SERENITY
ROLE PLAYING GAME

THE CIRCUIT

A TALE
IN
THREE ACTS

SERENITY
ROLE PLAYING GAME

THE CIRCUIT

WRITTEN BY
MICHAEL CHUMBLER
LENA FALKENHAGEN
JAN HENDRIK FRIEDRICH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ELIZABETH LYNN BLACKSON

DERIVED FROM A DISCUSSION STARTED BY
THOTHEGREY

BASED ON A MOTION PICTURE SCREENPLAY BY
JOSS WHEDON

WWW.CORTEXSYSTEMRPG.ORG

WWW.SERENITYRPG.COM

Here's how it is...

A frantic wave from a dear friend lets the crew know his settlement is under attack by slavers. Investigating the crime scene, a shocking advertisement alerts them that their friend is scheduled to compete in a pit fight to the death in only a few days! This new and literal deadline forces the crew into a series of dangerous encounters in a desperate attempt to save their friend

Game Master's Notes

The Circuit is a three act adventure of investigation into the kidnapping of a close friend. Starting with panicked call asking for help the crew must work quickly if they are to save their friend from a fight to the death, not of his choosing. The crew must delve deep into Verse's underworld, in order to get a lead on the traveling fights and then take a harrowing journey into the seamiest parts of the criminal world in a desperate rescue attempt, where slavers are actually only part of the problem.

Act one is in two parts consisting of *A Cry for Help* and a *Cold Trail*. Act two is also in two parts and moves the crew to *Trash Talk* and *Which Way Is Up*? The final act consists of three parts *Going All In*, *The Circuit*, and *Beatin' Feet*.

A Deadly New Fad

Once extremely popular on Earth-That-Was, pit fighting has now made a come back in the 'Verse. Some are legal and are gaining in popularity, especially on the Border Planets. There is however, a darker version of the fights making inroads into the tremendously competitive sports entertainment market. These bloody matches are highly illegal and are broadcast from a pirate Cortex node putting them at a disadvantage for market share against the approved version. In an ever increasing drive to improve ratings, the promoters of the illegal fights are taking their version of pit fighting, which they call the Circuit, to the next level. Namely, something that harkens back to the age of the Roman gladiators, is about to about to begin. The Circuit's newest attraction will feature fights to the death. The criminal and immoral nature of such bouts makes finding willing participants for such events somewhat more difficult than the promoters planned. Their response was to contact one of the most notorious slavers in the 'Verse to conduct a little creative staffing in order to fill the ambitious fight docket…

Act One
Scene One: A Cry for Help

"*I reckon it's possible to owe one person more, but I'll be dipped if I know how. My buddy saved me a dozen times over and if not for their timely interventions ya'll be talkin' to someone other than me, 'cause I'd be buzzard bait.*"
– Crew member's recollections

This adventure can begin In Media Res with the PCs either en route between systems with or without cargo, or resting up on ground depending on where they left off with their last adventure. If this is a new set of characters, they start on planet while looking for a job. Regardless of starting point, they receive a frantic wave GMs are encouraged to look at the player character's backgrounds for family member, army buddy, or other close friend to provide the name for the person placing the wave.

If the GM decides to play out the cargo search, the PCs can search for a go between to pick up a job. There are a couple options for locating a cargo to include using Friends in Low Places, a pre-planned hook for the PC's next adventure, canvassing the landing area like an old fashioned huckster, or locating a go between on their own.

The huckster method consists of working through the crowds at the port and smooth talking a cargo out of those present. The PCs will have to make a Hard (11) WIL + *Influence / Persuasion* roll to gain enough cargo to fill 25% of their ship's hold with

each level above Hard adding another 10%. A second roll using the same skill will net passengers in the same amounts with the same bonuses for rolling well. A failure nets nothing and a Botch results in a confrontation with a group of toughs equal in number to the PCs.

Developing a contact of their own requires a Formidable (15) INT + *Influence / Streetwise* roll to find a real middle man, one Otis Jenkins, than needs to move six large industrial-grade drilling derricks. The crates are large and take up 50% of the ship's cargo hold with the PC's being paid the standard 50% up front and the other half on delivery terms. However, this cargo comes with the, as yet unknown, drawback of a fixed delivery schedule of ten days.

Again, regardless of who the specific person is that is placing the call, the message is the same. A one way wave reporting that their small settlement is under attack. A group moved in a day ago with fancy promises for work on a new terraforming project and once they had everyone's guard down, they swarmed over the town with stun clubs and were grabbing up people for Buddha knows what. As their friend speaks they are interrupted by three burly attackers and goes down swinging in a sea of fists and stun batons. A HARD (11) INT + *Piloting / Astrogation*, will quickly figure that even at Hard Burn they are fifteen hours from being able to reach their friend.

This is where the GM must exploit the relationship with the PC without mercy, this loved one has saved their life, helped them

through the worst part of their life, is the reason they made it through school, or whatever else the GM can think of to drive home how much in debt the PC is to this person.

If for some reason the PCs seem reluctant to help, they get a follow up wave from little Henry Yi, the son of one of the settlers that found the Cortex Com and hit 'redial', reaching the PCs. He'll plaintively ask: "[Friend] said you'd put everything right again. Are you gonna get Mommy and Daddy back?"

Act One
Scene Two: Cold Trail

"*Slavery is illegal on every planet and moon spinnin'. That is what them as what writes Alliance law says is fact. But what is law and what is real is frequently somewhat different from that. Slavers are as slick as snot on a doorknob when it comes to trickin' folk into signin' on as 'settlers' fer a new colony or terraformin' crew. Them as what are too smart to get fooled into signin' on will find slavers will just plain snatch ya up if they have to or want ya bad enough, especially if ya go wanderin' around alone in the wrong places or live too far out in the boonies. Them as choose to live out on the Rim, learn that right quick as bein' alert will do ya a damn sight more good then them right purdy laws what gets passed by the Alliance will do for ya.*"
– Pops McMurty itinerant spacer, long time Rim resident and non-slave

On arriving at Friend's homestead, the find the obvious signs of a fight to include dozens of spent shell casings, blood trails, and five bodies (Friend's older brother and four other settlers known to the PC(s). While searching [Friend's] make shift office, they find a manifest that shows the tiny settlement only consisted of twenty odd people leaving seventeen are all missing.

