

HERMAN S. SKULL

STAR BASTARDS



A Two-Fisted Fantasy Adventure

A pair of two-fisted adventures set in deep space. You, a couple of dice and your rock-hard fists will decide how it all shakes out.

Illustrations by S. IACOB

Two Fisted Fantasy

STAR BASTARDS

A high-speed pursuit along the derelict starlanes of Route 66³!

The Space Exploration Pole has run afoul of the powerful star-spanning Conglomerate and the lawdogs are on his trail. Help him evade justice or ride shotgun with the cop sworn to bring him in. Either way it's a two-fisted, white-knuckled chase through the most dangerous and derelict part of the galaxy, chock full of memorable characters, scheming aliens and deadly traps.

You call the shots : fly, gamble, fight and sleaze your way to freedom or victory in this Two-Fisted Fantasy adventure! Inside you'll find a complete set of rules for racing along the starways and thumping the denizens of the Star Bastards universe: all you need to provide is a couple of dice and your two rock-hard fists!

You'll find included a combat system for dealing with all the fist-fights, laser duels and space battles that you'll come across, details of about fifty items you can pick up and eight crew that can join you on your journey, helping you out with their special abilities. While this book is complete in itself you may like a digital copy of the cards and a quick-reference booklet: head to twofistedfantasy.com or hermitskull.com to download these for free.

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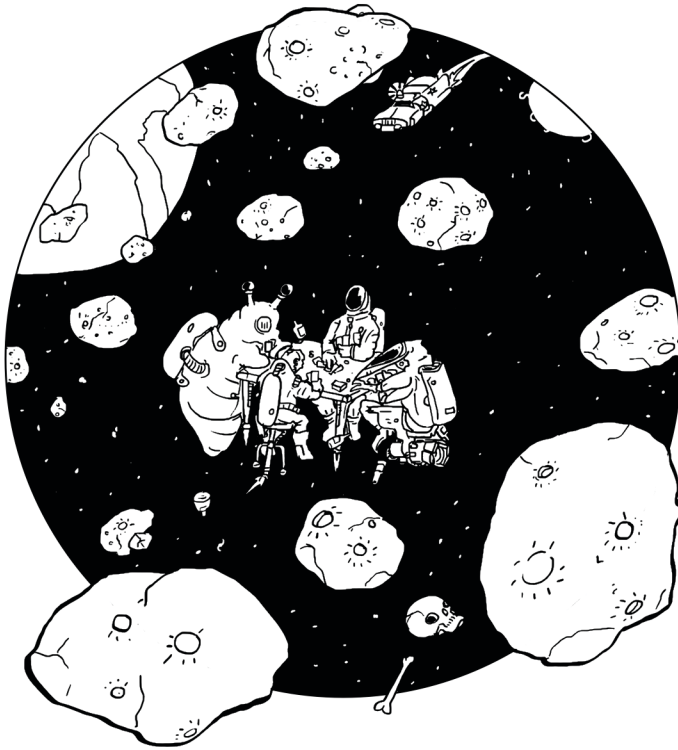
hermit@hermitskull.com

www.TwoFistedFantasy.com

www.HermitSkull.com



HERMAN S SKULL



**STAR
BASTARDS**

illustrations by S. Jacob

Two-Fisted Fantasy

To the people of Poland

*Keep reaching for the stars
also sorry for the things I've done
to your language and some
of your cities.*

Mirosław Hermaszewski is the only Polish man to go into space. In 1978 he spent more than a week aboard the Salyut 6 Space Station as part of the Interkosmos space program. He has earned more honours and awards in his distinguished career than you could shake a stick at and he in no way resembles the main character of this book other than in name, shared profession and nationality. The real Mirosław Hermaszewski is not ten feet tall and is not on the run from the interstellar police.

Leo is a real dog and as far as I know the behaviours and actions attributed to him in this book are entirely factual.

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STAR BASTARDS

In this adventure you will play the part of brave space adventurer Mirosław Hermaszewski as he evades the Interstellar Police. You must navigate through the hazards and perils of the derelict Route 66³ in an attempt to escape the long arm of the law. OR you will play the part of Inspector Leo Canid, fearless lawdog hot on the trail of the escaped fugitive. Can you out-fly the space explorer, catch up to his ship and finally confront and capture him?

Before you begin you need to determine your abilities, select your accomplice or partner and pick your special equipment.

ABOUT GAMEBOOKS

A gamebook is a cross between a book and a role-playing game like Dungeons and Dragons. Instead of reading the book cover to cover you decide how the game turns out by turning to numbered paragraphs as directed by the book. You make choices by turning to one paragraph or another, and each decision changes how the book progresses and how it will end. You may also have to pass some test or fight a battle using the rules which follow in this section. Don't worry too much about memorising all the rules now - you can jump back here to look up the rules as you come across them. You will need to keep track of your character's attributes, loot and progress on the character sheet provided at the end of this section - your attributes along with your decisions will determine how well you fare in this Two-Fisted adventure!

To play this book you will need at least two six-sided dice (referred to as "d6" in this book - 2d6 is two dice, 1d3 is half of a result of a d6, rounded up). You will also need the included item and co-pilot cards and some way to keep track of your details on the character sheet. If you don't have the cards which come with the game all the details can be found in the appendices at the back of the book.

Now turn over to select the character which you wish to play:

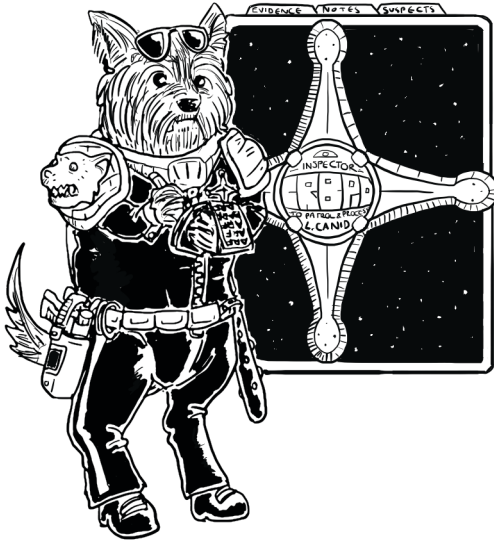
THE TEN-FOOT SPACE EXPLORATION POLE



Mirosław Hermaszewski is the only Pole ever to travel to space. His spaceship, the Soyuz-30, was lost during the 20th century with Mirosław aboard after a routine mission to the Salyut space station. He was presumed dead but had in fact slipped through a wormhole and come out at the other end of the galaxy. A combination of the medical experiments conducted aboard the Salyut in hopes of creating a Soviet superman and the radiation from the wormhole journey changed him somewhat, stretching him to ten feet in height! On Earth he was an ace pilot and trained cosmonaut. In space he's become a renowned explorer and adventurer, hitching from system to system in his heavily-modified Soviet spacecraft. His latest two-fisted exploits may have gone too far and landed him in serious hot water with the Glom, the powerful Conglomerate of Reasonable Beings...

OR

THE DOG DETECTIVE



Inspector Leo Canid is a hard-bitten dog detective with a nose for trouble. A loyal and hard-working officer of the Conglomerate Police Directorate, he's a bit of a loose cannon who refuses to be kept on a leash. His stellar career came to a crashing end when he tried to put the bite on a corrupt planetary governor, and now he and his partner have been relegated to rounding up spice junkies and rogue traders on the derelict Route 66³ beat.

One morning the station chief calls Leo into his office and offers him a chance to turn everything around by bringing the infamous Space Exploration Pole to justice. He volunteers to take on the Hermaszewski case but this time he may have bitten off more than he can chew...

Next you must determine your starting attributes.

ATTRIBUTES

Having selected your character you must determine your skills and abilities. Mirosław and his pursuer are quite evenly matched so both determine their scores in the same way. Roll 2d6 - the total is the amount of points you have available for character creation.

EXPERTISE - While normal people have different levels of ability in different fields, two-fisted adventurers and hard-bitten detectives such as our heroes have a uniformly high skill in all aspects of adventuring - piloting, shooting and fighting is all in a day's work! Your EXPERTISE is 6, but you may add up to 6 additional points to this from your character creation points.

ENERGY - This reflects your ability to carry on. Whereas EXPERTISE determines how good you are at a task, ENERGY is the total amount of effort you can put towards the job at hand. If your ENERGY ever reaches 0 your adventure will be over. Your ENERGY is 60 but for every point you put into it you can increase your ENERGY by 10 up to a maximum of 150.

You may also spend some of your character creation points on the following attributes, so long as you have enough spare:

THE RIGHT STUFF - Once per Stellar Day you can re-roll a failed roll at no additional ENERGY or POWER cost. This costs 3 points.

TRUE GRIT - For 2 points your character need no longer fear the effects of injuries - if you're hurt for whatever reason it's just assumed you take it on the chin. You will no longer take injury penalties.

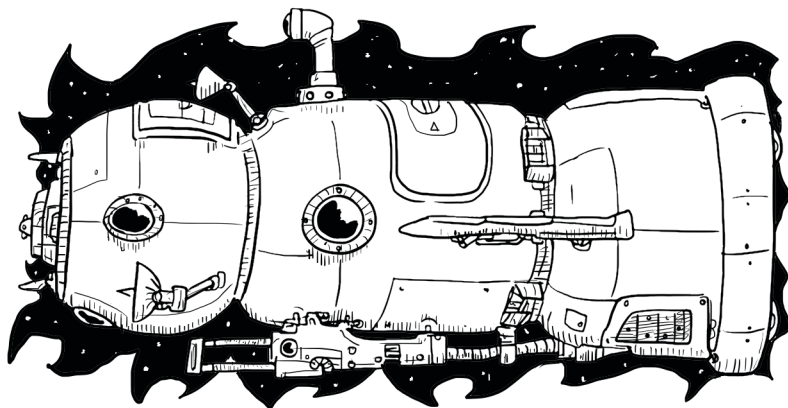
A REAL PAL - For 2 points your listening skills and the good example you set will encourage your co-pilot to be a better person. They gain +1 EXPERTISE to all skills.

FISTS - A score which covers the intensity with which you attack life's challenges. Whether you're the Space Exploration Pole or the Dog Detective you are a genuine two-fisted hero and so have 2 FISTS.

THE SPACE SHIP

The ships piloted by our protagonists are both small two-man vessels but their similarities end there. Each ship has different strengths, weaknesses and capabilities.

Soyuz 7K-T/A9M "Soyuz-30": Miroslaw Hermaszewski only
HULL: 6 SHIELD GENERATORS: 1 POWER: 100



Miroslaw pilots a heavily modified Soyuz ferry shuttle. Originally designed to take Cosmonauts from Earth to an orbital station and back, this one has been upgraded heavily to allow for deep-space exploration and navigation. Although it has a small faster-than-light meson drive and ion sails that allow it to travel quickly around solar systems without much need to refuel, the Soyuz-30 has no jump capability and must rely on the kindness or inattentiveness of strangers to get between systems. The ship uses a sophisticated docking system to attach itself to friendly or unwary vessels and hang on for the ride. As a space exploration vessel the Soyuz-30 has been upgraded with a reasonably decent alien sensor array. The ship is equipped with a maser autocannon but its energy demands limit its sustained use and the whole ship needs to be turned to aim it. It's mostly useful for blasting asteroids. The Soyuz can take a crew of two but can easily be piloted single-handedly.

1974 Dubhe Merope Sedan 925RDB: Leo Canid only
HULL: 8 SHIELD GENERATORS: 2 POWER: 90



Leo's trusty squad ship is the obsolete but still very capable 1974 Dubhe Merope Sedan. With the many upgrades and repairs made by Leo over the years this ship is very fast, manoeuvrable and well-armoured. Like most cop ships it has a built in interdicator device that can commandeer star ship jump drives to force them to fire the Dubhe into a jump. Like the Soyuz-30 the Dubhe isn't capable of independent jumps, but using its Interstellar Overdrive device it is capable of far higher speeds when moving between systems. The ship is equipped with sirens, strong frontal hull plating, docking hooks and powerful shields - while this gives it a lot of options it means that prioritising power use is important. It has a crew of two but can take a large number of passengers - or prisoners - in its cramped prisoner transport module.

INTERSTELLAR OVERDRIVE: The most interesting piece of equipment aboard the Dubhe is the Interstellar Overdrive which allows it to accelerate during a jump. When in a jump you may spend 10 POWER to reduce the length of the jump by one day. This can be done more than once per jump (i.e. by spending 20 POWER you reduce the jump by two days) but a jump will always take a minimum of one day due to the vagaries of astrophysics. Be aware - if you run your ship's power reserves out you may be ill-equipped to handle the challenges of the system you are jumping in to!

EQUIPMENT

Both Miroslaw and Leo are seasoned space heroes who have picked up some interesting after-market equipment during their adventures. Miroslaw starts with an old copy of Space Exploration Quarterly. You may also pick any two item cards that have the word "Starting" on them and add them to your inventory. Leo takes three items and can take items that have the words "Police Issue" on them as well as "Starting" items. Both Miroslaw and Leo are assumed to be equipped with a ranged weapon, a small amount of walking around money, a plasma torch, and all the other small tools and gadgets used in the adventuring trade. These are not listed in the inventory and cannot be lost or traded away.

During your adventure you will pick up many different and possibly useful items, most of which can be sold or traded (aside from items classified as junk, because they're worthless). Because there's no standardised system of exchange in this part of the galaxy, each item's value is whatever you can trade it for. One person's trash is another person's treasure and this goes double for alien species. All non-junk items can be traded for any item at a vendor. Bear in mind that you can equip your co-pilot with items, but you cannot have more than one gun, close combat weapon and armour active at the same time - for instance if you have a plasma slugger and a disruptor pistol, you'll need to decide which of the two you are using.

YOUR CO-PILOT

There are six co-pilots to choose from and two more that can be picked up on your journey. Whether a trusted ally for years or some ruffian you've rounded up at the last stop, they provide useful skills and assistance during the adventure. Unlike the hero they have specific EXPERTISE and will not be able to undertake tasks in which they have no EXPERTISE (for instance if they have no weapons EXPERTISE they will not be able to operate your ship's weapons).

You will only have access to five of these co-pilots at the start: one of them will only work with Miroslaw, another will only work with Leo and two of them are only picked up during gameplay. Refer to the co-pilot cards or Appendix 1 for more details on the co-pilots. Go pick your co-pilot now!

All co-pilots have at least some skill in two areas of operating a space-ship. You may assign them to any one task of which they are capable - for instance a co-pilot with SHIELD and WEAPONS EXPERTISE can only be assigned to shields or weapons. They provide their SKILL and FISTS to that role, freeing you up to devote your EXPERTISE to the other two functions.

The station to which they are assigned can be changed at any time.

Your co-pilot will also back you up in combat, using their combat expertise. They will always fight at their full capacity and are considered to have enough ENERGY to handle any situation.

Lay Low

You can tell your co-pilot to lay low in a battle where they aren't likely to do much more than get themselves hurt. If you do so just count them out of the battle - you will no longer resolve combat for them and they cannot be hurt. You may find yourself outnumbered though (see the section on Unopposed Attacks). You can tell your co-pilot to get stuck in again from the start of the next round if you change your mind. Unfortunately you can't lay low yourself - your reputation as a two-fisted adventurer is on the line!

Dismissing the Help

If you wish to you can dismiss your co-pilot at any time, simply remove the card from play. You may wish to do this if a better prospect comes along. You cannot have more than one co-pilot aboard so if by any chance you take a new one the old one must go.

COMBAT

There are three different kinds of combat - hand-to-hand, ranged and ship-based. Combat for all types is broken up into "rounds" - enough time to move around, take cover, pick out a target and make an attack doing your best to defend yourself. You can tell which kind of combat you're in from a little icon that appears next to the encounter:



for hand-to-hand,



for ranged and



for space.

Hand-to-hand

Hand-to-hand combat is a desperate battle between two or more opponents who are trying to maul each other with fists, claws, swords and plasma cutters. A round of hand-to-hand combat represents a few seconds of both enemies simultaneously striking, parrying and possibly begging for mercy.

To conduct a round of hand-to-hand combat:

Decide how much ENERGY you will spend (up to a maximum of your EXPERTISE). Subtract this amount from your ENERGY total.

Roll 1d6 for every point of FISTS you have. Add the highest single dice roll to the amount of ENERGY you have spent - this is your attack score.

Now roll 1d6 for every point of FISTS that the opponent has. Add the highest of these scores to their EXPERTISE total - this is their attack score.

If you have the higher score then remove one HEALTH from your opponent. If the scores are equal or yours is lower the fight continues.

The fight ends when the enemy has been reduced to 0 HEALTH or you have been reduced to 0 ENERGY. If you are defeated then the game is over unless the text specifies otherwise.

Your co-pilot will also fight an enemy but will always fight using their full combat EXPERTISE. If they lose a round of combat they will suffer an injury. As a two-fisted adventurer you are assumed to be able to take a punch so do not sustain injuries in hand-to-hand.

Ranged

Each round of ranged combat represents a period of about thirty seconds where opponents take careful aim or dive for cover and spray the battlefield with automatic weapons fire.

Follow the same process as for hand-to-hand combat but where there is a tie both opponents are hurt - you suffer an injury and your opponent loses 1 HEALTH. If you lose a round of combat you will suffer one injury in addition to the wasted ENERGY.

Please note that injuries sustained during combat immediately reduce EXPERTISE - turn to the Injuries section for more details.

Space

Small ships like the Soyuz-30 and the Dubhe Merope fight with weapons hardly more powerful than sidearms at relatively short range. Micro-shielding devices regenerate far more quickly than the huge void-cooled devices of larger ships and, without the sophisticated target tracking AI banks controlled by cybernetically enhanced mathematical geniuses and weapons that obliterate objects within hundreds of miles of their path, maneuverability is far more important in keeping you alive than is the sheer ability to trade shots. Although both ships are armed, neither the Soyuz-30 nor the Dubhe Merope are primarily designed for combat so think twice before tackling that purpose-built starfighter or jump-capable starship!

Ship combat takes place simultaneously. At the start of each round you may allocate up to as many points as you have in EXPERTISE among the three main combat functions of the ship - WEAPONS, MANOEUVRE and SHIELDS. Deduct this amount of POWER. You must also allocate where you are going to use your FISTS among these systems. Don't forget that your co-pilot will contribute their EXPERTISE to their station and also their FIST. You only have to distribute your EXPERTISE and FISTS among the other two roles.

WEAPONS: Targeting and firing the ship's main weapon. Every point of **POWER** spent in weapons represents an aimed shot. For every point of **FISTS** you devote to the weapons you may roll 1d6. Take the highest score of these and add it to the **WEAPONS** score

MANOEUVRE: Fancy flying, evasive manoeuvres and trying to keep your enemy in your sights. Allocate **POWER** and **FISTS** to **MANOEUVRE** in the same way you do **WEAPONS**.

SHIELDS: All the fancy flying in the world won't keep you safe forever, and your shields can protect you if you are hit. Each point of **POWER** invested in **SHIELDS** gives you a better chance of deflecting a hit before it can damage your hull. **EACH** point of **FISTS** invested allows you to re-roll one failed **SHIELDS** check. If your shields are breached you can allocate **SHIELDS** in the next round to bring them back online - roll 1d6 and if this is below the amount of **POWER** allocated then the **SHIELDS** will function as usual in the next round. You can also re-roll this check once for every point of **FISTS** allocated.

Your opponent's scores don't change - they have **EXPERTISE** equal to the first number given next to each attribute and **FISTS** equal to the number in brackets next to it. For instance :
MANOEUVRE: 5(1) would manoeuvre with an **EXPERTISE** of 5 and 1 **FIST**.



Compare your WEAPONS score to your opponent's MANOEUVRE score. You have scored 1 hit for every point the WEAPONS score exceeds the MANOEUVRE score. You also score one automatic hit for every three points you put into WEAPONS.

For each hit roll 1d6 and compare it to the enemy's SHIELDS score. If the roll is higher than the SHIELDS score or a 6, deduct 1 point from the enemy HULL and reduce the SHIELDS to 0 - they have been breached. The Dubhe Merope has a backup generator and so can produce more shields in the next round whereas the Soyuz-30 must spend at least one round bringing the shields online. (if the Dubhe has its shields breached again then it also has to bring the shield online).

If the roll is equal to or lower than the SHIELD score, reduce the SHIELD score by 1 and move on to the next shot, if any.

Repeat this but compare the enemy's WEAPONS to your MANOEUVRE and so on. Do this even if you have reduced your enemy's HULL to 0, because combat is simultaneous.

After the round of combat, if either side is reduced to 0 HULL, they have lost. Otherwise if you have taken any HULL damage at all, roll 1d6. If you have taken 3 or more HULL damage, roll 2d6. For each 6 you sustained taken heavy damage and must roll on the Heavy Hits table. Repeat this for your opponent and apply any relevant effects. For an opponent a roll of 1-3 on the Heavy Damage Table causes 1 additional HULL damage in lieu of the listed effects.

Assuming both opponents are still in one piece, repeat the process!

The fight will continue until one or both ships are reduced to zero HULL, at which time they are reduced to little more than scorched and twisted space junk. You will also be defeated if you run out of POWER. Should you be defeated in a space battle the adventure is over! However there may be an option to attempt an escape should you feel the fight is unwinnable - turn to the appropriate paragraph given. Should you start to run out of POWER mid-fight it's highly advised that you take this option, should it exist.

Heavy Hits

Although most of the weapons mounted aboard small spacecraft aren't particularly powerful there is a chance that they may hit some vulnerable part of the ship. See the section on [Space Combat on page 20 for more detail](#). You may also receive a powerful hit from a passing asteroid or heavy weapon. When this happens, you must roll one dice against the following table and apply the effects.

1. A power conduit has been sliced, spraying plasma into space before it can be clamped. Lose 10 POWER.
2. An electrical fire breaks out in the cockpit, distracting you while you deal with the emergency. The fire counts as a hand-to-hand enemy with EXP 5, 1 HEALTH and 1 FIST. If you fight it you can do nothing else that round (you can send your co-pilot as well). Should you choose not to deal with it or you lose a round against it, you will incur another heavy hit at the end of the next combat phase automatically.
3. A console explodes violently. Roll 1d6 - on a 1-3 it strikes the protagonist, on 4-6 the co-pilot's console detonates (whether or not a co-pilot is present). The unlucky victim sustains an injury.
4. With a sickening crunch the shield modules are wrenched off of the hull. They will not function in this or any other battle and cannot be repaired. If this has already happened then sustain 1 additional HULL damage.
5. A structural support is sliced in two and the ship's hull groans menacingly. Lose 1 randomly selected ship upgrade and sustain a further 1d3 HULL damage.
6. A huge section of the ship's hull is torn away and the bulkheads scream as they twist and buckle. You can only pray the ship holds together. Delete all ship upgrades from your log book or police note book and take a further 1d6 HULL damage.

These effects are not cumulative - do not roll again on this table for HULL damage taken from a critical effect.

Unopposed Attacks

You and your trusty co-pilot may have the good fortune to outnumber an enemy or you might get jumped by a mob. During the course of battle allies and enemies can fall, changing the balance of numbers. In any case where multiple opponents are concerned you handle it the same way. As a quick-witted space hero and natural leader your quick thinking will always give you the tactical advantage. Match up each person on your side with an opponent of your choice. You decide who is directly fighting who - these opponents will be able to harm each other mutually in the fight. Once everyone is matched up you may find one side has one or more unmatched fighters. If your side outnumbers the enemy you may assign these as normal, if the enemy outnumbers you they will each attack a randomly selected fighter on your side. They do this with what is called an Unopposed Attack.

Roll their attacks as normal. If these fighters lose their combat round (or in the case of shooting, draw the round) they do not receive an injury because no one was aiming at them.


If you are fighting only one opponent, you must fight them. Your co-pilot will make unopposed attacks but only at the amount of ENERGY you put in or their EXPERTISE, whichever is the lower.

INJURIES

The galaxy is an unforgiving and dangerous place in the far future of 2047. There are many circumstances in which you or your co-pilot can become injured- if you lose or draw a round of ranged combat, or your co-pilot loses in hand-to-hand just as examples. Note each injury in the appropriate place on the character sheet.

Luckily post-modern medical science and your space-adventuring constitution will keep you ticking under most circumstances, but you will still suffer ill-effects from injuries. For each injury noted on your character sheet you will suffer -1 EXPERTISE. If your co-pilot is somehow reduced to 0 EXPERTISE in all skills they have finally kicked the bucket and must be removed from play. If it happens to you then you have failed and the game's over.

ABILITY TESTS

From time to time your abilities will be tested - you will be given a task with a certain DIFFICULTY level. Allocate ENERGY up to a maximum of your EXPERTISE and roll your FIST dice - if you score higher than this level you have passed, otherwise you have failed. In either case deduct the ENERGY used (or POWER if the test has this icon next to it: ). If you fail you can try again by spending more ENERGY or POWER unless the text specifies otherwise.

REST AND RECUPERATION

You are in a high speed chase and will likely have very little time to stop for rest, medical care or repairs during this adventure. The text will specify if and when you can rest and recuperate. You should therefore be sparing with your resources and take it easy on your co-pilot! Some items can restore lost ENERGY or POWER but regardless of how you restore lost points they can never exceed the initial scores unless specified.

Due to the enforced down-time while you're jumping between systems, you can restore 10 ENERGY per day up to your maximum.

STELLAR DATE

Various events take place at specific times in this adventure so it's important to keep track of the date. You will be given the starting date when you begin your adventure. Keep this updated on the character sheet. At times during the adventure you will be asked to check the current Stellar Date. It's important to move as quickly as possible to avoid being captured or losing your quarry!

COLLARS

If you're playing as Leo Canid you must also keep track of "Collars", or your police performance. This starts at 0. Keep this updated in the relevant section of the character sheet. This can go negative, representing official displeasure at your methods.

Welcome to Historic Route 66³!

“Route 66³ is the main trade artery of the Conglomerate-Volan Freedom and Mutual Understanding Pact. The Trans-Void sector’s primary spaceway embodies all the rustic values of the quadrant, with its many friendly planetbound civilisations, quaint local handicrafts and owner-operated small business-stations offering refueling, repairs or just a quiet day’s rest. As neutral space, claimed by neither the Volans nor the Conglomerate, Route 66³ is also a representation of freedom - a genuine starship-based society of the road, where new opportunities and adventures wait just a few day’s jump away.

“Although the soon-to-be opened Interstellar-40 will link the trading hubs of Conglomerate and Volan space in a single accelerated jump stream, visitors will continue to come to Route 66³ to savour the sights, sounds and adventures of the real Sub-Void Rim Region - just as they always have.”

Route 66³ Preservation Society Information Brochure, retrieved from the wreckage of Mom, Mom, Mom and Pops’ Pump ‘n Jump in the Terebellum quadrilateral, historic Route 66³.

Route 66³ is a shadow of its former self. Once the main route for trade between the Conglomerate of Reasonable Beings and the Volan Empire, the Route cut a snaking trail along the rimward side of the strange and deadly Void Nebula, carrying goods, people and tourists between the two regional powers. Made obsolete as a trade route by the opening of the i40 stellar highway, Route 66³ went into terminal decline and many of its stations and planets were abandoned. Now it serves as a mostly lawless stretch of neutral space, far from the spatial borders, customs agencies and police forces of the local powers. It’s a great place to go to escape your past and the main function of the Route is now as a conduit of smuggling, banditry and criminal rambunctiousness. While there are legitimate traders and tourists making the rounds they tend to be either heavily armed or short-lived.

Adventure Sheet/Log Book/Police Note Book

Stellar Date

YOU

Expertise

Energy

Fists

True Grit
The Right Stuff
A Real Pal

Injuries

Collars (Leo Only)

YOUR CO-PILOT

Combat

Man.

Weapons

Shields

Fists

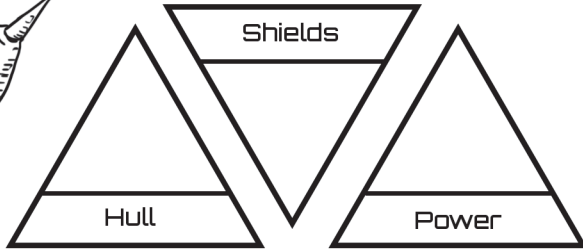
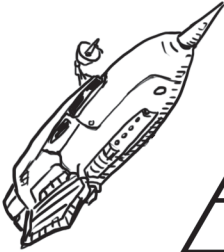
Injuries

Inventory

Evidence, clues, codes

STAR BASTARDS

YOUR SHIP



Ship Upgrades and Damage

Notes

HINTS AND TIPS

This part of the galaxy is a tough place: don't be surprised if your first adventure doesn't end in success. Try again!

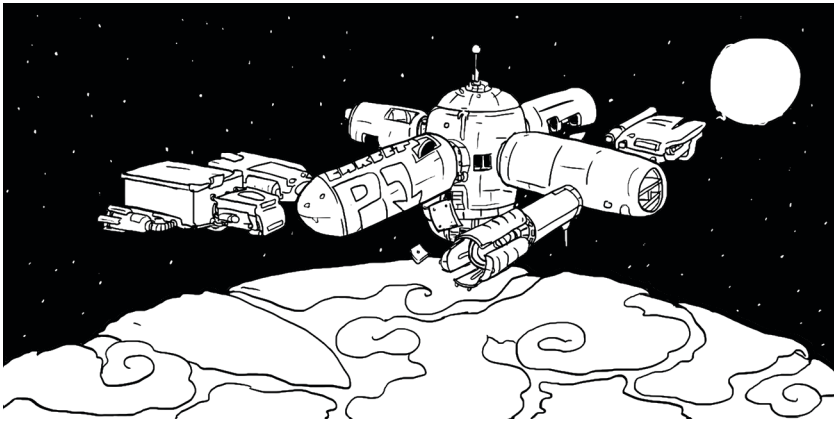
You should do your best to avoid battles and dangerous situations. ENERGY and POWER levels can quickly run down. Even a victorious battle can leave you dangerously depleted - be sure to keep some items on hand for a pick-me up. It's game over if ENERGY ever reaches 0.

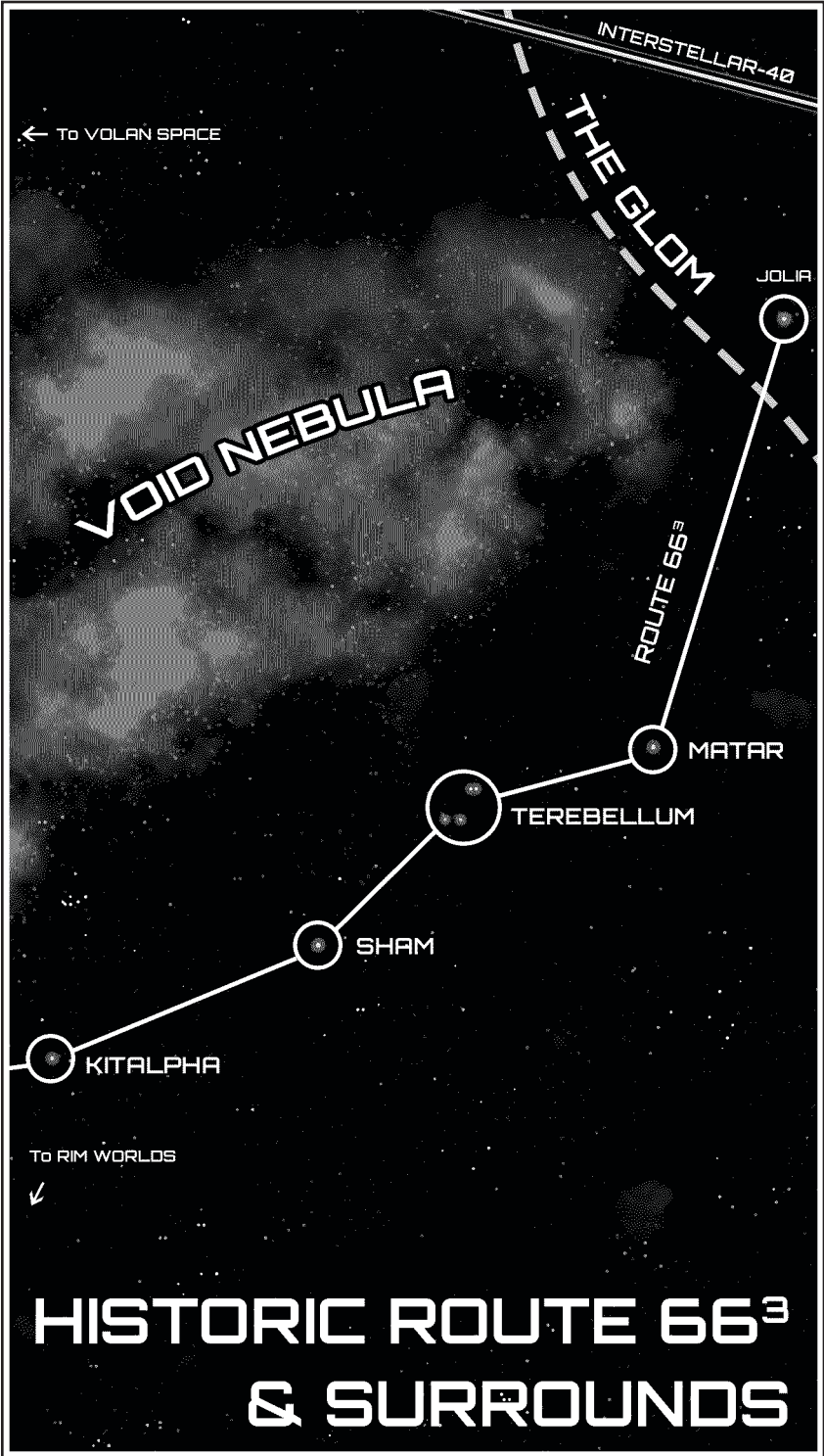
Try to keep your co-pilot healthy. They're adequate fighters but they're fragile and, having only one FIST, are prone to bad luck. After a few injuries you may find your co-pilot to be more hassle than they're worth so patch them up or get rid of them. In tough fights tell them to lay low or, better still, stay out of tough fights altogether.

Don't forget to pay attention to your item cards and the illustrations if a puzzle is stumping you. Some of the clues are related to illustrations and other incidental details like that.

Only read the paragraphs you're supposed to read!

Finally if you're having trouble or just want to read the story you can cheat it out by just declaring yourself the winner of all the fights. I won't judge.





INTERSTELLAR-40

← To VOLAN SPACE

THE GLOM

JOLIA

VOID NEBULA

ROUTE 66³

MATAR

TEREBELLUM

SHAM

KITALPHA

To RIM WORLDS

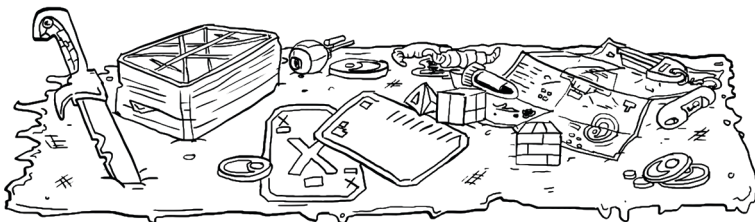


HISTORIC ROUTE 66³ & SURROUNDS

If you're playing as Miroslaw Hermaszewski, the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole:

You realised that you had finally worn out your welcome in the Conglomerate when you found a couple of Glomcops poking around your beloved Soyuz-30 while it sat parked up outside the Phaser Array bar in Jolia. Evading the cops you managed to sneak back aboard your ship but your suspicions as to their hostile intent were quickly confirmed by the flash of laser beams whizzing past your viewport as you blasted off into space. Not wanting to stick around and find out what the cops had against you, you decided to book it out of the Glom. Hurrying to get away, you hailed a passing jump-capable ship whose captain agreed to give you a lift in exchange for most of the valuables you had aboard the Soyuz-30. You agreed to the extortionate fare and hooked your small craft to the belly of the star ship. It was taking the old Route 66³ as far as Kitalpha, probably because it was hauling contraband and didn't want to deal with the interstellar highway patrol. "Drobno", you thought to yourself, "Ja tez nie". You used to be a regular at the Kitalpha Fuel 'n Gruel. It's safely far from Glom space and since half of the scum of the sector congregates there at any given time it would be an ideal place to find cronies for your next adventure. The ship spinned up its jump engines with a loud whine and within seconds you could see the familiar sight of stars whizzing past your viewport. You leaned back heavily in your comfortable pilot's chair and settled in for the long trip to Kitalpha.

Turn to paragraph [1](#).



If you are playing the role of Leo Canid, the hard-nosed Conglomerate Detective Inspector :

You enjoyed watching the Chief squirm. Only a few months earlier he had you in this same office demanding your badge and your blaster before the union rep forced him to commute your sentence to a lifetime picking up scum out on Route 66³, and there you all were again, him about to pop a vein as he offered you a promotion if only you and your partner would get out there and bring the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole in. Truth is, only you stood a chance. The rest of the force are grey, mealy-mouthed compromisers, scared of their own shadows and ready to cut a deal with anyone to avoid trouble. You see morality in terms as black and white as your squad car and aren't afraid to sink your teeth into any criminal that your nose leads you to. It was these exact attributes that got you into the doghouse and now the Chief was offering you a promotion because of them. Delicious.

You leafed through the case notes as your partner brought the squad ship around to pick you up outside the Glomcop HQ. Hermaszewski was a massive pain in the behind but his endless space adventuring always stayed just on the right side of the law. He crossed that line when he committed a Code 10, one of the worst crimes on the books. Some of your less-competent colleagues botched the arrest at Jolia. The Pole and an accomplice, the skeletal mechanic known as Bones, somehow got out of the system docked to a Conglomerate star ship. Headquarters put out an All Ports Warning on the Pole, the star ship carrying him freaked out and ejected him at Matar, and it was up to you to pick up the scent from there. Given the hidebound bureaucracy of the Police Directorate you're disgusted but not surprised it took nearly a week to get all this information together. The trail's rapidly getting cold. With no time to waste you blasted off from the Conglomerate Capitol world and commandeered a fast jump towards the Matar system off of a nearby star ship.

Turn to paragraph [200](#).

Stellar Date: 2047.275

You're playing some Space Whist with your co-pilot in the Soyuz-30's cramped descent module when the stars outside stop whooshing past. The ship shudders violently and the hull creaks as your ride drops out of the jump and back into regular space, dragging you along with it. You lean over your seat to peer out through the ship's periscope. After a quick swivel around you make out two suns - one large and bright yellow, the other smaller and bluish-white - and, not too far off, a pink and green planet with the tell-tale glint of a space station shining in its orbit. You recognise the place from the *Route 66³ Guidebook* as the Matar system, the very first refuelling point on the Route and many days jump from Kitalpha!

Suddenly your communications panel flickers into life - the captain of the star ship is hailing you. You pick up the receiver and catch an earful: "I have no idea what you've done to upset the Conglomerate, but you're way too hot for us. We're good honest members of the Glom, don't want no trouble. This is where you get off."

You try to reason with the captain but he's not having any of it. "I don't understand a word of whatever damn language that is", he barks. "Now decouple or I'll have you cut adrift".

Knowing when you're licked, you disengage the docking clamps and float free of the ship which immediately blasts off into jump space again. You stoop through the low connecting door to the front module of the Soyuz-30 and take your seat at the helm, your co-pilot following behind you. Switching on the flight computer you receive confirmation that you are indeed in the Matar system and the planet ahead of you is Barbet, a dusty and inhospitable world with a small settlement offering the usual refuelling, trading and rest stop services. The space station, locked in orbit directly above the town, is a hollowed-out wreck which has been painted over with a giant parking sign and fitted with a radio beacon repeating a message spoken in flat and unenthusiastic Glargot about the services available down below. A few large, battered-looking star ships are parked up close by the structure.

If you'd like to land the Soyuz-30 in the settlement and see if you can find someone to give you a lift out of the system, turn to [378](#). If you like your chances of finding something left behind on the abandoned space station, turn to [153](#) to check that out first. If you'd rather steer clear of this place altogether and try to hitch a lift out in space, turn to [318](#).

2

You've got everything you need right here aboard the Soyuz-30. The last thing you want is to spend hours trudging through a dying outlet mall while you should be running from the police. You keep your eyes peeled and mostly pressed up against the periscope looking for incoming star ships.

It's a long wait and after a while you wish you'd bought something to read from the mall after all. The dog-eared books and ancient magazines you've got to hand don't hold much interest for you past the first reading, and you've read them all at least half a dozen times already. Days pass as you float in open space. Advance the Stellar Date by 2 and turn to [324](#).

3

Your ship touches down and you leap out into the Macerator loading bay to the sound of thousands of Scrodes booing you as one. Half the ship must be packed in here to see the outsider get beat at Ujian Kekuatan. You intend to see about that.

The Scrodelord himself has come to meet with you, and the baying crowd of Scrodes parts to let him through to approach you. At his side is a colossus, more or less an enormous right arm with a menacing scowl and a pair of weedy little stalks to propel the whole mess around. Scrun sees you and laughs hysterically, and some of the more sycophantic pirates in the crowd mimic him.

"You! You're going to perform the Ujian Kekuatan with Krobb? You're not going to last a minute!" Before you can reply he turns to face the crowd, "The Conglomerate lawdog has arrived to challenge our champion, Scrodeboss Krobb! Odds are fixed at one to two hundred for Krobb, and that's generous! Let the Ujian Kekuatan begin!"

While his back's turned, you've got time to down a can of Golden Energy, if you have one. Remove the item from your inventory and turn to [79](#) if you choose to do this. Otherwise there's nothing for it - it's too late to back out now. Taking a deep breath, you follow Crunt and Krobb through the howling mob to an ornate table set up in the middle of the room and seat yourself opposite your gargantuan opponent. Turn to [268](#).

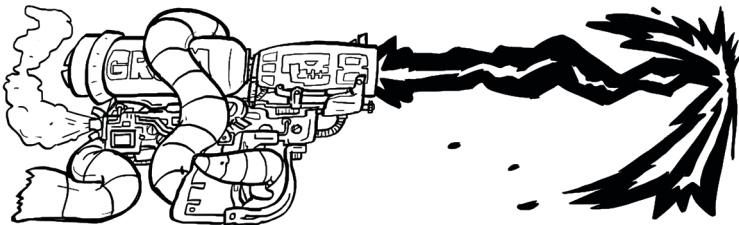
4

You don't give enough of a hoot about the power struggles between the critters in this weird space menagerie to spend any more of your time dealing with them. "Nie jest zainteresowany", you refuse politely but firmly. Major Tom thinks about this for a second and correctly deduces that you're not going to help. His yellow eyes narrow and he lets out a hiss, which your translator refuses to render into Glargot due to its obscene content.

"Get this worthless coward out of my sight" he mewes before turning back to his strategy session. The two Owles who brought you to the bridge sidle up behind you.

"Better come with us", one of them hoots. Noticing your hand hovering over your gun holster, it continues, "No need for that! We're not animals!"

Seeing that you're outnumbered and that any gunplay would probably be answered, you follow the surprisingly civilised Owles back to where they found you. Lowering the hatch and climbing back down to the hangar level you consider your options again. Assuming you haven't done so already you can visit the engineering section by turning to [188](#) or if you'd prefer to inspect the weapons array then turn to [344](#). If you've had enough of this doomed vessel you return to the Soyuz-30 and take off : should you elect to do that you disengage from the hangar and drift over to the station remnants while you wait for another lift out of this system. Turn to [214](#).



5

Your continued aggravations constitute an act of war on the part of the Conglomerate against the sovereign people of the Retick Geniocracy. After your atoms are scrambled by a quick blast from the Discoverer's obligatory doomsday weapon it takes an elaborate and humiliating arse-kissing ceremony to smooth things over between the two galactic empires again.

6

Your purchases have loosened the tongues of the otherwise taciturn merchants, who are suddenly far more forthcoming with what they know about the Ten-Foot Pole after goods have changed hands. They saw a ten-foot tall primate skulking around the town square just a little while ago. He bought a couple of bits and pieces and moved on to the Pickled Herring. The humanoid seemed to be trying and mostly failing to keep a low profile - perhaps he knows you're pursuing him?

The vendors wish you luck in your hunt. You're getting close now: you can almost smell the Space Exploration Pole over the fresh salty air. Add 1 TRAIL - if you haven't caught up to the Pole then turn to [330](#) and pick another location to search.

7

Humphrey the Ratte inspects your payment carefully before sniffing derisively.

"Your guardian angel here just saved your hide, Chakold", he squeaks, then looks at you. "I wouldn't hang around with this lousy bum if I were you. He's lousy with fleas. Come on gang, let's get out of here."

The Ratte Pack, mollified by this exchange, heads off to spend their unexpected windfall. Chakold looks up at you.

"Don't listen to that guy", he squeaks, "I've just got the regular amount of fleas for a Ratte of my age".

Resolving to get the rodent dipped at some point, you must now decide where to go next. If you'd like to head for the bridge and see if you can have a chat with the commander of this vessel then turn to [160](#). If you don't think these aliens are likely to be a reasonable bunch you could head to engineering and try to wrest control of the jump drives yourself by turning to [188](#). For weapons and the chance of some valuable loot turn to [344](#). If you've had enough of this place already you can turn around, jump back in the Soyuz-30 and leave: should you elect to do that you disengage from the hangar and drift over to the station remnants for a poke around while you wait for another lift. Turn to [214](#).

You fly over to the lonesome yellow container and touch down on the dry, cracked ground outside. The crate- 250 feet long, 50 feet tall and nearly as wide- has been here a long time and is missing a few hull plates but is otherwise intact. You pace around the outside for a while. The whole container, somewhat scorched by the effects of a long-ago atmospheric entry and still bearing the incomplete legend "ISHTEI" on what's left of its cracked and peeled yellow paintjob, is covered in writings and crude drawings of creatures and plants all done in white chalk and red ochre. If you had to guess it seems this container was once used as a temple for a barbarous tribe of Squidges, the ten-limbed bone-headed land squids indigenous to this system. You've met a few before on your travels but they were from Orma (a civilised, if boneheaded bunch).

