlorn Hope as trade negotiator. Now he gets to travel, meet new races, and fleece them for what he can get. He has numerous contacts, few of whom know his true identity.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Lockpicking d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Arrogant, Greedy (minor), Pacifist (minor)
Edges: Charismatic, Connections
Gear: Smart suit, stunner (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1, ROF 1, Shots 10. Stunners deliver nonlethal damage), 2 power packs, datapad, variety of forged identity cards, $1500

Xani Mung (Human, Engineer)

Xani serves as the ship's engineer and has her hands full keeping the crate spaceworthy. It needs a major engine overhaul, but finances make that a luxury more than a necessity. She learned her trade in the Republic navy, and her small stature belies her ability to defend herself in a fight. She was honorably discharged after losing an eye in an accident, and still holds bad feelings toward the navy, who she blames for her disfigurement. She is very knowledgeable about engines, but has few outside interests.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (electronics) d6, Knowledge (mechanics) d6, Notice d8, Repair d8, Shooting d6
Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Habit (minor: curses like a pirate), One Eye (wears patch), Vengeful (minor)
Edges: Luck, McGyver
Gear: Dirty overalls, molecular knife (Str+3), laser pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 1-3d6, ROF 1, Shots 24, Semi-Auto), 2 spare power packs, tool belt, $200

AB-494 (Robot, Steward)

Known to the crew as "Abby," AB-494 is a humanoid robot originally designed as a butler to rich nobles. When her (Abby is genderless, but the crew refer to it as a female) warranty expired, her former owner discarded her. Fortune saved her from being dismantled—Xani rescued her from the scrapheap, patched her up, and convinced Esteban to take her on a steward. Her former programming allowed her to fit right in to his new role. Despite being a robot, Abby is a full member of the crew and earns a regular wage commensurate to her role.

Abby has developed a serious fault in her programming. Her original programming forced her to be subservient to all sentient beings. Somehow she managed to override this and while she still refuses to use weapons, her lexicon of insults and taunts is outstanding.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Healing d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Taunt d10
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Loyal, Outsider (robot), Pacifist (major)
Edges: Construct
Gear: Portable minibar, $300

Kk'lee (Mantid, Hanger-On)

Kk'lee is not technically part of the crew, though he has been onboard so long and helps with minor chores that he has been accepted as the sixth member. He joined the ship as a passenger several years ago, intent of enjoying a six-month tour of the local systems. Despite his journey ending, he never left the ship and still continues to pay his way each trip through hyperspace. His crewmates know he is a psionicist, but they don't know he is actually a prince among his people. Kk'lee doesn't want to become a leader, so he ran away from home. His vast wealth comes from a trust fund he secretly established for himself before he fled his homeworld.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Piloting d4, Psionics d10, Repair d4, Shooting d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7
Hindrances: Outsider
Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Carapace, Leaping, Noble
Powers: *Burst* (pyrokinesis), *deflection* (wave of hand), *puppet* (suggestion); 10 Power Points
Gear: Fine clothes, mini-laser pistol (Range 10/20/40, Damage 1-3d6, ROF 1, Shots 16, Semi-Auto), 2 spare

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