While sweeping through the settlement, an Average (7) ALE + *Perception / Hearing* will pick faint movement. The sound emanate from a large wooden crate (Armor 2 Life Points 5). If the PCs hold their fire and creep up on the crate, inside they will find a terrified young boy of perhaps eight years old. On seeing the PCs he breaks into uncontrolled sobs and it will take a Hard (11) INT + *Influence / Persuasion* to calm the boy down. An Average (7) WIL + *Discipline / Intimidation* will frighten the child into silence, succeeds so well the boy is too scared to talk again without a Formidable (15) INT + *Influence / Persuasion* roll.

If the child was not intimidated first, he knows yields that his name is Henry Yi and that "Uncle Frank got hurt so {Friend} could talk on the Cortex. Bad men then took mama and papa away and now the cows need tendin' real bad." If the child was scared into silence, he will only be able to say "Bad men took mama and papa away." The boy clearly can not be left behind alone and that leaves the crew with the added dilemma of how to talk care of a young and helpless child.

The boy is right about the cows needing tending and the settlement will need some prep work to leave unattended for any length of time (animals wandering around, screen doors banging in the wind, etc) An Average (7) INT + *Knowledge* or INT + *Craft* to secure the buildings and a Hard (11) INT + *Animal Handling* to prepare the animals to free range in the area.

During the search and preparation, a Formidable (15) ALE + *Perception* or a Hard (11) INT + *Covert* will locate some unique shell casings. It is a Hard (11) INT + Knowledge or an Easy (3) INT + *Technical Engineering* using the Cortex to identify the casings as belonging to a Dragonbane Pit Viper .41 caliber pistol. This weapon is extremely rare and it has to belong to one of the Slavers. A Hard (11) INT + *Technical Engineering* will track the maker of the Pit Viper is located on Santo

If PCs contact the Federal Marshals, they take twenty-four hours to arrive. It is up to the PCs if they want to wait or not. If they do wait, the marshals state that since the crime scene has been "contaminated" they can not do anything beyond filing a missing persons report before leaving.

If PCs choose not to wait for the Feds or wait and leave after they do nothing, while accessing the Cortex, or something as mundane as the Friend's cat stepping on the remote, the PCs see an advertisement that begins the next scene.

Act Two
Scene One: Trash Talk

The 'Verse-Wide Extreme Pit Fighting Championship is touted as the purest form of one-on-one fighting known to man and for the past two years has taken the Cortex by storm. Reviled by religious groups for its brutality, the new 'sport' has non-the-less continued to increase in ratings and renown with the major competitors becoming house hold names among their loyal fan base.

While not sanctioned by any Alliance regulated sports league, the fights are legal and despite insistent calls for regulation by the government, the VWEPF continues to grow in popularity and fight cages for the matches have begun cropping all over the Border planets and demonstration bouts have even been held in a select few Core world venues.

– Op Ed article in the Sihnon Daily Register

Momentarily stunned by the Carney barker loud ad, before they can shut off the noise, they are shocked to see their friend in the background! As they focus in on what the ad is about, they discover the ad is for a brutal new sport sweeping the 'Verse – Pit Fighting. The announcer states they are starting a new program – Death Matches! Starting tonight and every night for the entire week, the fresh meat – the camera pans to the chain of prisoners, their friend is fifth in the chain, will fight in the order they are chained to the death versus the "Grim Reaper" who is an up and coming new competitor. Each fight will either end in the death of the fresh meat or the Reaper.

It only takes a second to figure out that their friend only has five days to live!

A Formidable (15) INT + *Technical Engineering* will trace enough of the signal to know it came from Santo An Average (7) INT + *Piloting /Astrogation* will calculate the trip will use up 36 hours even at Hard Burn of their 120 hours time limit.

Once on the planet, any skills used to try and pick up any information on "The Circuit" leads no where and eventually an encounter with some of the local street thugs. The characters will face a number of thugs equal to the number of PCs. This encounter will stay a fist fight, unless the PCs draw weapons first. .

Tracking the pistol clue and using a plot point with Friends in Low Places, or rolling an Average (7) INT + *Streetwise* or a Hard (11) WIL + *Fast talk* will discover that sales of the Pit Viper has been poorer than expected and no more will be made. Getting more in depth information requires a Heroic (19) WIL + *Influence / relevant specialty*. However, 3 plot points with Friends in Low Places will yield that only five units were sold to non Core World buyers with one each to the mayor and sheriff on Boros, one a smuggler captain whose ship was destroyed by an Alliance patrol, and a pair to the notorious slaver "Ripper Rusinski." Getting this name is a good step, but finding the elusive slaver will be a major challenge.

If the crew has the drilling equipment as a cargo, they have an additional problem with

Jenkins furious at any delays. Buying even a slight time extension requires a Formidable WIL + *Influence / Persuasion* to even get Jenkins to listen and an Opposed Roll of the same PC skills versus Jenkins' WIL + *Discipline*. A success in both rolls buys an extra day and a Critical Success buys a two day extension. Failing either roll earns a 10% per twelve hours late penalty and a Botch gets a clear threat from Jenkins that he knows people who like to break two-timing punk's legs.

The crew will be faced with a tough choice at this point, if they help their friend they will not arrive in time before the penalty costs them the entire second half of their payment. The minimum delay is five days and after a week without delivery, Jenkins will contact his leg breaker friends. Namely, the *Jinlian* (Golden Lotus) Tong who will beat the crew senseless if they try and deliver the cargo anywhere. If they try and skip with the cargo or dump it in space, the Tong will be out for blood and will be gaining a new Deadly Enemy Complication for the entire crew.

Pit Fighting

Based on the Earth-That-Was Ultimate Fighting Challenge where two fighters enter a fighting cage and battle it out one-on-one with a variety of fighting styles and a minimum amount of restrictions.

The Serenity version is run as normal combat with the addition of 'match' points for cinematic moves. A match point is earned for every "Called Shot" that strikes its intended target. However, a Botch at any time causes the loss of a match point.

Each match consists of three bouts that last ten combat rounds. If an opponent is knocked out before the end of the round, the fight is over. If both opponents are still on their feet, then the one that scored the most match points wins the round with best two out of three winning the bout if there is no knock out. A bout can end in a tie if both fighters have the same number of match points at the end of a bout.

If at the end of the three regular bouts there is a match point tie, there is a single round of "Sudden Death" in which the first fighter to score a match point win's the bout and the fight.

Act Two
Scene Two: Which Way is Up?