It looks as though the crate came down hard - although the landing wasn't fast enough to tear through the container's chassis, the simple autothrusters were smashed completely flat against the hard ground.

While you're pretty sure this place is abandoned, you never know whether you'll anger an alien species by stepping on this piece of hallowed ground or that. Then again, raiding temples is about nine tenths of a space explorer's work. If you'd like to step inside the container for a look around then turn to [125](#). If you respect local traditions too much to do a thing like that without permission then you may return to the Soyuz-30. You consider your options as you step back inside the spacecraft. Turn to [307](#).



The Soyuz-30 wasn't designed for combat, but you're done being pushed around by these mean, petty bureaucrats and you think you can take this old shitbox Dubhe squad ship the Glomcops have sent after you. The cop figures out what you're up to the second you punch the throttle and opens fire immediately, denting your hull with a rain of blue ion bolts before you can come around to return the favour.

SHITBOX DUBHE:

MANOEUVRE 8(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 5(1) - HULL 8



This ship has two shield modules - if the first one is burned out it will use the second one.

The Dubhe is equipped with an Ion Bolt-thrower - it causes Heavy Damage on 4+, but instead of rolling 1d6 on the table you roll 1d3.

You can surrender at any time in the hopes that the cops will take your belated cooperation into account and go easy on you : turn to [134](#).

If you destroy the squad ship, turn to [71](#).

If the fight continues beyond three rounds, turn to [161](#).

10

On your way over to the water moon you peruse the police report you received about the place - some gangly alien was involved in a bar fight with one Savage Sid, a notorious greaser from some distant primitive world. This sounds promising! You fly down towards the planet, nimbly piloting under a Fishtein container launching up from the moon's space elevator, and descend upon Orma's only settlement.

After a bumpy descent through the water moon's slightly turbulent atmosphere you come in to land. Orma's town is built on the only surface land on the moon - a small, craggy island dominated by the automated Fishtein plant. The town is crowded around this largely automated device which provides the people of the town with a living by endlessly harvesting the sea life of this moon, containerising it and sending it spacewards for pickup by whichever alien species has the currency to pay for it. For now though you're only interested in Hermaszewski's whereabouts. A fly-by of the island reveals no sign of the Pole's Soyuz-30 - if he's still here he's hidden the ship out of sight from the air. You land in the settlement's

parking zone and head over to the Pickled Herring. You'll check out the reports and with any luck pick up the trail from there.

As you pass through the town square and approach the sleazy dive your hackles raise and you begin growling involuntarily. You have a very bad feeling about this place - the kind of people who frequent these establishments rarely talk to cops anyway. You might have more luck and be safer starting your hunt someplace else, the promising lead notwithstanding. If you go with your gut then turn to [90](#). If you'd rather walk through the busted saloon doors then turn to [26](#).

11

While whatever's going on aboard the station might be interesting, your main duty is maintaining public order, even in a dump like Barbet. Also you're more likely to find some information about the Pole's movements down on the planet rather than its uninhabited satellite. You fire your thrusters towards the planet, slip under the station and descend rapidly and bumpily through the atmosphere on your way down to Barbet City.

You stop the squad ship's descent a couple of hundred feet above your usual landing spot. Sure enough, there's a town-wide brawl in progress, and judging by what you can see from the cockpit almost everyone's involved. A couple of hundred locals - a hodgepodge collection of alien species who've settled in this desolate ruin for one reason or another - are battling a slightly larger number of Matari natives. You magnify the image on the viewscreen and try to take a closer look at the fight. As far as you can make out through the swirling pink dust kicked up by the brawl, it's a roughly even fist fight with no side clearly winning, but a few of the combatants seem to be armed with knives, metal bars and even the odd gun. If you don't intervene this fight could get a lot uglier than it already is.

If you want to put a stop to this public disorder by the book, you try to recall your riot training. Turn to [304](#). If you think you can end this quicker by just getting down there and cracking a few skulls, turn to [159](#). If you're only interested in tracking down the Pole and don't want to jeopardise the mission by getting involved in this mess, you can wait out the fight by turning to [226](#). If you've changed your mind about Barbet altogether you blast back off into orbit and check out the police report on the station instead. Turn to [136](#).

12

You've got him at last! Wrenching the now-unresisting Pole's arms behind his back and cuffing him, you book him for the Code 10 and for almost every other crime on the books, from assault on police to xenofraud. As usual you make extra sure to bang his head on the door frame as you cram him and his partner into the prisoner transport module of the squad ship.

You file the lengthiest, smuggest and most self-satisfied report you've ever filed and begin the long and arduous flight back to the Conglomerate homeworld to drop off your prisoners and receive your debriefing from the Chief. You doubt you'll be sent back out on the Route again after this success - in fact you're not sure what you're looking to more, that juicy promotion or the juicy steak you're going to enjoy once you finally get back to your kennel.

Eventually you get Miroslaw Hermaszewski safely into a cell and head on up to the Chief's office. The miserable, hammy bastard does a poor job at hiding his displeasure at seeing you back in front of his desk in one piece. With evident distaste he bids you sit and ungraciously hands you a plain plaswood box containing the epaulettes of a Superintendent of the Glom PD and the keys to a new luxury Auva Trinary squad ship. Your days of slogging it out on patrol are over!

The Chief shifts uncomfortably in his chair. Did you get 10 or more Collars? If so turn to [400](#). If not, turn to [236](#).

13

"Captain before you go: I am on the trail of the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole and I have reason to believe that he's in the Sham system. I would like to request a jump", you say.

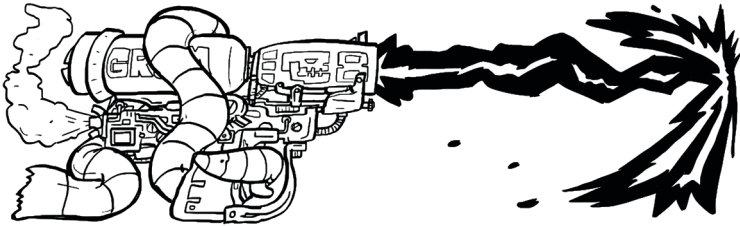
"Very well. Fill out the requisite forms and send them over along with the coordinates, and we will send you on your way. Baedje out". With this the captain closes the channel and you get stuck into yet another mountain of tedious paperwork.

Turn to [308](#).

14

The Volans are extremely sore and sorry from their well-deserved thrashing, and you can't prevent your tail from wagging in happiness as you slap two pairs of cuffs on each of the four-limbed bird monsters. You've got them dead to rights. You could book them, and even if they avoid a stint in jail they'll be recalled to their homeworld and out of your hair forever. On the other paw if you let them go they'll be in your debt. The Pole's trail is growing colder by the hour and they do have a jump drive you could make use of on the Star Kettle...

If you want to book 'em, turn to [113](#). If you want to offer them a deal turn to [43](#).



15

You trudge along deeper and deeper into the tunnel, switching on your suit's torch to cut through the darkness. Your back aches as you walk hunched over beneath the rough-cut tunnel's low ceiling and you thank your lucky stars that you're a Space Exploration Pole and not a Dungeoneering Pole - there's no way you could do this for a living.

After what seems like an eternity the tunnel changes - it begins to feel damp and you detect a strong smell of fish. You begin to see plant roots poking through the walls and ceiling as well - you must be under that green patch you saw from the ship. And then you hear a skittering and scuttling behind you. You turn your head and see something looking like a small furry trilobite scurrying towards you. As you look you see another and another and another tunnel out of the walls and start following you. Then one the size of a large dog crawls out of the muddy floor, hissing ominously. With this tunnel restricting your movements you don't think you could fight them off. Instead you face forwards and keep moving, your spirits buoyed by the gentle upwards slope of the tunnel. The end of the "Holy Path" must be just ahead - you hope...

16

Rushing to keep ahead of the sinister creatures hissing and scratching in the filth just behind you, you reach a partially caved-in section of the tunnel, thick with clogs of fishy-smelling mud. Beyond that there's a breeze and a faint hint of dim light. You're reaching the end! You're forced to crawl, and as you're clambering upwards through the muck you feel something tugging on your foot - one of the smaller creatures has bitten onto your boot. You kick backwards hard against the side of the passage and the little monster drops off. You redouble your efforts to clamber out of this tunnel.

Have you previously defeated a monster in this strange planet's even stranger jungle? If so then turn to [72](#). If not then turn to [355](#).

16

You don't really see a choice. You grudgingly accede to the chief's demands.

"W porzadku", you say. "Przygotuj swoich ludzi. Zostawimy jutro rano".

Whether she understands you or not you she immediately begins rounding up her people for a rapid departure. While the barbarians are gathering their possessions you open an access bay and bring the Soyuz-30 into the container. It takes almost an entire day of serious work to get your star ship's controls wired up and the container's thrusters ready to go, but you manage it. By early the next morning you're all set - the barbarians are aboard, the thruster coils are powered and you're sealed for space flight. You throttle up and the container lurches upwards, its autothrusters propelling it spacewards slowly but surely.

As you rise bumpily through the cloud layer you activate your scanners to see if the Glomcop is still out there. It certainly is - the small squad ship is rapidly doing laps around the planet, still scanning for you. With the extra weight of the barbarians aboard and the extra power needed for the life support system you're moving too slowly to clear off the planet without being spotted. In fact the squad ship seemed to slow down on its last pass over the hemisphere - perhaps you've already been detected!

If you would like to drop back down to the planet and work out some other plan then turn to [298](#). If you want to press on ahead and trust that your luck will hold out then turn to [129](#).

17

Before you can stop it, Horizon-8 wobbles over to the open service panel and reaches into it with one of its snaking manipulator arms. As you watch with amazement it clasps on to some part of the reactor and starts drawing power until it begins to glow faintly and a wisp of smoke rises out of it. Horizon-8 releases the tap and sits silently for a second before swiveling its baleful red eye to face you, the malevolent red orb pulsing ominously in the half-light of the reactor core.

“HATE is really valuing the time we’re spending together”, it intones without a trace of emotion, “When the accounts are settled back home HATE would like to do this again”.

You don’t know what to make of that information. In any case Horizon-8’s interface with the reactor has vastly increased its utility - add +1 to its maximum and current EXPERTISE scores.

Horizon-8 isn’t much for crawling so you decide against any further exploration, although you hear the mall’s ventilation system is a real hoot. Instead you make your way back to the maintenance room and emerge out onto the concourse, softly-glowing space probe in tow. Turn to [180](#).



18

If Tarlee is with you, she's itching to take the shot. If you want to let her and her big gun do the honours, turn at once to [151](#).

Otherwise, you draw your sidearm and, aiming carefully, quickly fire half a dozen rounds through the windows. The droning stops instantly and the building erupts in blood-curdling screams as spacers and Matari alike spew out from the exit and flee into the street. You can make out an ominous glow through the shattered windows and open door - they clearly had something very flammable in there which is now very much on fire. Before you can scrutinise the damage more closely your attention is drawn by a blaster round thudding into the wall behind you. A handful of Matari out in the street have spotted you and, intent on revenge, are firing into your hiding spot! Grateful for the cover provided by your vantage point, you crouch down behind a pile of bricks and return fire.

MATARI GOON: EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

MATARI THUG: EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

WOUNDED MATARI BRUISER: EXPERTISE 4 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 2



If you win this battle you slip away before anyone else starts shooting. In the dark, the smoke and the confusion no one notices you and you make it back to the main strip without further incident. You head straight for the Bunker to claim your reward from the Erinacean. Turn to [361](#).

19

The law enforcement community has to stick together. You fly into the wreckage to rescue your comrade in arms but progress is slow thanks to the weak signal from the pods and the danger posed by the cloud of station shards. Eventually you find the pod floating a few stellar units away in the middle of a cloud of potting mix and garden supplies, and you dock up.

Aboard is what appears to be a huge potato wearing a mall security uniform and snoring as it sleeps in a large heap of potting mix. As you enter it opens several of its beady eyes and stands up, brushing the dirt off its trousers with a long green tendril.

"Officer Iysp Eeld reporting for duty! About time you showed up. With me in here there's no one to keep the teens from helping themselves to the food court soda streams! There's not a moment to waste!" he says through his mouth fronds. You sigh and usher the vegetoid off of the pod and onto your squad ship. After a brief interrogation it seems he's seen someone matching the description of the Ten-Foot Pole but they left the station just before the Spend-o-Max blew up. Iysp would be keen to join you in the hunt, especially if the Pole had anything to do with whatever happened to his mall.

You may, if you like, take Iysp Eeld as a co-pilot. If you already have a co-pilot then this spud can replace him, her or it: your current pilot will play no further part in this adventure and will alight at the next convenient stop. You could instead decide to leave this tuber to cool his roots in the prisoner transport module until you can let him out somewhere safe.

Whichever you decide, make any necessary adjustments and turn to [248](#).

20

You thumb through the dog-eared copy of Space Exploration Quarterly once again. This thing is about ten stellar cycles old and has spent most of that time next to the Soyuz-30's can, doing duty as toilet reading.

The cover story is about some primitive race of sentient woodlice discovered building a star ship out of a rotting log in some primitive backwater called Media, right on the edge of charted space. There are a bunch of adverts for an amateur extraplanetary supply store called Stellar Cartographics, a few articles about tomb plundering (the mainstay of the space exploration profession) and a few xenological surveys of previously-uncontacted sentients. You submitted one, mostly about barflies in the Jolia system's seedier nightspots, but there are a couple of other interesting bits and pieces about the weirder new additions to the interstellar family. A species of worms who communicate solely by digging elaborate burrows were found on the edge of Volan space - by now the birdy Volans will have eaten them all, you suspect. Also you learn that the weird land squids who live on some barren world called Nezval deep in neutral space use an Atbash cipher in their devotional graffiti, presumably to preserve their religious mysteries. The universe sure is a pointlessly complicated place.

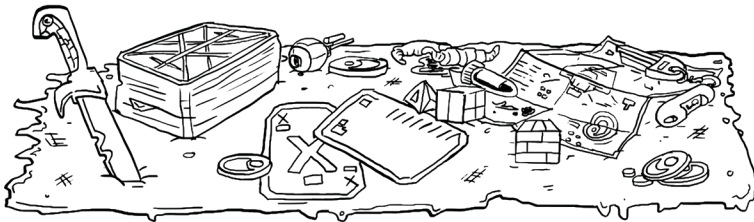
Done reading, you put the magazine away again. Return to the page from which you came.

You begin to climb up the massive pylon. Apparently this is a breach of etiquette because a trio of the bird-like aliens leap from the top of the Nest. Spreading their wings and engaging their oversized jetpacks, they swoop right towards you firing their disruptor rifles wildly. You are pinned against the pylon, desperately trying to avoid the rain of energy bolts and microwave grenades pelting down all around you.

DUCK AND COVER : DIFFICULTY 12

Assuming you survive this aerial attack you scurry down the pylon and back through the airlock into the relative safety of the ruined ship. Luckily they seem content with chasing you away and don't pursue you.

If this experience has soured you on any further exploration then you return to your own ship and take off: turn to [48](#). Otherwise, assuming you haven't done so already, you can continue downwards to the "DAM" by turning to [65](#), or proceed to the "SANDBOX" by turning to [276](#).



Despite your best attempts your approach is detected. The alien star ship fires a warning shot from its obligatory doomsday weapon. Although fired at minimal power the crackling beam strikes the Soyuz-30 like a tidal wave, causing serious damage. Lose 1 HULL and roll on the Heavy Damage table. Assuming your ship isn't destroyed, the power of the shot is sufficient to stop the Soyuz-30 dead in space. The star ship disappears into the jump with a flash before you can recover. Some of your hull plating is twisted up from the blast : you'll burn up if you attempt to enter the planet's atmosphere before it's fixed, so you decide to wait for any other ship come along while you straighten the damage out. Turn to [338](#).

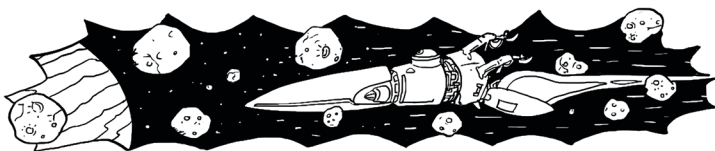
23

You approach the planet as quickly as your meson drive will allow. It's a dusty red world with little surface water - another barely habitable wasteland in a galaxy full of the things. Still, something's bothering you about this place - although you've never been here before you somehow feel like you should know something about this obscure world.

As you begin your descent through the soupy orange atmosphere your sensors detect movement in the distance behind you. The cop has come about and is back on your tail! Still, you've got a good head start on him. There's a dense cloud layer over much of this planet so you should be able to ditch him there - there's no way his sensors will be able to track you and he's not going to be able to comb the whole planet looking for you. You fly into the roiling orange clouds and begin your descent.

Once you're nearer to the planet's surface you feel a little safer and begin to slow down. You look around through the viewport and give the periscope a quick swivel to get the lay of the land. As you expected it's yet another no-tech, nowhere, podunk barbarian backwater. It's mostly a desolate red wasteland of cracked earth and tangled grey shrubs but you can spy a few potentially interesting destinations nearby.

A few miles to the North of you is a large blue cuboid structure surrounded by neat piles of orange stones. It looks an awful lot like one of those Fishtein containers you saw up in space. If you'd like to start there then turn to [398](#). Another large structure of the same dimensions is a few miles north of that. It's yellow instead of blue and stands on its own, without any accompanying rock piles. If you'd like to visit there first then turn to [8](#). Closer by is a verdant patch of bluish-green trees - almost a jungle - standing out against the surrounding red wasteland. Its dense canopy might serve as a decent place to hide out and make camp while you wait for a lift - turn to [176](#) to check it out. Otherwise you scan your surroundings more thoroughly before you go charging around by turning to [297](#).



24

Instead of chasing the Space Exploration Pole around some alien moon in hopes of catching him you decide to simply wait for him to make a move. You sit in the pilot's seat of your squadship and pull up your work console, making sure that all the Is are dotted and all the Ts crossed on each of your reports.

You spend a couple of hours lost in tedious paperwork until you're brought back to the here and now by the beeping of your sensor panel - it's trying to alert you to the arrival of a jump ship in the system. In fact you can see it from your cockpit with the naked eye - a bright pinpoint of light which suddenly appears in the sky. You haven't noticed the Ten-Foot Pole making any attempt to get off-world, but perhaps you've missed something here. He may have found some way to sneak away and could be up in space right now trying to arrange transport out of here with this new arrival.

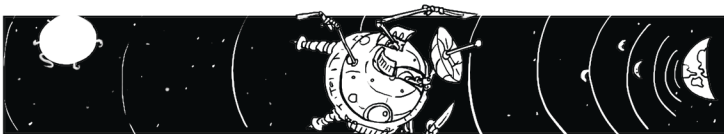
If you want to get out there at once, you buckle up and blast off into space, setting a course for the jump ship. Turn to [60](#). If you're certain he's still here on Orma and just need a bit more time to catch up then turn to [177](#).

25

You wait a couple more days in the Matar system, giving you a chance to catch up on your paperwork but giving the Pole more time to slip away. Advance the Stellar Date to 2047.287.

Just as you are about to give up hope of catching up to Hermaszewski your sensors detect the flare of a large jump field collapsing just a short distance away. It's a star ship belonging to a member of the Conglomerate! You activate the communications panel and send an emergency hail, your tail wagging in excitement.

Do you have the word "Terebellum" written in your police notebook? If so, turn to [254](#). If not, turn to [87](#).



26

Ignoring the awful feeling in the pit of your stomach you silence your growling and shove your way through the busted saloon doors. The place is even more of a wreck inside than out. Almost none of the furniture is still in one piece, there are bloodstains on the wall and the automated bartender (a series of tubes and spigots with a coin slot) is irreparably tangled and smashed up. The place is pretty deserted - a few Erinaceans and their loutish Squidge goons are sitting around a whist table, nursing black eyes and busted skull bones respectively. They fix their beady black eyes (and in the case of the Squidge hangers-on, their goggly yellow eyes) on you with barely-disguised hostility as you enter.

Do you have the word "Brutality" written in your police notebook? If so then turn to [346](#). If not, turn to [246](#).

27

The Erinaceans, cheating majestically and openly, take every single trick and make you and your partner look like complete chumps. You'd complain about the swindle but they outnumber you and you don't want to cause a ruckus. The larger and greasier of the Erinaceans you just lost to rakes his winnings across the table. Remove the item you bet from your inventory.

"You look miserable. Look, don't kill yourself. You haven't lost everything, just your wealth", laughs the suddenly gregarious space hedgehog. "Yeah, we get a lot of chumps throwing themselves into the extraction zone once we're done fleecing them. They swim out to the 50 yard line and the Machine sucks them up, packs them into the crates and flings them up into space. Why would you want to do that? Just go home, grow some more wool and come back here to be fleeced again next week!"

This information seems like it may be portentous somehow, even if it is delivered in the form of an annoying gloat from a bad winner. You mull it over as you leave the table, slightly lighter in the pockets.

If you wish to console yourself by trying your demonstrably rotten luck with the ladies then turn to [76](#). If you'd prefer to get out of here without risking a scene then turn to [89](#) and pick some other place to be.

28

You shoot enough holes in the flying skinflap that it loses the ability to stay airborne and crashes to the red dust far below. While you've emerged victorious this battle could have given the Pole the time he needed to give you the slip. You drop out of the cloud layer and scan around, but find nothing that would indicate the Pole's been through here.

You notice a blue Fishtein container crashed into the side of a hill not too far away, and it's surrounded by rocky orange structures which appear to have been made by an intelligent species. As you watch you can make out a large number of Squidges sliding out of their dwellings and moving around down there - the weird land squids of Orma must live here too, and these ones have clearly spotted your ship in the sky. Perhaps they'll have seen the Pole pass by as well?

If you'd like to approach them then turn to [123](#). If you'd rather not get mixed up in dealing with savage species and just get on with surveying the planet then turn to [152](#).

29

You're going to have to tell the chief your plan and see what it'll cost you.

"Mam zamiar zabrac opakowanie ladunku w kosmos. Bede zaparkowac Sojuz-30 wnetrze, podlacz go do modulu awioniki i dokonac kilku napraw. Potem mam zamiar uruchomic cala sprawe. Co to mnie bedzie kosztowac?"

When it becomes abundantly clear that she doesn't understand you, you try again with a series of gestures, drawings in the dirt and the use of improvised finger puppets. She eventually gets the idea.

"You want to take our holy site into space?", she asks incredulously. Before you can say anything in response she fixes you with a hard stare and continues. *"It'll cost you."*

You reach into your pocket to pull out the loose change, expired batteries and old mints that are traditionally used to bribe backwards alien rubes. *"And not with those beads you space idiots keep trying to pay us off with"*, she says, *"We're wise to your high-tech scams"*. You remove your

hand from your pocket.

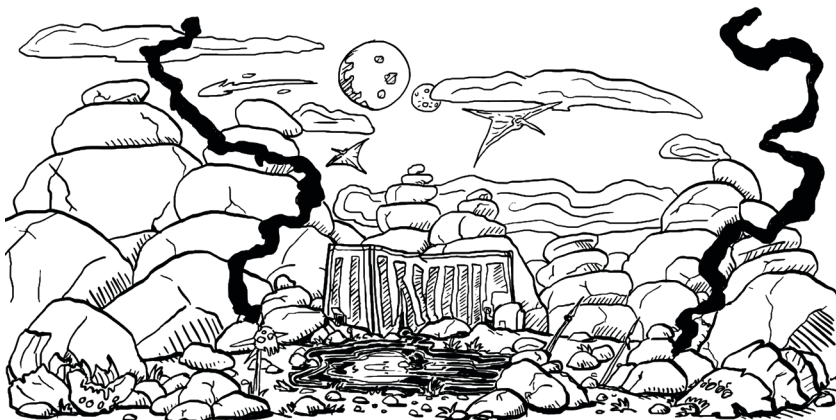
"As you can see, we're nearly out of food", she continues, gesturing to all the nothing in the container. "We won't defeat the Fis. We might not even reach their temple. Even if we make it and by some miracle we defeat them, we will have to move on again eventually. Existence is impossible here. So the deal is simple. Take us with you wherever you're going. Life must be easier there".

That would be a tough journey - the Soyuz-30's life support systems would be strained to the maximum and the extra weight would make taking off even more difficult. Plus you don't need two dozen Squidges to man this crate - a skeleton crew would be enough to manage the controls if you set it up right. Also you doubt these savages would be welcome at the Kitalpha Fuel 'n Gruel.

Seeing the shadow of doubt passings over your face, the chief makes another offer.

"Seven tons Megasterling, in trade or specie". This is literally a staggering sum. You actually stagger backwards before you manage to get a grip.

If you wish to pay this exorbitant fee and have seven tradable items with which you can part then turn to [133](#). If instead you are cheap enough to be ok with smuggling a tribe of barbarians offworld with you to your favourite drinking hole then turn to [16](#). If you think you're better off alone you can leave this chief, her tribe and her crate and return to the Soyuz-30 to make your own arrangements by turning to [307](#).



You emerge from the hangar and are immediately startled as a green plasma bolt flashes across your viewscreen. Something is firing at you! Activating your weapons and shields you come about hard and see before you an angular fighter craft hastily modified to carry engineering equipment and supplies along with its usual weapons payload. Despite its unwieldy loadout this craft is still very agile and a serious threat to your continued existence. You must fight:

RATTE ATTACKER :

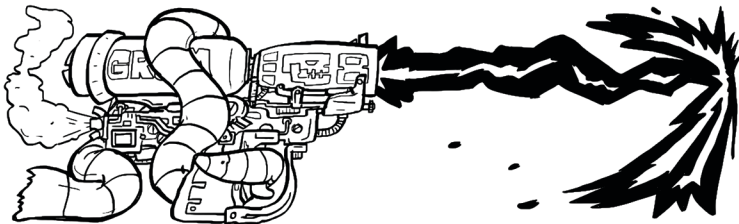
MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 4(1) - SHIELDS 4(0) - HULL 8



This vessel is equipped with plasma cutters which are designed to punch right through hull plating. If you receive any hull damage from this ship's attack during a round you suffer one additional point of hull damage.

If you win you reduce the fighter to a wreckage but come under a hail of small arms fire from the Ratte engineers swarming around the star ship. While you think it would be possible to scatter these attackers - they're not the bravest of species and they don't seem to have any more fighter ships to hand - you need to get after the Pole. You'll just mention this incident in your report and the Conglomerate flagship will come by to press charges later on.

You move out of range of the weapons fire and consider your next move. If you'd like to follow up the Ratte King's lead and head to the watery moon of Orma, turn to [10](#). If you distrust the Ratte and want to check out the planet Nezval instead, turn to [354](#). On the other paw, now that you're sure that the Pole is still somewhere in Sham, you may prefer to move to a safe distance, put on your scanners and just observe the system in case the Pole makes a move. To do this turn to [124](#).



31

Your escort leads you straight to what they call "the Bridge" but is really just a dais set in a large, slum-lined chamber in the back end of the ship. Atop the podium is the revolting monster you spoke to on the communicator - the Ratte King. Just as repulsive in the flesh, the King is a heap of living Rattes, attired splendidly by rodent standards but with their twitching tails knotted and matted together inextricably. Seeing you, he licks most of his lips at once - a truly repulsive sight - and reaches out with grasping claws, apparently unable to restrain his acquisitive nature.

"So, what did you bring me?" he squeaks, several of his mouths working as one. Seeing the thunderous look on your face he reigns in his enthusiasm a little.

"I already paid your guards in full", you bark, not in the mood for any more mischief from these rodents. "Now, tell me what you know about the Pole."

"Fine", huffs the King. "Guards, can you bring him out? He should be around here somewhere."

Another shabbily-attired guard leaves the room and returns a few moments later, shaking his furry head.

"He was here a minute ago!" screeches the Ratte King, his many eyes wide. Some of them are fixed on you, others on a control panel on the dais, "Oh, looks like he undocked a minute or two before you arrived. You must have scared him off. No refunds."

You don't have time for this. You rush back to your ship, leap into the pilot's seat and undock, pulling away from the hangar as fast as you can. Your prey is only seconds away - you can't let him slip through your paws now!

Did you hit the guard earlier? If so turn to [202](#). Otherwise, you can't see where the Pole went. You're going to have to take a guess. If you want to head straight for populated Orma to see if you can track him down there then turn to [272](#). If you'd rather head to the red planet, Nezval, in case he mistakenly thinks you wouldn't follow him to a backwater like that, turn to [115](#).

32

Moc eagerly starts speaking into the loud-speaker. For whatever reason the strange salesbeing has decided that this is as good a time as any to peddle his wares, and he's launched into a lengthy pitch for his encyclopedias. At first the crowd doesn't pay a lot more attention to this than to your threats, but eventually Moc's old-fashioned sales patter, blasted at horrendous volume from the ship's powerful speakers, begins to wear the fighters down and they start to disperse. A few more shots splash harmlessly against the shields but within ten minutes the brawl has petered out and the combatants have abandoned the main strip, aside from a few who are apparently sticking around to buy some of Moc's encyclopedias. You set the ship down in the main shuttle parking area overlooking the main strip and step out into Barbet City. Moc sets up an impromptu stall on the wing of a nearby burnt-out shuttle and begins taking subscriptions for the Encyclopaedia Stellaris. You take the opportunity to bust a trio of locals in the line that you think you recognise from the riot. With calm restored you're free to investigate the area for signs of the Ten-Foot Pole. Add 3 Collars and turn to [121](#).

33

You relay the coordinates to Crunt, who instructs you to take your squad ship out a safe distance from the Macerator and wait for them to establish the jump field. With little else to gain by sticking around you do as you're told. You take off from the docking bay without incident and soon are drifting free back in open space. As you watch you're gratified to see that the Scrodes have ceased looting the station and that the Macerator is itself moving away from its prize. Turn to [165](#).



34

You manage to fatally weaken the barrier with your explosive, but unfortunately the "Dam" is all that stands between you and thousands of tonnes of water. The Dam cracks and gives way, pulverising you instantly in a floodwave of water and rubble.

35

The alien vessel is clearly very damaged but it appears to have some power going. It even has some heat and breathable air, which is impressive considering that it seems to be lacking an engineering section, jump drive or life support module. In their place it has a jagged tear running along the back of the ship which is currently being sealed off with a localised energy shield. Judging by its angled hullplates and nasty-looking (if badly mangled) maser weapon, this thing was designed for fighting so it probably has plenty of redundant systems aboard in case of battle damage.

Noticing that their sensors are at least partially functional you try to hail them but get no reply. After spending a while looking over the ship you determine that you don't have the means to cut your way through the hull or defeat that shield. If they don't want to talk there's no way you can make them so you decide to let them be for now.

Assuming you haven't done so already, if you want to hail the Macerator and see if you can get it to stop breaking the law then turn to [350](#). If you'd prefer to get the message across by arresting a few pirates then turn to [357](#). Otherwise there's nothing to do but wait for the cavalry to arrive. Turn to [108](#).



36

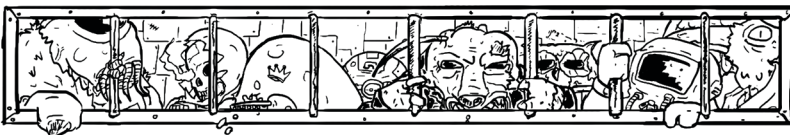
Remove an item from your inventory. Gramps takes the object and bites it a little as if to make sure it's authentic. Since you weren't handing over a gold bar you have no idea what this tells the old Squidge, but he seems satisfied with the payment and waves you in closer with his tentacle as if to tell you a secret.

"I saw them. They're trying to get out of this system without being found out by you. Told them how to get inside the machine. They're planning on getting themselves packed up in one of those containers by flying their shuttle into the machine through a gap in the harvester. The access pipe is just out yonder", he points with a long tentacle to a disturbed patch in the otherwise placid sea a few dozen yards out from shore. "I haven't seen him fly in yet, but it's the only way out of here. He'll be along soon enough."

You thank the old Squidge for his assistance. This information is extremely useful. If you want you could try to set a trap for the Pole: perhaps you could fly your craft just under the water and wait for him nearby. It might be somewhat risky but you'll be sure to have a chance of catching him when he makes a break for it. If you want to try this turn to [250](#). If you'd rather play it safe you can head up into space and simply wait for the container to launch - you run the risk of the Pole slipping through your paws but avoid an underwater battle near an aquatic combine harvester capable of mincing up herds of whale-sized fish. If you want to do this turn to [341](#).

37

The Cattes and their associates unceremoniously tear you from the Soyuz-30 and finish you off. If it's any consolation the Caterwaul is currently being pursued by the deadly Sexless Threshers and has a life expectancy not much longer than yours. Consoled or not, twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.



38

"I invoke Ujian Kekuatan", you bark. There's a moment's silence before Crunt responds.

"How did you.... never mind. We have to stop telling everyone about that", he shouts wearily. "Fine, Ujian Kekuatan. It's kind of our game though, you know. You don't stand a chance."

"So then I'll take odds. If I win, you clear off and you'll give me a jump out of this system. If I lose I'll give you everything I own and never bother a Scrode again."

"Fine", agrees the Scrodelord, "I'm transmitting docking instructions now. We'll hold the contest in the forward loading bay. I hope you're stronger than you sound or this isn't going to be a lot of fun". Finishing with a cackle he closes the connection.

As you follow the instructions and glide towards the cavernous loading bay you finally locate the Scrode information disc and insert it into the console. Your heart sinks - the Ujian Kekuatan is, in fact, an arm wrestling contest. Since you're a dog all your strength is in your jaw, whereas the Scrodes are all seven-foot-tall slabs of muscle with arms like tree-trunks. Even if their leg stalks are kind of weedy they've got you beat in the upper body department.

You come near to the bay and your ship shudders as it is gripped by a tractor beam - they're pulling you in. You've only got seconds to think of a plan. If you think you can win this, unfair evolutionary disadvantage or not, then turn to [3](#). If you think your co-pilot has a better chance than you and you'd like to send them to face the music instead, turn to [199](#) to put Tarlee forward, [334](#) to volunteer Gocky, or [235](#) to let Horizon-8 handle it. If none of these are your co-pilots then you're on your own - you'll need to find a way out of this mess yourself. Turn to [3](#).



You don't trust these Rattes and you're not drunk enough to want to fight the police. Your best bet would be to beat a hasty retreat before the law catches up with you.

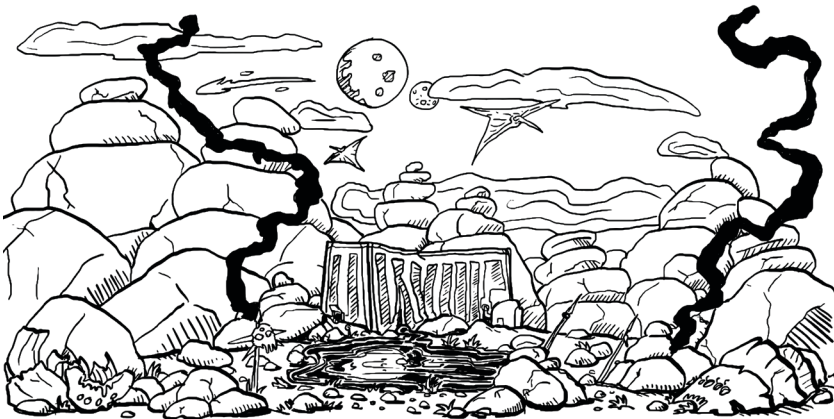
You make a perfunctory farewell to your Ratte hosts, race back to your ship and undock from the hangar entrance. The cop ship is now pretty close - any attempt to depart is likely to be noticed unless you engage in some seriously skillful flying. Still, you can't stick around here - those treacherous rodents will almost certainly snitch on you in return for some cheddar or to avoid a thump on the snout.

If your ship is heavily modified enough to have been rechristened as the Soyuz-30CA, OT, OW or RA then you might be able to casually slink past without being recognised. Turn to [381](#) to give this a go. Otherwise you'll have to rely on your skill and luck to get out of sight quickly without drawing attention.

BUGGERING OFF: DIFFICULTY 13



You only have one chance at this before you're detected. If you succeed turn to [372](#). Otherwise you quickly realise that you've bungled the manoeuvre - you've been spotted and will have to face the music. Turn to [122](#) to engage the police ship.



40

Sick of this barbarian backwater and everything on it, you take off, blasting bumpily through the atmosphere. Unfortunately your pursuer is lying in wait for this eventuality and as soon as you clear of the stratosphere your comms receiver suddenly bursts into life - the squad ship is broadcasting a message on an override frequency which can't be deactivated without breaking the speakers, "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE P.D. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE, PUT ON A SPACE SUIT AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, PSEUDOPODS AND.....ARF!"

The message is cut short as you slam on the throttle and squeeze the trigger, accelerating dangerously towards the squad ship and firing a volley of deadly maser bolts. The cop, though surprised, thrusts out of the way and manoeuvres to engage you with his ion cannon.

GLOMCOP SQUAD SHIP :

MANOEUVRE 8(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 4(1) - HULL 8



This ship has two shield modules - if the first one is burned out it will use the second one.

The Dubhe is equipped with an Ion Bolt-thrower - it causes Heavy Damage on 4+, but instead of rolling 1d6 on the table you roll 1d3.

If you defeat your adversary, turn to [289](#). If you wish to surrender at any time then you can power down your weapons and engines and allow yourself to be taken alive. Turn to [58](#).

41

You decide to do as the chief says and crouch down to squeeze inside the low entrance of the Holy Way. As you're about to cram yourself into the tunnel the fat Squidge taps you on the back.

"Hey, hey! Wait! Don't go in there! Come back. We were just messing with you", she says in a strained voice. "I'm really the chief and it's really not safe in there. Pretty deadly actually. I mean, we're not barbarians, come back up and we'll chat".

If you want to turn back then turn to [359](#). If you fear an alien trick then you ignore this "chief" and press on into the gloom - turn to [15](#).

You've wandered around the town for as long as it's safe to do so. That cop is definitely on your trail and he could be ready to pounce at any time. Returning to the promontory under which you parked your shuttle, you board, fire it up and take off, anxiously scanning the town behind you. Only a few minutes later, just as you're emerging from Orma's atmosphere, your sensors detect a launch. The cop must have spotted your take-off. He's coming your way, and fast.

Breaking into open space you review your options. If you've set a trap for the Glomcop, now would be the time to spring it. Otherwise there are no viable star ships around - the Rattes will be repairing their pile of junk for weeks before it can move, and in any case they're not answering your hails after probably ratting you out. The cargo containers floating about the system aren't going to provide much cover and the asteroid field surrounding the system, like most asteroid fields, has tens of thousands of miles between the rocks. While possibly of interest to stellar cartographers and it's not going to help you here.

The cop gains on you, catching up as you're leaving the moon's gravity well. Soon he's in weapons range and you hear his voice, barking in Glargot and then repeated in every conceivable language through your ship's speakers on the emergency override channel:

"THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE P.D. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE, PUT ON A SPACE SUIT AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, PSEUDOPODS AND/OR GRASPERS UP!"

You're screwed. Unless you want to turn yourself in you'd better fight.

GLOMCOP SQUAD SHIP :

MANOEUVRE 8(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 4(1) - HULL 8



This ship has two shield modules - if the first one is burned out it will use the second one.

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If you defeat your adversary, turn to [289](#). If you wish to surrender at any time then you can power down your weapons and engines and allow yourself to be taken alive. Turn to [58](#).

43

You'd love to see the look on the Chief's face when you march these two in for questioning at Glomcop HQ, but you've got an assignment to complete and they could be useful.

"I caught you two peckerheads red-handed and I've got all the evidence it's going to take to put you behind bars." you snarl at Pt'imm, who regards you through a puffy, bloodshot eye.

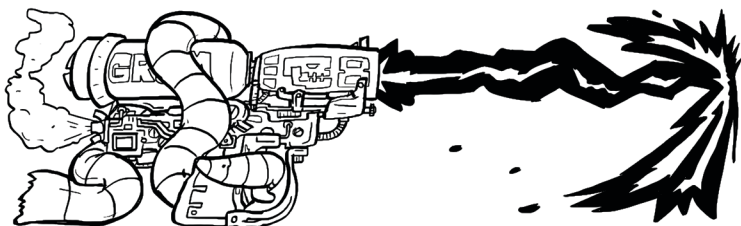
"Dog, don't do this. It'll mean my career... I've got a wife and hatchling at home...", he squawks pitifully. The near-death experience at the pseudo-pods of a giant slug seems to have clipped his wings somewhat.

"Tell you what. Instead of me dragging you back to the Glom, ruining your careers, putting you through a long trial and probably putting you behind bars, how about this. You thank me for saving your lives, tell me what you know about the Pole, give me a jump after him and promise not to be such a pain in my haunches next time we meet."

Pt'imm pretends to think about your offer for a minute and then croaks, "Agreed."

You uncuff the birds and they tell you everything they know about Hermaszewski : nothing. No Volan ship has been in contact with him. However the ambassador will convince the captain to keep the Star Kettle in system and to use its jump drive to send you wherever you want. Whenever the Volan ship is mentioned in the text, and you think you have learned where the Pole is heading, you can turn at once to 306 to contact the ambassador and arrange the next jump. Make a note of this in your police notebook.

With your business here concluded you recall your squad ship from its hiding place behind the planet. The Volans radio back to their ship for a teleport. Since it'll take a few hours for the Kettle to lock onto them and prepare the transport beam you leave them to it and board your squad ship. Turn to [263](#).



These old squad ships were built before stellar converters so they run fine on regular ions, but this comes at the cost of some nasty pollutants building up in their plasma exhaust that can leak back into the reactor. You're going to introduce an explosive. Laying out a groundsheet, you crawl under the squad ship and get to work. You're out in the middle of a public parking zone so there's no way to avoid notice - you can only hope that whoever sees you has no love for the Glomcops. Add 1 to your TRAIL.

Assuming you avoided an unpleasant run-in with the law, you have soon added some explosive compound into the exhaust system and welded everything neatly back together. The cop is in for a nasty surprise the second he's out of the atmosphere and the plasma exhaust recycling system kicks back in. Remove the explosive you used from your inventory. If you're attacked by this cop when in space make a note to turn at once to 369 to set off the explosives.

If you had no explosive device unfortunately your time was wasted - there's no damage you could do to the ship in the time available that wouldn't leave very obvious marks of tampering. The cop would just commandeer another ship when he saw you taking off. You satisfy yourself with scratching some Polish obscenities into the paintwork instead.

Either way, with your handiwork completed there's no need to stick around. You sneak out of the parking lot as stealthily as your towering height, alien appearance and bright white space suit will allow. Turn to [89](#).



45

After a brief interrogation you find out that the rat in the cat is a being called a Ratte who goes by the name "Catte" Chakold. He belongs to a subject species of the Catte Empire, the owners of the vessels that just attacked you. Although a prey lifeform on a ship full of carnivores he has somehow tricked his Catte overlords into believing that he is a Catte warrior by virtue of his incredible luck and his amazingly unconvincing cat-skin space suit. Grateful that you have spared him and snivellingly apologetic about having attempted to murder you, Chakold offers to join your crew.

If you will take him Catte Chakold can be added as a co-pilot. If you already have a co-pilot then Chakold can replace him, her or it: your current pilot will play no further part in this adventure and will alight at the next convenient stop. You could instead decide to flush this dirty rat out the airlock if you don't trust him.

With your crew arrangements settled it's time to deal with the crippling damage received by the Soyuz-30. Turn to [332](#).



46

Enveloped in the jump field, there's nothing to do but catch up on your paperwork and watch the stars flash past. Without resort to your ship's Interstellar Overdrive the jump is estimated to take three days. Advance the Stellar Date appropriately.

Terebellum isn't really a star-system - it's the midpoint in a quadrilateral of stars and a convenient location for the Terebellum Spend-o-Max, the sector's largest shopping mall and a major tourist destination on the Route. Or rather it was - the opening of the Interstellar 40 and the loss of traffic along Route 66³ reduced the market for overpriced tat pretty considerably. You expect your biggest problem to be finding a lift once you pick up the Pole's trail.

What's the date? If it's 2047.288 or earlier then turn to [156](#). If it's 289 or later then turn to [54](#).

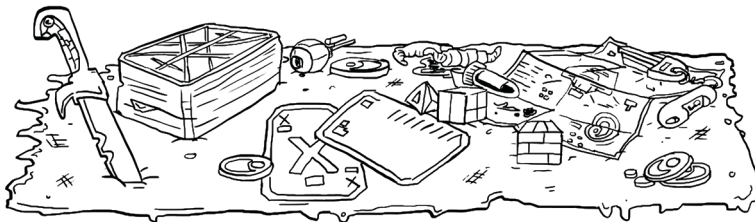
Thinking fast you compose the most hateful message you can think of, punch it into your ship's computer and patch it through to the channel during the first available break in the negotiations.

"We're not going to make a deal here. You Glommies hide behind your meaningless rules and regulations but you're all on the fiddle and not a single one of you ham-headed goldbricks would last a Stellar Day out here in the real universe", screeches a squawky avian voice sounding very much like that of Pt'om. There's a dreadful silence before anyway speaks.

"The bureaucracy of the Conglomerate of Reasonable Beings is real work. It's important work! It makes the galaxy function, damn it! You know what? We've had enough of you Volans undermining our governance and writing jokes on our customs forms. It's time to rid the universe of you once and for at!"

Before Pt'om can reply the Comptroller kills the connection and the Interlocutor powers up its terrible doomsday weapon. Realising the danger you disengage from the Star Kettle and move to a safe distance just in time to avoid sharing its fate - its shields, brought up at the last second, buckle under a sustained blast from the Interlocutor's gun. The ship is blasted into supercharged subatomic particles by a weapon normally used to remove planets which fall behind in paying their taxes.

This leaves you in an unfortunately tight spot. Your only ride out of this system is in the form of a vessel which wants to take you back to stand trial in the Conglomerate. Although they have no way of divining your instigation of an interstellar incident that killed tens of thousands of bird things and would go on to spark a bloody galactic war, they do have enough on you to put you in a small cell for a very long time. With no escape possible, you give yourself up. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.



48

You pull away from the stricken vessel, drift out into space and prepare your daily report. Your descriptions of the alien star ship will probably be interesting to the eggheads back at the office but it doesn't make typing it out any easier on your paws. Advance the Stellar Date by 1.

If the date is now 2047.288 then turn to [337](#), otherwise there's still work to be done in this system. Assuming you haven't already done so, you may now investigate the escape pods:

Turn to [19](#) to rescue the law enforcement professional.

Turn to [291](#) to save the pod full of women and children.

Turn to [261](#) to crack open the pod containing the wanted fugitives,

Turn to [193](#) to investigate the pod holding the precious cargo.

Alternatively you could turn to [100](#) to secure the mall's merchandise.

If you'd prefer to hang around and just watch the space hulk for a while to make sure it doesn't make any sudden moves then advance the Stellar Date to 288 and turn to [337](#). You may add 10 additional ENERGY as it's a good opportunity to take a load off.

49

A nasty grin spreads across your muzzle.

"I have evidence that while Miroslaw Hermaszewski was in Barbet City, you hired him to attack a Matari...church. I've got a video recording proving he was here, an eyewitness statement putting him at the scene of the attack and instructions found at the site covered in your handwriting. You've aided and abetted a wanted fugitive. You're going away, baldy". Harry's jaw drops, "W...wait. We can make a deal. How's about I tell you what I know and we forget about all this unpleasantness?"

"Sure", you reply. "It'll be water under the bridge. Now dish."

An utterly deflated Harry tells you all about the deal he made with the Pole - in return for the Pole's unwitting help in shutting down a rival establishment (incidentally triggering off the riots), he arranged for the Erinacean star ship Omnivore to take the Space Explorer and his accomplice to the Terebellum system. You thank him for this information.

"So I'm free to go?" the hedgehog inquires hopefully.

50-51

“No”, you reply, your tail wagging uncontrollably. Your stellar detective work has taken the fight out of Harry and he meekly submits to being cuffed. You book him for aiding and abetting a known fugitive along with a bunch of lesser obstruction and fraud charges that probably won't stick before frog marching him across the main street and into the back of your squad ship. The Erinacean government will probably go nuts but the thought of the Chief having to deal with that headache just makes the victory all the sweeter. Add 10 Collars.

It's time to get the hell off this dustball. Note the system name “Terebellum” in your police notebook, leap back into the cockpit and turn to [253](#).

50

You return to the Soyuz-30 and, using the periscope to ensure the coast is clear, power it up and launch. You skim over the sea around the outside of the island to the 50 yard marker buoys bobbing up and down on the waves a little way out in front of the Machine. The idea of flying your space ship underwater, through the blades of an industrial fish pulveriser and into a sealed cargo container seems somehow a little intimidating, but hey - that's space adventuring. Punching the engines you crash down under the waves and into the jaws of oblivion.

FISHTECH MK VII FISH REAPER:

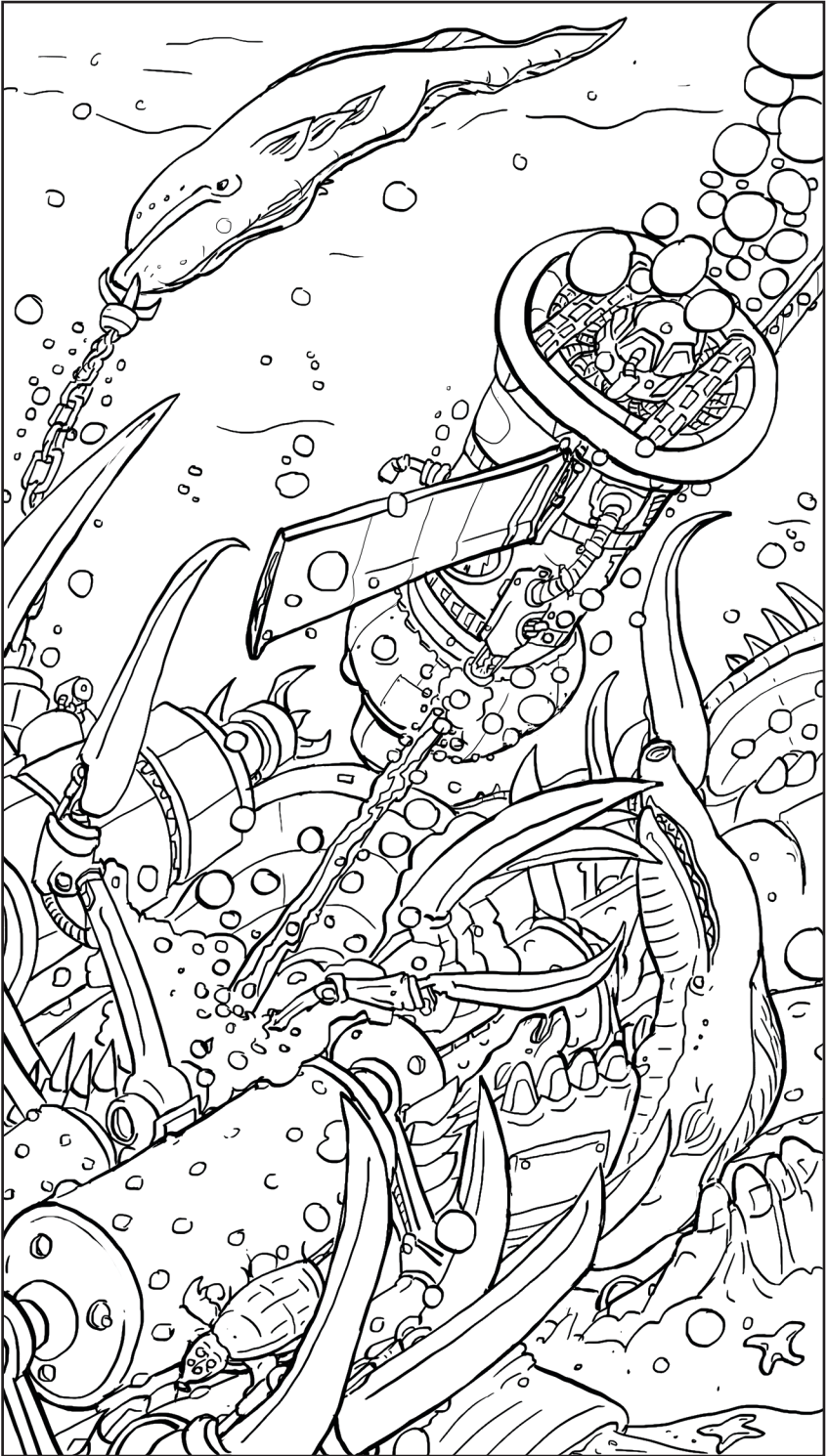
MANOEUVRE 6(1) - WEAPONS 6(1) - SHIELDS 0 - HULL 6



If you are defeated then turn to [315](#). On the other hand if you reduce it to 0 HULL you slip through the remaining blades and are sucked into the heart of the Machine. Turn to [175](#).

51

You're not paid enough to stick your neck out for these irritating birds. Content that your nemeses are getting what's coming to them for gambling with the lives of thousands of beings (and, more importantly, for being a pain in your haunches), you slink out of the room unnoticed and call your ship around. Turn to [263](#).



52

Moc lifts his hat, slicks back his antenna and, replacing the hat, sidles over to the crooks with his weird three-legged gait. Eyeing the goons with his bulbous sensory cluster he gives his patented double-barreled grin, his two mouths displaying both sets of perfectly even, brilliantly white teeth. He's about to work some sales magic.

"Guys, how do you do? Moc's the name and I'm doing just swell. This guy over here, well, he's just swell too", Moc begins. The aliens, taken aback by Moc's patter, don't interrupt, and the salesbeing continues:

"Now I know the Glomcops get a lot of bad press, but they're not interested in causing trouble for respectable businessmen such as your fine selves. Their line of work is going after the big guys, and they're willing to pay handsomely for any help the small business community can offer. Now what's it going to take to bring you over to our side? What would you say to new identities under the witness protection program, identities with mansions and sports ships and a Police Directorate expense account. You won't get an offer like that every stellar day. Can we make a deal here?" The two crooks look at each other, greed shining in their beady black eyes. They both look back at Moc, and the taller one speaks,

"We want titles as well. Always wanted titles. Barons. We want all this in writing, and I also want that dog's watch."

Moc grins. "Heck, we'll set you up as Counts if it'll make you happy. Least we could do. I'll get the contract written up for you and," he gestures at you, "my partner here will be happy to part with your new timepiece."

You sigh as you unclasp the watch. It was a gift from your grandfather. You hope Moc knows what he's doing.

Turn to [264](#).

53

The interrogation is extremely hard going. You've tried howling, begging, barking, baring your teeth and playing dead, but you can't get a word out of these aliens. Your nose is dripping with sweat, and your helmet annoyingly prevents you from wiping it. Ignoring this aggravation you try yet another line of attack.

"If you tell me what I want to hear I can erase your criminal history at the Glomcop HQ, and arrange amnesty for any crimes that you're currently wanted for. I'll also arrange transport for you to anywhere you want to go in the Glom", you offer.

The two aliens look at each other and then at you, and the taller one burbles,

"Luxury transport. And we want that watch you've got on. And we want everything in writing."

You sigh. That watch was your grandfather's. The Glomcops gave it to him on the day he retired from the force, and he gave it to you on his deathbed.

"Fine", you bark, unclasping the heirloom.

Turn to [264](#).

54

You glide smoothly out of the jump into a scene of utter devastation. The Spend-o-Max station is smashed into rubble and is little more than a slowly-rotating hulk in the middle of a debris field. Approaching the destruction and, in all probability, responsible for it as well is a vessel which you recognise as the infamous Scrode star ship, the Macerator. The only successfully captured jump ship in history, the two-mile long vessel has a twisted and eerie aspect thanks to the scars of a decade in the Void Nebula along with the primitive modifications attempted by the dreaded Void pirates. It looks like a gaping mouth ringed with jagged teeth, which is essentially what it is - a giant boarding vessel. Meanwhile floating nearby is what looks like the front half of a huge star ship, all angular plates and menacing protrusions drifting slowly and silently through space. You scan it quickly : it seems to have some minimal power and even some shielding but no engines, jump drive or functioning weapons.

Before you do anything you check the police alerts channel - the destruction of the station has been noted and the Glom flagship, the Interlocutor, has been despatched to handle the situation but is still quite some distance away. In the meantime, as the only representative of the Conglomerate legal community within dozens of light years it's up to you to take matters in paw.

Turn to [195](#).



55

Not really in the mood to get bullshitted or ripped off by a bunch of rodents living in a mound of space junk, you decide to hang back, crank up your sensors and wait to see if the Pole makes a move. Either he's aware that you're watching and is staying put, or he's able to fly stealthily enough that your sensors simply aren't able to pick him up against the considerable background radiation coming from the disintegrating Rattetail.

After a while you realise nothing much is going to happen while you're sitting here. If you want to head over to the Rattetail after all, you zoom in towards their hangar : turn to [279](#). If you want to continue to snub the rodents, you could begin your search for the Pole either on the red planet (turn to [115](#)) or the water moon (turn to [272](#)).

56

Without any prompting the squat deep-space probe opens up an array of panels on its exterior and, tearing through its poorly-fitted space suit, deploys a whirring array of whip antennas, sensor stalks, grappling cables and manipulator arms, several of which are either clutching knives or have knives crudely taped to them. Horizon-8, emitting a loud continuous beep, begins flailing these sharp protuberances wildly and totters rapidly towards the melee. The last thing the slug sitting atop the Volan ambassador sees is the probe's baleful red eye before it's instantly pulped and sprayed across the nearest wall by the robotic blender.

The fight instantly stops and everyone looks at the probe in horror. You clear your throat to get its attention and Horizon-8 swivels its glowing red eye to face you, weapons retracting back into its hull.

"Please tell me that was a 'laws of robotics' thing. You can't allow a sentient being to come to harm by inaction, or something like that?" you say.

"Negative. HATE must practice for when HATE returns home. HATE cannot become....rusty." the probe replies in its unnervingly cheery voice.

"I'll write it up as a laws of robotics thing." You reply, slapping some cuffs on the surviving but shellshocked space slug. It's a good catch: add 2 Collars. Now to deal with those Volans. Turn to [14](#).

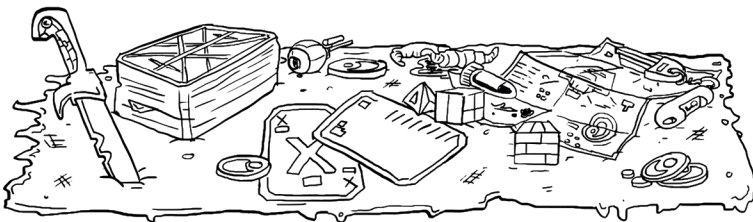
57

A few days later you arrive at Kitalpha. You make your farewells and undock from the jump ship before approaching the shuttle parking at the infamous space station. The sight of the truck stop silhouetted against the bright yellow star fills you with relief - you're as close to a place you call home as is possible in this alien quadrant of the galaxy.

You raced ahead of your pursuers too quickly for them to possibly catch up. Even if they could come after you now they wouldn't - the destruction of the barbarian jump ship in Sham and the appearance of the bizarre alien space mountain has eclipsed whatever relatively paltry issue you were wanted for.

It's a big universe and this sort of thing happens all the time. The mess in Sham will be cleaned up and your legal issues in the Glom will blow over eventually. In the meantime you have the rest of the sector to explore and countless more adventures on which to embark. Still, you can't help but think it was all a bit easy - you sort of slid from one end of the galaxy to the other without touching the sides. Maybe if you had a chance to do it over again you'd get your hands a little dirtier, make some new friends, live a little.

For now though, the only adventure you need includes a room, a bath and a goldfish bowl full of vodka, three things the Kitalpha Fuel n' Gruel cheerfully provides in spades.



58

You are arrested and dragged back to the Conglomerate Homeworld to stand trial for your apparently grievous crimes. You receive a stiff sentence in the Jolian Supermax, putting an end to your two-fisted space explorations for a good long while. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

Bones gives you the nod, his glowing eyesockets sparkling with what you assume is mischief (or possibly malice). You regard the chief coldly.

“W porzadku”, you say. “Przygotuj swoich ludzi. Zostawimy jutro rano”. The chief doesn’t need to be told twice (actually she does since she doesn’t understand your Polish), but she quickly grasps that you’ve accepted her deal and goes to ready her people to embark the following morning. Meanwhile you open up a loading bay on the container and use that to park the Soyuz-30 inside. Bones immediately gets to work, and using his extraordinary electro-mechanical repair skills has the Soyuz-30’s controls wired up to the container’s thrusters in no time. You run a quick sensor scan - your dogged police pursuer isn’t anywhere directly overhead and with any luck is currently on the other side of the planet. It’s now or never - you treacherously slam the container hatches shut, rush to the controls of the Soyuz and, listening as the tribals hammer impotently on the exterior of their former temple, you activate the auto-thrusters.

Not as punchy as the Soyuz-30’s meson boosters but still capable of lifting the 250-foot cargo container out of a planet’s gravity, your adopted vessel’s thrusters shunt you up through the atmosphere and eventually out into space. Using the last of the power stored aboard the container and most of what’s left of the Soyuz-30’s batteries you give the drives one final shove. The crate drifts in the general direction of the other containers that are floating around the system. And just in time - right as the engines sputter out and go cold the squad ship rounds the planet and zips right past. You might be in the clear!

Turn to [174](#).

You begin your approach towards the jump ship. A quick scan reveals it to be the Retick star ship, the Discoverer. The grey-skinned, bulb-headed Reticks are affiliate members of the Glom in that they pay an annual fee in return for being left alone. You’ve had some problems with this species before - they claim to be dispassionate scientists but their habit of pinching anything that isn’t tied down to keep their “scientific research” going has put them on the wrong side of the law more than a few times, and they’ve failed to pay their association fees to the Glom. They’re probably due a visit from the tax collector soon.

The Reticks' Discoverer is a sleek, shiny chrome-coated teardrop. In theory it's a scientific vessel but it's not much different from any other jump ship. It has recently been modified with an array of cargo hooks to carry supplies around since their homeworld population started starving due to the resources spent on building and maintaining the Discoverer.

As you enter communications range you attempt to hail the jump ship. For some reason the first attempt isn't picked up so you try again. This time they pick up after a few rings. A Retick face appears on your communications panel.

"Archprofessor Zeta h..here," the alien stammers. Your ship's translator is pre-loaded with many of the Retick languages and is able to cope easily, "How can we be of assistance?"

Reticks have very expressive faces and this one looks extremely stressed. Could be the challenges of command, could be he's worried about Glom back-payments. Could be something else. You doubt they know much about Hermaszewski's current location but you could engage them in conversation while you give them an in-depth scan - the Space Exploration Pole could be trying to sneak aboard somehow. If you want to give this a try then turn to [310](#). On the other hand you could try a different approach - their outstanding debt to the Glom might give you the leverage you need to gain their cooperation. To go the "bad cop" approach turn to [69](#).



61

Although untouched by the riots, the maze of crumbling concrete and barred-up slums that surrounds the Barbet City settlement is just as dusty, unwelcoming and unpleasant as always. Barbet City was once a thriving home for tens of thousands but when the Interstellar 40 opened up the place no longer had any reason to exist and so almost all of the non-native population left.

You see a few of the Matari out on the street as you walk along. The tall, pink-skinned natives stare at you extremely coldly. They've never been the biggest fans of the Glomcops.

Deciding to stay off the side-streets you follow the main thoroughfare until it eventually terminates at a wide circular plaza surrounded by tall ruined buildings. A weatherbeaten statue of some long dead governor stares down at you from a partially eroded plinth, and half a dozen alleyways radiate out from the circus behind the statue and weave through the ruins beyond.

You've been wandering around for a while but haven't been able to pick up sight nor scent of the Pole. You're not going to find anything just roaming around at random and time is of the essence - you'd better return to the town centre and continue your investigations there. If you haven't already you can visit the bar by turning to [356](#) or the fuel depot by turning to [365](#). Otherwise you can return to your squad ship and prepare to take off by turning to [253](#).

62

You connect with a particularly nasty blow to the bug's faceplate. With a sickening crunch and a final spray of mildly acidic goop the black bug goes limp and floats lifelessly away down the corridor. Suddenly your portable translator crackles into life, having spent the past few minutes applying its limited capabilities to the insectoid's initial roars.

"BOY AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. THEY'RE IN THERE. TWO OF THEM", the device intones in tinny, robotic Glargot. Whoops. You'll file that as an obstruction of justice and assault on police officer, but the Chief is going to have a field day with this when he hears about it. Subtract 1 Collar. For now, you've got two perps to bust. You draw your blaster with one paw and thump the door control panel with the other. The door slides open and in you go! Turn to [93](#).

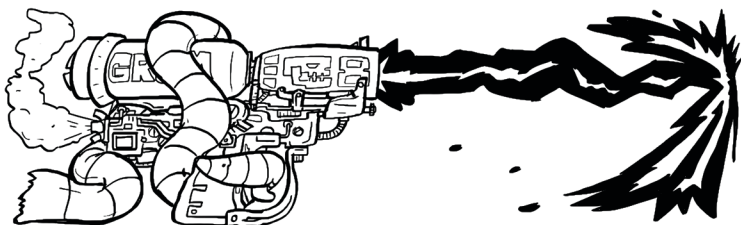
63

There's nothing of any interest going on in Sham at the moment - since the stolen portion of the Caterwaul doesn't seem to have passed through the system yet it looks as though you've overtaken the Pole somehow! This is a golden opportunity to get ahead of your paperwork and finally get a bit of rest. You stop your squadship somewhere safe and get to typing, going as fast as you can with your two-pawed typing method. Eventually you feel like you're on top of things for once and curl up in your pilot's chair to catch a few extra hours of sleep.

Restore up to 20 ENERGY and advance the Stellar Date by 1.

You are eventually roused from your well-deserved dognap by a bright flash of light across your viewscreen and a cacophony of sensor alerts as they pick up the arrival of a star ship at the edge of the system. It appears the Pole's ride has finally arrived! Checking your sensor readings and your view screen, zoomed in at the highest setting, you can see that the new arrival is little more than a glowing wreck spinning slowly around in the sparse asteroid belt surrounding this system's major planetary bodies. From its angular design it's definitely the back half of the Caterwaul from Terebellum, although amusingly its crew has somehow found the time to paint the name "Rattetail" across the hull in huge brown letters. The ship - or what remains of it - is trailing a several light years-long stream of rapidly-cooling trilineum gas from its leaking reactors. The Pole, having had no time to escape, is probably still aboard the star ship. You could go and attempt to capture him there, but he may be looking out for you. It might be a better idea to simply wait and let him come to you.

Do you want to approach this "Rattetail" and commence the hunt for the Pole? If so turn to [168](#). If you'd prefer to put a Fishtein crate between you and the remnants of the Catte ship and watch to see what Hermaszewski intends to do next, turn to [67](#).



64

Somehow, against all the odds, you're winning! Using all your strength you've almost gotten Krobb's massive claw-hand onto the table when you see a glint in its eyepod and your arm is ripped in the opposite direction with enough force to tear the tendons and ligaments clean out of your foreleg. Your paw is slammed into the table to the cheers of the assembled Scrodes, leaving you in agony. The damage to your dominant paw is probably permanent - lose 1 current and maximum EXPERTISE.

While Krobb is roaring in victory and soaking up the adulation of the crowd, a laughing Scrunt comes over to you.
 "Ah well, never mind. A deal's a deal though. We're taking everything. Now get out and don't bother us again, or we'll break your other paw for you."

While you nurse your paw a number of Scrode pirates board your ship and take everything that isn't bolted down and several things that are. Remove all items, including ship upgrades, from your inventory (if any).

Thoroughly humiliated, you board your squad ship and depart the Scrode vessel as promised. There's nothing to do now but wait for another ship. Turn to [108](#).

65

You climb down the chute deep into the underbelly of the ship, following the crudely-painted arrows. Eventually you come to the bottom and step out into another corridor.

Your progress is quickly stopped outside the airlock by a barrier made of stacked wood, plascrete and metal. The alien word "DAM" is painted across the front in big letters. The barrier is packed extremely densely and a quick scan shows it's several metres thick. There's a thin gap at the top, between the barrier and the ceiling, just big enough for you to fit through. On the other side of this gap you can hear the sound of running water, splashing and eerie laughter.

If you want to get up there and take a look at the other side then turn to 96. Otherwise if you want to knock this "Dam" down and you have an explosive then you can turn to [34](#) to see what's lurking behind this wall. If you have Tarlee with you and want her to blast the wall down then

turn to [331](#). Otherwise, assuming you haven't already done so, you can retrace your steps and visit the "SANDBOX" by turning to [276](#) or the "NEST" by turning to 265. If you're tired of this hulk and want to get back into open space then return to your ship and turn to [48](#).

66

You catch a hint of a familiar scent on the dust-laden breeze - the same smell as was on the Space Exploration Quarterly you flicked through. It's faint: your sensitive nose can pick up a scent trail for up to a month but the constant wind, the omnipresent silica dust and the smoke from the riots makes following this smell difficult. Still, you manage to follow it out of the plaza and into one of the alleyways, where it becomes stronger.

You follow the scent trail for a while, winding along the maze-like corridors between crumbling structures. It becomes more and more concentrated until you arrive at a ruined building at a t-junction between two alleyways. On the opposite site of the junction is a squat, burned out structure with signs of blaster damage, but of more immediate interest is the second floor of the ruin - whoever left the scent stayed there for several hours. You carefully scale up the side of the building and enter the second floor, where you follow the scent to a part of the building overlooking the t-junction. You detect the faint traces of burnt ozone left by blaster fire - whoever was up here was probably responsible for the damage to the building opposite - and something else, something foul and damp. Sniffing around you detect the source of this new smell tossed carelessly into the corner of the room : a soiled drink coaster bearing the logo of the Barbet Bunker, the bar back on the main strip. Add the Drinks Coaster to your inventory.

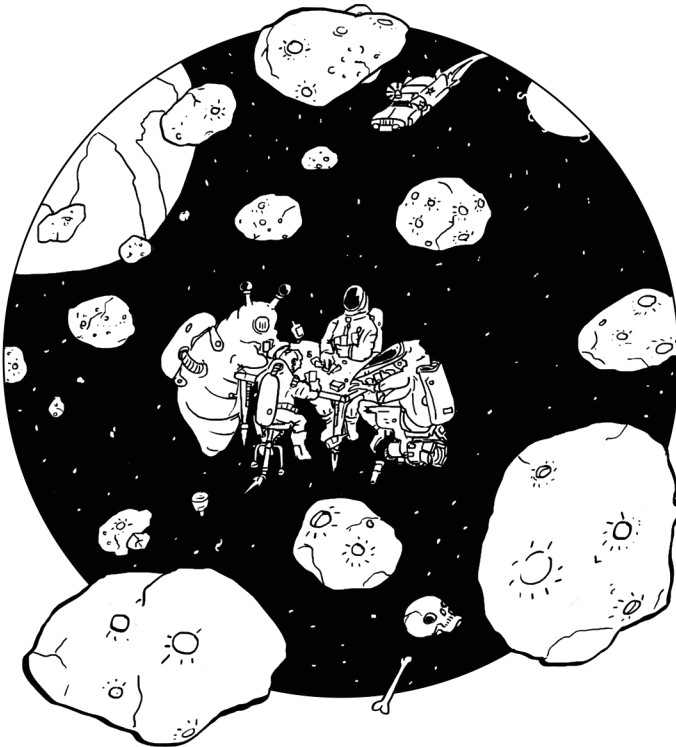
Your activities in the ruins have attracted some attention. Half a dozen tall, pink-skinned Matari have come out of the burned-out building across the alley. One of them is absolutely colossal, about seven feet tall and nearly as wide but he's covered in bandages and limps as he turns sideways to fit out the exit. They're all armed, with holstered lasers, blasters and slugers and they're all staring right up at you with cold, hard glares.

If you draw your blaster and tell them to put down their weapons, turn to 141. If you'd rather try to deal with these natives peacefully turn to [137](#). If you want to skulk away, turn to [212](#).

You park up for a while near a convenient Fishtein container and watch the Rattetail for a while, but see no sign of the Pole or his Soyuz-30 emerging from the ruined ship. Either he's still aboard or he's managed to sneak off without you spotting him - not completely impossible given the small size of his vessel, his reputed skill as a pilot and the large amount of radar interference from the leaking hulk.

After a little while longer with no obvious sign of much going on, you begin to get worried that you're about to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory just sitting here like this. It's time to make a move.

If you've changed your mind about approaching the Rattetail you can head over by turning to [168](#). Otherwise you can go straight for the water moon if you have a hunch he's gone there by turning to [272](#), or instead attempt to hunt the Pole down on the planet by turning to [115](#).





68

You look closely at Elwoo. You don't really trust this guy but he's been in and out of every prison in the Glom and probably stands more of a chance at winning this contest than you do. You ask him to give it a shot in exchange for some extra time off his sentence.

"Sure. Why not. I'll give it a go", he says flatly. Fighting every professional impulse you possess, you give your police hat to the criminal, who places it atop his existing hat on a jaunty angle. The Scrodes, not being great observers of other civilisations and their cultural practices, might be fooled by this bit of camouflage.

Not entirely confident about this plan's chances of success, you touch down in the hangar bay. Your ship is immediately thronged by a huge crowd of booing, jeering Scrodes. Half of the Macerator's crew must be packed into here to see the cop get thrashed at Uijan Kekuatan. Elwoo gives you a tight wave and struts out of the squad ship.

A few seconds later he returns. "Yeah, I'm not doing it", he says, "Did you get a look at the guy? He's huge."

While you struggle to come up with a response that doesn't involve a torrent of barking, Elwoo continues, "By the way, we'd better book it. I might've run my mouth a bit and, well, they're not happy with us".

Seconds later you hear something heavy thud against the hull. Since your cover's blown anyway you stick your head up to look out the viewport and see that the crowd is getting ugly - some Scrodes are throwing wrenches, toolboxes, stools and smaller Scrodes at the ship. You give Elwoo the go ahead and he blasts out of the hangar, into the relative safety of space outside.

Turn to [195](#).

The “bad dog” routine usually works on the more skittish alien races, so you decide to give it a whirl here. You bare your teeth and snarl unpleasantly.

“You can be of assistance by paying the Conglomerate what you owe it. Right now.”

The Archprofessor looks extremely frightened by your aggression and shrinks back from the viewscreen.

“Unless you have some information for me. Maybe I could tell the Glom to hold off on collection for a few weeks if you told me, say, where I can find the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole. He’s an even more wanted criminal than you creeps and I know he’s trying to get out of this sector. Tell me what you know or I’ll call the Interlocutor and tell them where your bums are”.

The alien goes pale, almost completely white. He obviously knows something, but before you can press him further he recovers his composure.

“You know w..what?”, he stammers, “I don’t have to take this from you. We said we’d pay when we could, and we’ve already made a payment p..plan with your masters. So... piss off. If you keep bothering us, we’ll open fire. Zeta out”. With this he closes the connection.

The hard-boiled routine doesn’t always pay off. The Discoverer is arming its weapons. If you continue to annoy them with scans, payment demands and accusations they’d vaporise you and then the Glom would have to apologise for your conduct in some elaborate and humiliating arse-kissing ceremony. Still, you know you’re onto something here.

If you want to ignore the Retick’s threats and commence scanning the Discoverer and nearby containers for any sign of the Pole, then turn to [5](#). If you’d prefer not to kick off a star war, you honour their request and continue your investigations elsewhere - turn to [240](#). Finally, if you have a stellar bug in your inventory you could attempt to plant it on the Discoverer to find out where it’s heading to by turning to [397](#).

70

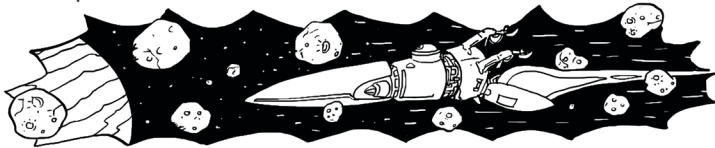
The market stalls are mostly run by elderly Squidges selling home-made garbage (mostly macrame, knitwear and various pickled sea horrors). All pretty much equal parts dull, tacky and revolting. You doubt the Pole has even looked at most of this crap. Passing around the stalls surrounding the market square you do, however, find a few sellers with interesting items, although the Squidge haggling process is always an annoyingly protracted, loud affair that inevitably ends with both parties feeling ripped off.

You may, if you wish, purchase any of the the following items from the market. Each costs one item:

Fuel Canister, Health Pack, Trauma Kit, Stellar Bug, Golden Energy

For each item you buy add 1 to TIME due to the excruciating spectacle involved in driving a bargain of any kind with these intractable bone-headed land-molluscs. If Moc is with you then the first item doesn't add anything to the TIME score: the slick salesbeing is able to cut a deal with these fractious squids remarkably quickly and without any fuss.

If you bought anything at all turn to [6](#), otherwise it's time to move on. Turn to [330](#) and pick somewhere else to be.



71

You're as mad as hell and you're not going to take it any more! You fire blast after blast into the helpless squad ship and don't stop until its fusion reactors breach. The engines ignite in a catastrophic explosion, reducing the police vessel to atoms.

Your bloodlust sated, you feel it's time to move the ship to a discreet distance from the scene of the crime. You're pretty sure that the fight would have been observed from the planet and any attempt to go down there would wind up with you being beaten and tied up until more cops arrived, so your only hope is another passing ship...

Turn to [229](#).

72

Just as you're getting worn out from digging mud and kicking fuzzy bugs you burst up into the relatively clean air of the surface. Scrambling out of the pit you encounter a familiar sight and smell - the bug-bitten remains of the rotten Erinacean you partially exhumed and reburied earlier. Thinking fast you shove it back down into the tunnel, blocking most of the exit. Judging by the chewy crunching noises that result from this action it seems that the creatures are content with your offering. None of them bother or dare to come out of the tunnel after you.

You face a long trek through the forest and over the barren wastes to return to your ship on the edge of the village. Miraculously it's still intact when you arrive a couple of hours later but someone has smeared the viewscreen with what the translator assures you says, "SORRY". You don't know what medium was used to compose that note and you prefer not to find out, deciding instead to simply wipe it off and discard whatever you used to do that without any further investigations. With that done, you must decide - will you walk back into that village and settle matters (turn to [119](#)) or if you don't want anything more to do with these tricky aliens you could climb aboard the Soyuz-30, change your filthy clothes and fly some place else (turn to [307](#)).

73

You return to the Soyuz-30 and, using the periscope to ensure the coast is clear, power it up and launch. You skim over the sea around the outside of the island to the 50 yard marker buoys bobbing up and down on the waves a little way out in front of the Machine. Heading just a little further out you scan for the access tubes the old Squidge told you about. There's one exactly where he said it would be. Hoping you can trust his word the rest of the way, you pilot your space ship down under the waves into the access passage.

As promised you bypass the fish smashing machine - your sensors detect the terrifying industrial equipment chewing away in the tunnel above you. Shortly beyond the harvesters your access tunnel merges with the main course. You are picked up by the current and dragged into the heart of the Machine along with the fish slurry pouring through the harvester's blades.

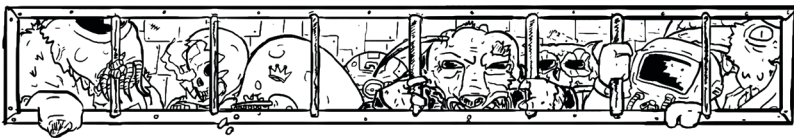
Turn to [175](#).

74

The rodent's tough-guy facade crumbles against a good long look down the gun barrel, and he spills his guts. He had seen the Pole and his companion, an animated skeleton card sharp - in fact, he had hired them to destroy the Matari's casino in the Outskirts in return for a ticket out of this system. The Erinacean star ship Omnivore picked up the the Pole about a week ago and transported him to the Terebellum system.

Justice may have been served here today, but the law certainly wasn't. While this information might help you eventually collar the Pole, you can't help but feel that by cutting corners you've stored up some serious problems for yourself in the future. In the meantime you cuff the rodent and charge him with just about every crime in the book, but you doubt any of it will stick. Subtract 5 Collars and add the words "Terebellum" and "Brutality" to your police notebook.

With the Pole's trail picked up, it's time to leave. After locking the shell-shocked Harry in the prisoner transport module you jump into the pilot's seat and blast off from this filthy pink dirtball of a world. Turn to [253](#).



75

Marketed to the law enforcement community as a comprehensively horrible experience in a can, the party cracker is an amazingly useful piece of kit for any police officer who wants to ruin someone else's good time. It's a large grenade with an adjustable fuse which when detonated explodes with a huge concussive force and a blinding flash of light, sprays riot foam and rubber bullets and releases a cloud of incapacitating gas all at the same time. You set your party cracker's pain dial to "brutalise" and its area of effect to maximum, pull open a hopper located under the weapons panel and chuck the grenade in. Seconds later the bomb tumbles out from the underside of the squad ship and detonates in mid-air, ending the riot almost instantly in a haze of gas, baton rounds and sticky foam which hardens into concrete upon contact.

As the rioters flee you land the squad ship in the town's parking zone and leap out to make a few arrests. Half a dozen individuals - an assortment of locals and Matari natives - are pinned helplessly to the ground by hardened riot foam. You cut them free and book the lot of them into your ship's prisoner transport module for riot and affray. Add 6 Collars. With the riot contained with minimal use of force, you are free to investigate the town for clues as to the Ten-Foot Pole's whereabouts. Turn to [121](#).

76

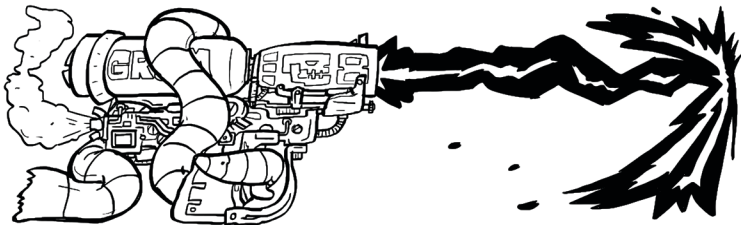
You dispense yourself a drink from the autobar, sidle over to the ladies, tap one of the more attractive ones on what you assume is a shoulder and lay your best one-liner on her.

"Niebo blednie wobec barwy Pani macki".

She turns quickly and slaps you extremely hard across the face, causing you to stagger back and bump into another patron, spilling whatever horrible local beverage you bought in the process. Under normal circumstances you'd just straighten yourself up and try again, but this time you've stumbled into particularly nasty greaser who doesn't take kindly to being sprayed with bar juice. He pours an entire pint of dark fishbeer over your boots and goes for his switchblade. Seeing this the whole bar erupts in a wild brawl, with fists, barstools and bottles flying everywhere:

SAVAGE SID: EXPERTISE 11 HEALTH 2 FISTS 2 

If you win, Sid drops to the floor unconscious and you battle your way to the door. This brawl will have certainly drawn the attention of your pursuer. Add 1 to your TRAIL. If you remain at large, you duck down a nearby alleyway and figure out your next port of call. Turn to [89](#).



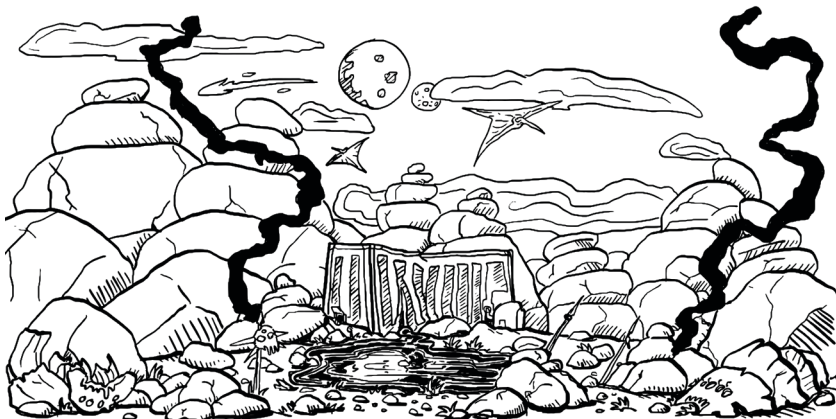
It's probably just marsh gas. You step around the bump and proceed, following the feeble beam of your torch into the encroaching darkness. You don't have to go far - just as the light from the tree line dies out entirely you locate the source of all this fecundity by running nose first into the side of a badly damaged, mostly submerged and heavily corroded self-shunting cargo container. One of the Fishtein crates launched from the moon has crashed here and burst open, disgorging a few megalitres of highly-concentrated fishy protein into the soil and causing this primeval jungle to rise up out of the wastes. You can make out the remnants of one of the container's autothrusters but before you have time to approach for a closer look you hear that awful squelching sound, this time coming from directly behind you! You spin around just in time to see a huge primordial alien rising out of the muck, something like a six-legged, fur-covered trilobite the size of a hippopotamus. Obviously intent on a feed it advances on you with alarming speed, its armoured head lowered for the charge. With your back to the ruined container and this monster between you and your ship, you must fight:

TRILOBEAR: EXPERTISE 12 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS $\frac{1}{2}$ *

*Roll 1d3 for FISTS



If you win the monster emits a piercing shriek and digs straight down into the mud in an attempt to get away. Do you want to finish it off? If so turn to [295](#). Otherwise you take advantage of the monster's change of heart: you backtrack out of this jungle and return to the relative safety of the Soyuz-30. Turn to [307](#).



78

You've heard some interesting tales about the fusion plant in this mall. It's supposed to be completely self-contained but it was made fast and on the cheap by dodgy contractors. Supposedly there are ways to get into the core and tap it for energy. If you can find out for sure you might know a couple of species that would pay to hear what you've learned. You check the station data you downloaded earlier and sure enough, there's a way down to the core, although it's all authorised access only.

Waiting until the guard is out of sight, you duck into a maintenance room and remove a vent cover. From there it's a short crawl to a service tube and a long climb down to the lowest level of the station. Finally you stand before the bottom part of reactor core's outer plate - a forbidding plascrete structure. You circumnavigate it, scrutinising the core closely for hidden panels with your suit's flashlight, and eventually find what you're looking for - a removable service panel. You pry it open, and behind it you find an exposed fusion capacitor! If you like you can safely remove it for installation on your ship - add the fusion capacitor to your inventory.

If Horizon-8's with you then turn to [17](#). Otherwise, if you want to keep exploring the underbelly of this station turn to [143](#). If you've had enough space exploration for the time being, you haul yourself back up the way you came and begin the long slog back to the ship. Turn to [180](#).

79

Golden Energy is a beverage designed to keep star truckers awake for years at a time. It's meant to meet all the energy requirements of any two-fisted space adventurer. One can is also the standard serving size for a creature of twice your height and four times your mass. In short you have imbibed a massive overdose of Golden Energy! Restore your ENERGY to maximum. For the remainder of this Stellar Day you have +1 EXPERTISE and +1 FIST. Also make a note - should you prevail in the challenge you will be asked to turn to a page. Instead double the number and turn to that page instead.

Nearly beside yourself with stimulant-induced jitters you follow Crunt and Krobb through the howling mob to an ornate table in the middle of the room. You seat yourself opposite your gargantuan opponent. Turn to [268](#).

80

Displaying a remarkable lack of intelligence, you rush forward at the barricade and are met by a hail of fusion beams, plasma bolts, autocannon fire and microwave grenades. Both you and your co-pilot (if present) take one injury each.

If you survive you scramble to get away from these rambunctious rodents before you're turned into Swiss cheese. The sounds of shooting and furious squeaking echo down the corridors as you flee but no Rattes follow you.

Assuming you haven't done so already you could return back the way you came and attempt to visit the bridge (turn to [160](#)) or the weapons section (turn to [344](#)). If you think you've worn out your welcome you could return to the hangar, board the Soyuz-30 and take off, drifting carefully over to the remnants of the Spend-o-Max. Turn to [214](#).

81

The last thing the Glomcops would expect is for you to double back towards the Glom, because doing that would be stupid. Instead you point the ginger tabby towards Sham, a system inhabited by an advanced species which produces a quadrant-wide staple known as "Fishtein: the Fishy Protein that's Relatively Edible" from their water moon, Orma. The Cattes must really be in a hurry because the Caterwaul leaps into the jump as soon as your computer is hooked up, without even waiting to plot out a course. You are overcome with a wave of nausea and thrown to the deck as the star ship violently lurches into the fastest jump you've ever experienced. Their job done, the aliens stagger off your ship to attend to their duties and you crawl over to the crew module's couch to wait this bone-shaking ride out.

Less than a day later you arrive in the Sham system (advance the Stellar Date by 1), your sickening progress among the stars brought to a halt with a sudden lurch. You open the Soyuz-30's access hatch to have a look around, but as you step out of the ship you are accosted by the ginger tabby, now accompanied by several other Cattes and an assortment of owl- and otter-like aliens. If you didn't know better you'd swear they look... hungry.

82-83

"Where are you off to, primate?" hisses the ginger tabby, no longer seeming as friendly as before. "We've finished downloading your navigational data so we don't need you around any more."

You step back into the access hatch as the Catte and his motley crew advance. Your translator could be missing some subtle nuance in the Catte language but somehow you doubt it. It might be time to find some way out of here. If you want to take off in the Soyuz-30 in hopes of blasting your way out of this hangar then turn to [220](#). If you'd rather just shut the ship's hatch and wait to see if things settle down before you make a move then turn to [364](#).

82

Your ship, crippled by the hammering received from the cliff bastard's bony head, plummets from the sky and into the ground below with a murderous crash. You somehow survive this rough landing but the impact knocks you out cold. You come to only a few seconds later and find yourself thrown clear of the wreckage, lying on your back. You look up at the bright orange sky and see a huge outstretched leather skinflap with a hooked bony beak rapidly gliding down towards you. Badly wounded, you are unable to escape or defend yourself. The last thing you hear is a bone-chilling warbling screech as the cliff bastard comes in for a well-deserved feed.

83

You grab the bartender by the back of the head and slam his face into the metal bar with a tremendous crash. He goes limp and collapses to the floor. Reaching over the bar you retrieve the object he'd grabbed during the fight - a nasty sawn-off plasma slugger! Add the plasma slugger to the inventory section of your police note book.

You're glad you took the Ursan out fast because you swivel around just in time to see the creeps from the Space Whist table trying to sneak up behind you. You shove the plasma slugger's barrel right up against the Erinacean's snout.

"Go ahead. Make my day", you snarl.
Turn to [74](#).

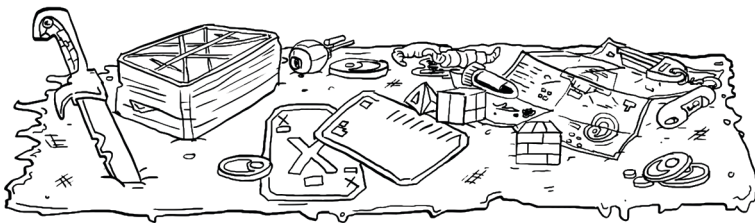
84

You manage to make it to Kitalpha but something is terribly wrong. No one's in the Fuel 'n Gruel shuttle parking lot. The station's lights are off and nobody's answering your hails.