"A triumph of the art of terraforming, Santo is a testament to Alliance engineering and the betterment of the 'Verse for everyone, which is the ultimate goal of your beneficent government. That is what the brochures once said about Santo, the situation has changed since the U-War. All things considered, Santo got off light during the war with no major fighting to damage the infrastructure, but the disruption in tourism was a serious setback to the planet's development that still hasn't managed to recover back to pre-war levels yet.

The casinos, resorts, and nightclubs are running again, but Santo has a darker side to it now and the traveler needs to be aware that if they leave the confines of the tourist areas, they run the risk of encounters with a well entrenched criminal element and the alarming number of individuals who have disappeared while vacationing on Santo is a closely guarded secret in order to prevent the fragile recovery from coming to a screeching halt.
– Standard boiler plate travel advisory disclaimer on all vacation package contracts

Entering the domain of slavers is not just asking for trouble, it is guaranting it, the first step being how to proceed. Strangers walking around on Santo have been known to disappear. An Easy (3) INT + *Influence/Streetwise* or an Average (7) INT + *Knowledge* will realize that moving in groups is essential. If any PC chooses to

move alone anyway, they will require an Average (7) INT + *Influence/Streetwise* or a Hard (11) WIL + *Discipline/Intimidation* (Intimidatin' Manner counts) to not run into three Bully Boys intent on cashing in on a new "worker." Two people drop these rolls by one step and three or more drop them by two steps with any difficulty dropped below Easy becoming no roll needed. Finding any information will take one of three paths:

Option One) Friends in Low Places and six plot points to encounter a buddy that brokers information as a go-between that knows Ripper dropped off a load of fresh meat before heading out three days ago, destination unknown. A Hard (11) INT + *Influence* or WIL + *Discipline* will get buddy to spill that the fresh meat were herded onto a non-descript old liner named the "Oddessy"

Option Two) A Formidable (15) INT + *Influence/Streetwise* will meet a spacer who drinks and talks too much. However, this man has Heavy Tolerance and will take 50 Credits to get drunk enough to talk. Despite being extremely drunk by that point, he is still terrified of Ripper. The PCs will have to roll HARD (11) WIL + *Discipline* to drink enough to keep spacer lulled or else a Hard (11) AGL + *Performance* to seem to drink enough to do the same. Once spacer is willing to talk, it will require a Hard (11) WIL + *Influence / Intimidation* or *Interrogation* to get the spacer to reveal the sale of slaves to the liner Oddessy.

Option Three) A Formidable (15) WIL + *Influence/Intimidation* while making lots of noise in the right quarters will rattle enough cages to draw the attention of what passes as "law" on this world that they have an encounter. The thugs will outnumber the PCs 1.5 to 1 (rounded up) and they attack with fists and stun batons. However, if any form of deadly weapon (knives included) will result in gunplay. If PCs defeat thugs, a Hard (11) WIL + *Influence/Intimidation* will get one of the thugs to mention the Oddessy.

Now that PCs have the name of the ship, they have to find her. Any Cortex access only finds when the ship was built and the now defunct spaceline she was built for twenty-five years ago. No information newer than ten years old is available on the ship dating from when the ship was renamed Oddessy from Odyssey. There is no authority on this planet to check a flight plan, so the only way to get a clue on the ship's probable course is to canvass the spaceport. This is a Formidable (75) Complex Action of INT + *Influence/Streetwise* with each roll taking 20 minutes that will find that the liner is the home of "The Circuit" and left two days ago, destination unknown. A Hard (11) INT + *Piloting / Astrogation* to calculate how far the liner could reach with it's listed speed of 3. Only one planet falls inside that arc, but a Formidable (15) INT + *Knowledge* is aware that there is an Alliance naval base on that planet. If this first roll is made, an Average (7) INT + *Knowledge* to know there is another moon, known to be a hub for smuggling, that lies fifteen more hours

outside of the liner's current maximum distance. With nothing else to work with, this moon is the most likely course of the Oddessy.

The GM is more than welcome to flesh out encounters on the ship to make the players sweat. They can encounter a curious guard or fellow gambler that presses their story forcing them to have to win an Opposed roll against INT + Influence / Persuade or Fast talk in order to slip past their questioner.

Another option is for the current super star the Grim Reaper to make a make a short speech that plays up his callous regard for his opponents and how he will triumph once again. The PCs could even get a chance to speak with him briefly setting a possible further encounter with this cruel evil man. The real purpose of this encounter is to show the sort of person their friend will face if and to add some further pressure on the PCs for what will happen if they don't get him freed in time.

Act Three
Scene One: Goin' all in

Londinum has a new queen, better known as the Odyssey and the flag ship of the Odin line, making her first port call at Halifax port and this new liner is the first word in luxury. Built in the Hangchow shipyard on Sihnon, the Odyssey is the standard bearer for how space liners will be judged. Sporting the finest in cabins, amenities, service, and safety, the Odin lines has high hopes that this magnificent ship will be the gateway to even greater things in the coming decades.
– Initial Cortex travelogue commemorating the launch of the space liner Odyssey.

Having the name of a ship and a probably course however, does not rescue their Friend. Plotting an intercept course with so little information is a Heroic (19) INT + *Piloting / Astrogation* roll to arrive with twelve hours remaining before their Friend's death match. A Formidable (15) roll will rendezvous with the Oddessy with six hours remaining, while a Hard (11) roll arrives with only an hour left.

The PCs have several options on how to approach the Oddessy with the most obvious method being to pose as gamblers betting on the matches. This isn't as simple as it sounds as The Circuit is highly illegal and the promoters of the event are extremely cautious with people they do not know. Successfully signaling the Oddessy requires a Formidable (15) WIL + *Influence / Persuasion or* a Hard (11) INT + *Influence / Streetwise* roll. On failing these rolls, an

Average (7) INT + *Technical Engineering / Sensors* detects that the liner has targeted the PC's ship. The Oddessy will give the crew one warning to sheer off or they will open fire immediately.

Another overt option is for the PCs to pretend having a new pit fighter that wishes to join the match. This option requires a PC in physical condition prominently displayed via wave and the same rolls as above, but one-step easier if the PCs have a plausible fighter figure to present. If no such an individual is available, then the rolls become two difficulty categories more difficult.

Covert boarding of the Oddessy is both extremely difficult and extremely dangerous again due to the cautious nature of the fight promoters. Making the approach undetected requires an Opposed INT + *Technical Engineering / Sensors* roll with the difference between the two rolls dictates how close the PCs can get to the liner. If the PC's ship has a stealth package, that skill die is added to the PC's roll.