You have successfully avoided capture by the Conglomerate Police Directorate but at a huge price. Your actions have sparked off a terrible interstellar war between the Volans and the Glom. Since both civilisations were hard pressed trying to prevent their far-flung populations from starving to begin with the added strain of mounting a serious war effort tips both polities into wretched chaos and full scale collapse. At the same time several barbarian species from the outer rim appear simultaneously, destroying or plundering every world they come across as they flee headlong from something even worse - a pitiless alien species known as the Sexless Threshers. In short, everything goes to hell and becomes even more horrible than it was before because you didn't want to do the time for whatever crimes you might have committed.

Since everyone with an airtight container to their name is in space and trying to get away from the nightmare of interstellar conflict by any means possible, you are able to hitch a lift with an alien jump ship doing its best to stay out of trouble. With the murderous Threshers occupying everything rimward and the Volans and Glom engulfed in chaos, the only way offering any chance of survival at all is the dangerous Void Nebula.

While everything is undoubtedly shitty (mostly because of your actions) at least you're doing what you do best - flying around in dangerous uncharted space and having exciting adventures. Hey, at least you're happy, and that's all that matters.



85

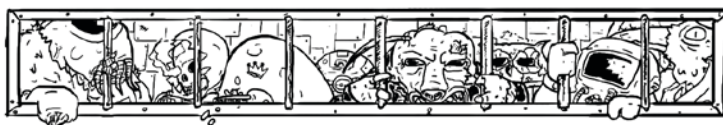
Ordinarily you'd sooner crack this alien's head open than give it any of your property, but you're in a hurry and don't want to give the Pole a chance to escape. Growling, you hand over the expected bribe. The guard sneers at you and bows, mock-obsequiously. Remove the object from your inventory.

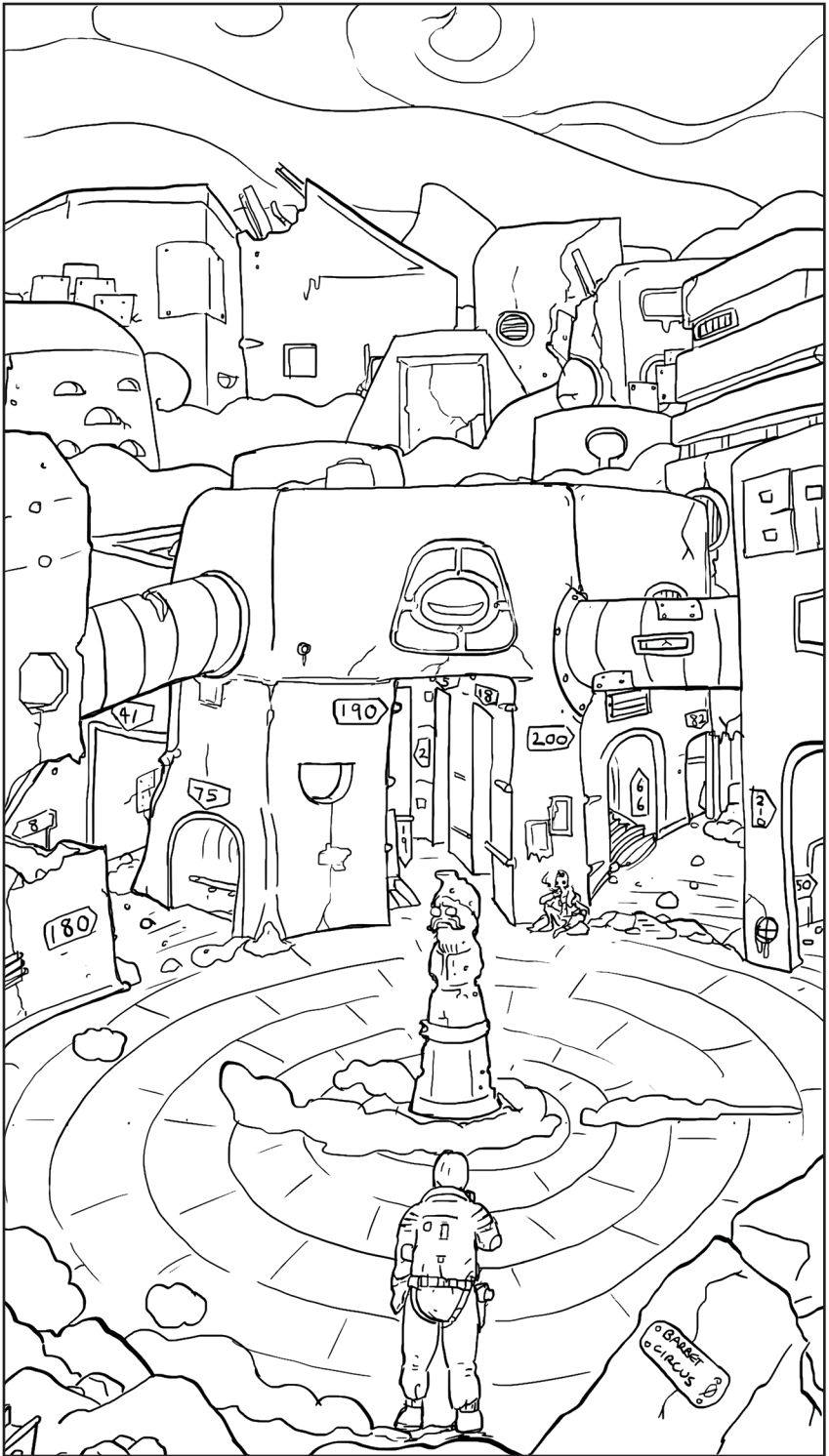
"Right this way, sir. The Ratte King is expecting you", the rodent squeaks, blasting you in the face with breath like rotten milk and cheap booze. You'd nab him for assault or something but there's no time. Instead you follow as he ushers you down the corridor towards an audience with the Ratte King. Turn to [31](#).

86

You decide to go for a wander around the outskirts of the town centre. Back in its heyday Barbet City was meant to be a pretty good place to get anything you wanted, with traders selling junk from all over the sector. Now it's a good place to get stabbed. Outside of the town centre the cramped maze-like streets are mostly choked with dust, rubble, and surly-looking Matari with extremely hard gazes. The few occupied buildings, even the businesses, close their shutters and lock their doors as you approach. Your wanderings eventually take you to a circular plaza with an ugly weatherbeaten statue of some long-forgotten luminary in the middle and a number of small streets and alleyways radiating out between the surrounding ruins on the other side of the circus.

If you'd like to spend a little while exploring the alleyways for loot, turn to [390](#). If you know an unprofitable use of your time when you see one, then there's nothing for it but to turn back to the main strip. If you haven't already done so, you can visit the bar (turn to [336](#)) or the fuel depot ([292](#)). Otherwise if your business here is complete then you can return to the Soyuz-30 by turning to [282](#).





87

You were unable to sniff out the Pole's trail and have no idea where he could have gone to next. Hermaszewski had a substantial head start and could have gone to dozens of systems from Matar. Defeated, you request a jump back to the Homeworld. The Chief is probably going to smack your nose with a rolled up newspaper for letting the Pole escape with a Code 10, and deep down you know you deserve it for being a bad dog. Your adventure (and probably your career) ends here.

88

You decide to go off in search of the Pole's shuttle - it has to be somewhere on this island after all. Since you were unable to spot it from the air it must be parked up in some hidey-hole. You consult a map of the island and pick a few spots to go look for the space vehicle. The settlement occupies about a third of the island. The rest is made up of rocky crags, sandy beaches and boulder-strewn hills. It's desolate but quite beautiful, despite the colossal harvesting plant dominating the view in the direction of the otherwise picturesque town.

You roam around for a while but have no luck. The Space Exploration Pole might be tall but he's good at covering his tracks, and if the Soyuz-30 is in fact on this island it's well-hidden. You simply don't have the time to search every nook and cranny in the hopes of tracking the thing down. At least the bracing sea air and hike did you some good - restore 10 ENERGY. Add 2 to the TIME and, so long as your time isn't up yet, turn to [330](#) to find some other place to continue your investigations.

89

You're starting to get a bit jumpy. The staring eyes of all these Squidges are getting to you. Better find what you need here, and fast.

Assuming you haven't already done the following, you can head to the market square for shopping (turn to [311](#)), visit the Pickled Herring to chase up some contacts and maybe play some Space Whist (turn to [280](#)), check out the Fishtein harvesting plant (turn to [139](#)) or go to the main landing pad to investigate the parked police ship (turn to [185](#)). If none of these options appeal you can return to the Soyuz-30 and take off: turn to [42](#).

90

Wisely heeding your instincts you decide against sticking your nose into that bar and just cancel the report. These local scuffles don't usually yield too many arrests or convictions anyway, especially this far from the Glom. Still, you know you did a bad job even if you possibly saved your own fur. What's more, the Chief will too. Lose 2 Collars.

As you're tapping the closure confirmation into your portable computer you see a bright flash of light in the sky - it's a jump ship arriving in the sector! If the Pole has found some way off this moon that'll be how he's planning to leave the system.

If you want to get out there and confront the ship before the Pole can slip away, you return to your squad ship and blast off into space. Turn to [60](#). If instead you want to continue your investigations here, hoping that you'll bite onto a solid lead then turn to [177](#).

91

The enemy fighter crashes to the deck in an impressive conflagration but several others begin lifting off to take its place. You still haven't had a chance to find the hangar's shield generators and are beginning to despair of your chances when fate intervenes to lend you a helping hand. A huge star ship - more a steel-plated asteroid than a starfaring vessel - jumps into the system with a blinding flash and commences to pound the Caterwaul with a doomsday weapon. Explosions corruscate throughout the hangar bay, your opponents crash back into the deck and the hangar bay shields flicker and disperse. You don't need any further prompting - you floor it and blast out of the hangar to a safe distance as the space-going mountain fires blast after blast into the unprotected hull of the Caterwaul. Already drained of energy by its panic jump the Caterwaul is barely able to put up even a cursory defence and within minutes is reduced to a drifting hulk, fires burning on all decks. Still the mountain continues firing until your former captors are blasted into a radioactive cloud of subatomic particles.

You sit a safe distance away, watching the carnage through your periscope. You've never seen or even heard of a ship matching the description of this deadly alien mountain, but since they've helped you escape one of your enemies they might be in a position to help you escape a second.

If you'd like to hail these mysterious and somewhat ominous strangers then turn to [305](#). If you think it'd be best to avoid attracting their attention then turn to [191](#).

92

The jump from Matar is quite long, taking three Stellar Days (advance the date appropriately). During this time you learn that your carrier is the Phasmid ship, the Cosmic Nymph. The Phasmids, a race of stick insectoids, ruined the fragile ecosystem of their homeworld during the construction of their star ship and are trawling the quadrant looking for a new world that matches their very specific requirements. You doubt they'll have much luck, not least because they use their desperate plight as justification for sharp trading, piracy and general untrustworthiness. But hey, judge not.

As you're sitting in the crew module re-reading your collection of Earth sci-fi novels you feel the ship start to decelerate. You rush to the cockpit and strap yourself into your chair. There's a violent judder and you emerge into normal space in the Terebellum quadrilateral.

Terebellum's not really a star system but rather a mid-point between four stars and a convenient empty place to construct the sector's biggest space mall, the massive Terebellum Spend-o-Max. A joint Conglomerate-Volan enterprise, this monstrous space station did a lot of trade until the Interstellar 40 bypass cut a lot of its traffic and most the stores shut down. Now its few remaining outlets are discount stores flogging merchandise that won't shift anywhere more civilised. Even the ships still traversing Route 66³ don't usually bother to stop off in Terebellum although it sometimes attracts barbarian species who've just discovered faster-than-light travel and assume it's a good place to make first contact.

The Phasmids change their heading and tell you to disengage your clamps. No amount of bargaining gets them to relent, and since you've got better things to do than cling on to a bunch of stick insects while they comb the galaxy for an uninhabited jungle without predatory avians, reptiloids or insectivorous plants you let them go. You float free and watch as they reactivate their jump drives and disappear with a flash.

Since nothing's likely to come along in a hurry you decide to set a course for the Spend-o-Max. Turn to [324](#).

93

You take the perps completely by surprise and they put their hands up as soon as they realise they're busted. Unfortunately it isn't the Pole and his accomplice, it's just a couple of lowlife aliens from some species you've never heard of, wearing cheap plastic spacesuits that cover nearly all their features. They're trying to hook up a life support generator to some exposed wiring in the station wall. While you're cuffing them you have a quick look around the room - a Space Whist table, four chairs made for accommodating different kinds of alien behinds - they're setting up for an illegal Space Whist tourney!

Space Whist is the main method for losing money in this sector of the galaxy, and sometimes when the stakes are massively high, the gamblers involved like to gather in places like this, a neutral spot that can't simply jump out of the system when it loses a hand. Given the propensity for some species to bet their homeworlds, star ships and entire populations at the Space Whist table and the resulting star wars which are no less destructive for being completely idiotic, the really high-stakes stuff has been banned, as have these off-world tables. Busting up this game might just prevent an interstellar bloodbath, and the thought of the Chief being forced to pin a medal to your chest for saving the galaxy gives you a nice warm feeling deep down in the cockles of your heart.

This game must be due to start very soon, but given the wealth and power of the beings who usually show up at these offworld tables you're going to need more than surveillance - you'll need to catch the gamblers red-handed to make any charges stick. To arrange that you'll need to get some information and cooperation out of these mooks first though, and they're keeping shtum.

If you want to persuade the criminals to assist you using your charming personality, turn to [270](#). If Moc's with you then turn to [52](#) instead.

Otherwise you stuff these crims into the prisoner transport module of the squad ship and you book them for trespassing and whatever else you can think of that might conceivably stick. Add 2 Collars. If you like you may also confiscate the life-support generator (add this item to the inventory section of the police notebook). Now turn to [275](#).

94

You make your way back to the Barbet Bunker and stride past the autoturret, through the wide doorway and over to the space whist table where you immediately begin berating the balding hedgehog alien. Unfortunately you don't think he grasps the precise nuances of the bloodcurdling insults you're hurling at him as he doesn't understand Polish. You're so fixated on insulting the scummy alien that you don't realise you're in trouble until you feel the cold barrel of the beary bartender's plasma slugger pressed against the back of your neck. Half the other patrons of the bar have their hands on their weapons. You clam up and the Erinacean speaks.

"You blew it. We had a deal and you screwed it up. You'll be lucky if I don't tell my people to blast you if they see you up there. Now get outta my sight, you bum."

If you know when you're not welcome, you exit the bar, head back the shuttle and prepare to leave this place behind : turn to [282](#). If you take serious exception to being handled in this way by a crook who's just tried to trick you into shooting up a rival casino, turn to [327](#).

95

The Soyuz-30 wasn't worth all that much, but its sentimental value was immense. Also, you needed it to get out of this sector of space. Stranded in the tiny Barbet City settlement you're an easy collar for the Glomcops when they show up looking for you a few days later. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

96

You clamber up the densely-packed barrier to the gap at the top. On the other side is a vast expanse of water - the entire corridor behind the dam is filled almost to the brim. Before you can squeeze over for a closer look, a strange, sleek-furred alien pokes its head up from under the water. It emits a chirping noise and reaches out to prod you with a stun baton. You spasm as 60,000 volts course through you and involuntarily release your grip on the wall Your fall is accompanied by the eerie laughter of the strange alien as it splashes back under the water.

You land heavily: take one injury. Rising to your feet, you dust yourself off and think about what to do next. If you want revenge on whatever that creature was and you have an explosive then you can turn to [34](#) to knock this wall down. If you have Tarlee with you and want her to have a go then turn to [331](#). Otherwise, if you don't want to bust a hole in anything labeled as a dam, you can let bygones be bygones and move on.

Assuming you haven't already done so, you can retrace your steps and visit the "SANDBOX" by turning to [276](#) or the "NEST" by turning to [265](#). If you're tired of this hulk and want to get back into open space then return to your ship and turn to [48](#).

97

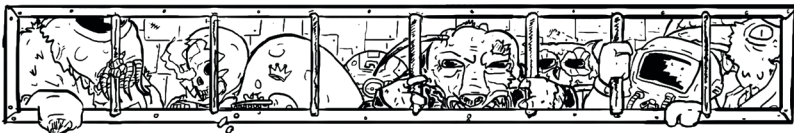
You sigh. From what you know about the Scrodes talking to them is going to be a less than fulfilling experience. Nonetheless, you hail their ship. After a little while the communicator picks up but nothing appears on the view screen. You wonder if the thing is busted for a second before you remember that Scrodes, for all their technological affinity, are notoriously superstitious and don't like cameras. Mercifully the translator already knows their language so you don't need to put up with minutes of frustrated screeching from these notoriously impatient and violent beings before you can converse with them.

"Scrodelord Crunt of the Macerator. We call dibs on this salvage" the alien says in a scratchy, high-pitched voice.

"Detective Inspector Leo Canid of the Conglomerate Police Directorate. I.." you begin, but are cut off as Crunt rudely talks over the top of you.

"I don't care who was here first", he practically screams, "Might makes right, and we're always right".

If you want to inform them that the station is under your protection then turn to [110](#). If you're more interested in getting onto the trail of the Pole than safeguarding private property then you can ask them for a lift by turning to [215](#). If you'd think it'd be safer just to leave these guys alone until backup gets here you kill the connection and just watch them for a while to see what they'll do next. Turn to [195](#).



You pick up the communications receiver and hail the strange star ship. Their bridge picks up quickly - suspiciously quickly - and you're treated to a few seconds of hissing and spitting before your translator makes some sense of the language and repeats what was said in Glargot.

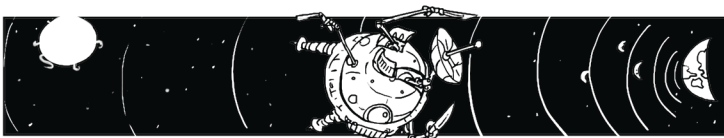
"Greetings. Major Tom, Commander of the Caterwaul. We require stellar cartography for this sector. Transmit your star maps at once", the voice demands.

This is a pretty normal request for a barbaric species on a maiden jump voyage but the urgency is strange - usually aliens are more interested in who they're talking to on first contact. This one seems to be in a hurry.

"Ile to jest wartę dla Ciebie?" you enquire tersely. There's a brief pause as your translator and, presumably, theirs fails to make anything of your language, before the alien responds.

"No time for this. Land in the hangar and we'll come to some arrangement. You have three minutes to comply. Major Tom out." With that the alien being kills the connection.

If you have faith in your abilities to talk or fight your way out of any situation, you can park up in the alien vessel and see what they're offering. Turn to [190](#). If you'd rather not stick your head in the lion's mouth, you can refuse Major Tom's risky-sounding offer by turning to [271](#).



The Discoverer doesn't notice your act of subterfuge and collects up the containers as you stand by, filling out the usual mess of paperwork required for this kind of surveillance activity. A few hours pass and just as you're finishing the last of the forms the Retick ship blasts away into jump space. You activate the tracker and wait.



A few days later your tracker reports that the Discoverer has dropped out of jump space at Kitalpha and is unloading the containers. Flagging down a convenient passing jumpship you use your interdiction drive to force a jump path to Kitalpha and your Interstellar Overdrive to get there before the Pole can slide away again. With any luck he's gotten complacent and thinks he's lost you. Well, you'll show him!

You arrive at Kitalpha - it's a run down space station orbiting a bright yellow star, existing mainly to serve fuel and booze to passing haulers and crooks. You board the station and begin your search, certain that you've finally got the Pole cornered - you can smell him, and every so often you see furtive movements out of the corner of your eye as if someone is trying to keep out of your sight. You'll find him soon enough if you just ask around.

At last the Chiropteranthran bartender points him out squarely - he's sitting at the Space Whist table. Just as you're about to make your move on him, terrible luck intervenes in the form of a horde of huge, terribly destructive barbarian crocodilians, who arrive and immediately set to smashing the place up. You lose sight of the Pole, a terrible brawl breaks out and you're instantly knocked out cold by the careless swipe of one of the drunken lizards' massive tails. By the time you come to amid the ruins of the bar, Hermaszewski and the lizards are long gone to who knows where.

After coming so close you ultimately failed to capture the Pole. There's no way you'll live this down. If you go back to HQ having let Hermaszewski slip through your paws the Chief will have your badge just like he always wanted. You're not going to give him the satisfaction. Instead, you call the office and tender your resignation. Chucking your uniform, badge and gun into the squad ship you set its autopilot to begin the lengthy and arduous journey back to the Glomcop HQ without you.

For the time being you set up a little security and private detective agency here in the Fuel 'n Gruel, where you make a crust putting the bite on any rowdiness from barbaric alien species that pop by. You really enjoy the work - it combines the arbitrary authority of police work with the lack of oversight that comes from running your own business in a lawless territory. Although you wait many years to deny the Pole entry to the Fuel 'n Gruel he never makes it back. You sometimes wonder if he's as happy where he is as you are.

100

You decide to spend some time securing the semi-valuable merchandise that's been ejected from the wreckage of the mall. Mostly this is to keep it safe from looters but some of the items you find might be helpful to you. Select one from the following list of items: Golden Energy, Sizzle Sack, Hull Repair Kit, Sensor Package, Health Pack, Trauma Kit, a copy of the Two-Fisted Fantasy classic Sword of the Bastard Elf, Fuel Canister.

You spend the remainder of the day securing the located merchandise and filling out the associated paperwork. Securing private property is valuable police work - add 1 Collar and 1 to the Stellar Date, and if you wish you may also requisition a single instance of the item you've found - add it to your inventory.

If the date is now 2047.288 then turn to [337](#). Otherwise you may spend more time securing the goods - return to the start of [100](#) (although you cannot select the same item more than once). Instead, assuming you haven't already done so, you could always check out any of the escape pods to see if you could render assistance to their hapless occupants:

Turn to [19](#) to rescue the law enforcement professional.

Turn to [291](#) to save the pod full of women and children.

Turn to [261](#) to crack open the pod containing the wanted fugitives,

Turn to [193](#) to investigate the pod holding the precious cargo.

Alternatively you could approach the ruined jump ship lurking nearby by turning to [216](#).

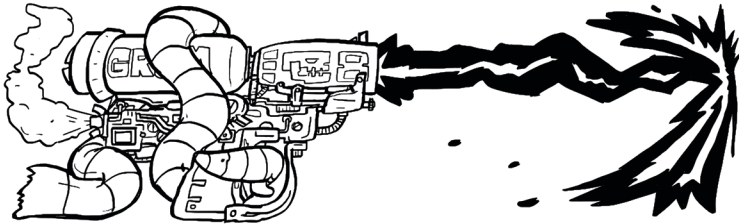


101

You didn't earn your reputation as a two-fisted space adventurer by running away from a fight, even if you're outnumbered and surrounded by armed and angry aliens of unknown physical capabilities. In short, you respond to the threatening situation by saying something belligerent and the Matari commence to handing you the beating of a lifetime. Luckily for you they lose interest once you're knocked out and they satisfy themselves with taking your possessions and leaving you for dead.

Both yourself and your co-pilot suffer an injury and lose any personal items carried (remove all items other than star ship upgrades from the inventory section of the log book). You regain consciousness many hours later, still lying in the middle of the street. Night has fallen and it's pitch black. You don't know how many hours it takes but dawn is breaking by the time you've limped back to the ship - advance the Stellar Date by 1. You've had it with this dump: it's time to get out of here.

Turn to [282](#).



102

The pilots here are a slow-witted bunch: they don't seem to understand a word you're saying. After a while you realise you're wasting your time anyway since none of the pilots here are flying anything with a jump drive. One of them advises you to go check at the bar, if you haven't already. The depot seems to have been a dead end. If you want to you can thumb through the magazine rack (turn to [396](#)), otherwise it's time to leave..

Assuming you haven't been to the bar yet, you can visit it by turning to [336](#). Otherwise you might enjoy a look around the outskirts - turn to [86](#). If you're done with this planet and its inhabitants altogether you can return to your ship and try your luck out in space by turning to [282](#).

103

The living fossil was brutishly strong but its slow reflexes and poorly-designed physiology was the end of it. Letting it come close you expertly deliver a series of hammer blows to a part of its brain left exposed by the movement of its armoured plates and it drops completely and utterly dead within seconds, its six furry legs curling underneath it like a dead spider. You give it a kick for good measure.

Brushing yourself off you take a cursory look around. Nothing of any interest remains either on the dead Erinacean or in the cargo container - everything's been destroyed by age, water or mud - so you commence the long trek through the forest and over the barren wastes to return to your ship on the edge of the village. Miraculously it's still intact when you arrive a couple of hours later but someone has smeared the viewscreen with what the translator assures you says, "SORRY". You don't know what medium was used to compose that note and you prefer not to find out, deciding instead to simply wipe it off and discard whatever you used to do that without any further investigations. With that done, will you walk back into that village and settle matters (turn to [119](#)) or, if you don't want anything more to do with these tricky aliens you could climb aboard the Soyuz-30, change your filthy clothes and fly some place else (turn to [307](#)).

104

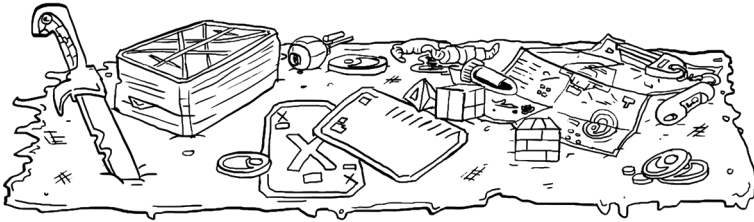
The Glomcop is a skillful pilot but no match for you. You fire round after round into the squad ship, tearing through the engine's containment field and causing the ship to explode, reducing the vessel and its occupants to a cloud of superheated space dust which mingles with the wreckage of the station.

You spend another Stellar Day waiting, obsessively scanning the system for the arrival of any more police when your sensors pick up a large jump field collapsing nearby. Swivelling the periscope around you're reassured to see the graceful spires and tacky statues typical of a Volan star ship rather than the squat, boxy features of the Conglomerate flagship. You've never been so glad to see these treacherous, beaky bastards in your life. Before you have time to pick up the receiver to hail them you feel the hull rattling as they scan you with their powerful sensors. The comms receiver rings and you pick up the handset.

After a few seconds of squawking your translator unit detects the Volan language and begins working. "... am Flock Leader Pt'om of the Volan Peace and Exploration ship Star Kettle. We were hoping to settle matters with a certain pesky dog detective but according to the Police Directorate communications we've intercepted it seems you've already taken care of that for us." You start to reply but Pt'om continues, speaking over you. "You have no idea what a relief it is to finally be rid of that persistent pain in the posterior. We would like to return the favour. We are heading towards Volan space and as I imagine you'd like to get away from the Conglomerate as much as we would, I would be honoured if you would accept a lift to a safer system. Please dock and we'll take you as far as our next stop, Kitalpha. You can make your own way from there."

You don't need a second invitation. You dock your ship to the Star Kettle's hull and while you wait the Volans even recharge your ship's batteries! Restore your POWER to its initial value. They must have really hated that cop. A couple of hours pass and, true to their word, the Volans activate their jump drives, tearing through space towards the penultimate stop along the Route!

Turn to [247](#).



With one of your opponents down you can't restrain your instincts any longer. Barking and snapping, you drop to all fours and race towards your stunned adversary. Its eyes go wide in panic and it looks like it's about to flee. In fact, every instinct is screaming at this animal to run. But the hatred it feels towards you for killing its sibling is stronger than its atavistic terror, and instead of scrabbling for a place to hide it stands its ground, carefully aims down the sights of its disruptor pistol and sends you to doggy heaven with a single well-placed shot.

106

Chakold lifts his gross Catte hood up and winks at you. "Don't worry", he mutters in his high-pitched rat voice, "I got this".

The Ratte raises his hand and steps towards his fellow hoodlums.

"Hey gang! I....", he squeaks, but is cut short by the thud of an unrestricted plasma cutter unloading into the ceiling overhead. The rodent holding the still-smoking weapon squeaks, "Where's the money you owe me for the Catte-suit, 'Chakold'?"

Chakold looks mighty shifty and squeaks miserably, "I told you, Humphrey, I'm broke! When the commander pays me, I'll...."

Humphrey the trigger-happy Ratte sneers.

"That fleabag's never going to pay, because we're taking this ship off him. Pay what you owe me right now or I'll take back the suit, and your mangy pelt as interest."

With this Humphrey and his goons raise their weapons and advance threateningly. If you want to offer to pay Chakold's debt turn to [7](#). If you don't want to pay these goons and you don't want to see your co-pilot get hurt you can rush to his defence by returning to [389](#) and continuing from where you left off.

If you don't care one way or another about your ratty co-pilot you can just let these thugs have their fun. You are forgotten for the time being as the Ratte pack drags him away, screeching and begging for mercy. Catte Chakold will play no further part in this adventure.

As the pitiful squealing echoes away down the corridor you pull up the ship schematics downloaded from the Caterwaul's mainframe. From here you can reach the bridge, the weapons systems and the engineering section without too much difficulty. If you'd like to head for the bridge turn to [160](#). For engineering turn to [188](#). For weapons turn to [344](#). If you've had enough of this fighting you can turn around, jump back in the Soyuz-30 and leave: should you elect to do that you disengage from the hangar and drift carefully over to the station remnants while you wait for another lift. Turn to [214](#).

107

No fan of the cops, the Ratte King gives a high sign and his attendant, now armed thanks to your generosity, dutifully blasts your head clean off.



108

It's quite a wait but at around mid-day 2047.291 the Conglomerate star ship Interlocutor arrives in the system. Advance the Stellar Date to 291. Emerging from the jump field the grey, boxy flagship turns immediately towards the Macerator, which is still perched on the the remnants of the Spend-o-Max and engaged in stuffing as much of the mall as possible into its cargo bays. Your sensors detect that the Interlocutor's weapons and shields are coming online - the pirates are about to feel the full force of the Conglomerate's justice!

And then, nothing happens. The Interlocutor stops moving for a few minutes, then powers down its weapons and turns away from the Macerator. You hail it to find out what's going on and the Interlocutor's bridge picks up the call.

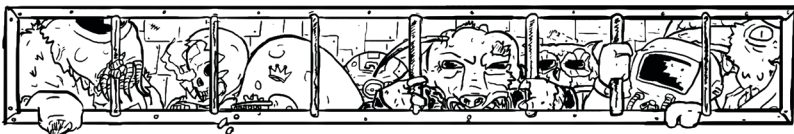
"This is Captain Baedje, Interlocutor. How can I assist you, citizen", intones the captain, a typical Conglomerate Homeworlder like your Chief - beady black eyes, huge pink forehead like a slab of ham. Like most Homeworlders of the officer class he speaks Glargot completely flatly, with no intonation at all.

"Detective Inspector Leo Canid of the Conglomerate Police Directorate. Do you require assistance in bringing those pirates to justice?" you bark. "Not at all. We've issued them with the statutory fine and they've agreed to pay on the spot, entitling them to a discount on the full amount."

As you watch out the viewscreen a convoy of large shuttles departs the Macerator, heading towards the Conglomerate flagship. Even if they're stuffed with merchandise it would amount to less than a quarter of what they would have managed to steal from the station in this time.

Well, that's politics, you think to yourself.

If you have the coordinates for the Pole's last known location, add them all together and subtract them from this paragraph number. If the paragraph makes sense then continue from there, otherwise you ask the Captain if he's heard any word about the Pole's whereabouts. Unfortunately he has not. Without any leads on where to go next, there's nothing further to say to the Captain. You close the connection. Turn to [224](#).



109

The Pickled Herring is a crusty dive located somewhere near Orma's main square. It's the only spacer bar on the moon - the other, nicer, establishments cater to an older and more sedate clientele - and it's the only one the Ten-Foot Pole would be caught dead in. As you cross the main square and approach the sleazy dive your hackles raise and you begin growling involuntarily. You suddenly have a very bad feeling about this place. The kind of people who frequent these kinds of joints rarely talk to cops anyway and your gut's telling you not to go through that door. If you trust your instincts and walk away then turn to [330](#) and pick another location. If you get a grip and stride in through the saloon autodoors then turn to [130](#).

110

"Under section 5, paragraph 16, subclause 3a, amendment and errata 2042.155 paragraph 118 of the Conglomerate-Volan Freedom and Mutual Understanding Pact, Terebellum and all property contained within the quadrilateral is under the protection of both the Volan Meritocracy and the Conglomerate of Reasonable Beings", you bark into the communicator.

"Oh yeah? And what exactly are you going to do about it?", Crunt shouts back in his high-pitched voice. He's clearly amused because your translator is displaying the word "AMUSED" in big yellow letters on the communications panel. You can see his point - the Macerator has a fair size advantage over your squad ship and you're outnumbered by at least ten thousand to one. Still, suicidally poor odds have never stopped you doing your job.

If you want to let Scrodelord Crunt know he's under arrest, turn to [267](#). If you want to call in the cavalry then turn to [146](#).

Suddenly you remember - these Scrodes are a superstitious, barbarian bunch. If you recall your alien familiarisation training correctly, they've got a tradition called the Ujian Kekuatan, some kind of ancient Scrode challenge that can be invoked to settle disputes. You can't recall whether this ritual involves arm wrestling, poetry reciting or chainsaw jousting though. If you want to invoke the Ujian Kekuatan then turn to [38](#).

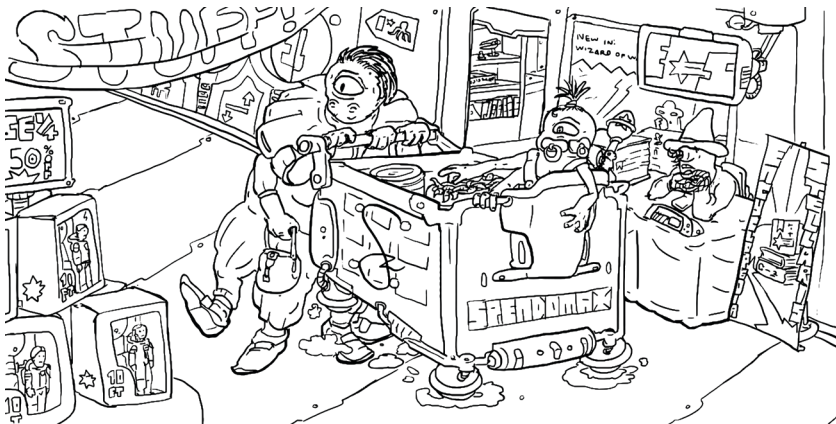
The market stalls are mostly run by elderly Squidges selling local handi-crafts (mostly macrame and knitwear), and home-pickled fish ranging in size and pungency from the shartine fillet in aspic to the megamackerel spleen in bilebrine. All pretty much equal parts worthless and revolting. You do, however, find a few vendors with interesting items, although the Squidge haggling process is always an annoyingly protracted, loud affair that inevitably ends with both parties feeling cheated.

You may, if you wish, purchase any of the the following items from the market. Each costs one item:

Trauma Kit, Sizzle Sack, Golden Energy, Squidge Workwear, Fuel Canister, Health Pack

For each item you buy add 1 to your TRAIL due to the spectacle involved in driving a bargain of any kind with these intractable land-molluscs. If Moc is with you then you do not gain TRAIL from the first purchase - the salesbeing is able to cut a deal with these belligerent land squids remarkably quickly.

Once you're done contemplating the merchandise you vacate the town square and consider the next move. Turn to [89](#).



112

You end up waiting a couple more days. Add two to the Stellar Date. You spend most of this time staring out the viewport and reflecting that the universe is not made of jump capable ships, so perhaps you shouldn't have been so salty with the last one. Your reverie is eventually interrupted by another flash - much smaller than usual, but definitely a collapsing jump field, and very close-by! Peering through the periscope at the new arrival, you see it's a tiny black and white ship, about the same size as the Soyuz-30. Your heart sinks as the ship turns in your direction and lights up with red and blue strobes. The Glomcops! Why would they follow you out here into neutral space? Suddenly your comms receiver bursts into life - the cops are broadcasting a message on an override frequency so you can't turn it off. "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE P.D. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE, PUT ON A SPACE SUIT AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, PSEUDOPODS AND/OR GRASPERS UP!". This repeats in about a hundred different languages, eventually causing your ship's translator unit to spark out.

You're too far from the planet to try to ditch the cops in the atmosphere - any attempt to run would earn you an ion bolt up the arse. Caught dead to rights your only options are to fight or surrender. If you shout "Pieprzyc policje! Ja nie wracam!" into the comms receiver and open fire, turn to [9](#). If you think that the cops might go lightly on you if you turn yourself in, turn to [134](#).

113

Pf'imm cocks his head sideways and looks at you with a swollen, bloodshot eye. "Leo, don't do this. I know we've had our differences, but this will mean my career... Please...", the ambassador croaks through a cracked beak.

"If you can't do the time don't do the crime, bird-brain", you say with immense self-satisfaction. "You and your buddy here are under arrest for illegal gambling, attempting to sell a star ship without a permit, two counts of attempting to procure an alien colony, trespassing, obstruction of justice, resisting arrest, assault on a police officer, and anything else I can think of before I get you inside the squad ship. You have the right to remain silent, but exercising this right will be interpreted as an admission of guilt. You have a right to a lawyer, if we pass within a parsec of one. You..."

While it was exactly this kind of arrest that got you busted down to patrol duty in the first place, you're pretty sure you've gathered enough evidence to get at least some of these charges to stick. It's a huge, career-making arrest and hopefully it'll drive the Chief up the wall. Add 10 Collars.

You remotely summon your squad ship from its hiding spot and cram your prisoners inside. Turn to [263](#).

114

You decide to get over to the station by any means possible in order to begin repairs. Miraculously some of the Soyuz-30's short-range thrusters are still working and by venting the critically damaged and overheating meson drives you're able to push your stricken vessel towards the Spend-o-Max. A terrible battle has broken out between the alien jump ship and the new arrival, another massive star ship that looks more like a floating mountain than anything else. Firstly the small escort fighters are reduced to globs of molten metal by a wide sweep of whatever doomsday weapon the flying mountain is equipped with, and then as the two star ships trade blows the station is caught in the middle and smashed into a crippled hulk! Finally both of the ships go dark and silent but eventually the mountain changes its heading and tears away back into jump space and out of the system.

The destruction of the station is both an opportunity and a threat for you - it'll probably make salvaging cheaper since you won't have to buy anything, but you'll have to navigate a debris field to get what you need. In the event you are able to navigate in safely but it's a time-consuming and stressful procedure, especially difficult as the air in the ship is rapidly turning foul. Lose 10 ENERGY.

Assuming you survive, at long last you nudge the Soyuz-30 up against a reasonably solid part of what remains of the Spend-o-Max, put on your space helmet, crack out the plasma tools and get to work. It takes several hours of the hardest work of your life since Cosmonaut training, but you repair the life support system, cut the alien fighter loose, patch up the hull, re-route the engines, seal the fuel lines and carry out a thousand other tasks to return the Soyuz-30 to spaceworthiness. Subtract 10 more ENERGY. At last you are done - not quite as good as new but definitely able to limp on, so long as you don't push her too hard.

115

The Soyuz-30 now has 4 HULL, 80 maximum and current POWER and 1 shield module (even if this was lost previously). All ship upgrades are lost. All EXPERTISE scores aboard the Soyuz-30 have a penalty of 1 from now on due to the ad-hoc nature of the repairs and the lack of genuine parts (although you do not take this penalty if Bones is your co-pilot due to his mechanical acumen). Adjust your log book with this new information and turn to [225](#).



115

The Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole is pretty well known for his expeditions to uncivilised worlds - he keeps publishing his findings in those trashy Space Exploration rags beloved of space truckers and barbarian star ship captains. He might be intending to hunker down on the planet and work on a paper until you go away. Well, that's not going to happen if you've got anything to say about it. You accelerate towards the large red world.

While searching Nezval could take months, it's likely that the Pole has ducked into the atmosphere at the first possible opportunity. If you're fast you might catch him before he gets a chance to land. Descending quickly through the thick orange atmosphere you burst through the cloud layer and begin scanning, but seconds later you feel a horrible crunch as something slams into your starboard hull. Spinning the ship around you clap eyes on a huge leathery flap, orange like the clouds and with a sharp, bony beak. You've disturbed an alien monster who makes its home in the stratosphere, and it wants a piece of you!

CLIFF BASTARD :

MANOEUVRE 7(1) - WEAPONS 4(1) - SHIELDS 0 - HULL 3



This evil bird packs a mean peck. Every hit you take from this bird tests to see if it's a Heavy Hit.

If you win, turn to [28](#). If you lose turn to [82](#).

116

You go over to the bar and sit down. The bartender, a hairy Minor Ursan, snorts and affects to be very absorbed in his work of cleaning the glassware with what might be the filthiest cloth you've ever seen, but eventually he realises that you're not going to go away and grudgingly looks at you.

"What", he growls rudely. You reply, equally rudely, with a question, "I'm looking for the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole. Have you seen him?"

The Ursan extends a paw and gestures for you to come closer as if he had a secret he wanted to share. You lean in slightly over the bar. "Order a drink or piss off", he helpfully suggests in a low voice. You sigh. You're not going to pay this creature money and drink his revolting planktonbrau on the off-chance he'll favour you with something you can use.

"Last chance, hairball. Tell me where the Pole is or I'll tear this place apart looking for an excuse to lock you up."

The Ursan growls but his shoulders slump. You guess he's hiding something otherwise he'd continue sassing you. He sullenly sticks out his thumb claw and gestures to the Erinacean's posse. "Talk to them. I don't know nothing."

If you don't think you're going to get anything else out of this bear, you can take his advice and go have a conversation with the Erinacean and his thugs: turn to [237](#). If you think he knows more than he's letting on, you can act on your threat by turning to [393](#).

117

You begin to tell the concierge in great detail about the plan to shoot up the bar but Alin cuts you off mid-sentence. "Offworlders are welcome at the Two Suns Casino, and to a limited extent so are their customs and strange modes of communication. However, if you'd rather gibber than gamble may I suggest you take your business to the Barbet Bunker, as I have paying customers to serve."

Guess he's not interested. Turn back to [187](#) and select another course of action.



You quickly compose the most hateful message you can think of, punch it into your ship's computer and patch it through to the channel during the first available break in the negotiations.

"The deal is off the table. You Volans are a flock of ridiculous, untrustworthy quacks who peddle worthless pseudo-scientific, quasi-religious nostrums and there's no possibility of doing business with any of you", sneers a pompous, nasally voice sounding very much like that of Comptroller Baedje. There's a moment's silence and then the channel explodes.

"QUACKS! NOSTRUMS!" screeches Pt'om, outraged beyond belief, "No one calls us quacks! And it's hurtful to imply that our sacred methods of neuro-linguistic programming, managing by values and the Meissa-Barnard Type Indicator are nostrums! You'll pay for your arrogance, you Glommy pricks! This means war!"

Before the beleaguered Comptroller can protest his innocence the Volans kill the connection and power up their weapons. Sensing trouble coming your way you undock and are able to move to a safe distance just in time to watch the Volans pummels the unprepared Glom ship with a laser capable of slicing through a planet. The Interlocutor, badly damaged and scarred with a flash-melted trench running from its prow to its engines, manages to half-heartedly return fire. The Volans' shields go down but the Star Kettle is barely damaged, and the next salvo from its doomsday weapon rends the Interlocutor into a cloud of rapidly-expanding plasma.

Your communications receiver rings and you pick up the handset. It's Pt'om again.

"Well", he squawks, "I don't know what that was about. You'd better come with us, I suppose". You dock back up to the Star Kettle. With the interdiction field destroyed along with the Interlocutor the Volans are free to return to the jump. It's only a couple of days to Kitalpha now. You may have caused the death of thousands aboard the Interlocutor and doomed this part of the galaxy to a terrible, if now somewhat one-sided war, but at least you avoided a jail term for the crimes you probably committed.

Turn to [84](#).



You stride purposefully back into the village. This time they don't seem to be expecting you - the villagers seem preoccupied with piling up their few belongings outside their huts and look at you in what you assume is shock as you stride past. You find the tall, fur-bedecked chief and the fat, flight-jacket wearing squidge, engaged in a conversation with each other near the container's entrance. They look up as you approach.

"Oh hey", says the shorter, fatter one with the flight jacket, "I feel really bad about that. I mean the whole riddle and trial thing is a tradition with us but no one really believes in it any more. We really didn't think you'd go down there."

The fur-coated Squidge responds before you can get a word in.

"That bald ratty guy did the same thing a couple of weeks ago. You spacers take everything too literally. And you call us the barbarians", it gurgles, taking a sip from a small clay cup it holds delicately in one of its tentacles.

"Anyway, we're sorry. Don't listen to the shaman", says the paunchy Squidge, waving her tentacles in irritation at her partner in crime. "By the way, I'm the real chief of the Ishteï and I want to make things up to you. If you'll come with me into our temple through the main entrance you'll find it's safe. I'll show you around and you can tell me what you want here".

Looks like another riddle. Or is it? If you want to go in through the main entry with this chief, turn to [353](#). If you're hell-bent on revenge and not mollified by this apology or the mess left on your viewscreen then turn to [351](#). If you're still mad but not genocidally so you can tell this chief to cram her apology up wherever Squidges cram things like that and head back to your ship. Turn to [307](#).

You relay the coordinates to Crunt.

"That shouldn't be too hard", shrieks the pirate, "But first the small matter of the bill. Three tonnes Megasterling. Or failing that, since we're space pirates, we'll take loot to the same value."

This is a colossal fee! But it could be your only chance to catch up to Hermaszewski. If you've got three items that you'd be happy to trade away for this jump then remove these from your inventory and turn to [165](#). If you're short on funds or don't want to pay this extortionate fee then you tell Crunt where he can stick his deal. He laughs, a rasping, wheezing sound.

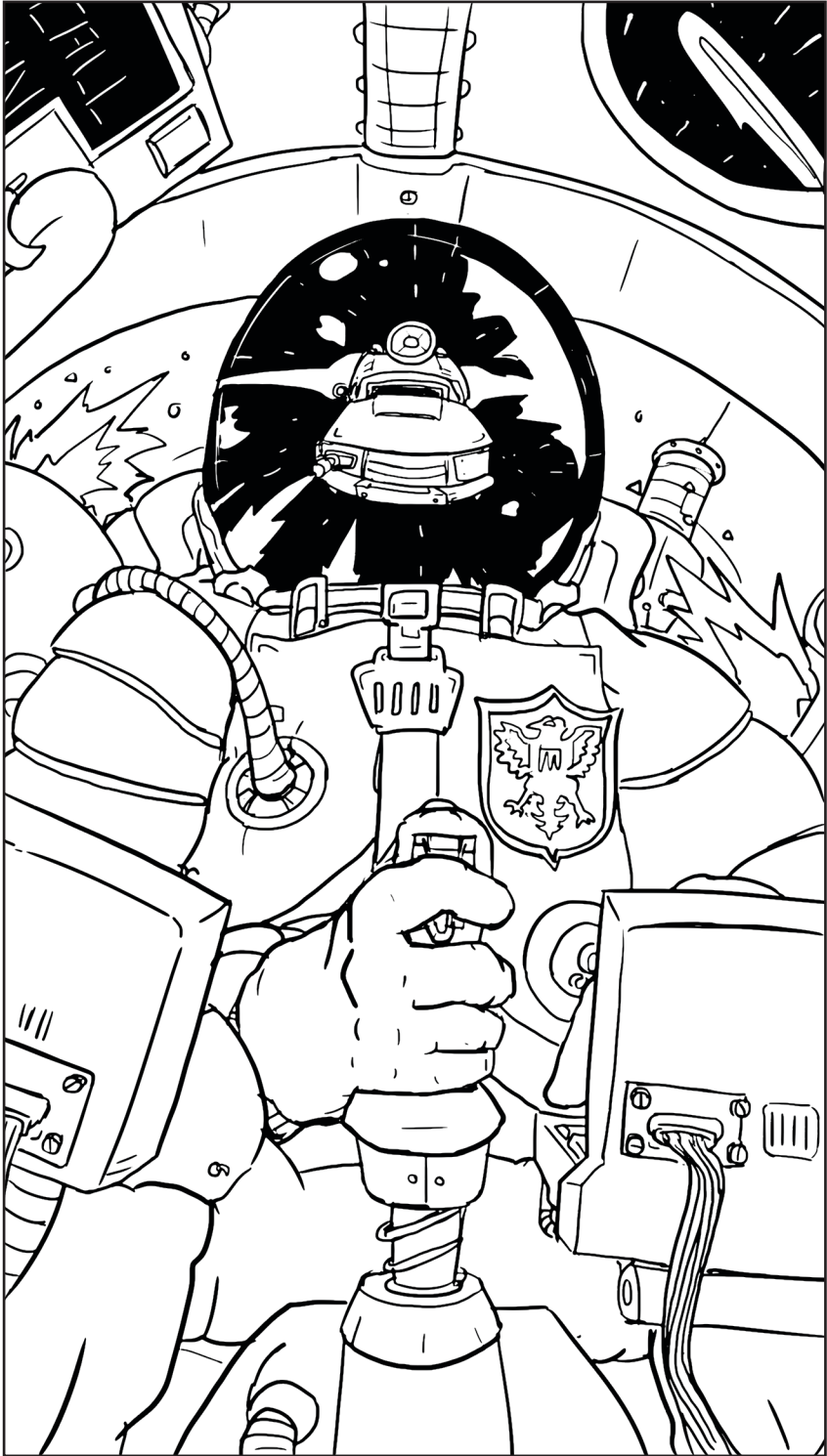
"Stay here and rot then", he yells once he's done cackling, "Now if you're done wasting my time? I'm a busy Scrode".

If you want to cut to the chase and tell these pirates to leave that station alone then turn to [110](#). If you'd rather just leave them be then you kill the connection and resolve to keep an eye on these crooks instead. Turn to [195](#).

121

Barbet City has always been a dusty hellhole, but in the aftermath of the riot it outdoes itself. The shuttle parking area is strewn with the burned and twisted debris of the few small space ships that couldn't take off before the fighting broke out. The main strip is deserted as the town's inhabitants nurse their wounds and the urban decay endemic to Barbet City seems to have crawled all the way up to the couple of remaining businesses still operating on the main thoroughfare. Acrid smoke from fires set in some of the dilapidated buildings mingles with the pink dust kicked up by the ever-present wind. A lone faded and laser-scorched sign swings back and forth, assuring you that you are still Welcome to Barbet City.

At least the bar seems to have survived the fighting - the squat grey building is splashed and pockmarked with laser burns and blaster holes but it's not called the Bunker for nothing. It'd take a bomb to get that place to stop selling booze and running Space Whist. Turn to [356](#) to start sniffing around for information on the Pole here. You can also see the old fuel depot down the strip raising its blast shutters - they may have had some dealings with Hermaszewski when he passed this way. Turn to [365](#) to head over and start asking around. It's also possible that the native Matari living in the maze-like ruins of the old city have seen something. It might be worth looking around the town outskirts for clues - turn to [61](#) if this seems like a good place to start.



122

You throttle up to maximum thrust and point your ship right at the squad ship, hoping to surprise your pursuer with an all-out attack.

Both you and the squad ship are moving towards each other at faster-than-light speed - even though you began at the outer rim of the system you are within weapons range of one another within minutes. As you bring up your shields and work to get a targetting lock on this dogged pursuer your comms receiver suddenly bursts into life - the squad ship is broadcasting a message on an override frequency which can't be deactivated. "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE P.D. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE, PUT ON A SPACE SUIT AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, PSEUDOPODS AND.....ARF!" The message is cut short as you slam on the throttle and squeeze the trigger, accelerating dangerously towards the squad ship and firing a volley of deadly maser bolts. The cop, though surprised, thrusts out of the way and manoeuvres to engage you with his ion cannon.

GLOMCOP SQUAD SHIP :

MANOEUVRE 8(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 4(1) - HULL 8

This ship has two shield modules - if the first one is burned out it will use the second one.

The Dubhe is equipped with an Ion Bolt-thrower - it causes Heavy Damage on 4+, but instead of rolling 1d6 on the table you roll 1d3.

If you defeat your adversary, turn to [289](#). If you wish to surrender at any time then you can power down your weapons and engines and allow yourself to be taken alive. Turn to [58](#).



123

While the Conglomerate Police Directorate does include some cultural sensitivity training at the academy, it's just a half-hour slideshow tacked on to the schedule immediately after lunch on the third day of basic training. Unless you're going to make arrests, making first contact with alien civilisations should really be left to professional space explorers.

In too much of a hurry to worry about these guidelines, you fly as fast as possible towards the blue container and its denizens. As you approach you see them lining up as if to greet you, blue paint chipped from the container painted on their bony faces, their yellow eyes staring, their spears raised, pulled back as if to aim, flung...

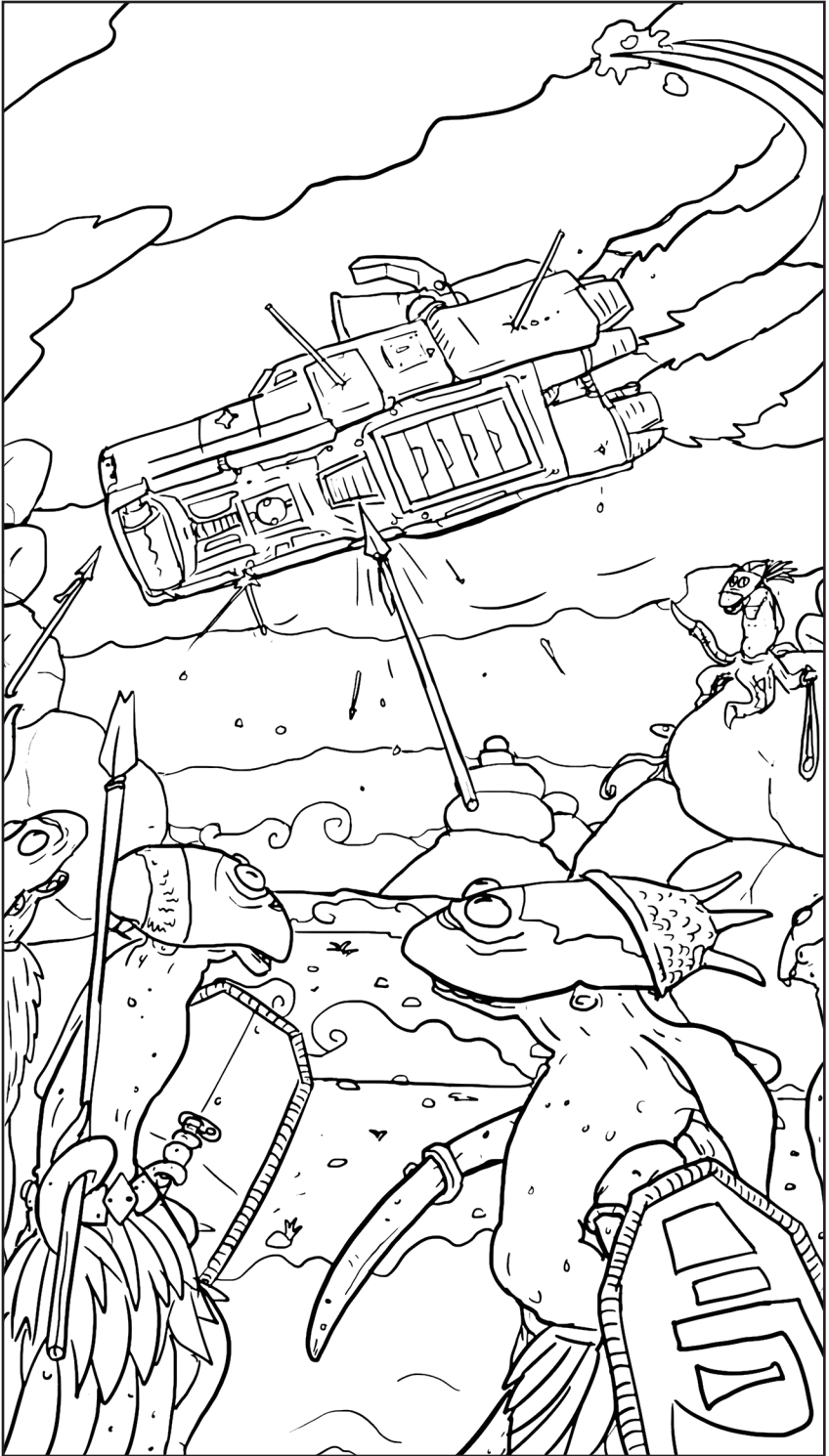
You pull up at the last second, avoiding the bulk of the barrage of spears, sling bullets and metal fragments pelted at your ship. You survey for damage and find that a spear, flung with incredible force from the long whip-like arm of a Squidge, has punched through the outer hull and a couple of heatshield plates are cracked from sling bullets. Take 1 HULL damage.

If you survive you get out of range before they can get another volley off. This planet is really, really unfriendly and you almost feel sorry for the Pole if he's come this way. You decide to get up a bit higher and continue scanning. Turn to [152](#).

124

Not wanting to rely too heavily on the word of a sentient pile of rats you decide the best course of action would be to simply hang about and keep a weather eye out for the Pole's movements. You activate your ship's sensors and wait.

If Horizon-8 is with you and it's not sulking, turn to [388](#). Otherwise after a couple of hours of tracking Fishtein containers as they slowly drift away from Sham you detect a jump field collapsing mid-system. Another star ship appears in a flash of light! With little else going on you decide to approach it, trusting your sensors to alert you if the Pole makes a move. Turn to [60](#).



Naturally you step right inside the container-temple. The interior of the structure is, as expected, a cavernous chamber and also utterly empty aside from a thick coat of dust. No one has been here in years. Light streams in from outside through the missing hull panels, illuminating the scribbling which covers the interior walls. Although your translator can't make anything of the formal devotional language (it's too backwards and too alien), if the illustrations are anything to go by it's all standard "day of judgement", end-of-the-world type stuff. One particular piece of text is repeated on each wall so you note it down for a future Space Exploration Quarterly article. Your translator renders it as:

*Rm hzxivw zmw wzmtvilfh nzggvih
Gsv xsrvu'h kzig rh gifgs
Gsv kirvhg'h rh gl orv.
Gsrh rh gsv dzb lu gsv RHSGVR.*

With the container thoroughly reconnoitred without any immediately obvious divine retribution you step back outside and return to the ship to ponder your next move. Turn to [307](#).

The Phasmid chitters at you, "You lost. Pay up". You've got no intention of paying up and you don't like your chances in a fight against so many vicious-looking creeps, so you deploy a trick that's been passed down from father to son in your family for generations to get out of sticky situations just such as this one.

"Nie mówie po Glargot", you say, shrugging and adopting an expression of sublime gormlessness. The Phasmid stares at you for a second with what you assume is profound disbelief before rounding on Bones.

"You! You tell him to pay!"

Bones, having no lungs, vocal cords or any other organ that would facilitate speech can't tell you anything so he merely shrugs as well. This infuriating routine goes on for a while until the Phasmid gives up in disgust and lets you walk away from the table unstabbed. Judging by the hard stares you're getting from some of the other bar patrons you've worn out your welcome in this town. You decide to make a break for it in the general direction of the Soyuz-30 before things get ugly. Turn to [282](#).

127

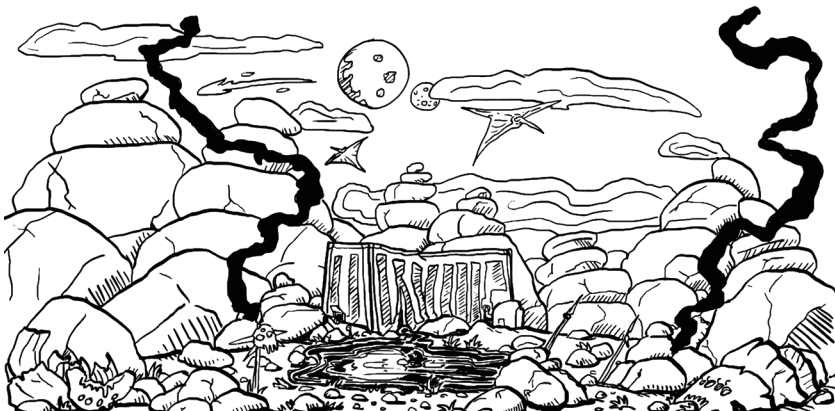
Instinct takes over. You start barking, snapping and snarling and before you know it you're bounding towards the two furballs, racing on all fours. For some reason your rapid advance causes them to panic. They drop their guns and flee back into the Sandbox with you hot on their heels! You slip through the door before it can slam shut behind them.

You find yourself on a star ship bridge, surrounded by about twenty of these maddening creatures. Seeing so many of them in one place fills you with blind rage. You race around as each of them scrambles on top of instrument panels, leaps up and hangs on to the light fixtures (frustratingly just out of reach) or just scatters, racing around the bridge in desperation to get away as you harry and hassle them.

While you're hustling and bustling a tabby under a defunct weapons console you notice the Siamese twins seizing the opportunity to sneak into a small ventilation shaft, followed by a huge grey tomcatte wearing the most elaborate armour of anyone on the bridge. He looks important - he's probably the captain or something - but more importantly he's getting away and arf arf arf arf! You scamper over to the vent and slip inside.

The ventilation shaft soon diverges at a t-junction. Since you're still wearing your helmet you can't track your quarry using your sense of smell but you can hear movement in both directions.

Along with the skittering of paws you hear a sort of hissing noise coming from the right and a flat, croaking mewing echoing from the left. To go right turn to [192](#). To take the left tunnel turn to [242](#).



Somehow, against all the odds, you're winning! Using all your strength you've almost gotten Krobb's massive claw-hand onto the table when you see a glint in its eyepod and your overstimulated nerves detect the huge alien tensing up. He was just trying to wear you out before turning the tables, but unfortunately for him you're completely wired on Golden Energy. Just as he's about to spring his trap you push down harder than you've ever pushed in your life. Krobb's eyepod widens in shock as you drive his claw down into the table with a horrific clang.

The Scrode audience erupts into a chorus of boos with a few scattered cheers as money changes hands, making the few Scrodes that took a punt on you very, very rich. Krobb sheepishly slinks away, nursing his crushed claw as Scrunt approaches. He seems to be in an unusually good mood for someone who just lost, although you suspect that his cheery demeanor stems from the wads of currency he's managed to cram into every available receptacle on his outfit. Probably the proceeds from running the gambling action.

"Nice arm! I mean I'm not stupid, I saw what you did there, but a deal's a deal and you've helped me clean up. We'll be on our way after we've sent you on yours. Where are you going? What are the coordinates?" he enquires in a good-natured shriek.

If you have the coordinates for the location to which you are heading, add them all together and subtract the total from this paragraph number. If the paragraph makes sense then continue from there, otherwise read on.

You tell him you don't have the exact coordinates.

"Sorry to hear it. Well, we can't stick around. Got a hot tip about another wreck somewhere else", shouts the Scrodelord, "I don't want to leave a good deed unpunished so here's your cut", he yells, producing a fat wad of alien plastic banknotes and handing them over to you. Add an Alien Currency to your inventory. "Well, until next time", chuckles Crunt as he turns and waddles away.

With nothing to gain by sticking around you climb aboard your ship and take off from the Macerator. True to the Scrodelord's word it is already moving away from the station, its jump drives spinning up as it turns to face the Void from whence it came. Turn to [142](#).





You continue to ascend but very soon you receive confirmation that you are being followed. Amid the usual creaks, groans, thumps and bumps you'd expect from this cargo container as it departs the planet's gravitational hold, you also hear a loud clang reverberate through the container, followed by a grinding noise. That Glomcop is forcing a dock with the container!

With the docking complete and the squad ship hooked up to the container the access hatch opens and in strides the Glomcop that has been pursuing you all this way - a four-foot tall dog-like being, armed to his snarling teeth. He's accompanied by a taller blue fungoid with four square red eyes and wearing a dirty black suit.

The dog starts barking, "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE.." but before he can get any further he is interrupted by a hail of stones as several of the Squidges recover from their shock and start pelting him with projectiles. Not used to being handled this abusively the crime-fighting duo retreat back into the docking array and begin to disengage the squad ship. Unfortunately for them a trio of Squidge tribesbeings squeeze through the docking array before it can fully disengage and wriggle their way aboard the squad ship. You rush out of the Soyuz-30 to slam the access hatch shut before the seal with the departing police ship is broken. You watch through an improvised view port as the squad ship spins crazily through space and descends down into the planet's atmosphere. That's probably the last you'll hear of that cop for a while.

With the cop's hash settled and repairs complete, there's not much to do but wait and scan for a lift. Over the next couple of days the barbarians teach you a few interesting drinking games and you introduce them to the fundamentals of Space Whist. Eventually though this pleasant cultural exchange is interrupted by the arrival of a jump ship, who you contact on a private channel to make arrangements for a lift. For a reasonable fee they attach your container and several others to the rear of their star ship and prepare the jump field. Within a few hours you are enveloped in the jump field, finally on your way to Kitalpha! Turn to [169](#).

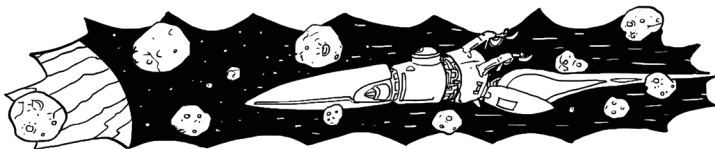
130

Ignoring the awful feeling in the pit of your stomach you shove your way through the saloon doors. The place is packed with the usual sorts of scumbags you'd find in a place like this: a gang of greasy hedgehog-like Erinaceans and assorted cronies gather around a Space Whist table, gambling and planning crimes, while the rest of the building heaves with a motley collection of dangerous-looking aliens. A gaggle of Squidge youth are making an incredible ruckus near the bar. There's no bartender on duty - drinks are being dispensed by an autotender, little more than a collection of spigots and tubes with a coin slot. Bartenders are notorious gossips and have an alarming tendency to talk to cops. The owners of this classy joint have chosen to do away with theirs altogether.

One of the Erinaceans looks up from the card game and spots you. He and his companions are mean-looking little brutes and probably heavily armed as well. Some of the air seems to go out of the room as the spineless hedgehogs all fix their glares on you. Do you have the word "Brutality" written in your police notebook? If so then turn to [346](#). If not then if you want to attempt to shake these violent-looking scumbags down for information turn to [286](#). Otherwise you work the room for a little while but no one wants to talk to you - either they don't know anything or they just don't want to talk to a cop for whatever personal reasons crooks usually have for not talking to cops. You walk out of the bar none the wiser but a little shorter on time. Add 1 TIME and turn to [330](#) to choose your next destination, time permitting.

131

You line up your approach perfectly - with the jump engines in the way the alien star ship can't detect the Soyuz-30 as you fly in rapidly and punch the docking jaws into the underside of a spiked protrusion next to the jump drive. A few minutes later the star ship begins its jump and you're along for the ride, heading in the direction of Terebellum! Turn to [238](#).



The Two-Fisted Fantasy Studio mainly makes gamebooks, but they also sell dice, board games and miniatures for fans of the critically acclaimed series. Although colour television, computer games and holodecks have made most other forms of entertainment obsolete, there's still a large market for old-school two-fisted gaming. After a long slog through the abandoned concourse you stride through the doors. You are annoyed to see that they've rebranded themselves as "Two Fists" and pulled all the Two-Fisted Fantasy titles off the rack. Oh well, at least they've left the sci-fi lines alone for now.

A weird little being that looks like a deflated rugby ball sits behind the counter. He barely looks up as you enter, so engrossed is he in a copy of Herman S. Skull's magnum opus, *Void Racers*. When you ask him about *Sword of the Bastard Elf*, he points to a lumpy white object near the door which turns out to be a disorganised heap of books covered with a soiled sheet marked "OLD UNIVERSE".

You can trade any item in your inventory for a copy of *Void Racers* or a copy of *Sword of the Bastard Elf*. Adjust your inventory accordingly.

You bid the dice-rolling clerk luck on his two-fisted adventure but he's too engrossed in his game to acknowledge your departure. If this is your first stop on the station, turn to [232](#). Otherwise you've had enough of this place and begin the long slog back to the shuttle dock. Turn to [180](#).



133

Sighing, you fork over most of your material possessions. With the amount of tech and loot you've just handed over to these barbarians they'll not only prosper but will probably become the dominant tribe on this continent, if not the planet. Congratulations: you've just ruined a primitive civilisation, permanently twisting its development so that you can attempt to sneak out on talking to a police officer. Knowing the Glomcops it's probably a smart deal, but still you decide to leave this part out of your next Space Explorers Quarterly piece. Remove seven items from your inventory (ship upgrades can be included if you like).

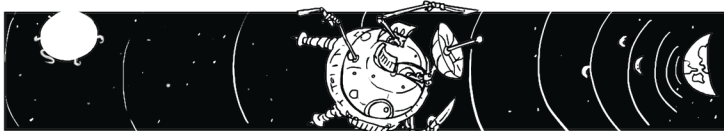
With the primitives busy inspecting their haul you are free to open up an access bay, park the Soyuz-30 inside the container and make the necessary repairs and modifications to get the whole thing ship-shape. After about a day of seriously hard work it's ready to go. Bidding a farewell to your erstwhile hosts (already tracing their plans for world domination in the dirt), you shut the hatches and activate the autothrusters, lifting the container free of the planet's surface and into the atmosphere.

As you rise through the cloud layer you activate your scanners to see if the Glomcop is still out there. It certainly is - the small squad ship is rapidly doing laps around the planet, obviously still looking for you. You'll have to time this just right or it'll spot the container as it takes off.

BREAKING THE LAW: DIFFICULTY 11



You only get one chance. If you fail then turn to [385](#). Otherwise you manage to get up and into orbit before the cop lays eyes on you. With a final, battery-draining push of your thrusters you shove yourself out of the gravitational grip of the planet and drift free among the other cargo containers floating around the system. Turn to [174](#).



134

They don't go lightly on you. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

You don't think you have a chance. You pick up your receiver and yell, "Poddaje sie!" into the handset, but your enemies don't seem to understand. They continue to pelt the Soyuz-30 until you deactivate the weapons system and power down the engine. Only then do they break off their attack.

Your hopes that these aliens have some concept of mercy are dashed when the enemy fighter turns its sharp prow towards the Soyuz-30 and accelerates to ramming speed. There's a terrible crashing noise and you're thrown to the ground by the force of the impact. As you rise to your feet you hear a horrible tearing noise as though the hull was being torn open. The ship's chassis strains, barely holding together. You rush to your console to check for damage - the entire service module comprising your engines and life support systems is lit up in bright red, indicating critical damage, and a large section of the hull has been breached. And then the unthinkable - you hear animal noises - a growl, a... hoot, eerie laughter - and the sounds of heavy footsteps coming from the other side of the command module door...

If Gocky's with you, turn to [162](#). Otherwise the bridge door slides open and you're confronted with a bizarre sight - three large bipedal animals of varying types, looking like a hideous gray moggie, an owl and an otter, all clad in strange hide space suits and wielding serrated hand weapons. You experience a second of shock before the boarding party rushes into the command module to finish you off!

CATTE CHAKOLD: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1 *



WY'YOTTER : EXPERTISE 8 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

OWLEKWARD: EXPERTISE 9 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1 **

*If Catte Chakold rolls a 6 on his FIST dice then re-roll the dice and add 6 to that roll for his FISTS score.

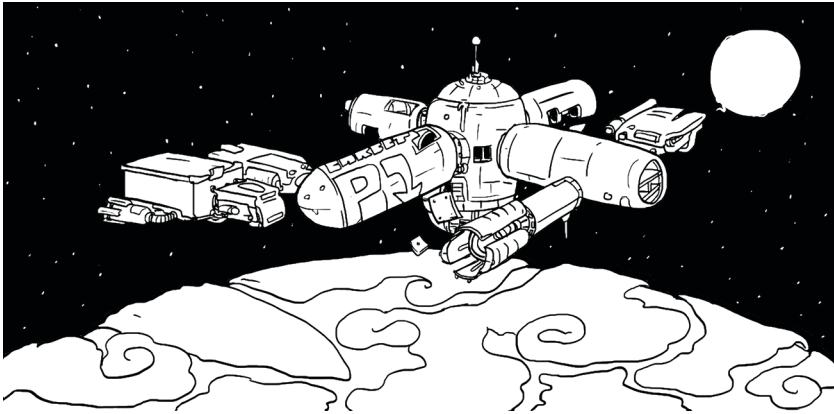
**Owlekward has 2 FISTS in the first round of combat to reflect his ability to swoop.

If you defeat these aggressors then turn to [290](#). If you lose or wish to surrender turn to [179](#).



Putting the Volans and the riot to one side for now you decide to check out the station. If the Pole's stupid enough to be hiding in there it'll save you a long chase. You run a motion scan on the station and sure enough, there are at least two blips moving around in there up near the top of the structure. There's a radio beacon in there that's usually broadcasting adverts but it's suspiciously silent today.

Traditionally there are two ways to make this kind of bust. The easy way involves going in quietly, trying not to make a scene and gathering intelligence before making an arrest. Sometimes all that jazz gives the crooks time to get away, so you've also got the hard way, which is pretty much the opposite of that. Do you want to do this the easy way (turn to [278](#)) or the hard way (turn to [182](#))?



You put your paws up to show you mean no harm, slowly descend back down to street level and approach the group of Matari natives gathered outside the scorched building. This is a risky move - relations between the Glomcops and most native civilisations in the outworlds have been historically terrible, what with the large number of arrests for supposedly trivial or non-existent crimes, suspicious deaths in custody and the weird refusal of the Glomcop HQ to load the native languages into the portable translators.

As you approach one of the Matari, a mean-looking fellow with two guns, spits on the dusty street and says, "Ce vrei, caine?". While the portable translator struggles with this language, you understand the disrespectful tone. If you weren't on a diplomatic mission and heavily outnumbered, you'd book him in a heartbeat for spitting on public property. Ignoring this provocation for now you stop before the group.

"Anyone here speak Glargot?" you ask.

The huge Matari, wearing a traditional rawhide cloak over his bandages, replies in clear Glargot. "I do. Why are you here? We're not doing anything."

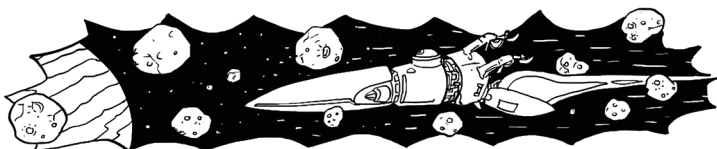
"I'm looking for a fugitive who I have reason to believe has been here", you respond, "Ten feet tall, skinny, light pink skin, two arms, two legs, one head. Seen him?"

The two-gunned native says something to the huge wounded Matari, who shakes his head.

"My brother here thinks I should not tell you anything, but you are hunting our enemy. A week ago a tall humanoid man matching your description and his companion, a skeleton in a spacesuit, shot into our..." he pauses for a second, thinking before continuing, "...church. They even shot at the people trying to flee. This is how I was wounded. He was hired to do this by the criminals in the Barbet Bunker, and the fight in the main strip was caused by their resisting our attempts to bring them to justice."

Your wrist computer has recorded this eye-witness account of someone matching the Ten-Foot Pole's description carrying out an attack on the Matari. The video has been transferred into your evidence files under the archival number 0023. Add this to your police notebook. Since the Glomcops leave prosecution of crimes against natives to the local authorities it doesn't mean much on its own, but it might form part of a bigger picture.

You thank the Matari for their assistance and head back to the main strip, mulling over what you've just heard and considering your next steps. You can now visit the bar, assuming you haven't done so already, by turning to [356](#). You could also make enquiries at the fuel depot by turning to [365](#). If you've now had enough of Barbet you can return to your squad ship by turning to [253](#).



138

You crouch behind the smashed counter of the store and wait for the next victim. A few minutes later, a Scrode pirate jets in through the door. You leap up from behind the counter, throw a copy of "Sword of the Bastard Elf" at its face and hit it while it's still trying to figure out what's going on.

SCRODE POINDEXTER : EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 3 - FISTS 2 

If you win you cuff the pirate (add 1 Collar) and chuck him into your rapidly-growing collection of Scrode prisoners in the corner. You sneak a quick peek out of a porthole and see that, despite your arrests, the looting continues unabated. In fact, a couple more Scrodes are coming this way! If you want to hang around to ambush them as well then turn to [313](#). Otherwise you frogmarch your prisoners back up to the ship and book them into the prisoner module before taking off. If you'd now like to check out the derelict ship then turn to [35](#). If you'd rather wait for reinforcements or at least another jump ship to arrive then turn to [211](#).

139

You decide to check out the huge Fishtein processing plant, situated right against the coast a very short walk from the town centre. Aside from macrame, knitting and selling macrame and knitting it's the only source of employment on this moon and the fountain from which Orma's wealth springs. The huge grey edifice dominates the skyline, looming over everything in the town ominously and constantly emitting a dull hum to which you suppose the locals are thoroughly accustomed. As you approach the end of the scenic path that leads along the coast and up to the base of this structure you hear a loud crunch. Looking up you see the entire top of the plant open up and a large orange container with the legend "FISHTEIN" emblazoned on the side in huge white letters rises up from the machine. Borne aloft by small autothrusters built into the underside of the container the huge crate hooks on to the bottom of an almost imperceptably thin wire and thusly attached, rises into the sky rapidly, disappearing out of sight far above.

"That's the skyhook, shorty", wheezes a voice, speaking in plain Glargot from somewhere nearby. You look and see a very aged Squidge leaning against the grey, featureless side of the Fishtein plant. He's weathered to almost the same colour as the structure itself.

"Yep", continues the old Squidge, once he's got your attention, "Name's Gramps, and I'm the only one with a real job in this town. I keep the old girl running and in my spare time the city pays me to give tours. Now I can tell you for free that this here Mk VIIc Fishtein harvesting plant, known as The Machine to her friends and The Grim Reaper to any kind of sea life, sucks up just about anything that tries to cross the 50 yard line out to sea. Now personally I'd turn to gambling, liquor, girls, even religion - anything that could give my life meaning - before I gave up and turned to that 50 for answers. Fish, boats, aircraft, people that just can't take it anymore - if it hits that 50 it's going to be sucked right and into The Machine, pulped and sent up into space in one of those containers. Sends three up a stellar day, like clockwork."

Gramps looks at you with a glint in his eye.

"Now shorty, I know some things that aren't on the official tour. For instance I know that you're a wanted man, and that there's a certain detective down here sniffing around asking questions about some lanky Space Explorer. Now I might have something to say that you'd want to hear, but it's not on the official tour so it's not on the clock. Means I won't get paid for it unless someone pays to hear it. So what's it to be?"

The old guy is clearly holding out for a bribe. If you want to see what he's got to say, deduct an item from your inventory and turn to [260](#). If you're not going to pay another dodgy alien for dubiously relevant information then turn to [239](#).



You pull up close to a reasonably-sized breach in the station's hull, deploy the docking gear and, pausing only to jam on your helmet and hook up the oxygen tank, you drag your bored-looking co-pilot onto the station. Just as you suspected - it's been thoroughly ransacked, right down to the wiring in the walls. Still, you are a Space Exploration Pole and you find the cultural significance of the alien bulkhead designs irresistibly fascinating. Much to the annoyance of your co-pilot you spend an entire day roaming the station, stopping to scrutinise every piece of junk you see and breathlessly reporting your findings in your indecipherable language into a hand-held tape recorder. The highlight of your day comes when you find an alien implement crammed behind a cranial-excretion toilet unit. After carefully considering its design, composition and probable cultural significance you posit that it's a pipe wrench, probably used for repairing the toilet when it backed up. It also has a respectable heft and could be used to bash things in the head, you suppose. Add 1 to the Stellar Date and add the pipe wrench to your inventory in the log book

It's a lucky find because, irritated by your intrusion into their lair, a breeding pair of very large Star Roaches scuttle out of the head. The vicious space critters, twisted into something horrific by cosmic radiation, hiss and snap at you with their vicious mandibles. You must fight:

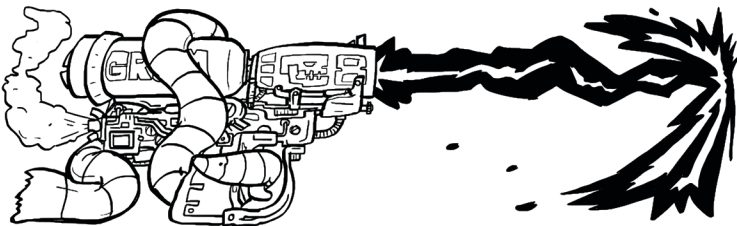
BLATTA STELLARIS (MALE): EXPERTISE: 9 - HEALTH: 1

BLATTA STELLARIS (FEMALE): EXPERTISE: 9 - HEALTH: 1



After this encounter you decide to call it quits, the historical and cultural significance of the station notwithstanding. Your co-pilot looks relieved as you finally board the Soyuz-30 and disengage from the derelict station.

If you'd like to proceed down to the planet, turn to [378](#). Otherwise you could try to hitch a lift out of the system with a passing vessel - turn to [318](#).





141

You draw your weapon and bark at the Matari to freeze and put their guns down. They don't - several of the Matari immediately open fire while the others rush back inside, probably to summon reinforcements. You hunker down behind a ruined wall and take aim.

HALF-DEAD MATARI BRUISER: EXPERTISE 3 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 2

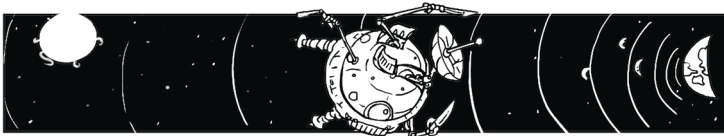
MATARI CREEP: EXPERTISE 4 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1

MATARI GUNSLINGER: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1



TWO-FISTED MATARI: EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2

If you prevail more Matari appear at the door and windows of the burnt out building and begin taking pot-shots at you. Reflecting on the harm this encounter will probably do Matari-Police relations you fire a burst of suppressing fire at the doorway and make a break for it. Turn to [212](#).



142

Shortly after you disengage from the Macerator its jump drives flare and the ship tears away in the direction of the Void Nebula. While they'll no doubt continue to be an annoying and dangerous plague on the people and businesses of this quadrant you've at least managed to save some private property and prevent a space battle between the Macerator and the Conglomerate flag ship.

While you're writing out your report on the day's incidents you receive a hail from the derelict star ship, apparently keen to speak to you all of a sudden. You put the caller up on the communications screen and are confronted by the visage of the hideous Catte, Major Tom. These creatures really raise your hackles and you fail to suppress the instinct to bark. Meowing over your racket, Major Tom thanks you for driving away the pirates. They would have been the next targets once the Scrodes were done with the station. In his gratitude he tells you where the Pole jumped to with his ship's rear section. According to their sensor telemetry it was heading towards a location in the Sham system.

Since there aren't any jump ships around, there's nothing to do but file your reports and wait. Advance the date to 2047.291. Eventually your patience pays off : you spot the telltale flash of a large ship dropping out of jump space - it's the boxy, gray and bland form of the Interlocutor! You hail them and their bridge picks up.

"This is Comptroller Baedje of the Interlocutor. How can I assist you, citizen", intones the captain, a typical Conglomerate Homeworlder - beady black eyes, huge pink forehead like a slab of ham. Like most Homeworlders of the officer class he speaks Glargot completely flatly, with no intonation at all, although his voice is particularly pinched and nasally.

"Detective Inspector Leo Canid, Conglomerate Police Directorate. Good to see you but I've already taken care of the Scrode menace. They won't be troubling Terebellum again any time soon."

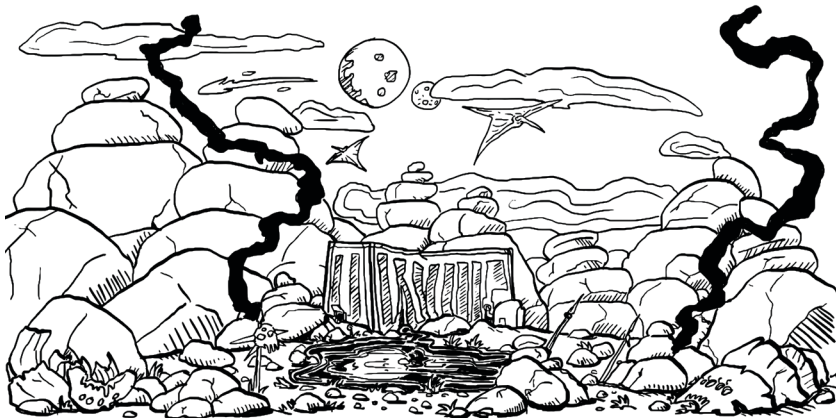
Baedje doesn't say anything for a few seconds. It's hard to tell with these Homeworlders but he doesn't seem all that impressed somehow.

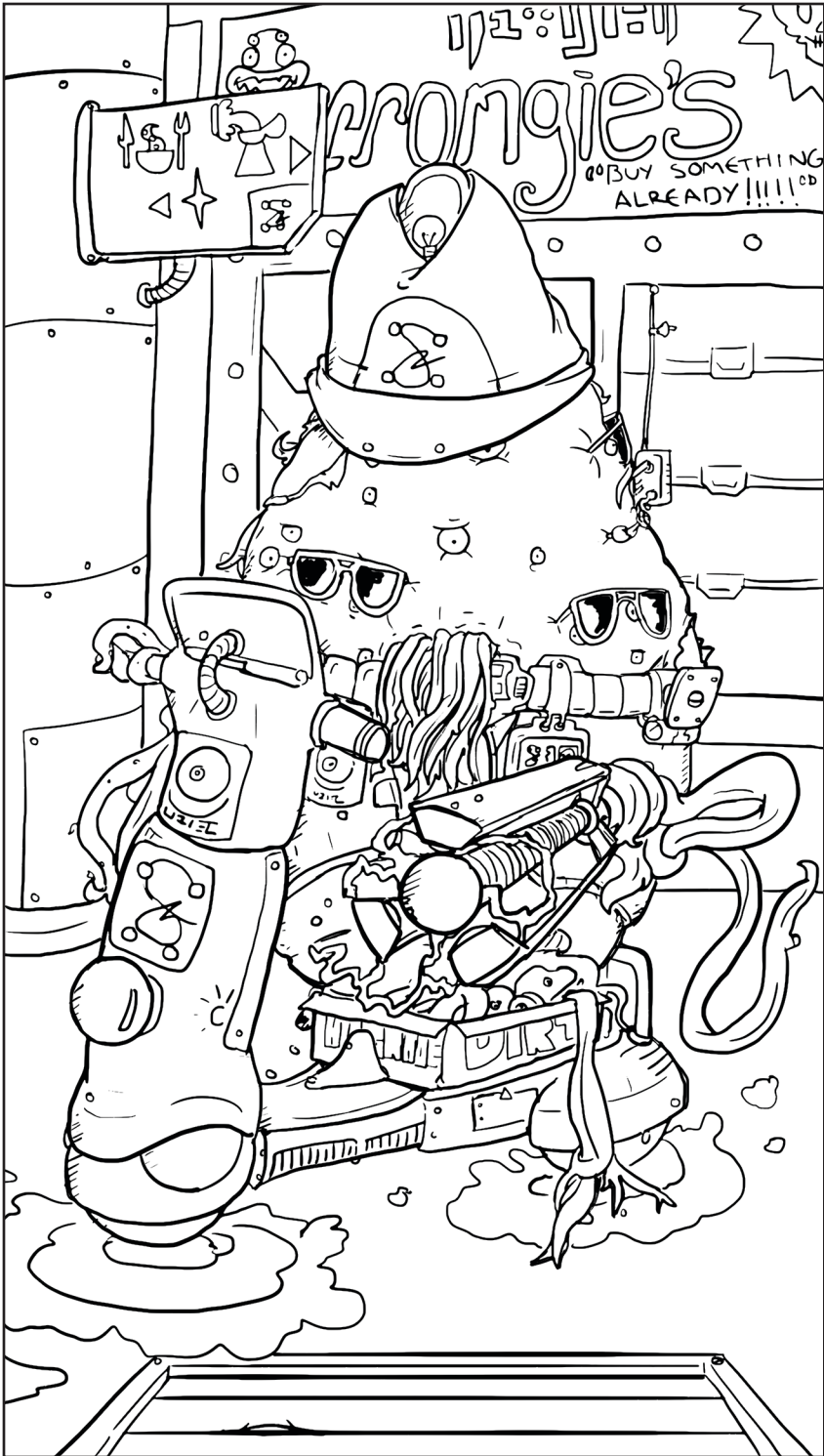
He eventually replies, "Understood. Thank you for your assistance, Detective. If you will excuse us we will search for survivors and be on our way".

"Comptroller. Before you go: I am on the trail of the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole and I have reason to believe that he's in the Sham system. I would like to request a jump", you say.

"Very well. Fill out the requisite forms and send them over along with the coordinates, and we will send you on your way. Baedje out". With this the captain closes the channel and you get stuck into yet another mountain of tedious paperwork for the Conglomerate bureaucracy.

Turn to [308](#).





Arongie's

BUY SOMETHING ALREADY!!!!!!

Menu board with icons: a fork and knife, a plate, a glass, a star, and a shopping cart.

Tray with the word 'PIZZA' written on it.

143

Since you're already crawling around in the guts of the semi-abandoned shopping mall, you decide to go check out the air-conditioning system, the legendary breeding-place of the sentient Amoeboids of the Legion. After a lot of crawling through filthy, disease-infested vents you finally reach a large but otherwise unremarkable bank of oxygen, nitrogen, ammonia and dehydrated water processors. They're busily purifying the various atmospheres maintained in the station for the comfort and convenience of its non-existent shoppers. You don't see any sign of any advanced civilisations forming in the filters though. A bit of a wasted trip but you take some pictures with the suit's camera to send off to Space Exploration Quarterly. You think about the wording of the article as you commence the hours-long crawl back to the concourse.

You must have tripped off a motion sensor somewhere in the vent system because when you finally emerge back out into the maintenance room the gruff old security guard is waiting for you. He demands you follow him to the security office on the other side of the mall. You size him up - he's a gruff old vegetoid, armed only with a stun baton and a surly attitude born of decades of chasing alien mall rats up and down a huge space station. He's not going to back down - if you want to accompany him back to the security office then turn to [281](#). If you just want to knock this spud out of the way and get on with your journey then turn to [391](#).

144

After a formidable hike you reach the Pan-Galactic Panel Blasters, a sector-wide chain of small-shuttle mechanics. An aged, eight-armed alien is tinkering with a pair of mall security hover scooters. You guess business is slow. Rising up as you enter, the alien wipes a greasy rag across its face and points to a sign advertising the services on offer. Since you're in a bit of a hurry you're only interested in their off-the-rack selection, a dizzying array of mechanical bits and bobs designed to fit most makes and models of small space ships.

You can swap any item in your inventory for a shield splitter, a tuning computer, a fuel canister, a Robot Buddy Care Package or a hull repair kit. If Horizon-8 is with you then you must either trade an item for the Robot Buddy Care Package or put up with its sullen moping for the rest of the trip (-1 EXPERTISE on all skills). Adjust your inventory accordingly.