The actual approach is a HEROIC (95) Complex Action: vs. Ship's AGL + *Piloting* that has to be completed within 10 turns. Any Botch or failing within the 10 turns indicated the PCs have been spotted

The crew has to get to Point Blank range in order to dock or to get close enough to board the liner via space suit.. Docking requires an Average (7) Ship's AGL + *Piloting*, while a space walk between ships is an Average (7) AGL + *Technical*

Engineering / Vacc Suit or a Hard (11) AGL + *Athletics* to safely reach an airlock on the Oddessy. Failing either of the space suit options leaves the PC floating in the Black. A second roll of either of those skills is required to return to their ship or risk being left floating helplessly in space. The pilot can stop and pick up the 'floater' with an Average (7) Ship's AGL + *Piloting* roll, but the approach to the Oddessy has to be started all over again and this time the roll is INCREDIBLE (115) within the same 10 turns.

If the pilot of the PC's ship stays on board, in order to give this player something to do, the GM can add the following options to liven things up:

First, if the PCs are carrying the drilling equipment, whether the PCs docked covertly or approached openly and are holding station near the ex-liner, have the pilot roll INT + *Technical Engineering* against a Formidable difficulty to pick up an odd blip on the radar.

If they success, they faintly pick up a barely detectable ship slowly approaching from the liner's wake. If the PC fails, the Oddessy doesn't and the PC automatically detects the liner launching a shuttle to investigate. The Pilot must now make an Opposed INT + *Technical Engineering* roll to remain hidden from the shuttle.

The pilot then picks up a tight beam communication from this unknown ship stating that they represent Jenkins and to heave to for cargo transfer. The pilot has the option to warn the rest of the crew, but has to win an Opposed INT + Technical Engineering / Communications to avoid the signal being detected. If it is detected, the escaping PCs on the ship will suffer a one-step penalty to all Stealth based skills used to reach the escape ship.

Once the PCs on the Oddessy have reached their own ship, they have to avoid both the liner and the second ship. Use the same rules listed below, but the PC pilot must make Opposed rolls against the two other ships, possible pulling away from one ship and not the other. One up side to the presence of the second ship is, if the liner is beating the crap out of the PC's ship, the second ship will fire on the liner to allow the PCs to escape for the simple reason they wish to prevent the cargo from being destroyed.

The second ship will however, be in hot pursuit of the PCs and will fire on them to using extremely precise fire to disable the PC's engines to keep them from escaping in order to recover the cargo (Use the Border Planet Bounty Hunter template).

If the PCs do not have the drilling equipment, then the second ship is a bounty hunter (Use the High-Tech Bounty Hunter template) tracking any PC with a Deadly Enemy complication.

If neither of these applies, then the second ship is just a very stealthy yacht of a rich patron of The Circuit joining the Oddessy just in time to catch the fights.

Act Three

Scene Two: The Circuit

"*Pit fighters? Hell that's about as twisted a bunch of* hun dan[1] *as live in the 'Verse! I fess up doin' my own share of fightin' in my day, but jumpin' into some cage thing to beat the tar out some other feller fer money ain't never been my idea of how to make coin. I seen waves of them old-time fights they called boxin' on Earth-That-Was and they was interestin', but them pit fighter types are just plain* feng le[2] *iff'n ya asked me, which ya didn't, but seems plum clear enough even if ya didn't. I don't know who is more* kuang zhe[3] de, *them as what does the fightin' or them as what watches the fights.*"
– Pops McMurty itinerant spacer and long time Rim resident

Once aboard the liner, the method of boarding will drive the actions the PC needs to take next. An overt entry as a gambler will require the use of a Hard (11) INT + *Persuasion* or an Average (7) INT + *Performance / Acting* to be escorted to the betting tables. Minimum bet is 100 Credits with 1,000 Credits being considered a "High Roller" which gains a one-step bonus to further rolls to maintain their charade. The arena where the fights occur is simply labeled "The Circuit" and is off limits before matches as are the contestant's quarters, to include the involuntary contestants.

The overt entry as a contestant will require the same Hard (11) INT + *Fast Talk* or an Average (7) INT + *Performance / Acting* to be believable enough to be accepted as a fighter. The advantage of using this ploy is that the "fighter" will be escorted directly to the contestant's quarters. However, the involuntary contestants holding area is still off limits.

Actually entering The Circuit as a fighter to buy time or earn money requires a PC to battle one of the lesser opening act fighters

This fearsome brawler will be a serious challenge for the PC, but not an insurmountable one. An example fighter is included in the NPCs, but the GM will have to tailor the fighter to be slightly superior to the PC involved in the fight.

If the entry was clandestine, the PC(s) will have to make a Hard (55) Complex Action using AGL + *Covert / Stealth* to reach the casino undetected and an Average (7) INT + *Performance / Acting* to successfully blend into the crowd of other patrons without having been introduced. Again the use of 1,000 Credits gains High Roller status and the one-step bonus. While the PC(s) head for the casino, failing the Stealth roll results in the PC(s) running into one of the ship's space hands. This spacer must be subdued within ten combat rounds or another spacer will arrive to sound an alarm. If the covert PC(s) reach the casino undetected, but fail the Performance roll, they do not blend in successfully and are detained by the ship's keepers that quickly discover they didn't enter the ship legitimately and now face some tough questioning.

---

[1] Jerks
[2] Loopy in the head
[3] Nuts

Working the crowd on the ship for contacts, information, side bets, or pick pocketing each require the use of different skills. Developing a useful contact is a Heroic (19) WIL + *Influence / Persuasion* roll. Getting any useful information or happenings in the 'Verse is a Formidable (15) INT + *Influence / Streetwise*. Side bets are Opposed Rolls of INT + *Influence / Gambling* and finally pick pocketing is an Opposed Roll of AGL + *Covert / Pick pocketing* versus ALE + *Perception*.

Reaching the closely monitored and heavily guarded involuntary contestants holding area will be the most difficult part of the adventure. The holding area has a guard on duty outside the hatch leading to the cells at all times. The guard is armed with a stun baton and a pistol. The locked hatch requires a set of electronic lockpicks and a Formidable (15) AGL + *Covert / Lockpicking* roll. And unbeknownst to the PCs, there is a second guard inside the hatch as well. This guard is only armed with a stun baton. The actual holding area consists of twenty tiny (8' x 4' x 6') cells. The locks are mechanical and require either the guard's keys or a set of standard lockpicks and a Hard (11) AGL + *Covert / Lockpicking* roll to unlock. This area is also monitored from the bridge, but not on a continuous basis. However, if the link goes out from using an optical bomb or shooting the camera, this will be noticed and the bridge will contact the holding area guard within 2-5 rounds.