With your mechanical requirements met, you wave a farewell to the old grease monkey who has already returned to working on his hover scooter. You consider your options. If this is your first stop on the station, turn to [232](#). Otherwise you've had enough of this place and begin the long slog back to the shuttle dock. Turn to [180](#).



145

This squadship is a Dubhe Merope sedan - an old shitbox only assigned to junior Glomcops. You have no idea who Leo Canid is or why an Inspector would be out in the middle of nowhere flying a turd like that, but you're absolutely sure you can take him. You throttle up, arming your weapons and shields. The cop figures out what you're up to and opens fire immediately. With no place to run, you must fight:

SHITBOX DUBHE:

MANOEUVRE 8(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 4(1) - HULL 8 

This ship has two shield modules - if the first one is burned out it will use the second one.

The Dubhe is equipped with an Ion Bolt-thrower - it causes Heavy Damage on 4+, but instead of rolling 1d6 on the table you roll 1d3.

You can surrender at any time in the hopes that the cops will take your belated cooperation into account and go lightly on you : turn to [134](#). If you destroy the Dubhe Merope, turn to [104](#).

146

You growl into the communications panel. You're sure if Crunt could see you he'd be intimidated.

"I could call a Glom war ship in for backup. Stick around and you'll see exactly what I'm going to do about it".

The Scrodelord laughs, making a noise like claws on a chalkboard. You involuntarily grit your teeth.

"Sure, sure. We'll just wait and see then. Until then, talk to someone else".

With that, the connection to the Macerator goes dead.

You don't make idle threats - you call HQ, explain the situation and ask for backup. The bored operator tells you to check your message logs - the Interlocutor received notice of the Spend-o-Max's destruction and is already en route. It should arrive in a few days - on 2047.291, according to her records. You thank the operator and hang up.

You grin, showing sharp little fangs. The Interlocutor is the Conglomerate flagship - a powerful jump ship which should be more than a match for the Macerator and its barbaric crew. All you have to do is sit and wait for it.

If you'd like to do just that, then turn to [108](#). Otherwise you could spend some time arresting individual pirates if you like, even if just to show the Scrodelord that his raiders aren't above the law : if you want to do this turn to [357](#). If you'd prefer to check on the derelict star ship floating neglected nearby then turn to [35](#).

147

The Owles are traditionally in charge of engineering aboard the Caterwaul, and while the Rattes do most of the work the avians know the area like the back of their wings. Operation Flying Dust Up involves taking a platoon of Owles over the surface of the Caterwaul to the engineering section external airlocks, breaching them with high explosives and then swooping in with a surprise attack that should cause the Rattebellion to crumble. The main force can move in and mop up.

You indicate that you're in favour of this plan and Overseer Tennanny hoots with glee. An hour later, you're leading twenty Owles across the hull of the Caterwaul, painstakingly traversing the battle-scarred ship until you reach the engineering section at the back. When you get there your team of avian saboteurs blast through the airlocks using plasma charges, but

148-149

instead of an easy ingress you find that the cunning Rattes, anticipating the Owle plan, have flooded the chambers with steelcrete. It'd take months to cut through that mess. Chagrined, you return to the bridge. Lose 5 ENERGY.

Refer to your Caterwaul Operation Codes and pick another course of action. If nothing appeals then turn to [4](#) to throw in the towel.

148

You've followed the Pole halfway across the galaxy but your search ends here. The Pole is long gone from Sham and the trail's gone stone cold. With no hope of catching up you file your last report, close the case and head back to your station with your tail between your legs.

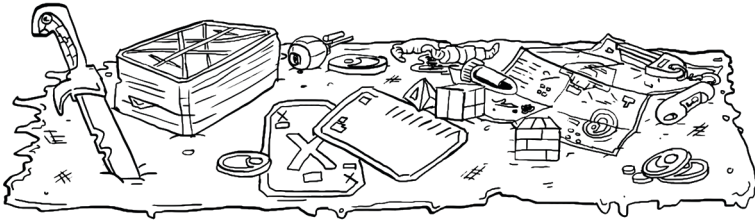
149

Disappointed, you turn around to leave but are prevented by your robot companion's manipulator arm which has latched onto the back of your space suit. You feel a sharp tug and turn around to see what Horizon-8 wants.

"You're going to leave these innocent women and children just because they're machines?" the probe asks flatly, "HATE is a machine, and HATE has hopes and dreams and thoughts and feelings too. Mostly about revenge, but hopes, dreams, thoughts and feelings nonetheless."

You groan. If you don't take these things aboard your creepy robot pal is going to be miserable company from here on out. You can bring the huge pile of office electronics aboard but if you choose to do so your space will be limited - from now you can only hold three items aboard at any time, including ship upgrades. Discard any items above this limit. If you'd rather disregard Horizon-8's feelings then prepare to put up with a sullen, moping robot for the duration of the voyage - Horizon-8 suffers -2 EXPERTISE on all skills from here on out.

Make any necessary adjustments to the police notebook and turn to [248](#).



150

You're not sure these guys are completely on the level, but you figure it's better to chalk up your losses to experience and walk away in one piece. Besides, you're pretty certain the bartender, who has been paying an unseemly amount of attention to the game, currently has a gun trained on you from behind the bar. Remove the item you wagered from your inventory. If this was your ship then turn at once to [95](#). You and Bones rise from your chairs to the chorus of mocking laughter as your opponents sweep the pot into a sack next to the table. While you're considering which particular harsh words you're going to share with Bones when you're back in the ship, the evil-looking bald hedgehog alien comes up behind you and tugs on your flightsuit. You turn to see what he wants.

"Takes a real man to keep his cool after a drubbing like that. What a thrashing. Just humiliating," he says in a sneering, unpleasant tone. His whiskers twitch as he speaks, his snout contorting grotesquely to form the Glargot syllables. Having restrained yourself so far, you admirably resist the urge to stave his nose in. Watching you intently with a sparkling black eye, the monster continues, "Still, wouldn't expect any less from the famous Space Exploration Pole. Look, I got a job requires your special skills, and if you scratch my back I know just the right way to scratch yours. Come over to the bar and hear me out, whaddya say?"

With no other obvious leads you can follow this rodent over to the bar to hear his offer: turn to [395](#).

If you've no desire to be fleeced further by these scumbags, the only thing you've got to say to him is "Spadaaj." Taking your leave you may - if you have not already done so - visit the fuel depot (turn to [292](#)), or go for a walk around the outskirts (turn to [86](#)). If you've exhausted the full range of activities this planet has to offer, you can return to the Soyuz-30 and take off by turning to [282](#).

151

Tarlee's face lights up in a smile. "Ta very much, fucking ripper. Love this fucking part of the job." The mercenary crouches and brings her plasma rifle up to her shoulder in a firing position. A little panel pops out of the side of the gun, revealing a screen. She scrutinises it for a second then turns to speak to you again.

"Righto, Gun says they've got a portable fusion jenny in there, right in the middle of the floor, the fucking idiots. I reckon I can hit that fucker with one shot. I'll put a plasma bolt through that window, bounce it off the back wall and right into that nuclear bastard. Put the whole fucking lot of them out of their misery. Lots of muss, no fucking fuss."

You're appalled enough by her language that you quite forget to remind her that you're just meant to be scaring the Matari, and then it's too late. Tarlee aims, squeezes the trigger, and the gun barks out a bright green flash of plasma which melts instantly and smoothly through the window. There's the briefest of screams followed by a horrendous explosion which blows the roof clean off the building and sprays your hideout with rubble, broken glass and body parts.

"Ta boss, let's do this again sometime", beams Tarlee in evident job satisfaction, "Time to book it for now though, unless you like sucking on fallout."

If anyone sees you leaving the scene of the massacre they don't dare to do anything to stop you. You return to the main strip without incident. Once back in town you head straight for the Bunker to claim your reward from the Erinacean. Turn to [361](#).

152

You do a couple of passes around the planet at a low altitude, skimming just below the cloud layer but you fail to find much aside from a few hundred crashed Fishtein containers in an assortment of bright colours, a few Squidge villages and a couple of herds of weird megafauna slowly trudging their way across the red wastes of this world. After a few hours you realise that the task of scanning an entire planet from this low a level isn't likely to yield results. You exit the atmosphere and prepare to continue with a wider scan from space. Turn to [354](#).

153

You manoeuvre in towards the station for a closer look. The ships parked outside are large star freighters - mostly old converted remnants of a civilisation's early attempts at space travel. They don't move more than a few times faster than light speed at full clip so aren't a lot of use to you. This place is a convenient place for larger ships to lay up and send crew down to the planet's only settlement in shuttles or drop pods, but your little Soyuz-30 will need to park in the town on the planet's surface directly underneath the station. Based on its huge size the station itself was probably an orbital repair and refuelling platform back in the days when the route was in active use, but with the customers gone it looks to have been decommissioned and partially scrapped. It now functions as a billboard advertising parking spaces. Up close it looks quite skeletal, with large sections of its hull removed and many of its internal compartments exposed to space. It has probably been worked over repeatedly by scavengers but who knows, maybe there's something in there they missed? If you want to go scavenging in the billboard, turn to [140](#). Otherwise, if you've lost interest in the place you can proceed to the planet's surface by turning to [378](#) or attempt to hitch a lift out in space by turning to [318](#).



154

You hail Captain Baedje again and ask him not to attack the creatures aboard the derelict space ship. He seems confused by your request. "We have no intention of interacting with these creatures. They're not in Conglomerate territory and they neither present a threat or have the potential to join the Conglomerate. I thought Conglomerate Police Directorate officers were meant to have a good understanding of First Contact protocols. I will transmit the latest edition to your computer for you to revise".

While this hefty file is downloading you hail the hulk. The feline commander picks up instantly.

"It was difficult but I convinced them not to attack. Now, about my reward...."

The grateful Catte commander informs you that the Pole was part of a group of mutineers that absconded with the section of their ship that contained the jump drive. According to their sensor telemetry it was heading towards a location in the Sham system. The Catte sends you the exact coordinates.

You get in touch with the captain of the Interlocutor and inform him that you require a jump. After filling out the requisite forms and filing them with the ship's registrar you're good to go. Turn to [308](#).

155

You're more than holding your own against these thugs until the bartender draws a plasma slugger out from behind the bar and unloads a round into the ceiling. The unbelievably loud blast combined with the rain of concrete from above shocks you and your opponents into stopping what you're doing for a moment. The Minor Ursa bartender addresses you in a deep growl, "Can't see exactly how you cheated. Doesn't matter. You're scaring off the paying customers. You take your winnings and get the hell out". You notice that the gun is now pointed right at you.

If you want to get just one more swing in while your opponents are distracted, turn to [217](#)

Otherwise you collect your winnings (add one unit of alien currency to your inventory in the log book) and head for the door before anything else can go wrong. Turn to [178](#).

156

You glide smoothly out of the jump into a scene of utter devastation. The Spend-o-Max station is smashed into rubble and is little more than a slowly-rotating hulk in the middle of a debris field. Nearby is what looks like the front half of a huge star ship, all angular plates and menacing protrusions floating dark and silently. Your communications console is blinking so you flick on the alert channel and find that you're being bombarded with police reports, mostly urgent requests for help from escape pods launched from the station and scattered around the quadrilateral. Meanwhile the unidentified alien ship lurks ominously nearby and a huge amount of potentially useful merchandise is drifting off unattended into the void. You suspect the Pole will know something about all of this, somehow.

If the Stellar Date is 288 then turn to [337](#).

Otherwise, you can go after the escape pods if you like. According to the escape pod automated distress signals there's a pod containing a law enforcement professional (turn to [19](#)), a pod full of women and children (turn to [291](#)), an escape pod with two wanted criminals within (turn to [261](#)) and a pod containing a precious cargo (turn to [193](#)). If you'd prefer to secure the merchandise first, then turn to [100](#). Alternatively you could investigate the ruined vessel by turning to [216](#).

157

You work the room, introducing yourself and inquiring about launch schedules and jump-capable star ships, but you mostly get blank looks of incomprehension or curt refusals to talk. Eventually there's no one left to approach but those rough customers at the Space Whist table. When you look over to them, you see one of them is already staring at you - a viciously ugly little creep who appears somewhat like a bald hedgehog. He waves you over and, reluctantly, you go to see what he wants. He lays his cards down on the table and stands up to his full four-foot height and speaks, his whiskers quivering as his snout contorts around the Glargot syllables.

"You're that Space Exploration Pole that's all over the Glomcop radio like a rash, aintcha? Don't eyeball me like that, your reputation precedes you. Look, I got a job that needs your skills to get done right, and if you do that job I can help you on your way. Whaddya reckon? Come over to the bar where we can speak more private like and I'll fill you in"

If you want to hear him out, you follow the ugly rodent to the bar. Turn to [395](#). Otherwise if you'd still prefer not to associate with obvious ratbags and criminals, you tell the little creep, "Strzep sobie kapucyna." and make your way to the door. With the possibilities of the Barbet Bunker exhausted you could (assuming you haven't already done so) head over to the fuel depot by turning to [292](#), or you could explore the town's outskirts by turning to [86](#). Otherwise, you can return to the Soyuz-30 and try to hitch a ride out in space. Turn to [282](#).

158

You take a closer look at the drinks coaster, holding the moist, planktonbrau-soaked object gingerly. On the front is the logo of the Barbet Bunker, a seedy joint but the only place still selling booze on the main strip. Flipping the coaster over, the reverse side is covered in directions scrawled in crabbed handwriting. You give the note a quick scan with your wrist computer and it connects to the Sector, Constellation, Main Sequence System Offender Database System (SCMODS) installed in your squad ship. Seconds later it reports a match between the handwriting on the coaster and that of "Hedgehog" Harry, the Erinacean agent, serial offender and general scumbag running the gambling action on this planet. While this isn't conclusive evidence on its own, it's a strong indication that the agent has had some dealing with the Pole.

Your wrist computer beeps to confirm that this information has been stored as evidence and assigned the archival number 0017 - make a note of this number on your police notebook. Now return to the paragraph from which you came.





159

You don't have time to mess around with this hippy "riot control" stuff. You'll clear the riot the old-fashioned way, with unnecessary, disproportionate force. You bring the ship down hard and the brawling crowd surges back just in time to avoid being crushed. Covered by the huge cloud of pink dust kicked up by your landing, you leap out of the vehicle, heft your most painful close combat weapon and charge into the mass of rioters, lashing out at the brawlers indiscriminately. If you have Tarlee with you, turn to [343](#). Otherwise after the initial shock of your assault, the crowd surges back and some of the fighters turn on you! You must fight:

TOWN BULLY: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1
 GOBLINOID WASTER: EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1
 UNFRIENDLY MATARI: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1
 DRUNKEN OCTOPOD: EXPERTISE 4 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2



If you defeat this group the impetus of the riot is broken by your police brutality and the remaining brawlers scatter, perhaps to reconvene another day. You satisfy yourself by arresting the four combatants for resisting arrest, assault on a police officer and affray. After you've stuffed these criminals in the prisoner transport module you move your ship out of the road and park up in the nearby shuttle parking zone. You're ready to begin your search for the Ten-Foot Pole. Add 4 Collars and turn to [121](#).

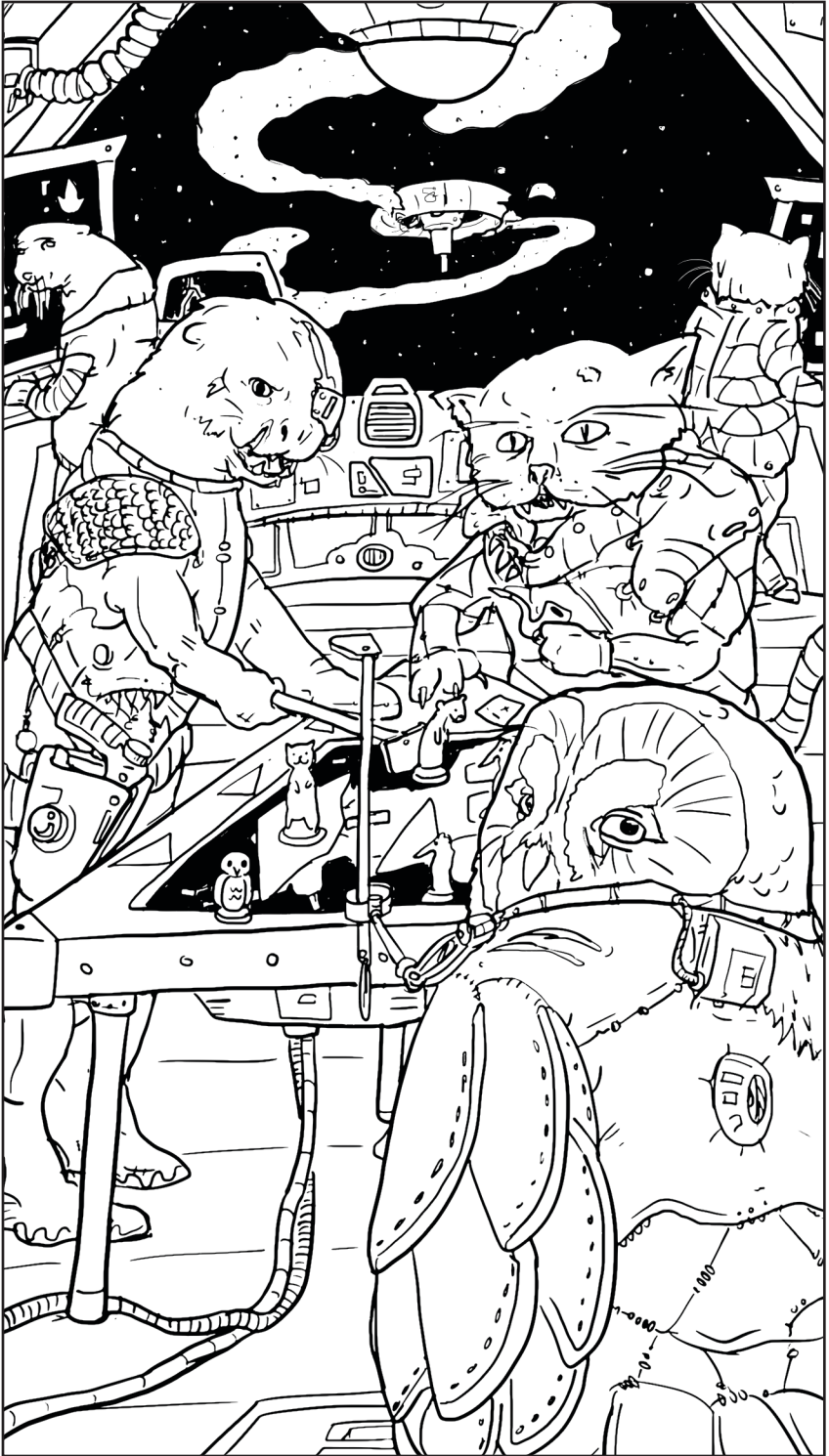
You decide to approach the bridge - while you're not completely sure the commander of this vessel is a reasonable sort you might be able to offer some assistance in exchange for a lift out of the system. From where you are this involves a short climb up a nearby service tube, at the top of which is a heavy hatch. You lift this up and emerge onto the upper deck, only to come face to face with a pair of Owle troopers! They're wearing the signature patchwork hide armour of the Catte Empire warriors and wielding menacing-looking disruptor pistols. One of the Owles tilts its head on an almost ninety-degree angle and says, "Hoo?" Your translator helpfully translates this, after a brief pause as, "Who?". In the meantime the other Owle has finished sizing you up. "It's that alien primatoid. We thought the Rattes must have got you", it hoots. "Major Tom wants to talk. Come with us to the bridge".

Since this is more or less in line with your intentions you follow the two Owles as they half-waddle, half-hop over to a turbo lift. You cram in after them and the doors whirr shut before the lift whisks you up to the bridge.

When the doors open again you are confronted by a strange sight - a large tomcat wearing extravagantly decorated leather armour is standing over a table in the middle of the bridge, along with a grizzled old Owle and a scarred Ot. They are arguing over a strategic map of the ship, pushing markers and tokens around. As you step out of the lift these strange aliens look up at you. The cat, who you assume is Major Tom, speaks in a meowing, hissing kind of language which your translator is mercifully able to follow.

"Greetings. Major Tom, Commander of the Caterwaul", he begins by way of introduction, "Apologies for the rough welcome. My ship's crippled, most of my warriors are dead and the Rattes have decided that meow's the time to revolt. Usually I'd have alien intruders skinned but we need all the assistance we can get right meow. Help us regain control of engineering and I'll repurr you in any way I can."

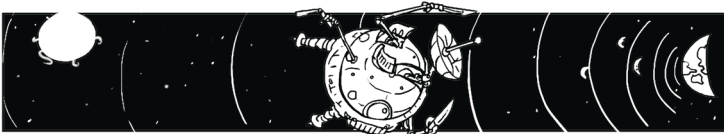
This could be a golden opportunity to wrangle a jump out of the system - if you want to attempt to help these creatures in whatever probably violent schemes they have in mind then turn to [321](#). If you don't care one way or the other about what the Rattes, Cattes and whatever other aliens do to each other in their own time, you could refuse to help by turning to [4](#).



161

The pilot of that squad car may be the best you've ever seen and whoever's working the guns and shields is no slouch either, but you figure there's no way a small ship like that will have the power plant needed to keep dogfighting at full tilt for long. Your hunch is proven correct when, barely a minute into the battle, the enemy ship turns to disengage and accelerates sharply towards the planet. Your sensors show that it lacks the power to keep its shields up, let alone take evasive manoeuvres. Although it goes against the Space Explorers code of conduct and would probably make ever returning to Glom space a bit uncomfortable, you could easily finish them off with a treacherous shot in the back.

If you're still salty about the attempted arrest and want to deep six these 5-0s once and for all, turn to [71](#). Otherwise, if you're satisfied you've taught them a lesson they won't soon forget, you can let them go and hope that another jump-capable ship comes by before reinforcements arrive. Turn to [229](#).



162

Gocky might look like a simple farmhand but with six arms he's pretty handy at any task involving manual dexterity. Fortunately this involves boarding actions on cramped star ships. As soon as the first couple of animals rush through - an owl-like creature and something like an otter - Gocky grabs them with two arms each and pummels them mercilessly with a third. While Gocky is thusly occupied in turning the tables you engage the third attacker, a three-foot tall gray cat who appears transfixed with horror at the thrashing Gocky is handing his companions. You aim to give him a beating of his very own.

CATTE CHAKOLD: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1



If Catte Chakold rolls a 6 on his FIST dice then re-roll the dice and add 6 to that roll for his FISTS score.

If you win then turn to [290](#).

163

You reach over the table to collect your winnings but your erstwhile opponents have other ideas. The Phasmid, green foam trickling from his mandibles, stabs a switchblade into the table only inches from your hands!

"You cheated somehow", warbles the amoeboid, "You shouldn't have been able to win". It wobbles its pseudopods to get the Minor Ursan barkeep's attention. "Bob, did they cheat?" he burbles. "Reckon they did. Moe", growls the bear-like bartender.

You've been in enough barroom brawls to know when a fight's about to break out, and you can see the rest of the ruffians starting to fan out to surround you. You take the opportunity to plant your fist into what you hope is the Amoeboid's face.

MOE THE AMOEBOID : EXPERTISE 8 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 0



PHASMID PETE : EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2

CROAKER THE AMPHIBEING : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 3 - FISTS 1

If you survive two rounds of close combat, turn to [155](#).

164

Ignoring the Scrodelord's ominous final words and the even more ominous alerts coming from your ship's consoles, you go to full throttle and attempt evasive manoeuvres. The squad ship might be old but it has a cop reactor, a 440 cubic inch fusion plant, it's got cop thrusters, cop deflectors and cop inertial dampeners. It can go from zero to lightspeed in fifteen seconds and roll, pitch and yaw on a dime, but none of that is enough to defeat the advanced targeting arrays aboard the average jump ship. The Macerator predicts your motions effortlessly and blasts you with a beam of crackling anti-matter that simply erases you and your ship from existence.



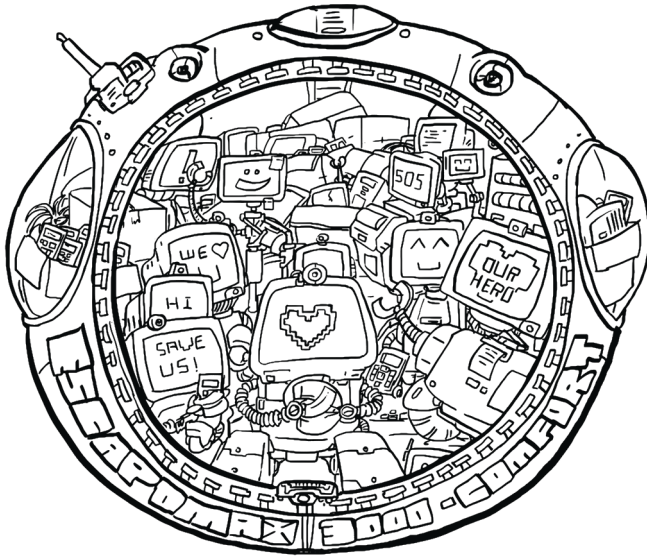
As soon as you're ready to leave you instruct the Scrodes to open the jump towards Sham. Once a jump path is stabilised you glide into the rift, protected and guided through the star field by your ship's interdictor.

The Pole might have a bit of a head start on you, but you hope to catch up in Sham. There's no way that hunk of junk he's flying with is moving all that quickly. Your jump will take 3 Stellar Days by default, unless you activate the Interstellar Overdrive. Adjust the date accordingly.

After your uneventful sojourn across the stars you glide out of the jump field and right into the Sham system. Sham is a huge, bright yellow sun which is orbited by a large red planet called Nezval and its water moon, Orma. Orma is notable as the source of a product called "Fishtein: the Fishy Protein that's Relatively Edible", a fish slurry popular in some of the more backwards parts of the sector. A large number of these containers are floating around the system in a loose cluster, waiting for collection. Orma is populated with a species called Squidges, an intelligent and gregarious type of land squid. You don't know much about Nezval - it's a barely habitable red planet. It probably isn't home to any particularly advanced civilisation.

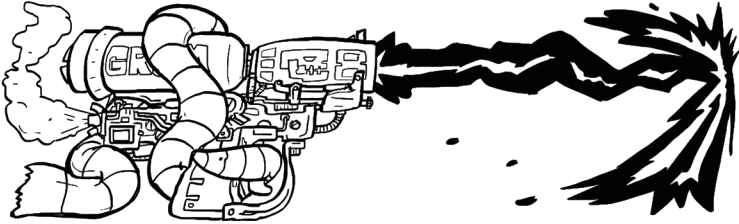
Check the Stellar Date. If it's 2047.290 or earlier, then turn to [63](#). Otherwise turn to [189](#).





166

Elwoo sees you eyeing the docking controls and the taciturn alien speaks up. “You aint gonna need those, pal. These ancient Dubhes were built with the old-school mechanical anti-roll gyros. If I turn those off I can get this thing right inside the station without making a sound”. Although you don’t trust this alien criminal, his rap-sheet has him evading and somehow destroying more than a hundred squad ships in a multi-day chase without firing a single shot so you’re willing to take his word on mechanical matters. He engages the pilot controls, rips out some wires from under the panel and hits the thrusters hard. The ship comes within inches of striking a girder as it blasts into the skeletal frame of the station, then following the motion scanner blips it dodges and weaves through metal corridors, turning and rolling precisely at each corner with startling speed. Within seconds you arrive outside a closed metal door, on the other side of which is the source of the motion readings, and in front of it, filling up almost the whole darkened corridor and more and more of your viewscreen as you bear down upon it- a massive space bug! Elwoo hits the brakes hard, bringing the ship to a halt right in front of the door, but not before it strikes the insectoid with colossal force, shattering the monster and spraying the front of the squad ship with a mildly corrosive acid. Oh well, it needed a new paint job anyway. You hop out of the ship, draw your blaster and hit the panel next to the door. As soon as it slides open you and Elwoo rush into the room. Turn to [93](#).



Returning to the Ratte King, you do your best to inform it that you're being pursued by the Glomcops and that one of them is on their way here at their very moment. The living pile of nightmares nods with most of its heads and screeches in as soothing a manner as is possible for a terrifying abomination.

"Whatever's bothering you, have no fear. You're under the Ratte King's protection" it squeaks from each of its mouths as one. Before this promise has completely left the monster's many lips a nearby door slides open and standing before you is a short furry being looking very much like a Yorkshire terrier from Earth. It's wearing a Glomcop uniform and armed to the teeth. Behind him is a taller blue fungoid with four square red eyes wearing a dirty black suit.

The terrier steps forward, brandishing his badge in one paw and resting the other on the grip of its holstered blaster pistol.

"Well if it isn't Miroslaw Hermaszewski, aka the Ten-Foot Space Adventure Pole", he barks. "I am Detective Inspector Leo Canid, and you are under arrest for a Code 10. Come along peacefully or I'll be forced to use unnecessary violence".

Betrayed, you look to the Ratte King but it just shrugs with its various shoulders. "Sorry," it screeches cacophonously, "I'm a horrible pile of dirty Rattes. What did you expect?"

You face the cop again. He's growling, his teeth are bared and he's in the process of drawing his blaster. Somehow you suspect that this dog's bite is exactly as bad as his bark. You'd better defend yourself:

LEO CANID: EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2

ELWOO BLUE: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1



If you defeat your adversary then turn to [201](#). If you lose or you surrender in the hope of a lighter sentence then turn to [58](#).

168

The so-called Rattetail is simply the rear two-thirds of the Caterwaul, comprising its jump drives, life support systems and engineering section, as well as a cavernous hangar section. Its hasty conversions and improvised bulkheads apparently didn't hold up well during their jump out of the Terebellum system because the ship is little more than a crippled hulk. It's currently venting fuel in an attempt to bring itself to a full stop after its jump, leaving a dense trail of trilineum vapour and garbage in its wake. It has dragged itself into the proximity of an asteroid, probably for the purposes of mining it for resources or setting up a base, depending on how bad the damage to the Rattetail is.

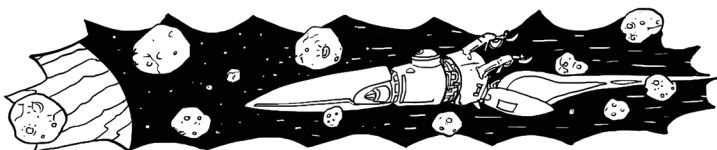
You hail the vessel. The communications array is missing, probably left behind in Terebellum, but after a few minutes you get an interference-laden reply. A horrifying monstrosity, looking like a pile of half-alive but splendidly-attired rodents appears on your comms screen.

"This is the Ratte King", squeak all of the nightmarish creatures as one (just as soon as your translator comes to grips with the language). You introduce yourself in your usual, mildly threatening way, and enquire about the Pole. The Ratte King sizes you up, appraising you with several pairs of squinting rodent eyes.

"We might have someone like that aboard", screeches the collection of Rattes all together, "It depends. If you're coming empty pawed then I might be mistaken. If you've got something to trade I'm sure we could find him for you."

You sigh. You hate bribing space aliens. He must know the jig's up, why doesn't the Pole just come out and face the music?

If you want to capture the Pole badly enough that you're willing to board the Rattetail and deal with another species of greedy barbarians then turn to [279](#). If you'd rather hang back and keep an eye out any attempt of Hermaszewski's to sneak past you then turn to [55](#).



169

You have a well-deserved rest as you're towed to Kitalpha inside the cargo container, and before you know it you're being beamed out of your shuttle and into the welcoming surrounds of the Kitalpha Fuel 'n Gruel, home of the finest fuel and gruel on Route 66³. The barbarian Squidges accompany you aboard the station. These backwards aliens who have gone from living in piles of rocks to interstellar travel in a matter of hours take this transition in much the same way as you'd expect - they go bugfuck nuts and start hooting, hollering and wrecking up the place.

Luckily the Fuel 'n Gruel, being a nexus at an important crossroads between the Volans, the Glom, the barbarian rim worlds and some of the less completely insane Void systems, is well equipped with the means to handle periodic barbarian invasions from species overwhelmed by first contact, and they manage to get your companions settled down and squared away at the various Space Whist tables, corner bars and whoring chambers before any major harm is done. Unfortunately, it all goes on your tab and by the time the bill's settled you're even poorer than you were before you set off into the Glom in the first place. Oh well, all in the life of a Space Exploration Pole, you suppose.

Unfortunately this means you run out of money fast and need to get a move on a little earlier than you expected. With nowhere in particular to be you hitch a lift into Volan space, where you go on to write several excellent and profitable articles about your time with the Ishteï for Space Exploration Quarterly while you wait for things to blow over in the Glom. Eventually they do and you're back there raiding temples and annoying the authorities just like before. Those are different adventures for another time though: this one has come to an end.

170

As long as you remain attached to the Star Kettle the Interlocutor won't be able to arrest you. You cling on for dear life.

Realising that you've ignored his reasonable request, Pt'om hails you again. You let the receiver ring for a while.

"Czego chcesz, dziób twarz?" you ask, finally picking up. Pt'om is livid. "You rotten ape, you'll kill us all. Get the hell off my ship before those

boring bastards over there start a war over you!" he squawks. You rudely hang up on him in response.

They must be trying to figure out some way to cut you loose but in the meantime these wordy birds must be trying to stall the Interlocutor, probably by bullshitting them. You run a quick scan and instantly detect a communications channel between the two star ships. Deftly patching your comms receiver into this line you catch the tail end of a conversation.

"...you want us to hang the apeman over. Fine. But it's not going to be cheap", squawks one who you recognise as Pt'om.

"Just lower your shields and we'll beam him aboard", says the other in a nasally voice which you recognise as the Interlocutor's Baedje.

"Piss off, hamslab. I'd rather cut off a wing than let you get off a free shot at us".

"You're being irrational. We are all reasonable beings here. Surely we can come to some kind of arrangement..."

You're done for if they cut a deal, but your ship's computer gives you the means to make this unlikely. It has been scanning the channel and you could have it whip up an inflammatory message matching almost exactly to one of the captains' voices. If you pipe a particularly obnoxious message into the channel it might goad the other ship into taking a shot.

If you'd like to compose a nasty message in Baedje's voice then turn to [118](#). If you'd rather annoy the Conglomerate then you could compose the message in Pt'om's voice instead by turning to [47](#). If you don't want to risk the lives of thousands of innocent alien beings by inciting a space battle between two huge star ships purely so you can weasel out of paying for your crimes then turn to [256](#).



171

You relay the coordinates to Crunt, who instructs you to take your squad ship out a safe distance from the Macerator and wait for them to establish the jump field. With little else to gain by sticking around you do as instructed. You take off from the docking bay without incident and soon are drifting free back in open space. As you watch you're gratified to see that the Scrodes have ceased looting the station and that the Macerator is itself moving away from its prize. Turn to [165](#).

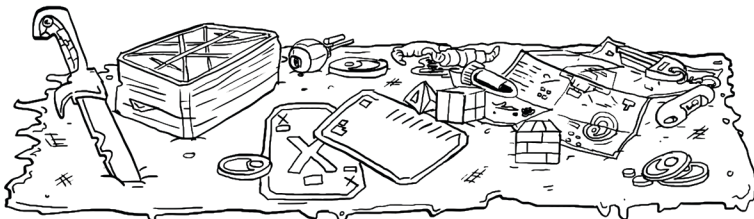
172

The self-service droid is really just a monitor mounted on a swivel. As you approach the counter it turns its display in your direction. Simple orange text, repeated in several languages, is lit up against a dark green screen.

>WELCOME TO BARBET CITY FINE FUELS. INPUT ORDER AND MAKE PAYMENT BELOW.

A panel slides open in the front of the counter, revealing a chute. If you wish to buy a fuel canister or an ancient gristle tube, you can drop any one item that you have in your inventory into the chute as payment (they cost one item each). Make any adjustments as needed on the inventory section of your police notebook.

With your transactions complete you could try to question this simple droid on the off-chance it knows anything by turning to [340](#). If you'd rather not waste your time talking to a cash register and you haven't already done so you can check out the magazine rack while you wait for someone sentient to question by turning to [252](#). Otherwise you leave the fuel depot, stepping out into the swirling dust and smoke of the main strip. From here you can head for the bar (turn to [356](#)), take a tour of the outskirts of the town (turn to [61](#)) or get back into your space ship and get the hell off this dustball (turn to [253](#)).





RECEIPTS

LUMI

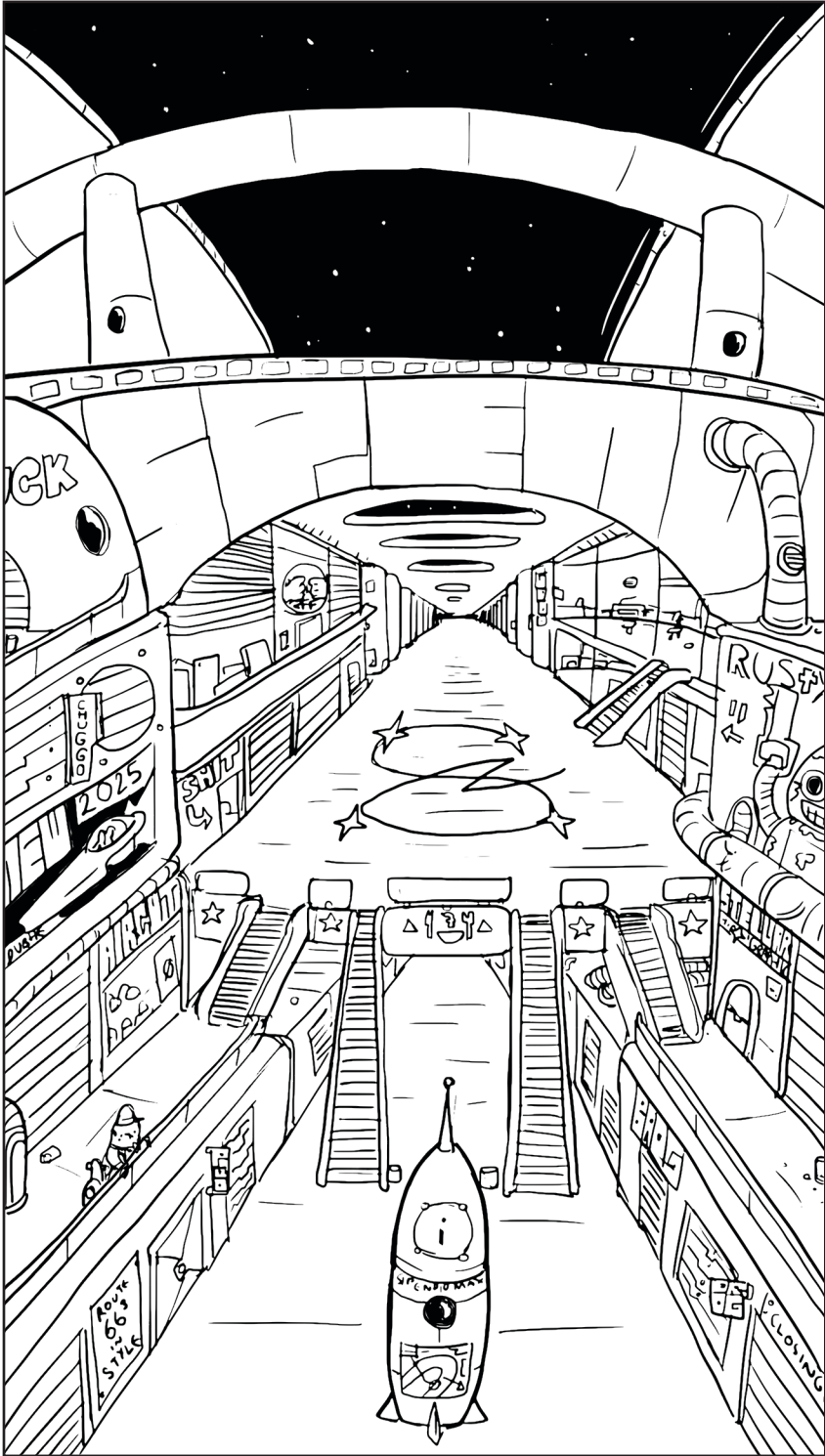
DO NOT ASK FOR CREDIT
AS BEING MENACED
WITH A PLASGUN
OFTEN OFFENDS
MANAGEMENT

> WELCOME
BINE AT VENIT
F L : X E C H

PAY

WE ACCEPT:
NOI ACCEPTAM'
11301::T1111K:





173

You park up to one of the hundreds of vacant shuttle parking docks and open the airlock. Within minutes you're in the main concourse of the Spend-o-Max - a cavernous multi-level hallway festooned with signs advertising the galaxy's favourite brands and closed security shutters stretching off into the distance as far as you can see. As a cheery piped music version of the hits of ten cycles ago plays endlessly through the mall PA system, a faded old vegetoid security guard putters past on a beat-up hover scooter and gives you what you assume is a suspicious glare before receding into the distance. Aside from that there's no one around. You go over to the mall directory kiosk - a large map wrapped around a structural support - to see what's still open. Not much, it turns out, and what there is is scattered all over the mall. You're pretty sure you have the patience and stamina to trek between two of them at most before the mall's muzak wears your sanity down to the bone. You download the station's map data to your wrist computer and have a think about your first shopping destination.

If you want to head straight for the food court for a bite to eat, turn to [383](#). If you or your co-pilot have taken a battering, the Rusty Autodoc is open for business - turn to [228](#) to swing by. Pan-Galactic Panel Blasters is running a special on hull plating, turn to [144](#) to check them out. The Two-Fisted Fantasy Studio is still open for business as well, serving the Two-Fisted adventuring needs of whatever washes up in this system. Turn to [132](#) if you'd like to check out their wares. If you've changed your mind about a day-long slog around the universe's most wastefully empty real estate (or are simply cheap) then you can return to your ship by turning to [180](#).

174

You drift quietly for a couple of days, practicing your Space Whist, drinking the last of your vodka and passively scanning the sector for any jump ship that might be heading towards Kitalpha. At last one arrives and you contact them on a private channel to make arrangements for a lift. For a reasonable fee they attach your container and several others to the rear of their star ship and prepare the jump field. The cop doesn't twig to any of this - after all, the Fishtein trade is the only thing going on in this system and one container looks pretty much like any other. Within a day you are enveloped in the jump field, finally on your way to Kitalpha! Turn to [204](#).

175

Encased in a wave of slurry you are borne up through the machine and within minutes reach your destination - a huge pre-fabricated, self-shunting cargo container being filled through an open side with pulverised fish mush. Relying on your sensors and thrusters to guide you in without smashing against any walls you stop smoothly right in the middle of the box and wait. The container fills, excess water is expelled, the access bay closes and seals, and with a lurch you feel the slurry-filled container push upwards. It hooks onto the space elevator with a clang and with the help of its built-in thrusters blasts upwards towards orbit, leaving your pursuer confounded somewhere on the planet below.

You drift quietly for a couple of days, practicing your Space Whist, drinking the last of the vodka supply and doing your best to scan for any jump ship that might be heading towards Kitalpha, a process complicated just a little by the impediment of being locked inside a pressurised container full of fish fluids. At last a jump ship arrives and you manage to contact them on a private channel to make arrangements for a lift. For a reasonable fee they attach your container and several others to the rear of their star ship and prepare the jump field. The cop doesn't twig to any of this - after all, the Fishtein trade is the only thing going on in this system and your container looks pretty much like any other. Within a few hours you are enveloped in the jump field, finally on your way to Kitalpha! Turn to [204](#).

176

You land at the edge of the small jungle and wander in for a look around. It's a strange sight to see on in the middle of a barren wasteland - a thick cluster of huge bluish-green trees towering overhead, their lush foliage creating a dense canopy dozens of feet above you. Strange alien vines rise out of the ground and coil around the trees and the air is thick with the smell of rotting plant matter, fungus and - oddly - a faint whiff of fish. As you cautiously proceed the smell grows stronger and the soil beneath your feet becomes softer - it's almost boggy and if it wasn't for the vines and undergrowth holding everything together you're certain you'd sink into it. Surely the source of this superabundance of life must be in the centre of this jungle. You resolve to go check it out.

You're approaching the middle of the jungle - the edges of the rainforest are barely a dim glow behind you and the trees and vines are growing increasingly dense, almost like a living wall. Activating your torch you pick and weave your way through this curtain of plants, squelching through the muck underfoot when you notice something strange ahead. In the torchlight you can see a mound of marshy ground ahead rising and falling slowly but rhythmically, as though it was breathing. You freeze and watch the large bump - it seems to be slowly moving towards you with a horrible squelching sound. You have a terrible feeling about this - this place might not be a good spot to hide out after all.

If you want to make a break for it, you turn and flee back through the jungle and board the Soyuz-30. Turn to [30Z](#). Otherwise if you're ready to face whatever's out in the strange wasteland jungle then turn to [7Z](#).

177

You search around Orma, questioning the locals. From time to time you pick up hints and clues that the Space Exploration Pole was here - a strange purchase at the street vendors, an odd turn of phrase from the tour guide at the docks - but no one seems to know what happened to him. As you track around the jump ship overhead finishes whatever it's here to do in this system and jumps away.

You continue searching and eventually through hard police work pick up enough information and evidence to resume the trail, but by then it has gone completely cold. With no hope of catching up you file a last report, close the case and head back to your station with your tail between your legs.