If any PC is captured, they are immediately thrown in one of the holding cells. They are questioned briefly, mainly to figure out who they are and how they got on board. This is an Opposed WIL + *Discipline / Relevant Specialty* versus the questioner's WIL + *Discipline / Interrogation*. Regardless if they win or loses these rolls they will find themselves hustled to The Circuit to be a side attraction prior to the main event in tonight's roster of events.

The Circuit

Designed to take the most violent aspects of Pit Fighting to an extreme that even the most callous of Alliance officials is unable to condone, the concept of The Circuit was, from the beginning, designed to take the bloodiest elements of Pit Fighting and combine them with a bastardized mixture of a stylized Cortex entertainment vid and a severely twisted nightmare of the Roman gladiators from Earth-That-Was.

The only rule in The Circuit is to inflict as much pain as possible while looking as flashy on camera as possible while doing it. There are no holds or punches barred and no referees. The two fighters enter the cage and fight until one or both are beaten senseless. There are no match points or 'tapping out' in The Circuit, a fighter either wins or is carried out of the fighting cage broken, unconscious or, as is usually the case, both.

As form is more important than function, a Circuit fighter will play for the camera as they make their attacks, especially when an opponent is staggered and not able to fully resist. If the fighter can make a Formidable (15) AGL + *Performance / Acting* and they can hit with a Called Shot, they will earn a spot in the highlight reel. These close ups are what gains a fighter notoriety and a following and in turn, higher rankings among the Circuit fighters.

The new Death Matches simply allows the victor to continue to strike the losing fighter until able to inflict a fatal injury, specifically one meant to be as gory as is physically possible.

Act Three
Scene Three: Beatin' Feet

"*Freedom is an illusion. Senseless hopes that serve no purpose. The strong lead and the weak serve, this is the way of things. If a servant deserves freedom he must earn what he seeks from his master. His master is obligated to allow the servant to earn his desire by placing him high above the courtyard in a cage full of vipers, so that the servant's illusion can be fulfilled by the tender mercies of the serpents.*"
– The annotated collected works of Shan Yu Volume Eight, Chapter Four, Celestial Publishing, Tenth Printing, Londinum, 2515

On reaching the holding cells the PC(s) find that fourteen of the cells are occupied, one by their Friend, twelve by members of their Friend's settlement, and one by a stranger. This disheveled young man can be just as he appears – a terrified innocent snagged up by slavers, a hook to another adventure, a plant by the keepers to spy on the slaves, or just about anything the GM wants him to be.

Counting the four members of the settlement that have been killed in The Circuit, this accounts for everyone taken in the slaver's raid. The Friend will not leave without all the members of the settlement, which greatly complicates the escape for everyone. The only hope for so many to escape is via the lifeboats and a rendezvous with the PC's ship. Reaching the boat deck however, will be the problem.

Depending on if the PCs took out the camera that monitored the holding pens will be a large factor in how much time the PCs have before some from the ship investigates. If the camera was disabled, after a short delay, the bridge makes a call to the guard stationed inside the main hatch. The PCs can try to bluff by using a Formidable (15) INT + *Influence / Persuasion* or a Hard (11) *Performance / Acting* to fool the bridge that everything is okay. If the roll fails or is not tried, the bridge will sound an alarm and a half a dozen keepers will arrive in ten rounds armed with stun batons, but two will have shotguns and wearing Ballistic Mesh body armor.

A Hard (11) INT + *Knowledge* or an Average (7) ALE + *Technical Engineering* will locate the main maintenance access tunnel and allow the PCs and escapees to avoid detection long enough to reach the boat deck. However, the captain has keepers waiting in force (ten) at this obvious escape route. A Formidable (15) INT + *Knowledge* or a Hard (11) INT + *Technical Engineering* will find the bilge inspection tunnel that leads all the way to the main airlock. The PC's ship was allowed to dock only long enough for PCs using one of the overt options to board before having to take up position within 500 meters of the Oddessy. The pilot will have to make a Heroic (19) Ship's AGL + *Piloting* to dock before the Oddessy can be deployed. If the boarding was covert, the PC's ship will have to make the same two rolls to close in order to dock undetected.

If the GM wants, the PCs can increase their escape chances by staging a diversion. A Hard (11) INT + *Covert / Sabotage* will jury rig a short in an access panel that will set off a fire alarm in a different compartment of the ship to draw the crew away from the route the PCs and the rescued settlers are taking to escape, giving the PCs a one-step bonus to all Stealth skills used to reach their escape ship..

Once free of the liner, the PCs come under intense fire from the enraged Oddessy. The PC's start at Point Blank range and to escape, they have to move beyond Short range to get out of range of the liner's weapons and beyond Extreme Range to completely escape pursuit.

Escaping is a series of Opposed piloting rolls with both the pilot of the PC's ship and the Pilot of the Oddessy making a series of rolls using their vessel's Agility and their own + Pilot / Appropriate Specialty Skill. In addition, depending on their ship's current Speed Class, they will receive a Skill bonus or penalty to their skill roll.

Speed Class	Skill Modifier	Speed Class	Skill Modifier
1	-4 step	6	+1 step
2	-3 step	7	+2 step
3	-2 step	8	+3 step
4	-1 step	9	+4 step
5	+0 step	10+	+5 step

(Example: The Oddessy will travel at her top speed. Since her hard burn rating is 5, Oddessy's pilot has a +0 step Skill bonus.)

Each turn, the pilots make opposed skill rolls. If the player character succeeds, the Crew's vessel moves one Range Category further away from Oddessy. On an extraordinary success, the ship moves two Range Categories further away. If the pilot fails, Oddessy moves one Range Category closer to the Crew's ship. She'll move two Range Categories closer if the Crew's pilot botches the roll.

The chase ends either if the PC's ship moves beyond Extreme range and thus effectively escapes pursuit, or if Oddessy's missiles destroys the PC's ship as they are not ship interested in survivors. However, if the PC's ship gets destroyed and they end up in shuttles or escape pods, they will quickly find themselves in the Oddessy' holding cells and will soon be the newest contestants in "The Circuit's" next death match.

NPCs

Circuit Fighter

AGL d10 **STR** d10 **VIT** d6 **ALE** d8 **INT** d6 **WIL** d8 Initiative: d10 + d8, Life Points: 14

Traits: Two-Fisted (Major Asset), Mean Left Hook (Minor Asset), Branded (Minor Complication), Sadistic (Major Complication)

Skills: Athletics d6/Dodge d10, Covert d6, Discipline d6/Intimidation d10/Persuasion d8, Perception d6/d8 Sight, Performance d6/ Acting d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10.

Description: A typical pit fighter raised in the back streets of any hard scrabble colony in the 'Verse. Groomed specifically to the role of the passion play that is the core of pit fighting, this bare knuckle brawler is a formidable opponent not to be taken lightly.

Keeper

AGL d6, **STR** d8, **VIT** d8, **ALE** d6, **INT** d6, **WIL** d8; Initiative: d6 + d6, Life Points: 16

Traits: Intimidatin' Manner (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d6/Dodge d8, Covert d6, Discipline d6/Intimidation d10, Guns d6/Pistol d8, Influence d6, Perception d6, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Stun Baton d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10.

Description: Skilled at keeping order and the prisoners in line, these quasi-guards officers are the backbone of the Oddessy's internal security. Well paid, they are loyal enough to not be susceptible to bribery or most other forms of subversion.

Oddessy Space Hand

AGL d6, **STR** d6, **VIT** d6, **ALE** d8, **INT** d8, **WIL** d8; Initiative: d6 + d8, Life Points: 14

Traits: Steady Calm (minor Asset), Crude (Minor Complication)

Skills: Athletics d4, Influence d4, Knowledge d6, Mechanical Engineering d6/Repairs d8, Perception d6, Technical Engineering d6/Repairs d8, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: A typical crewman on just about any ship in the 'Verse, competent in his skills and no more loyal than he has to be.

Thugs

AGL d6, **STR** d10, **VIT** d10, **ALE** d6, **INT** d4, **WIL** d6; Initiative: d6 + d6, Life Points: 20

Traits: Tough as Nails (Major Asset), Greedy (Minor Complication), Chip on the Shoulder (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d4, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Guns d4, Influence d6/Intimidation d10/ Streetwise d10, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Knives d8/Clubs d8, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10.

Description: Not gifted with much in brainpower, but blessed with more brawn than the average bear, this classic leg breaker is just the person you need to protect your territory of to enforce a protection racket or anything not requiring much in the way of thinking

Drunken Spacer

AGL d6, **STR** d6, **VIT** d6, **ALE** d8, **INT** d8, **WIL** d6; Initiative: d6 + d8, Life Points: 12

Traits: Heavy Tolerance (minor Asset), Hooked (Minor Complication)

Skills: Athletics d4, Influence d4, Knowledge d6, Mechanical Engineering d6/Repairs d8, Perception d6, Technical Engineering d6/Repairs d8, Unarmed Combat d4.

Description: A down in his luck crewman that knows more than he wants about the workings of the 'Verse and as a result seeks refuge in a bottle.

Henry Yi

AGL d6, **STR** d4, **VIT** d4, **ALE** d6, **INT** d4, **WIL** d4; Initiative: d6 + d6, Life Points: 8

Traits: Things go Smooth (Minor Asset), Weak Stomach (Minor Complication)

Skills: Animal Handling d4, Athletics d6, Covert d6/Stealth d10, Knowledge d4, Perception d4, Ranged Weapon Combat d6/Sling shot d8, Survival d2

Description: The nimble, but traumatized young survivor of the raid on the settlement

Otis Jenkins

AGL d6, **STR** d6, **VIT** d6, **ALE** d8, **INT** d8, **WIL** d8; Initiative: d6 + d8, Life Points: 14

Traits: Friends in Low Places (Minor Asset), Stingy (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d4, Covert d4, Influence d6/Negotiation d8/ Persuasion d8/Streetwise d10, Knowledge d6/Business d8, Perception d6, Planetary Vehicles d6.

Description: The very antithesis of memorable, Jenkins plays his ability to remain unnoticed to the hilt. Quick to pick up where opportunities exist, he is quite good at his ability to make a deal. He is however, not known for parting with a single coin beyond what he has to, he is absolutely the wrong person to attempt cheat in any manner.

Ships

Oddessy
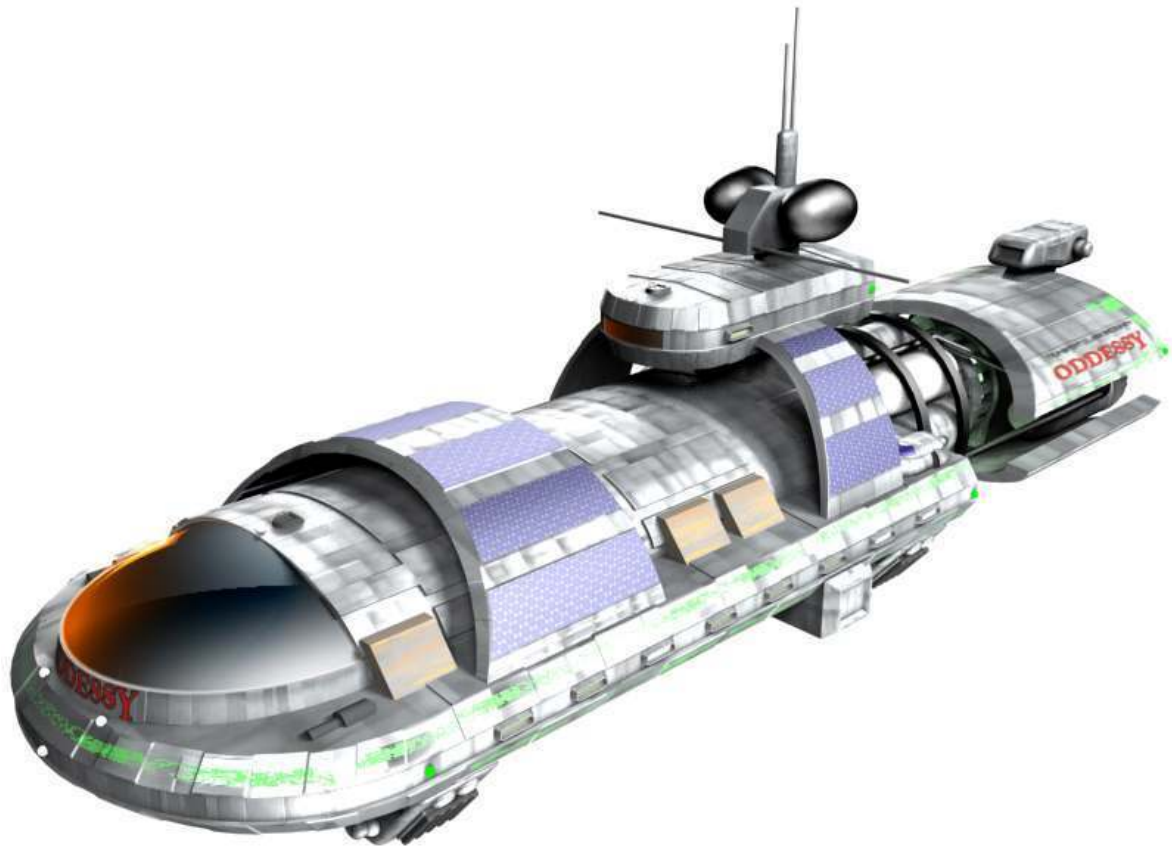
Dimensions (LxBxH): 240 x 100 x 40 feet.