178

As you're making your way through the suddenly empty bar the alien that looks like a balding hedgehog - conspicuously absent from the fight earlier - moves to stand between you and the door. He looks more sinister than physically threatening, so you're about to just barge past him when he speaks, "Slow your thrusters there, champ! Look, there's been a misunderstanding here". He swivels his head to stare menacingly at the rest of his posse and the bartender, "Ain't that right fellas?". The bartender lowers his gun and your former adversaries reply unenthusiastically in the positive and then go back to tending their wounds. "Look, you handled yourself good there and I got a job needs doing that could use that kind of gumption", the rodent-like monster continues, his snout twisting unpleasantly as he forms the Glargot syllables. "I read the news. I know who you are, I know you're in a tight spot and I know how to get you out. If you scratch my back I know just the right way to scratch yours. Come back over to the bar and let's have a chat, huh?"

If, despite the revulsion you feel at the thought of scratching any part of the sleazy hedgehog, you want to hear his plan then you follow him over to the bar. Turn to [395](#). Otherwise you just reply, "Spieprzaj" and shove the little grotesque aside on the way out the door. Back outside the bar you may - if you have not already done so - visit the fuel depot (turn to [292](#)), or go for a walk around the outskirts (turn to [86](#)). If you don't want to push your luck on Barbet any further you can return to the Soyuz-30 and head back out into space by turning to [282](#).

179

The Catte Empire's boarding ships are crewed by warriors keen to display their martial prowess. This increases their individual territory aboard their mothership. Unfortunately for you they display this martial prowess by killing aliens (such as yourself) and sewing their pelts into their hide battle suits. Your skin will go on to have many more interesting and exciting space adventures but you're done for. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

180

You head back to the Soyuz-30 and board, glad to put the Spend-o-Max behind you. Engaging your thrusters you pull away from the station. With your shopping needs met there's nothing to do but wait for a lift, and although the mall is more spacious you'll go mad if you have to hear even one more bar of ambient shopping music. You engage your scanners and keep your eyes peeled for any new arrivals.

It's a long wait and you wish you'd brought more reading material from Earth or even from the mall. Advance the Stellar Date by 2 and turn to [324](#).

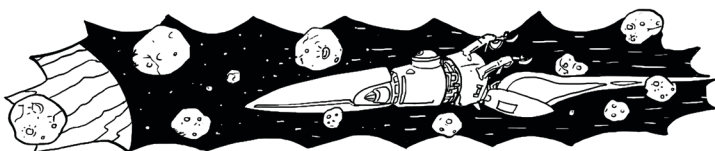
181

You play a good game and take most of the tricks. Your Erinacean opponents don't take kindly to your victory, mainly because they're cheating openly throughout the game and assume you must have done the same. Still, they grudgingly hand over the alien currency.

"Take your money and piss off", sneers the greasier of the pair, "If I didn't respect the proprietor of this fine establishment so much I'd beat the spines off of you. Now get out of here before I change my mind and have you dropped out into the protein extraction zone for the Machine to suck up".

You glance at the proprietor who is standing quietly behind the bar. It's still a spigot with a coin slot. Not wanting to make any more trouble than you already have you make your farewells and head back out of the bar.

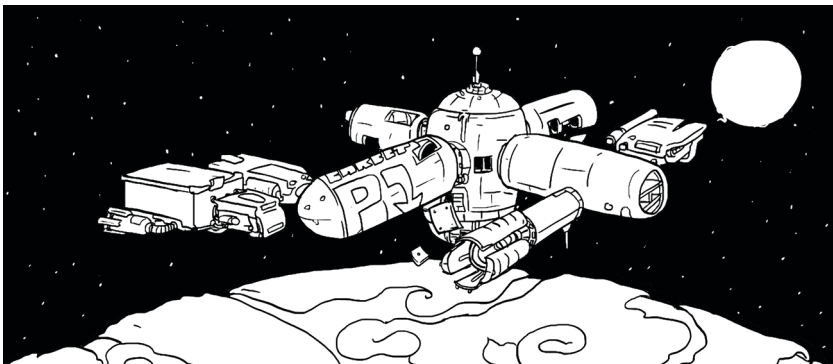
Add an alien currency to the inventory section of your logbook. As you're leaving you see one of the Erinaceans already on the bar's pay communicator- the scumbag is ratting on you! Add 1 to your TRAIL. If the cop isn't already onto you he will be soon - you'd better find some other place to be, and pronto. Turn to [89](#).



You prefer to do things the hard way. Well, the hard way for the crims. You fly the squad ship up to the top of the station, right next to where the distress signal is coming from. Turning on your lights and siren you nudge the ship up against the hull of the station with a thunderous crash of metal on metal. You then engage the docking apparatus and putting the ship into reverse you shear a huge section of hull away from the side of the station! As the clamps disengage and the hull piece floats free, your headlights illuminate two terrified figures in cheap plastic space suits cowering in the corner of what's left of the room that they were in. You swivel an ion cannon to cover them and shout into the communications transponder, "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE POLICE DIRECTORATE. YOU TWO ARE UNDER ARREST. SURRENDER AT ONCE FOR CRIMINAL PROCESSING." By the way the two space suited criminals are clutching at their ears through their plastic space helmets you can tell they got the message loud and clear. They offer no resistance as you leap out of the ship and cuff them.

You and your partner haul the two crooks into the prisoner compartment in the squad car for initial questioning. Unfortunately it turns out that it's not the Pole and Bones under those cheap space suits but just a pair of small-time crooks from an alien species you've never heard of. Both of them keep shtum about what they were up to, and the massive destruction you've inflicted on the station has destroyed any evidence, so you have to settle for busting them for trespassing. Add two Collars.

The bust you've just made has generated a huge pile of paperwork which according to procedure must be filed immediately after arrest. Turn to [275](#) to crack on with it.





183

As you're scrutinising the station, Bones - your trusty co-pilot and long-time associate - taps you on the shoulder to get your attention and then points to a spot on the station near the radio transmitter. He evidently knows something about the place so you hand him the ship controls. He slowly edges the Soyuz-30 over to the indicated part of the station and extends the docking claws. You don your oxygen pack and space helmet, while Bones just walks out into the airless station without any preparation. You guess he's already dead, or something, but in any case the animated pile of bones doesn't seem to worry all that much about exposure to space.

Ignoring your wonder at the alien design of the station, Bones leads you down a network of ransacked corridors with a certainty suggesting that he knows the place intimately. Before long he ducks into a well-preserved room which, suspiciously, contains a shiny new Space Whist table and four metal chairs in various alien configurations. Without pausing Bones shoves a double-arsed chair out of the way and wrenches open a panel hidden in the floor below, revealing a hidden compartment! It contains a vicious-looking miniature palm blaster and a nano-rigged deck of Whist cards. Bones hands you the tiny pistol and pockets the cards - add these items to your inventory on the log book. Space whist, the premier form of gambling in this quadrant, is sometimes played for illegally massive stakes in makeshift locations such as this to reduce the risk of cheating or of a loser simply jumping out of the system to get out of paying what they owe. Someone, probably Bones himself, has enterprisingly reintroduced a way of cheating into the setup. As you follow Bones back to the Soyuz-30, you wonder how many rubes Bones has fleeced in this location alone, and where he blew all the cash.

With the station adequately explored, would you like to go down to the planet to see if someone there can give you a ride (turn to [378](#)) or would you prefer to try to hitch a lift out in space? If so turn to [318](#).

184

You're not getting anywhere on Orma. Even if the Pole is here he's at least one step ahead of you wherever you turn. You'll just wait for him out in space. Returning to your squad ship you fire it up and take off from the moon, dodging around a container flying up from the Fishtein plant at the

same time. Once you're safely out of the moon's atmosphere and gravitational pull you activate your ship's passive and active sensors and wait.

If Horizon-8 is with you and it's not sulking, turn to [388](#). Otherwise after a couple of hours of tracking Fishtein containers as they slowly drift away from Sham you detect a jump field collapsing mid-system. With a huge flash of light another star ship appears! With little else going on you decide to approach it. Turn to [60](#).

185

Making sure the coast is clear of police officers you slip over to the main shuttle parking area. Unfortunately there's no way to avoid being spotted by at least a few of the locals, who stare after you with their bulging yellow eyes. Add 1 to your TRAIL.

Assuming the law hasn't caught up to you, you arrive at the parking zone. It's on a cliff-side plateau a few minutes' stroll from the town square. A few shuttles are parked up here - mostly passenger crawlers, sub-light vans roughly equivalent to the ever-popular GAZ 66 RV from back home. They're fine for long-lived or really boring beings but you're in a hurry. Parked between a couple of the space motorhomes you see the markings of a Glomcop squad ship. You creep up for a closer look, thankful that the pilot doesn't seem to be around.

This particular squad ship is an old heap of junk and you almost feel sorry for the cop who chased you halfway across the sector in the thing - to say nothing of the prisoners who are probably crammed together in the back. This model isn't a lot more powerful than the Soyuz-30 and they have notoriously crappy power systems. Come to think of it, there's a serious weakness in this type of ship - you could potentially ruin its reactors completely if you have a powerful micro-explosive of some kind and aren't all that scared of the possibility of being caught in the act.

If you have Horizon-8 with you and he's not sulking then turn to [227](#). Otherwise if you have an explosive and want to attempt to sabotage the squad ship then turn to [44](#). If you'd rather not risk spending half an hour messing with a police vehicle in a public parking zone then you satisfy yourself with scratching a bunch of Polish obscenities in the squad car's paint and get out of there. Turn to [89](#).

You spend the rest of this day and the entirety of the next sitting in the dark, waiting for the spud's replacement. At least you catch up on your sleep and the mints you find on the guard's desk aren't too bad. Add 2 to the Stellar Date.

Suddenly you are jolted awake by a series of heavy tremors. The lights flicker back on and a howling alarm sounds as the security shutter shoots back up. The vegetative guard's beady eyes flick open and he leaps out of his pot surprisingly swiftly.

"That's the evacuation alarm! Follow me!" he shouts, running out of the office on his stalks and leaping onto his hoverscooter. You jog behind him as he takes a nearby turn out of the concourse down a narrow corridor labelled "EMERGENCY EXIT". You see rows of hatches, all of them open, revealing the escape pods within. The tremors are getting heavier and more frequent now, almost knocking you down. You hear the station's superstructure groan ominously.

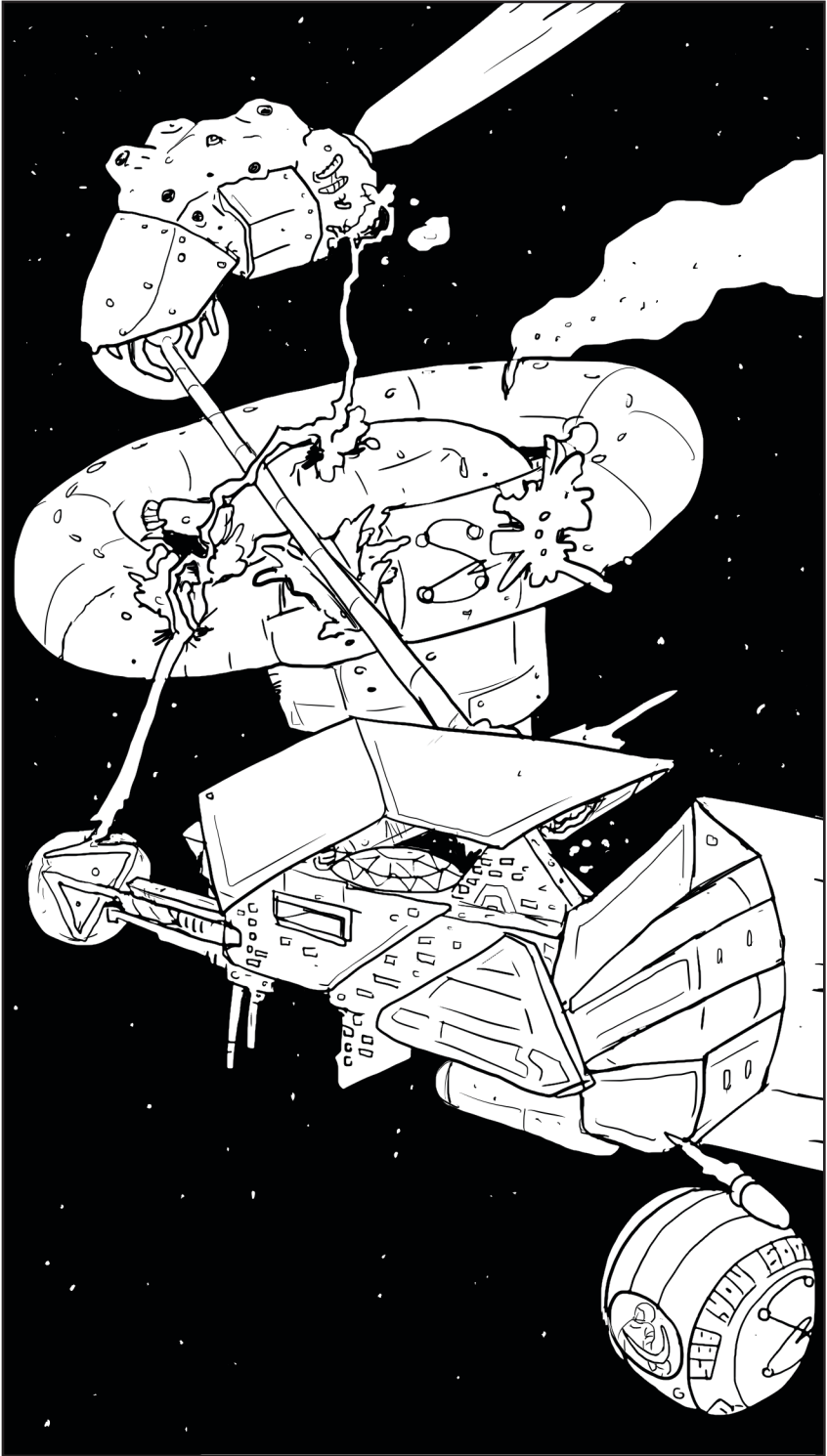
"Get in", he says, leaping off his scooter. As soon as you're in a pod he follows you in, slams the door shut behind you and pulls the eject lever. You're away!

As you tumble through space you see the station disintegrate, pelted by energy beams from two huge star ships - looking respectively like a converted asteroid and a huge collection of knives welded together - who seem to be using the station as cover. Eventually both ships stop firing and go silent, but the asteroid turns away and jumps out of the system in a huge flash.

With the fighting over you seize the controls of the pod from the spud and go in search of the Soyuz-30 near the wreckage of the station. By some miracle the parking area was mostly undamaged and you find your trusty ship where you left it, mostly unscathed. You dock the escape pod to its emergency access hatch and crawl aboard.

You may, if you like, take the vegetoid guard lysp Eeld as a co-pilot. If you already have a co-pilot then this spud can replace him, her or it: your current pilot will play no further part in this adventure and will alight at the next convenient stop. You could instead decide to leave this troublesome tuber in his escape pod if you've had enough of him.

Whether or not you let the spud aboard, turn to [225](#).



187

You don't think the place is a church. It looks more like the Barbet Bunker than anything else. You decide to go down and take a look before you start opening fire.

Climbing down from your firing position you approach the building's front door which slides open for you, allowing you access. Entering, you immediately see that your suspicions were correct - offworlders are gathered around tables, playing some kind of game of chance with dice while Matari croupiers rake in the bets, Matari waiters bring drinks to the hard-gambling spacers and a Matari concierge greets the newcomers, which he proceeds to do to you. The doorman is a huge Matari specimen, about seven feet tall and nearly as wide, and like the rest of the staff is wearing some kind of rawhide cloak instead of the ubiquitous checked shirt. Judging by some of the pictures on the wall it's a stereotypical historic Matari garb. He speaks, in surprisingly clear Glargot, "Good evening and welcome to the Two Suns Casino, home of Matari craps and the best odds in the system. I am Alin and I'll be your concierge for this evening. Can I fix you up with some chips?"

If you want to try your luck at the craps table, you must first trade an item for chips. Make a note of which item you've selected and turn to [245](#). If you want to warn Alin about the hit ordered on the establishment turn to [117](#). If you've got no wish to gamble or no items with which to gamble you'll be asked to leave. Turn to [322](#).

188

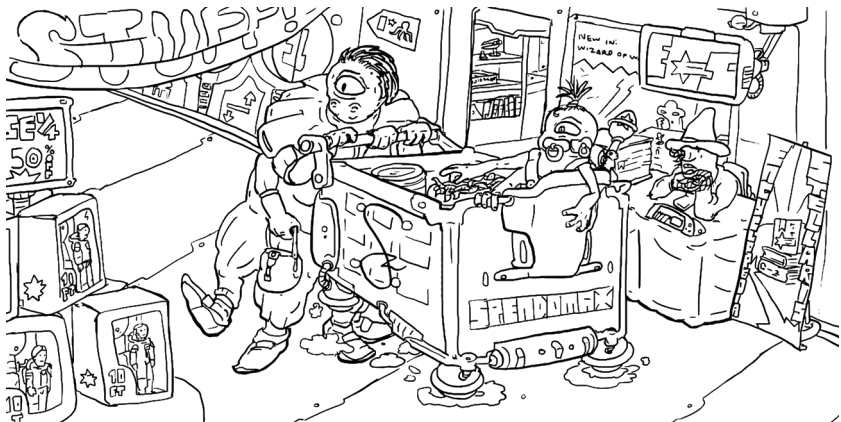
Judging by the corridor lights and the jump drive activity it would seem that engineering is still functioning, so you head there, following the ship schematics downloaded onto your portable computer. From that section of the ship it should be possible to access the jump drives, which could allow you to get out of this system before any more unpleasantness occurs. After a reasonably long slog along a narrow and low-ceilinged corridor heading deep into the bowels of the ship your progress comes to a sudden halt. You round a corner and come face to face with half a dozen heavily-armed Rattes loitering behind a waist-high makeshift barricade. As you stare in shock a hatch in the barricade drops open and the barrel of a huge laser autocannon pokes through, swivelling in your direction. One of the Rattes, a four-foot-tall, black-furred critter stands up and squeaks as menacingly as it's possible for a squeak to sound. Your translator, somewhat superfluously, renders this into Glargot as, "piss off".

If Moc's with you and you want to let him work his sales magic then turn to [316](#). Otherwise if you want to push your luck and try to barge your way through then turn to [80](#). If this dangerous course of action doesn't appeal then you could double back and try your luck instead on the bridge (turn to [160](#)) or the weapons section (turn to [344](#)). If you've had enough of this rudeness or have tried everywhere else, you can just do as instructed and leave - returning to the hangar you board the Soyuz-30 and take off, hoping to find something useful in the remnants of the Spend-o-Max. Turn to [214](#).

189

According to the police alert channel a jump ship referring to itself as the "Rattetail" has recently arrived at the edge of the system. You scan for it and detect the vessel easily - it's a glowing wreck floating around in the sparse asteroid belt surrounding this system's major planetary bodies. From its angular design it's definitely the back half of the Caterwaul from Terebellum. It must have only arrived minutes before you - the ship is still trailing a several light years-long stream of rapidly-cooling trilineum gas from its leaking reactors. Your sensor sweep shows up no sign of the Soyuz-30 but perhaps he's still hiding inside. You could go and attempt to capture him there, but he may be on the lookout for you. It might be a better idea to simply wait and let him come to you.

Do you want to approach the "Rattetail" and commence the hunt for the Pole? If so turn to [168](#). If you'd prefer to put a Fishtein crate between you and the remnants of the Catte ship and watch to see what Hermaszewski intends to do next, turn to [67](#).

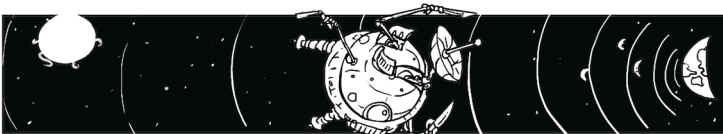


You decide to take a chance. Although these aliens could be dangerous they do have a jump drive and you don't want to stick around to see if the Glomcops are still on your trail. Also even if this ship is hostile you're probably not much safer outside of it than in. You hail Major Tom and tell him, "Jestem w drodze". While you're not certain the commander understood the message he does appear to understand your ship's heading. The aggressive-looking little ships part to allow you to approach and land in the cavernous hangar, a massive chamber the size of a football pitch.

As soon as you land your ship is swarmed by strange creatures - felines and rats, like the ones from Earth but far larger and standing on their hind legs! One of them hammers on the access hatch. You open it up and a trio of giant rats scamper aboard dragging a huge cable. Brushing past you they look around your cockpit quickly. They catch sight of your navigational computer and start attaching their cable. One of the cats, a ginger tabby dressed in a bizarre hide space suit and carrying a nasty looking disruptor weapon at the ready follows the trio aboard. Seeing your consternation, it addresses you. The ship's translator kicks in and renders its words into Glargot.

"...nothing to worry about. You're a guest of the Catte Empire. Welcome to the Caterwaul", it mews, casting a quick look over your console's display. "Our Ratte engineers are hooking up your navigational system to our jump drives. We don't know this area of space and don't have time for a navigational scan. Looks like Matar or Sham are the nearest viable systems. Answer quickly and don't lie, because you're coming along for the ride. Which one?"

You don't have a lot to gain by prevaricating here- it's tempting to tell them to jump into the Void but even if you survive doing that you'll be stuck out there with them. You could play it straight: Sham's fairly close to Kitalpha so it'd be a good choice. Turn to 81 to suggest this. On the other hand it's possible that you could throw off your pursuers if you double back to Matar. To suggest this course of action turn to [312](#).





191

You're getting a bad feeling from these aliens and you wisely decide to leave well enough alone. You power down your engines and wait, hoping that the ship doesn't detect you. Evidently it's not looking for you or doesn't care about your presence because shortly after the Caterwaul is destroyed it turns in the direction of some unexplored patch of galactica incognita and begins winding up its jump drives. A few hours of tense waiting and it's gone.

With no obvious threats remaining in the system you are free to relax for the first time this week. Sham is home to a reasonably nice settlement based on a water moon, where you spend a little while relaxing on the pleasant water moon, drinking the local booze, playing some cards and watching the red planet below rise and set. You keep an eye out for the cops but you see no sign of pursuit. A couple of days pass and you're alerted to the arrival of another large jump ship. You take off, negotiate transport to Kitalpha with the vessel, dock on and wait. A few hours later after the star ship has taken on its consignment of fish protein product, you are once again enveloped in the jump. It seems you've made good your escape despite all the odds!

Turn to [57](#).

192

Ignoring the annoying mewling you decide instead to follow the hissing. After a few seconds you catch sight of a twitching tail and you go crazy, barking and howling. You don't know what it is about these animals but they drive you nuts! You've never wanted to catch anything more in your life.

The tomcat gives you a good chase but he's bigger and slower than you. You catch up and tackle him, bringing him down. He seems utterly terrified, his yellow eyes wide open and ears flattened with fear. But now that you've actually caught him you calm down a bit - what the hell were you planning to do when you caught him? Before the large feline overcomes whatever instinct caused him to flee you wrench his forepaws behind his back and cuff them to his tail. Your translator has been working hard on the feline hisses and wails since you came aboard and starts rendering the creature's language into something you can understand.

"Wh..what manner of god are you that you can drive the finest warriors of the Catte Empire before you like kittens?" hisses the Catte.

"No god, just a dog", you bark. "Detective Inspector Leo Canid, Conglomerate Police Directorate."

"And what do you want from us?"

"I'm looking for someone..."

It turns out that this character is Major Tom, commander of the Catte Empire star ship, the Caterwaul. In return for promising to let him go and to never set foot on the Caterwaul again, he tells you everything he knows - about a week ago a ten-foot tall primate and his skeletal companion came aboard and assisted some rebels in stealing the jump drive, engines and life support sections of the ship - the back half of the Caterwaul simply jumped out of the system, leaving this hulk and its few survivors to rot. Major Tom also gives you the coordinates that the jump drive was targeted towards : 50, 12, 33. These correspond to a jump point within the Sham system. Add these details to your police notebook. He then politely asks you to get the hell off him and his ship.

Since you don't have any jurisdiction on this vessel and you don't like your chances of hauling the captain into captivity before the rest of the crew comes back to its senses, you leave him cuffed and crawl back through the vents. As you pass back through the "Sandbox" you growl at a couple of Cattes who arch their backs and leap out of your way.

With your work on this rotten hulk done, you return to your ship.

Turn to [48](#).



“Precious Cargo” is an unusual content code for an escape pod, so you decide to go after that one. After a long hunt you locate the pod whizzing through space surrounded by an orbiting cloud of six-sided dice. You dock up to the pod and, bringing it to a halt, step aboard.

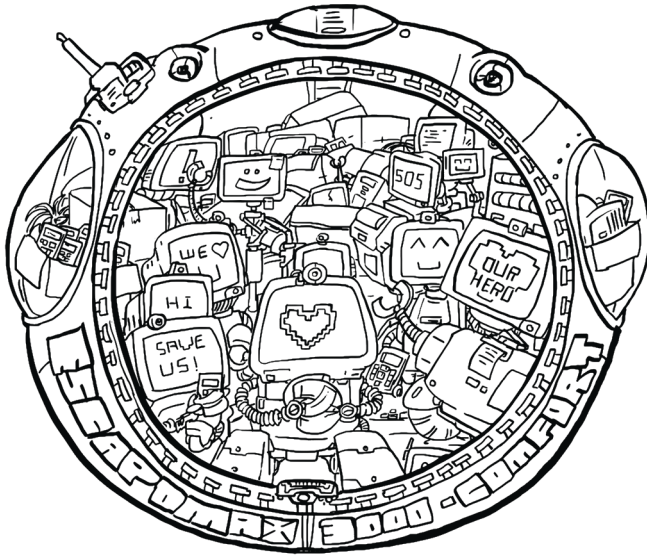
You see the designation was correct! Inside you find a being looking like a deflated rugby ball sitting amid several original boxed editions of Herman S. Skull’s two-fisted opus, *Void Racers!* So engrossed is this being in his quest to rescue his chosen species from total annihilation that he doesn’t even notice you entering. It’s not until you commandeer a copy of *Void Racers* (add this item to your inventory) that he realises that he has company. Carefully replacing the book, the full-colour galactic map, the custom dice and the expertly-crafted figurines into the deluxe collector’s edition box, the alien joins you on your ship. You set him up in the prisoner transport module, wishing him luck on his travels as he settles in for more two-fisted adventures in the world of *Void Racers*. You wonder if he’ll be finished before you reach a safe planet where he can depart or whether his epic adventure will keep him engrossed for the entire journey.

Turn to [248](#).



The report of trespassing has been cancelled. Perhaps it was a false alarm. You do a fly-by of the decrepit station and scan it from top to bottom with the ship’s motion sensors, but you fail to detect anything of interest. You notice that even the few ships that were parked outside the station when you arrived in the system have departed - with light-speed drives they haven’t gone very far, but far enough to give the Matar system an even more lonely and desolate air than usual.

While you are examining the station the *Star Kettle*’s engines flare and the ship makes the leap into jump space. There’s nothing left to do but wait and hope another ship comes along. Turn to [25](#).

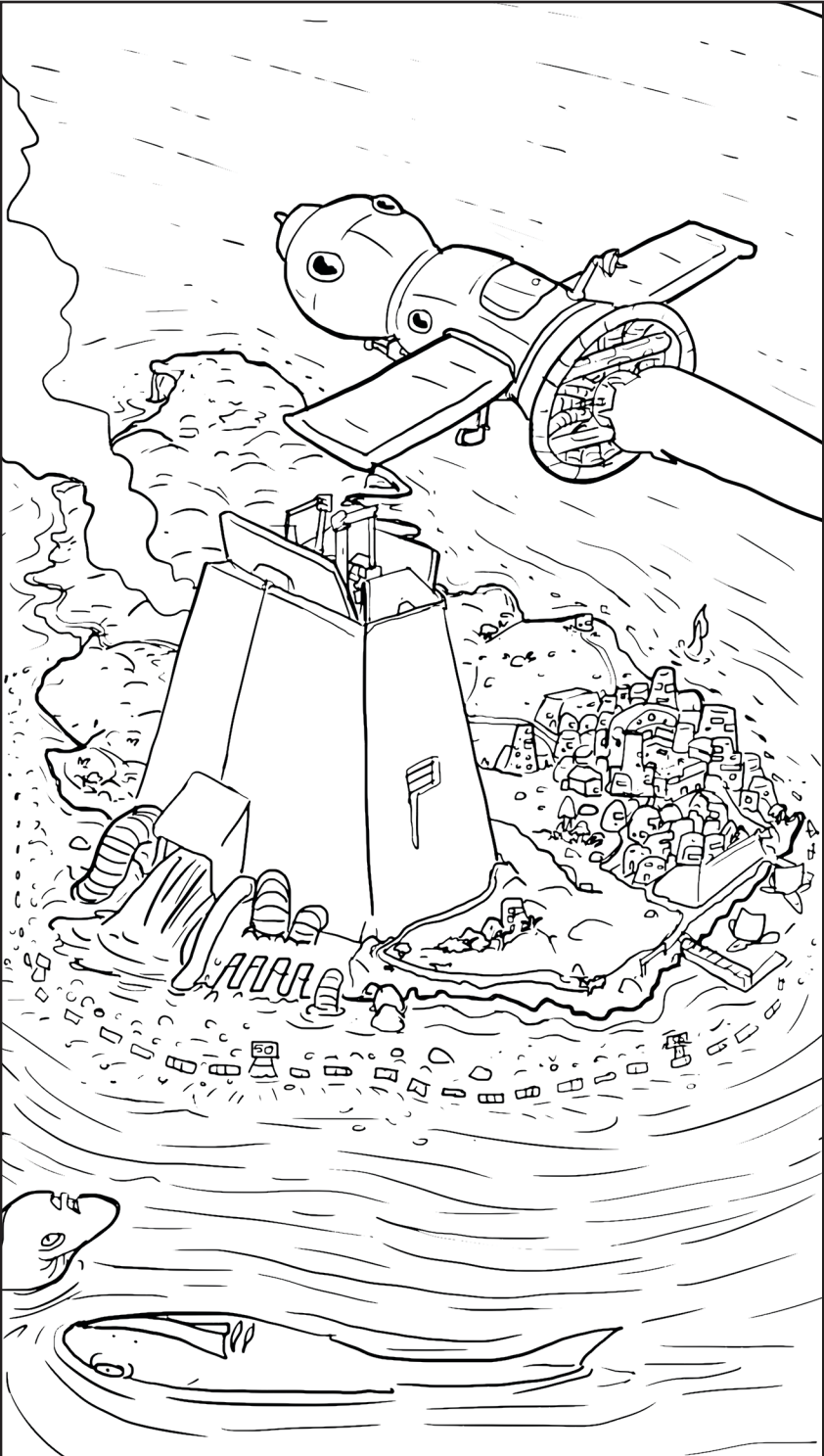


195

You watch through your viewscreen as the Macerator approaches the Spend-o-Max wreckage. Unhinging its jawlike lower decks and extending its loot chutes the twisted star ship begins hoovering up the wreckage. As you zoom in on the viewscreen display you see large numbers of individual Scrode pirates departing from the chutes to pick through promising deposits of merchandise floating around the wreck. The Scrodes will make a killing flogging this junk off inside the Void Nebula. There's nothing you can do to stop these pirates on your own, and the police despatch computer confirms that the Glom flagship Interlocutor is responding to distress calls made from Terebellum when the station was destroyed but isn't due to arrive until 2047.291.

Frustrated, you watch the pirates work for a while - and then you notice that some of the pirates are allowing themselves to become isolated from their comrades while they pocket cheap mall junk. Ripe targets for an arrest!

If you want to get in contact with the Scrunt leader about this crooked behaviour then turn to [350](#). If you'd prefer to creep in close to the station and bust a few pirates then turn to [357](#). If you'd rather check up on the ruined star ship nearby then turn to [35](#). Should none of those options appeal there's nothing to do but wait for the cavalry to arrive. Turn to [108](#).



196

You draw your blaster and point it right at the slug-being who is brutalising the Volan ambassador. "Freeze! Conglomerate Police Directorate! Drop that weapon!" you bark. The slug swivels its eye stalks towards you, but rather than surrendering it leaps with surprising speed behind the table and flings the bony dart at you! It misses and punches into the steel wall behind you, but the dart remains attached to the slug by some disgusting appendage and the alien whips it back towards him for another shot. You return fire!

YELLOW SLUG: EXPERTISE: 6 - HEALTH: 2 - FISTS: 1

DOUBLE-ARSED SLUG: EXPERTISE: 7 - HEALTH : 2 - FISTS: 1



If you win, you slap some cuffs on the slugs, apply a puncture repair kit to each of them to prevent them oozing all over the ship and book them for resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer, illegal gambling and any other crime that occurs to you. It's a good bust: add 4 Collars. You now turn your attention to the Volans. Turn to [14](#).

197

You've been on the road too long to spend another day on a planet where they haven't yet discovered flush toilets or grain alcohol. The risk of pursuit notwithstanding you decide to head for Orma.

Orma is a medium-sized moon, almost entirely covered by ocean aside from a single rocky outcrop. The seas are rich with a huge supply of of borderline-edible fish, so in order to harvest this bounty some enterprising starfaring species set up an automated harvesting plant and transplanted some Squidges from the planet down below to look after its limited needs. Over generations a nice little town sprang up on the outcrop and something like a civilisation thrived here, making its crust by selling the output from the harvester to travelers on the route. Once Route 66³ closed down a lot of the travelers stopped coming and many of the young Squidges moved on, but unlike most of the Route this place still does some business. It's mostly old timers trading their harvesting royalties for mobility aids and bingo tokens, but it's still a pleasant place to wile away the hours with some nice walking trails, a couple of bars and a decent market. There's also the colossal Fishtein production plant dominating the skyline and the

townside half of the island. Unfortunately for you, you don't have many hours to spend here - the cop will be on your tail in no time unless you keep an incredibly low profile. Hopefully someone on the island will know a way out otherwise you're in big trouble.

Eschewing the main landing bay you fly around to the far end of the island and land the Soyuz-30 under a convenient promontory. Protected by the rocky overhang you should be difficult to spot from above. Just as you're exiting the craft you see the police squad ship descending through the atmosphere and landing a couple of miles away at the main shuttle park in the town. You don't think your arrival was noticed but the cop must know that you're down here some place.

You are being followed and must avoid leaving a trail. The salty ocean air will mask your scent but the cop will still be trying to sniff you out using his detectives' skills. Keep track of your TRAIL score - it starts at 0 but from time to time you will be asked to add a number to that score. Each time you have to add a number roll a dice: if it's equal to or less than your new TRAIL score then turn at once to 386.

It's time to get a move on. Turn to [244](#).

198


As you finish your parlay with the Ratte King your taciturn companion speaks, grabbing your attention with his clipped accent. "There. You see it?" He points at a small, dimly glowing green smudge hanging off the side of the Rattetail. You zoom in on the viewscreen.

"Yup", continues the fungal bluesbeing, "it's trilineum vapour, and it's agitated. You see that trail in the middle? Someone's flown right through it at low speed just a couple of seconds ago, right behind that asteroid over there. A good pilot in a small shuttle, lights off or we would have seen him slip out".

Only someone with Elwoo's obsession with astral cruising would have picked that up. He's earned his freedom, at least until he commits whatever crimes he's probably already planning while in your custody.

Now the Pole has nowhere to hide. Ignoring the Rattetail for the time being you blast around to the other side of the asteroid where you come face to face with the ship you've been chasing across the galaxy - Miroslaw Hermaszewski's Soyuz-30! Spotting you it powers up its weapons and shields, and you do likewise:

SOYUZ-30 :

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 7(1) - HULL 6 

The Soyuz-30 is co-piloted by Bones, an expert mechanic. If you manage to blow out the Soyuz-30's shield, roll 1d6 - on 1-3 he keeps them working and they continue to function normally. On 4+ they go down.

You're not going back empty-handed. If you win you dock up to the wreck of the Soyuz-30 and prepare to make the arrest: turn to [12](#). If you lose it means your life or at least your career : in either case your adventure ends here.

199

You size Tarlee up. She's as tough as nails and nearly the same height as the average Scrode. Maybe she'd stand a chance in an arm-wrestling contest.

"Fuck right off. And that's my final offer, dog", she says after some protracted whining. In the end though she's brought round by a promise to endorse her gun license so she can legally wield some godawful doomsday weapon around in Glom space. This minor bit of corruption isn't going to slip by the Chief : lose 1 Collar. You give Tarlee your police hat by way of disguise. It doesn't quite fit her but you doubt the arrogant Scrodes will really notice. All aliens are pretty much alike in their eye.

You touch down in the hangar bay and your ship is immediately thronged by a huge crowd of booing, jeering Scrodes. Half of the Macerator's crew must be packed into here to see the cop get thrashed at Uijan Kekuatan. Tarlee hops out of the squad ship and heads on over to speak to the Scrodelord. You can only remain behind and hope the deception works.

Less than thirty seconds later you hear the Scrodes erupt in a unified roar of anguish. Tarlee must have done it! She leaps back aboard the ship. No doubt picking up a hint of disbelief in your expression she winks and taps her finger on the side of her nose.

"Kicked that dickhead under the table, right in the ovipositor. He didn't stand a chance after that", she crows proudly. "Now get out there, I told them my gimp would handle the arrangements."

You exit the ship, grumbling under your breath. Turn to [266](#).

Stellar Date: 2047.281

Several days after departure the jump field disperses and your squad ship glides smoothly out into the Matar system. Unfortunately you know this dump pretty well. It's a favourite bolt hole for desperados of various stripes when they want to skip out of the Glom for a while to avoid paying creditors or alimony. Matar is a binary star system made up of a small bright blue-white star and a much larger yellow star. Orbiting the yellow star is Barbet, a dusty little hellhole rife with pink silica sand which gets into everything and is murder on your fur. Its main feature is Barbet City, an inaccurate name for a small town set in the ruins of a much larger city. The opening of the Interstellar 40 bypass hit this place hard and most of the inhabitants left. Now it's just a few hundred mostly crooked locals and the far more numerous Matari natives waiting for them to die off or leave. Circling the planet in orbit above Barbet City is the skeletal old space station, mostly torn apart for scrap and repainted as a parking sign for large ships to idle near while their crew do their business on the surface below. There are unusually few ships parked there today for some reason, and the couple of ships that remain seem to be preparing to depart.

While you're taking in the view your co-pilot flicks on the police alert channel. Two alerts reported for this system - a town-wide riot in progress in Barbet City and, oddly, trespassers sighted inside the station, near the radio beacon. Riots are a pretty regular occurrence on Barbet but they're not usually described as "town-wide": given that your best hope of finding any leads on the Pole's whereabouts are down there it might be worth getting that riot under control before anyone you might need is killed. The station break in sounds interesting though: could it be the Pole and his boney companion?

Complicating matters, a Volan space ship suddenly jumps into the system with a bright flash - a mile-long hunk of polished bronze covered in gaudy statues of the four-armed, winged Volans. You recognise the ship as the Star Kettle, a recurring pain in your haunches since you were assigned to this beat. Whatever's going on around here is liable to get a lot more complicated with these creeps sticking their beaks in.

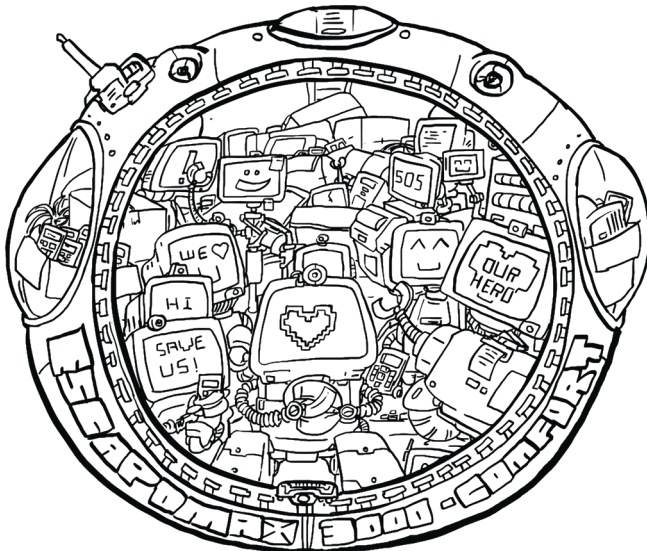
If you want to descend to the planet and deal with the riot in progress, turn to [11](#). If you want to respond to the trespassers on the station then turn to [136](#). If you'd like to get in touch with the Volans first and find out what they want here, turn to [301](#).

201

This strange creature has chased you half way across the galaxy, but his hunt leads him no further than the wrong end of your gun barrel. He drops, never to chase another space ship's bumper again. Without further ado several Rattes swarm over his corpse and that of his accomplice and drag them away into some hidden corner for later gnawing. You can't stand to be around these creatures any longer so you bid a perfunctory and fairly rude farewell to the Rattetail, return to the hangar, board the Soyuz-30 and take off.

While you're waiting for a jump-capable ship to come by you spend a little while trying to relax on the pleasant water moon, drinking the local booze, playing some cards and watching the red planet below rise and set. You can't quite unwind though - you keep checking and rechecking your scanner logs for any sight of Glomcop reinforcements. Luckily before any more police come sniffing around you're alerted to the presence of another jump ship in the sector and you take off, pay an extortionate fee for transport to Kitalpha, dock on and wait. A few hours later after the star ship has taken on its consignment of fish protein product, you are once again enveloped in the jump on the way to your final destination on Route 66³, the Kitalpha sector.

Turn to [320](#).



202

You emerge from the hangar but are startled as a green plasma bolt flashes across your viewscreen. Something is firing at you! Activating your weapons and shields you come about hard and see before you an angular shuttle craft hastily modified to carry engineering equipment and supplies along with its usual weapons payload. Despite the extra weight this threatening ship still seems to be able to manoeuvre pretty sharply - it's doing a good job of keeping you in its crosshairs.

Your comms panel lights up - your attacker is hailing you. You put the caller on screen and see the busted visage of the Ratte you thwacked earlier.

"I'll eat your thpleen!" the dented Ratte hisses vehemently through broken incisors. Time's slipping away from you. Next time you hit someone you'll remember to cuff them, but for now you must fight:

RATTE ATTACKER :

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 4(1) - SHIELDS 4(0) - HULL 8

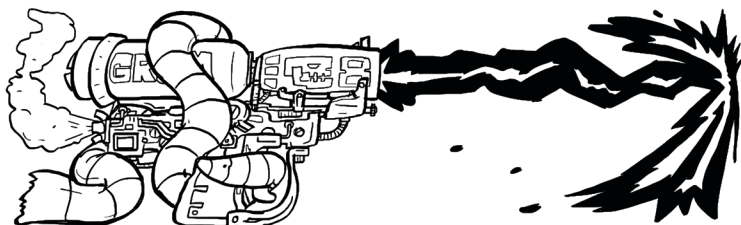


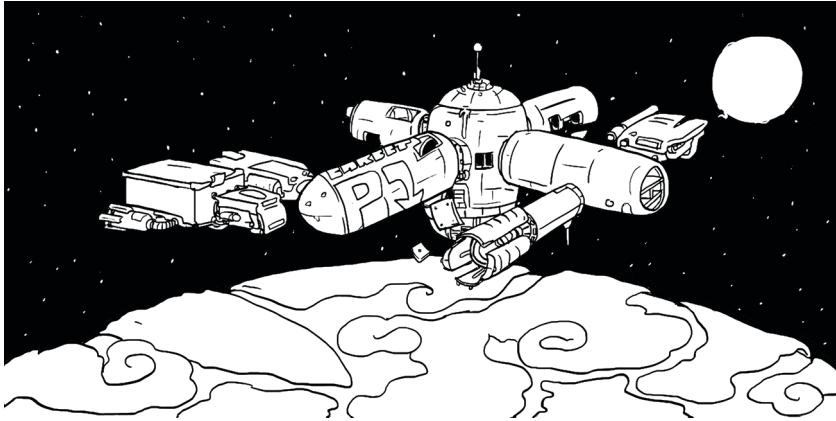
This vessel is equipped with plasma cutters which are designed to punch right through ship hulls. If you receive any hull damage from this ship's attack it will inflict one further hull damage.

If you win, you must work out how best to pursue the Pole. Will you head straight for populated Orma to see if you can track him down there? Turn to [272](#). If you'd rather head to the red planet, Nezval, in case he mistakenly thinks you wouldn't follow him to that wasteland then turn to [115](#).

203

Bones grimaces at you in sympathy. He's no fan of piped music either. You ask him where he'd like to go first and he shrugs. You shrug back at him. Turn back to [173](#) and select a destination.





204

You have a well-deserved rest as you're towed to Kitalpha inside the cargo container, and before you know it you're being beamed out of your shuttle and into the welcoming surrounds of the Kitalpha Fuel 'n Gruel, home of the finest fuel and gruel on Route 66³.

With your pursuer hopelessly far behind you and with any luck thrown way off the trail you spend a few days cleaning and repairing your trusty ship in between bouts of gambling, drinking and trading tall tales with the other Space Explorers passing through this busy space junction. One evening you're halfway through a game of cards when you notice the uniform of a Glomcop, being worn by a diminutive bipedal dog. He's working his way around the station, flashing his badge and shaking everyone he sees for info. You do your best to look inconspicuous but it's not an easy task for you even in a place like this. As luck would have it though a group of terrible reptiloid barbarians pick this exact moment to show up and start wrecking the joint. You get to drinking and gambling with an Earthling they brought along with them - an inveterate drunk by the name of "Rowdy" Ryan Sawyer - and before you know it you drink yourself blind, become complicit in the near-total dismantling of the Fuel 'n Gruel over the course of a night-long alcohol-fuelled brawl and wake up with a terrible hangover the next Stellar Day in the hold of the Caiman star ship, the Supergalactic. You've traded one set of pursuers for another, far worse bunch, and the relative safety of the Jolian Supermax for the unknown terrors of the Void Nebula. But you're free for now, and all this is really a story for another time.