Tonnage: 8,525 tons.

Speed Class: 3 cruise/5 hard-burn

Crew Complement: 4 officers, 12 spacer, 20 service crew, 20 croupiers, 20 keepers

Crew Quarters: 37 double cabins, two single cabins (captain, chief mate)

Fuel Capacity: 250 ton tank 1,250 tons of fuel (1,200 hours)

Cargo Capacity: 400 tons.

Passenger Capacity: 20 single holding cells, 20 double cabins, 4 - 50-ton VIP suites.

Gear: Two 20-ton passenger shuttles, fourteen 20-ton lifeboat shuttles, auditorium with 200 seats and "The Circuit". One 50 person casino, Full spectrum Cortex broadcasting facilities, an infirmary with three beds, and a 50 pound short-range missile launcher with ten explosive missiles carried in hidden pop-up turret.

Price: €400,000 new; €100,000 now.

Agi d4, Str d6, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6; Init d4+d8, Life 12

Traits: Cortex Specter (minor asset), Seen Better Days (minor complication)

Skills: Aerial Transport Operations/Transport d2, Space Transport Operations/Transport d2, Perception d4, Heavy Weapons d4.

Complexity: Average

Maintenance costs: New €19,200 (€1,600 per month, €28,800 a year (€2,400 per month) with Seen Better Days (minor).

Description: Once the flagship of the well respected Odin cruise line when she was launched as the Odyssey in 2493. However, despite being a company with a long distinguished history, Odin lines fell on hard times when the great-grandson of the founder of the company became CEO. Even though Chester Fillmore Gannon had the finest business education the 'Verse could provide, he was missing that critical spark that makes a successful businessman. After several changes he instituted resulted in a precipitous drop in customers, Odin line was never able to recover from the lost business and was soon bankrupt. Unable to keep up with the maintenance, the Odyssey was in poor shape when she was sold at auction a mere fifteen years after her ballyhooed launching.

The ship was converted into a quasi-bulk freight/colony ship and made a few runs out to the Rim taking colonists to newly terraformed worlds, most notably three trips to the failed Miranda colony before the planet was declared a "Black Rock" and abandoned. The increasing upkeep on the aging liner was more than the owners were willing to pay and the ship languished in a second hand ship dealer's yard for a few years before being picked up by the pit fighter promoter Jamison Meriwether. Refurbished and re-launched with a made up and whimsical name of Oddessy, the once proud liner is now the home of the most vicious form of pit fighting, the ship includes the enhanced dedicated Cortex source box necessary for transmitting the illegal broadcast known as The Circuit.

ODDESSY Deckplan
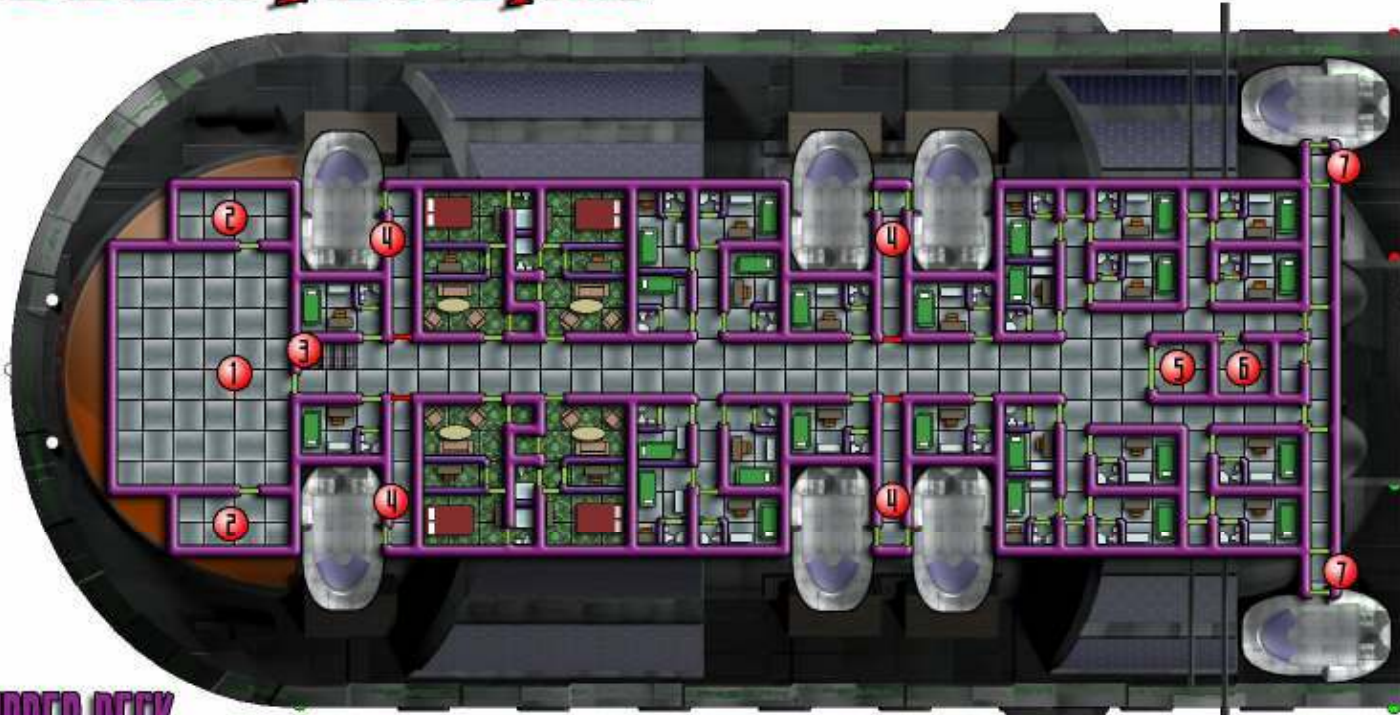
UPPER DECK

1 DINING
2 CARGO
3 STAIRS TO DOME
4 SHUTTLE ACCESS

5 ELEVATOR
6 STAIRS
7 PASSENGER SHUTTLE ACCESS
8 BRIDGE

■ = 5'

CREW DECK

ODDESSY Deckplan

CENTRAL DECK

■ = 5'

1 CIRCUIT RING	7 LOUNGE	13 DINING HALL	19 MAIN ENGINEERING
2 CARGO	8 CORTEX HUB	14 ACTIVITIES ROOM	20 MASSAGE TABLES
3 HOLDING CELLS	9 BAR	15 HOUSEHOLD SERVICES	21 HEAD
4 BROADCAST BOOTH	10 GALLEY	16 OFFICES	22 LAP POOL AND HOT TUB
5 VAULT	11 EXERCISE ROOM	17 ELEVATOR	
6 CASINO	12 SHOWERS	18 STAIRS	

ODDESSY Deckplan
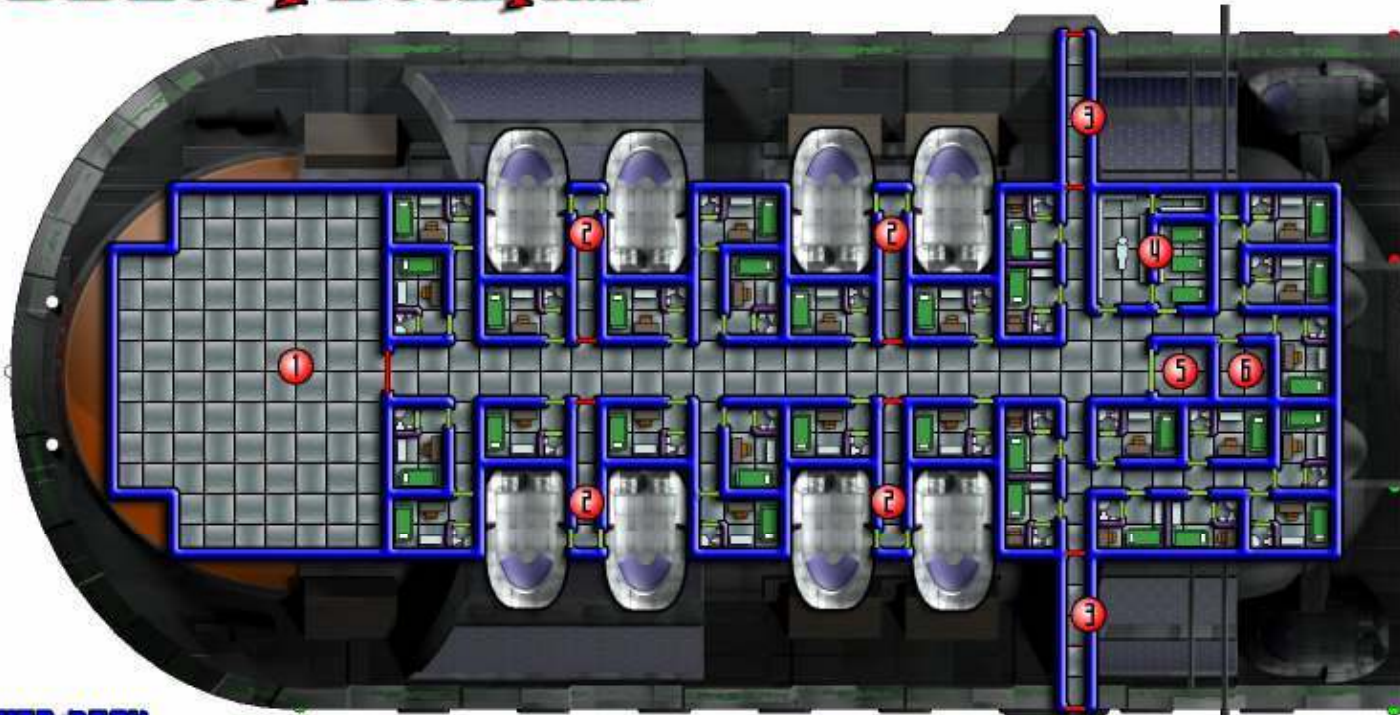
LOWER DECK

1 CARGO
2 SHUTTLE ACCESS
3 GANTRY

4 MEDICAL
5 ELEVATOR
6 STAIRS

■ = 5'

Sirocco

Dimensions: (LxBxH): 60 x 40 x 25 feet.

Tonnage: 600 tons.

Speed Class: 8 cruise/10 hard-burn

Crew Complement: 2

Crew Quarters: two single cabins

Fuel Capacity: 24 ton tank 120 tons of fuel (800 hours)

Cargo Capacity: 50 tons.

Passenger Capacity: two double cabins (or 4 single holding cells)

Gear: Six life pods, one 50 pound short-range missile launcher in a hidden turret with a twenty explosive missile magazine.

Price: €77,000 (€76,800 without missile turret)

Agi d8, Str d4, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6; Init d8+d8, Life 12

Traits: Cortex Specter (Major Asset), Gas Guzzler (Minor Complication), Memorable (Minor Complication)

Skills: Aerial Transport Operations/Transport d2, Space Transport Operations/Transport d2, Covert d6, Heavy Weapons d2, Perception d4.

Complexity: High

Maintenance costs: New €1,920 (€160 per month).

Description: The Sirocco may or may not have a role in this adventure as it depends on whether the pilot of the PC's ship stays onboard their ship or not. If it is the vessel of the Tong or bounty hunter, the ship will be armed and equipped to carry four prisoners, if it is a yacht, the ship will be unarmed and configured to carry four passengers in the lap of luxury.