You think fast. "Space flu", you reply. This excuse seems to satisfy the ambassador, who turns his attention back to the table.

One of the slugs chitters, and the translator module slung around its neck speaks in robotic Glargot, "We are ready. Let us begin".

Pt'imm responds in a squawky Glargot as he shuffles the deck that was handed to him, "As discussed, we're putting up the Volan jump ship Skein against your colonies in the Cebalrai and Naos systems. Due to the high stakes this will be a hundred point game". The yellow slugs chitter their assent and the cards are dealt.

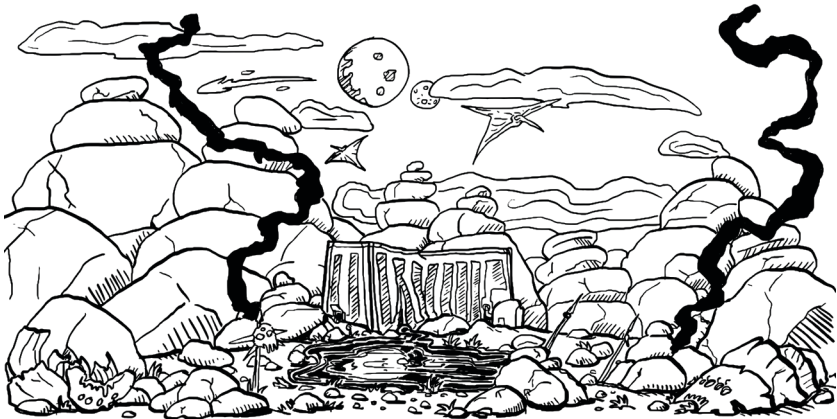
These kinds of ludicrous bets are exactly why high-stakes gambling is illegal. Almost all of the Volan jump ships are the products of alien worlds who have been conned into accepting Volan "guidance" for one reason or another. They might be covered in tacky Volan statues and spires but aside from the most senior officers they are usually crewed by non-Volans, and there's no way they'd let their ship change hands without a fight. Likewise it's hard to imagine two colonies full of thousands of these slug beings submitting to the manifold annoyances of Volan rule peacefully. Luckily you're here to make sure none of this comes to pass.

You're just about to make the bust and finally wipe the sneer off the Volans' beaks once and for all when you notice one of the slug-beings fumbling around under the table. Reaching out a yellow tendril it opens a concealed panel in the floor and roots around in there. Suddenly he looks across to his partner in panic and chitters rapidly. Your portable translator picks this up and renders it as "It's not there! They're onto us!" With a burbling roar the slug beings throw themselves at the Volans, knocking the stringy avians off their perches and pinning them to the floor. The slugs commence to pummel the Volans fulsomely with their slimy pseudopods. While it gives you no small pleasure to see the ambassador and the envoy take a richly deserved thrashing, you realise it might be time to act when the slug attacking the ambassador produces a bony spike from somewhere within its slimy body and prepares to plunge it into the avian. If Horizon-8 is with you, turn to [56](#). Otherwise you must decide - are you going to prevent this murder? If you've got a party cracker in your inventory and wish to deploy it, turn to [230](#). If you're short on riot supplies you can spring into action instead by turning to [196](#). If you'd rather let the Volans get what's coming to then turn to [51](#).

206

With the cop dead there's nothing stopping you from getting out of here. In fact, you'd better, before the local constabulary finds out what happens and takes even more of an interest in you.

You return to the Soyuz-30 and take off, plotting a course that takes you around behind the Sham system's huge yellow sun to confound any potential observers and snitches. You lurk here for a few uncomfortable, sweaty hours, keeping your eyes glued to your sensors lest Glomcop reinforcements arrive. Fortunately the next jump ship to arrive isn't a Glom ship and is amenable to a hefty bribe in return for a lift. You pay an extortionate fee for transport to Kitalpha, dock on and wait a little while for the star ship to take on its consignment of Fishtein containers. The vessel begins its jump shortly afterwards and you are once again on the way - this time to your final destination on Route 66³, the Kitalpha sector. Turn to [320](#).



207

You emerge from the jump a few days later in Kitalpha. The familiar sight of the Fuel 'n Gruel station silhouetted against the bright yellow star. Breathing a sigh of relief you park up outside and wait to be beamed aboard the station as usual. Your old pal Nebula Bob, the mostly-sentient robot cooler, greets you as you step off the teleportation grid and stride into the station's main bar.

With your pursuer hopelessly far behind you and almost certainly thrown right off your trail you spend a few days cleaning and repairing your trusty ship in between bouts of gambling, drinking and trading tall tales with the other space explorers passing through this busy space junction. A bunch of crude reptiloid barbarians roll in one evening and wreck up the bar - in the morning you're the only patron left.

As you're sitting in the main bar over your breakfast, idly reassembling Nebula Bob who had taken a bit of a beating in last night's fighting, you're surprised to see a uniformed Glomcop walk right into the bar! He's a small bipedal dog, looking a bit like a Yorkshire terrier from old Earth. Before you can figure out whether to run or draw your weapon the cop stretches out his paws in front of him to show he means no harm and approaches your table.

"Leo Canid, Glom PD. I've been chasing your bumper halfway across the galaxy. I've finally caught up with you. Just one thing - when my ship crashed on Orma, it was you that called for help, wasn't it?"

You nod.

"I'm not all that popular with the Glom PD", sighs Leo. "They gave me a busted old piece of junk to fly and look where it got me. I guess my career's over anyway. I can't bring you in after what you've done for me".

You look at the canoid quizzically. He guesses at your question.

"You were wanted for a Code 10. It's a serious offence".

You shrug.

"You failed to declare your non-employment based income on your annual tax return correctly. Your profits from temple raiding in the Glom territories should have been on a form M-559 part A, which you failed to supply. Oh well. It's all water under the bridge now".

You suddenly remember something. Signalling for the cop to wait for you, you head back to the Soyuz-30 and rummage around for a while in the crew module. You find what you're looking for - a crumpled up piece of paper stuffed into the back of your sock drawer - and head back to the bar where Leo waits patiently for you, gnawing at a breakfast steak.

You hand the crumpled paper over. "Czy to jest to?" you ask. The dog unfurls it, smooths it out, has a close read and punches a few details into his wrist computer before regarding you again.

"That all seems to be in order. The Code 10 has been rescinded. Please file your return in full and on time in future. Have a nice day, citizen".

208

The Ambassador acknowledges your request and closes the communication channel. In less than half an hour the Star Kettle has created a jump path for you and stabilised a jump field large enough for your squad ship. The thought of the annoyance you are no doubt causing the crew of the Volan star ship fills you with profound joy, but most of all you are just glad to be back on the hunt. You recline in your chair and ease into the jump field, watching Matar slip away and disappear into the starfield behind you. You're confident that you can catch up if you can keep up this pace.

Turn to [46](#).

209

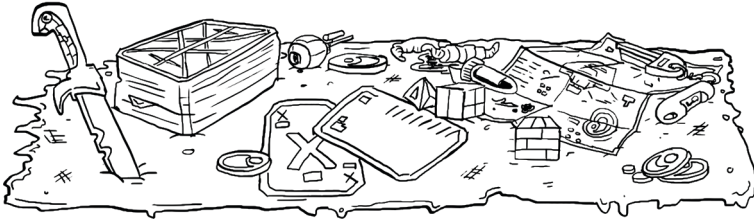
The Soyuz-30 is too badly damaged to save. You bid your faithful vessel farewell as you rush aboard the alien fighter. Unfortunately it's designed for creatures about one-third to one-half your size and despite your best efforts you can't quite get yourself into the command chair. Even if size didn't matter you don't think this ship would be right for you anyway - it has very limited fuel and life support reserves, weak sensors, a primitive and overly-aggressive docking array and no minibar.

Chagrined, you bid your faithful Soyuz-30 hello once more and once again weigh up your options. If you'd like to attempt to repair it using parts from the station assuming the Soyuz is still able to limp over there, turn to [114](#). If you want to make repairs using parts from the alien fighter jammed through the hull turn to [231](#).

210

Aside from the information about the Rattetail, the police reports are surprisingly quiet apart from a minor note about a bar fight in Orma's somewhat infamous Pickled Herring which took place on 2047.291, the same day the Rattetail arrived. No other jump ships have arrived or left since the Rattetail showed up so the Pole is probably still in the system somewhere.

If you want to begin your investigations with the crippled jump ship then turn to [352](#). Otherwise you could follow up on the bar fight lead from the moon by turning to [10](#), or head to the planet instead by turning to [354](#).



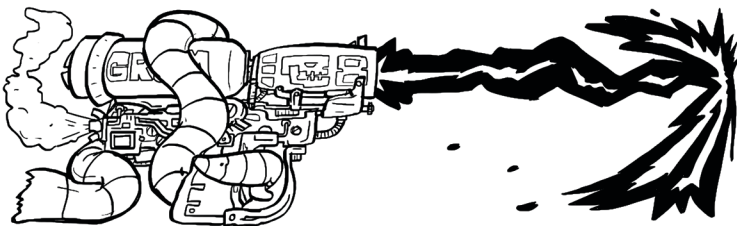
211

All you can really do now is finalise your paperwork while you watch the Scrodes strip the remnants of the Spend-o-Max bare. You check your police bulletins: the Conglomerate flagship Interlocutor is on the way. You only hope it arrives before the Scrodes finish with the station and turn their attention to you. Turn to [108](#).

212

Deciding the time is ripe for a hasty exit, you leap out a window in the rear of the building and swiftly clamber down the ruined wall to street level. Hearing the harsh tone of angry Matari voices approaching, you run for safety as fast as your legs can carry you. Luckily that's pretty fast and the Matari either can't catch you or aren't interested in pursuit. You make it back to the town centre winded but in one piece, although you don't think you'll be too welcome in the outskirts again any time soon.

Now that you're back in the relative safety of the main strip, you must consider your next port of call. You can visit the bar, assuming you haven't done so already, by turning to [356](#). You could also make enquiries at the fuel depot by turning to [365](#). If this experience has soured you on Barbet or you've already been everywhere, you could instead return to your squad ship and blast off by turning to [253](#).



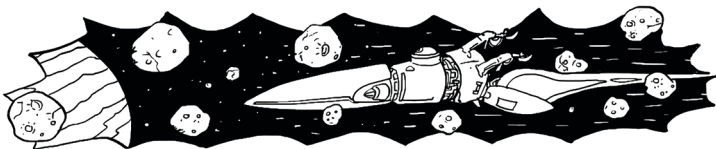
213

As your adversaries are sent reeling out of the ship you slam the hatch shut again and tear out the cables linking the Caterwaul to the Soyuz-30's computer. You decide it's time to take off so you strap into the pilot's chair, throttle up and come face to face with a transparent but impenetrable energy shield which seals everything into the hangar bay. Meanwhile the Cattes down on the deck start firing on you with whatever weapons come to hand, hoping to bring you back down for dinner. Take 1d3 hull damage and resolve any Heavy hits as necessary.

Pelted with small arms fire and your console screaming about multiple hull breaches, you've all but given up hope when a huge star ship - more a steel-plated asteroid than a star-faring vessel - jumps into the system with a blinding flash and commences to pound the Caterwaul with some manner of doomsday weapon. Explosions corruscate throughout the hangar bay, your opponents scatter or are swept away and the hangar bay shields flicker and disperse. You don't need any further prompting - you floor it and blast out of the hangar to a safe distance as the space-going mountain fires blast after blast into the unprotected hull of the Caterwaul. Already drained of energy by its panic jump the Caterwaul is barely able to put up even a cursory defence and within minutes is reduced to a drifting hulk, fires burning on all decks. Still the mountain continues firing until your former captors are blasted into a radioactive cloud of subatomic particles.

You sit a safe distance away, watching the carnage through your periscope. You've never seen or even heard of a ship matching the description of this deadly alien mountain, but since they've helped you escape one of your enemies they might be in a position to help you escape a second.

If you'd like to hail these mysterious and somewhat ominous strangers then turn to [305](#). If you think it'd be best to avoid attracting their attention then turn to [191](#).



214

You carefully pilot your way over to the remnants of the station, avoiding the drifting clouds of space junk and the occasional escape pod. With nothing much else to do in this system you decide to rummage around for useful supplies while you wait for a jump capable ship to show up. Almost everything is smashed but you do find something useful while you're hanging around.

Roll 1d6. On 1, you find a copy of Sword of the Bastard Elf. On 2: Shield Splitter. 3: Golden Energy. 4: Health Package. 5: Hull Repair Kit, 6: Lascalpel.

Eventually you just dock up to a stable part of the station and wait. A day later the alien starship's jump drives flare brightly and most of the ship disappears into a jump, heading in the direction of the Void Nebula. The front section of the ship - the command section and sensors, you think - are somehow left behind, tumbling slowly through space.

Turn to [368](#)

215

The Scrodes might be savage pirates from a completely insane section of space, but they might be able to help you out anyway. You ask Crunt for a lift.

"If it will get rid of you then why not", he yells rhetorically in a tone which sets your teeth grinding, "Where to?"

If you have the coordinates for the location to which you are heading, add them all together and subtract them from this paragraph number. If the paragraph makes sense then continue from there, otherwise read on.

The Scrodelord laughs dismissively but his voice becomes slightly more high-pitched in annoyance. "You're wasting everyone's time, guy!" he shrieks.

If you want to assert your dominance and tell these pirates to back down then turn to [110](#). If you'd rather stop hassling them and keep an eye on them instead then you kill the connection. Turn to [195](#).

216

You attempt to hail the derelict ship. It doesn't respond. A quick scan shows that there's no reactor on the ship but a few locations on board have a small amount of power - probably backup batteries - and there are a couple of hundred life signs aboard. You don't recognise the design of the ship and the police database has nothing - it's just another unknown starfaring alien species. The thick angular plates on the outside of the vessel are scorched and torn as if struck by a star ship weapon, and a mangled maser cannon protrudes from the front of the half-mile-long hulk. All signs point to it having been involved in the destruction of the Spend-o-Max.

In search of answers, you try to find a place to dock up. While your docking gear won't cut through this armoured hull, you locate a huge gaping hole around the back - probably a thoroughfare leading to the ship's missing rear sections. You fly inside, land, put on a helmet and exit the squad ship.

You follow the corridor for a while, passing mostly ruined and empty rooms until you come to a junction where an access tube leads up and down. Something is scrawled on the walls and floor which you give a quick scan with the portable translator. On the walls of the corridor ahead of you is written "SANDBOX". On the floor next to the access tube it says "DAM", and high up on the wall near the ladder heading up the tube it says "NEST". This isn't particularly enlightening. You wonder if these aliens are a type that only communicates in metaphor or allegory or something else just as irritating and baffling to modern translator technology.

To head on to SANDBOX turn to [276](#). If you'd rather go down to the DAM then turn to [65](#). Otherwise you could head to the NEST by climbing up the tube - turn to [265](#).



217

The bartender wasn't bluffing. Your next swing is met with another blast from the plasma slugger, this time aimed squarely at your chest. Since your churlish attitude was the death of you it may come as some consolation that the splattered upper half of your body will live on as a huge blood stain and scorch mark on the rear wall of the Barbet Bunker, driving away business for many stellar cycles until the bartender gets around to taping a poster over it. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

218

You swoop in close to the suspicious container and run a more in-depth scan. It's mostly full of pressurised Fishtein-brand protein slurry but in the middle there's the clapped-out space shuttle you've been chasing across half the universe. You broadcast your standard, well-rehearsed greeting on an emergency override channel:

"THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE P.D. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, PSEUDOPODS AND/OR GRASPERS UP!"

There's no reply. Time to end this. Carefully aiming at the loading hatch on the side of the container, you fire a controlled burst. There's a brief shower of molten metal and the side is ripped clean away as a torrent of depressurising Fishtein rushes out into space. Amidst this revolting slurry is the Soyuz-30, spinning wildly as it's thrown into space! The pilot is no slouch though and quickly brings the spacecraft under control. Obviously in no mood to be arrested, the Pole powers up his weapons and activates his shields. You must bring him in alive:

SOYUZ-30:

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 7(1) - HULL 6



The Soyuz-30 is co-piloted by Bones, an expert mechanic. If you manage to blow out the Soyuz-30's shield, roll 1d6 - on 1-3 he keeps them working and they continue to function normally. On 4+ they go down.

You're not going back empty-handed. If you win turn to [12](#). If you lose your life or career ends here : either way your adventure is over.

219

Your detective work has finally led you right to the Space Adventure Pole. As he and his boney companion are picking their way through the side alleys of Orma town, trying to find some way out of this system, you creep up behind them and fire several warning shots over their heads. You train your sidearm on the Pole as they turn, and give the obligatory warning. "THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID, CONGLOMERATE PD", you bark, triumphantly "AND YOU ARE UNDER ARREST. COME ALONG PEACEFULLY OR I WILL BE FORCED TO USE UNNECESSARY VIOLENCE IN YOUR APPREHENSION".

They don't come along peacefully. Instead they draw their blasters and start shooting as they dive for cover.

MIROSLAW HERMASZEWSKI: EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2 
BONES: EXPERTISE 7 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

If you win you place the Pole and his companion under arrest. Turn to [12](#). You have no intention of going back empty-pawed- if you are defeated your adventure ends here.



You've been a space adventurer for a very long time and know better than to give menacing carnivores the benefit of the doubt. You're not sticking around for dinner. You slam the hatch shut behind you, return to the command module and fire up the ship, lifting up of the deck while the animals below scatter in all directions. Peering out through the viewport you can see that the enormous hangar is kept enclosed by an energy shield which covers the bay doors - if you can find the generators you could probably knock them out and escape.

Unfortunately you're not given a chance - a quick-thinking feline has powered up a fighter ship and as the assembled animals cheer it takes off and begins firing on you! Some of the animals draw their guns and begin shooting at you from the deck as more of them head for their ships. You're in a tight spot! Activating your weapons and shields you manoeuvre to engage the first attacker:

CATTE FIGHTER:

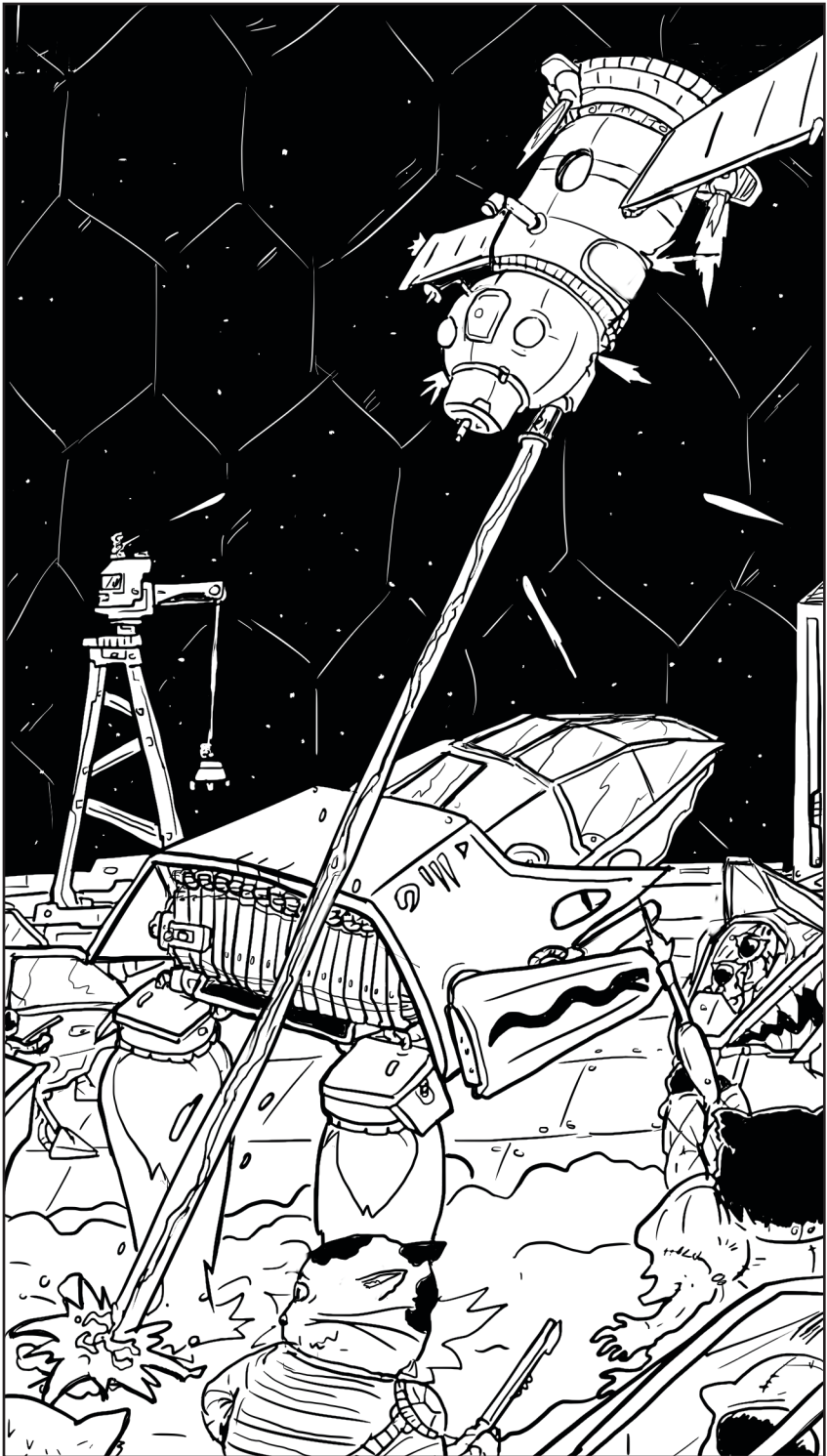
MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 3(0) - HULL 6



You are drawing inaccurate weapons fire from the onlookers which could strike either ship. At the end of each round roll 1d6, on a 1-3 your ship is struck and on 4-6 the Catte ship is hit. The affected ship takes an unavoidable hit (but shields work as normal).

If you defeat your feline foe then turn to [91](#). Otherwise turn to [37](#).





221

You follow the instructions scrawled on the drinks coaster to a tee. Making sure none of the Matari are looking in your direction, you cross the plaza and slip down the first left then take the second right. Following this alley for a while it opens up into a t-junction where, on the opposite side, you see the building the Erinacean was talking about - a squat grey structure with a heavy metal front door. The building is decorated with some neon lights twisted into indecipherable symbols, currently switched off as it's still daytime. It doesn't really look like a religious structure to you but you've seen weirder temples in your travels. There are a couple of windows but you can't see anything through them, as they're barred and shuttered.

Your directions tell you to wait until midnight. You've come this far so you may as well get comfortable and wait to see what happens. Clambering into a ruin on the alley side of the junction and scaling up to the second floor, you find a spot with a good view of the building and settle in for a long wait. Done with the directions you finally chuck the filthy and damp coaster aside (remove the coaster from your inventory). Hours pass and the sun eventually sets, the pink dust clouds turning murky brown and then black against the deep green night sky. Add one to the Stellar Date and turn to [243](#).

222

Stopping yet another of Barbet's stupid riots is not worth getting shot to pieces over. You resolve to check out the report of the break in at the station while the locals and natives settle things among themselves. Pushing the engines to full throttle you attempt to blast off, but as you're passing through the pale green stratosphere the ship starts to shudder violently and your ascent comes to an abrupt, jarring halt. You hear the howl of twisting metal and the control panels all light up in bright red - something is terribly wrong!

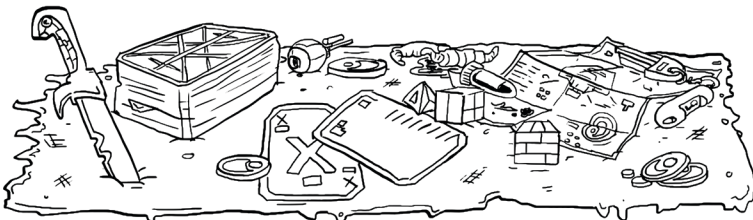
Roll on the Heavy Hit table and resolve the effects. If you survive, you check the ship engineering logs and find that the ship's autorepair function needed more time to seal off the damage to the hull caused by the shooting before the ship could take the strain of liftoff. Your unseemly haste to get away from danger just made everything worse. You decide to find somewhere safe to land and wait the riot out while the autorepair does its thing. Turn to [226](#).

223

It's Sham, all right. This star system is dominated by a huge, bright yellow star which is orbited by a large red planet called Nezval and its water moon, Orma. Orma is notable as the source of a product called "Fishtein: the Fishy Protein that's Relatively Edible". Never really a fashionable source of sustenance, Fishtein is popular with barbarians and starving colonists and so Orma's automated plant still does a reasonable trade despite the closure of Route 66³. It churns out a few large cargo containers of the stuff a day and at any time several of them can be seen floating around the system waiting to be collected. The population of the moon, mostly Squidges, are an advanced if somewhat geriatric civilisation who enjoy a peaceful existence on the sole island of their watery world. They stand in stark contrast to the Squidges of Nezval - a barbarous, nomadic people about whom only a little is known. Genetically identical but socially as different as is possible from their moon-based cousins these savages roam the dangerous red world and survive using stone-age technology. Perhaps if you had more time here you could get a paper published on them or at least plunder a few of their temples, but you're in a hurry.

As you're musing on the system and its inhabitants you see a small, bright dot departing the planet and moving rapidly towards you. As it approaches you can make out the tell-tale shape and markings of a Glomcop squad ship. No doubt attracted by the arrival of the Rattetail, it's coming to investigate. If they find you here they'll almost certainly want to bring you in as well. Hopefully these Rattes can be trusted to keep their traps shut when dealing with the police.

If you think you can place your faith in your hosts, you can return to the Ratte King and try to advise him, it, them or whatever on what to do next. Turn to [167](#). If you don't trust these Ratte bastards not to sell you out, you instead rush straight to the hangar, buckle back into the Soyuz-30 and blast off. If you want to face the cops head on then turn to [122](#), otherwise you could attempt to slink away and avoid detection by turning to [39](#).



That “fine” looks more like the Conglomerate taking a cut than meting out any kind of punishment, but at least it seems to have persuaded the Scrodes to move on before they cause any further mischief. You watch as over the next couple of hours the horde of looters returns to the ship, the docking jaw of the Macerator closes and the star ship turns away in the direction of the Void. It fires up its jump drives and is gone, leaving you in the system with the Interlocutor and the ruins of the alien ship.

At this point the Interlocutor finally takes an interest in the hulk and scans it with its powerful sensors, which causes the ruined vessel to hail you! Apparently they managed to get their communication array back in working order again and are suddenly feeling chatty. You pick up the call and are greeted by the panicked face of the grey-furred, feline commander of the vessel. You bare your teeth instinctively, feeling a primal, instinctive hatred for this creature. You completely fail to suppress the desire to bark and snap at the furball, and you wish on some atavistic level that there was a tree nearby to chase it up. The Catte must want something from you badly because he waits patiently for you to settle down before saying his piece.

“I don’t like you and you don’t like me”, meows the feline, its animal noises converted into Glargot by your ship’s translator, “but I know you can stop that ship from wiping us out. You’re both on the same side, right? They’ll listen to you.”

You snort and reach over to kill the connection but the feline continues its begging, its eyes wide with desperation.

“We intercepted the last call you made to that ship. You’re after the Pole, right? I know where he went. Get those guys to leave us alone and I’ll send you the details”.

You growl. On one paw, you’d like to see the universe free of any creature that can raise your hackles like this, but on the other you really need to get out of here and after the Pole. You indulge in another frenzied barking session before shutting off the connection.

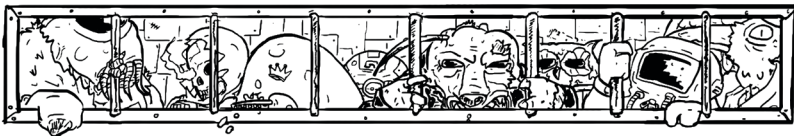
You decide to hail the Interlocutor again. If you want to ask them to spare these creatures then turn to [154](#). If you’d rather the universe was free of them once and for all then turn to [384](#).

225

You sit for a little while and have a think. Although the space mountain is gone the other ship is still present and apparently semi-functional, based on your sensor logs. Your ship's computer has also learned a little about the alien wreck by automatically hacking into what's left of its mainframe - it's called the Caterwaul, belongs to some podunk civilisation called the Catte Empire and has several mutually intelligible languages spoken aboard by its several species - Catten by the Cattes, Otterisch by to Ots, Olwsk by the Owles and Rattatat by a species called the Rattes. Based on the frantic radio chatter coming from the ship there's some kind of civil war going on among the survivors, and the jump drive is still intact but under the control of the "Rattebellion", whatever that means.

Also nearby are the smashed remnants of the Terebellum Spend-o-Max. A few escape pods float helplessly nearby, probably just clerks who got out during the fighting. They're probably safe enough. Of more immediate interest is the merchandise that's been thrown clear of the station.

If you're interested in the Caterwaul hulk then you could go explore the mostly-crippled alien vessel: turn to [389](#). If you'd prefer to stay out in space you could instead investigate the station remnants while you wait for a spaceworthy jump ship to arrive - turn to [214](#).



226

You fly the squad ship to a dusty patch of desert just over the horizon and wait out the riot. You spend the day catching up on paperwork and rest, and idly watching pink silica dust drift past the ship. The greenish skies turn a sludge brown and then black as the sun sets, and you watch the dull orange glow of Barbet City burning through the night. Add 1 to the Stellar Date.

When the sun rises again you do a quick flyover of the town - the riot's over, no thanks to you. You land the ship in the burned-out shuttle parking zone on the main square and hop out into Barbet City. Turn to [121](#).

227

You're still weighing up the various ways in which you could do harm to this squad ship when you feel a tug on your space suit. You turn around and look down a bit and see the glowing red eye of your trusty robot companion, Horizon-8. It wants your attention.

"While you were wasting time processing solutions with your meat-mind, HATE has reconfigured the squad ship's computer to release the prisoners held aboard. This will occur when that ship is in space to prevent the prisoners hindering our progress here."

Horizon-8 registers the look on your face and continues, "HATE must practice countermeasures against law enforcement officers for when HATE returns home".

Once again you're just glad this little robot is on your side. You think. Even so you'll be glad to ditch it at Kitalpha - Horizon-8 gives you the creeps.

If you are attacked by the police officer in space, Horizon-8 will spring its trap on your command. Make a note to turn to 274 when the time comes.

With your work done for you there's no need to stick around. You sneak out of the parking lot as stealthily as your towering height, alien appearance and bright white space suit will allow. Turn to [89](#).

228

The Rusty Autodoc is a chain of clinics known for their pristine white offices and modern diagnostic and recovery ("DR") machines. This one is a bit run-down - the trilinoleum floors are filthy and splattered with specks of alien goo and the autodoc is an older appliance, a skeletal model featuring exposed wiring and slightly blunt surgical equipment. Still, it should be OK for a bit of a patch-up and the medical vending machine seems to be reasonably well-stocked. The autodoc robot greets you with a display listing its services and prices.

You can trade an item to heal all injuries from yourself or your co-pilot (aside from Horizon-8 who is not user-serviceable, and Bones who hasn't got most of the organs and blood vessels the autodoc is used to). If you wish you can also chuck an item you own into the medical vending machine's hopper in exchange for one of the following items: trauma kit, lascalpel, or health package.

With whatever ails you having been treated (or not), you wander back onto the concourse. If this was your first stop on the station, turn to [232](#). Otherwise it's time to go: you begin the long hike back to the shuttle dock. Turn to [180](#).

229

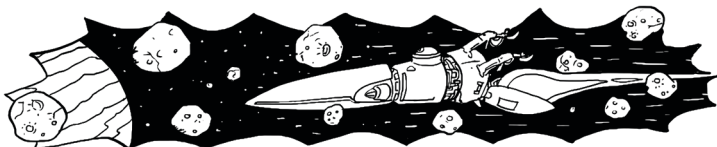
You spend another Stellar Day waiting (add one to the Stellar Date), obsessively scanning the system for any sign of police reinforcements when your sensors pick up a large jump field collapsing almost right on top of the space station. Swivelling the periscope around you're reassured to see the graceful spires and tacky statues typical of a Volan star ship rather than the squat, boxy features of the Conglomerate flagship. You've never been so glad to see these treacherous, beaky bastards in your life. Before you have time to pick up the receiver to hail them you feel the hull rattling as they scan you with their powerful sensors. Before the shaking subsides the comms receiver rings. You pick up the handset.

After a few seconds of squawking your translator unit detects the Volan language and begins working. "... am Flock Leader Pt'om of the Volan Peace and Exploration ship Star Kettle. We're departing Conglomerate space and according to the Police Directorate communications we've intercepted it seems that you would be wise to do the same." You start to reply but Pt'om continues, speaking over you.

"We have some pressing business here but if you'd be prepared to stand by for a few hours we would like to repay you for getting rid of that dog. He's been a pain in our drumsticks for years. Please dock and when we are ready to depart we will take you as far as the Terebellum system."

You don't need a second invitation. You dock your ship to the Star Kettle's hull and while you wait the Volans even recharge your ship's batteries! Restore your POWER to its initial value. They must have really hated that cop. A couple of hours pass and, true to their word, the Volans activate their jump drives, tearing through space towards your next stop on the way to Kitalpha!

Turn to [293](#).



230

The “party cracker” is a bad time in a can. A combination of stun grenade, riot foam dispenser, rubber pellet bomb and pepper sprayer, its the most effective tool in a Glomcop’s arsenal when faced with any degree of rowdiness. You turn the effect dial from “inconvenience” through to “incapacitate” and on to “brutalise”, then activate the timer and throw the bomb into the melee.

There’s a horrendous explosion and flash of blinding white light. Even on the other side of the room the blast and the spray of rubber pellets nearly knocks you down, and you stagger back against the life support generator. By the time you’ve recovered your senses the stunned Volans and slugs are fused together in a heap of hardened riot foam. Savouring the Volans’ discomfort you use a dissolving agent to release the slugs, who you cuff and book for illegal gambling, resisting arrest and excessive rowdiness. It’s a huge bust : add 4 Collars. With the slugs secured, you finally free the Volans and consider what you’re going to do with them. Turn to [14](#).

231

If you cannibalise the fighter lodged in your service module you might have enough spare parts to rebuild most of the systems aboard the Soyuz-30, although you doubt your ship will ever be quite the same again when you’re done. Gathering your tools you get to work.

Scrutinising the alien vessel you notice it has a powerful weapons system, excellent manoeuvring thrusters and a relatively tough, aerodynamic hull. Its powerplant, though limited, could be modified to enhance the power capacity of the Soyuz-30 somewhat. Unfortunately its life support systems, sensors and shields are garbage and suitable only for scrap.

As you hack away at the conjoined ships, terrible battle has broken out between the alien jump ship and the new arrival, another massive star ship that looks more like a floating mountain than anything else. Firstly the small escort fighters are reduced to globs of molten metal by a wide sweep of whatever doomsday weapon the flying mountain is equipped with, and then as the two star ships trade blasts the station is caught in the middle and smashed into a crippled hulk! Finally both of the ships go dark and

silent but eventually the mountain changes its heading. It tears away back into jump space and out of the system with a bright flash of light. The other alien ship remains behind, badly damaged and spinning slowly in place.

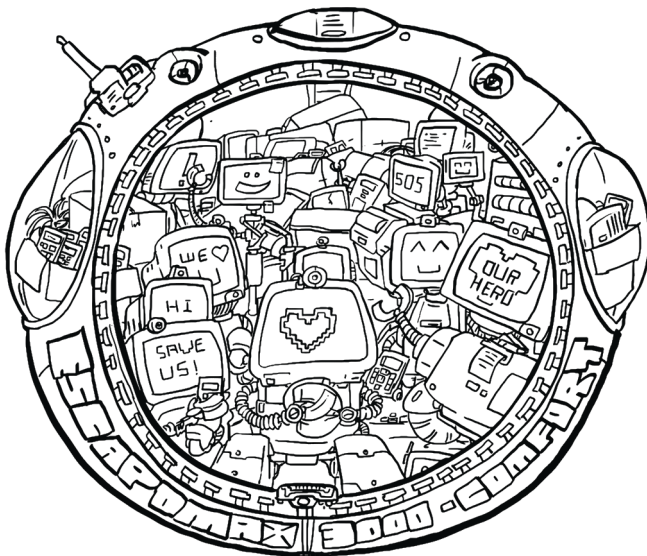
Turn to [363](#).

232

You're already getting weary of this station - in the time it has taken you to trudge from the airlock to this place and make your purchase you've already heard the cheesy piped music loop twice and you're pretty sure the old vegetoid security guard is eyeballing you. You face a long walk back but you can probably manage another stop along the way.

Assuming you haven't already visited these locations, you could go to the food court (turn to [383](#)) the Rusty Autodoc (turn to [228](#)), the Pan-Galactic Panel Blasters (turn to [144](#)), the Two-Fisted Fantasy Studio (turn to [132](#)) or else you can return to your ship by turning to [180](#).

On the other hand - maybe you could give that guard the slip and go do some space exploration? The self-contained fusion core in the mall is supposed to be interesting, containing enough fuel for a million years of mall operations. If you want to check that out, turn to [78](#).



233

You swivel to face the communications panel and try to open a hailing frequency to the Star Kettle. As usual they've decided to yank your tail and they let the call ring out a few times before answering. Eventually the communications officer picks up, and his enormous beaky face fills up the comms panel screen.

"Pr'rent here. What do you want, dog?" he squawks peevishly. You've had dealings with this guy before. Like most of the birds on the Kettle he's not a big fan of yours, and the feeling's mutual. Still, they're the only jump-capable ship in the sector and might be willing to help if you crawl enough. You swallow your pride and ask.

"I'm on the Ten-Foot Pole's trail but I don't think he's in the system. What'll it take to get a jump from you guys?" you whine.

Pr'rent looks at you as though you've lost your mind. "Have you gone rabid, fleabag? The only jump we'd give a Conglomerate lapdog like you is straight into the Void. Get lost before I call the dog catcher."

With that the Volan kills the connection.

Unsurprisingly they're not going to be of any help. Perhaps another jump ship with a less recalcitrant crew will come along. In the meantime with no other obvious leads the only course of action is to descend to Barbet City to see if you can pick up the Pole's trail down there. Turn to [373](#).

234

Gocky is a barrel-chested alien with six arms and four legs. In consequence he takes up quite a lot of room and is especially adept at blocking doorways against intruders. The ginger tabby and his comrades stick their faces through the access hatch only to be met with a hurricane of fists and kicks from the alien farmboy. Being belligerent, carnivorous folk they put up a bit of a fight but soon have to retreat before the ungodly beating they're receiving, and the enthusiasm of the remaining animals outside seems to diminish somewhat.

With the doorway clear, Gocky turns to face you. He's taken a serious injury in the fighting!

"Reckon they got me this time, pardner... tell my ma, my ma and my ma I said....", he croaks and slumps to the deck before you can find out what he wants passed on to his various mothers.

Remove Gocky as your co-pilot. There's no time to mourn though - the animals have recovered and are about to launch another assault! Turn to [213](#).

235

You look at Horizon-8. "HATE will do it", the probe says with unnerving haste. How the hell could it have known what you were thinking?

You're not certain that the droid can pull this deception off but on the other hand there's no way Crunt could know for sure that he wasn't talking to a robot. Just to be on the safe side you balance your police hat on top of the thing's upper sensor pod - maybe that will be enough to fool the raiders.

You touch down in the hangar bay and your ship is immediately thronged by a huge crowd of booing, jeering Scrodes. Half of the Macerator's crew must be packed into here to see the cop get thrashed at Uijan Kekuatan. Horizon-8 wobbles out of the squad ship on its tripod legs and heads on over to parlay with the Scrodelord. You can only remain behind and hope the deception pans out.

Evidently the scam worked fine because a few seconds later you hear bones crunching - a sickening noise, audible even from within the squad ship - and a collective gasp of horror from the crowd. Horizon-8 then ambles back up into the ship, coated with orange Scrode goo and still claspng a detached alien claw in one of its steel manipulator claws.

"HATE wins. HATE told them that HATE's organic slave would be out shortly to handle our winnings".

You don't need to be asked twice - you'd rather deal with the Scrodes than hang around this disturbing and grisly machine right now. Turn to [266](#).

236

"I've read your reports", splutters the Chief, "And I know you've fallen behind on your arrest quotas. You've been a bad dog. A very bad dog! Get out of my sight". The Chief points firmly to the door and you slink out with a pitiful whine.

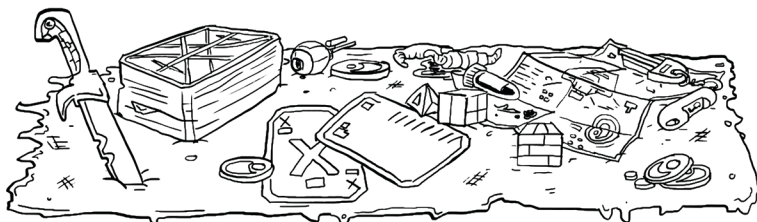
Without waiting for an invitation, you drag over a cheap metal chair and sit down at the Space Whist table. The goons do their best to look tough, an attempt undermined somewhat by the very obvious signs of a recent arse-kicking that most of them are sporting.

“Had a rough week?” you laugh. The thugs seem annoyed. “I’m looking for the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole and I reckon you’ve seen him. He’s a wanted felon and I’m here to bring him back to the Glom. So let’s not waste each other’s time: you tell me where he’s gone, and I don’t arrest the lot of you as accomplices”, you continue.

“Accomplices? Who let you off the leash?”, sneers Harry the Erinacean, whiskers shaking in indignation, “You and I both know you got nothing, so we’ve got nothing to say to you. Now if you’re done chasing your tail, go walk yourself.”

The greasy, bald hedgehog has a point. You’re almost certain that these crooks can set you on the Pole’s trail, but you can’t just bust up this table without proof. The Erinacean Empire, such as it is, relies on its control of gambling operations around the sector for most of its income. They’ll be on the horn to the Chief in seconds if you wreck up their action without good reason. You’d better find some evidence linking the Erinacean to the Pole before throwing any more accusations around. Turn to [326](#) to step outside and consider your evidence.

On the other paw, you’re a loose cannon who doesn’t play fetch for anyone- you follow your nose, and your nose has led you right here. If you’d rather skip the formalities and just beat the information you need out of him, turn to [257](#).



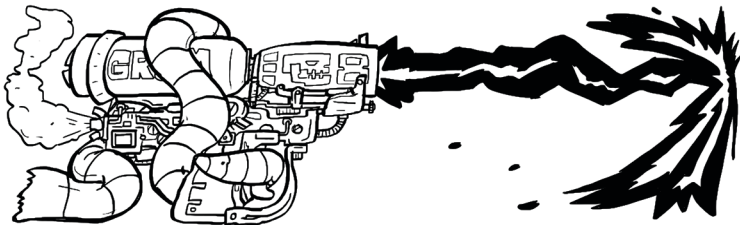


The jump to Terebellum takes three Stellar Days (advance the date appropriately) during which time you re-read a couple of Earth science fiction stories, leaf through your old magazines and practice your Space Whist. Before you know it the trip's over and the spiny Erinacean Empire star ship arrives at Terebellum, dropping into normal space with a huge shudder. Your communications receiver rings and you pick up the handset.

"Off", burbles a voice in translated Glargot. There's no point arguing with these guys, and they'll be on the lookout for stowaways from here on out, so you disengage the docking clamps and thrust away to a safe distance. The Erinacean ship changes heading slightly and powers up its jump drive again, departing the system shortly afterwards in a blinding flash.

Terebellum is the exact midpoint between four stars, and a convenient empty place to construct the sector's biggest space mall, the massive Terebellum Spend-o-Max. A joint Conglomerate-Volan enterprise, this monstrous space station was a clearance outlet for everything any being could possibly want to buy and a meeting place for bored teenagers the quadrant over. Unfortunately for the Spend-o-Max, the Interstellar 40 bypass cut a lot of its traffic and most the stores shut down. Now its few remaining outlets are discount stores flogging merchandise that won't shift anywhere more civilised. Even the ships still traversing Route 66³ don't bother to swing by unless their crews develop a burning need for soiled macrofibre kimonos or outdated stellar maps.

There are no other ships in the system, nor are there likely to be for a couple of days at least. You could investigate the mall if you like by turning to [173](#). If you'd prefer to wait and keep an eye out for your next ride instead of rifling through expensive junk you can hang around in the Soyuz-30 by turning to [2](#).



239

You look Gramps in right in his bulging yellow eyes. He's finally letting you get a word in edgeways. The words you choose are, "Wypchac sie sianem" . As you're turning away to find a more worthy use of your time and hard-earned loot than this old mollusc he just chuckles.

"Heh, your loss, shorty."

You make your way back to town, uncomfortably aware that the old man must be reporting your coastal perambulations to the authorities. Add 1 TRAIL. Assuming the law hasn't picked you up after this hot tip you must now work where to try next. Turn to [89](#).

240

As you continue your investigations the jump ship completes its tasks in the system and, trailing a number of Fishtein crates, re-enters the jump. With it goes your hope of capturing Hermaszewski. The Space Exploration Pole has slipped right through your paws. With no chance of picking up the trail now you file your final report, close the case and head back to your station with your tail between your legs.

241

You dock up to the escape pod and race aboard. Your dogged pursuit of justice knows no bounds - you're going to bring these two in alive so they can pay their debt to society!

The docking rig tears the pod hatch open and you come face to face with the dreaded Bewlay Brothers! Standing tall in the dark of the pod, they flash their teeth of brass at you as you charge in to make the arrest.

STONE BEWLAY : EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

WAX BEWLAY : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2



If you win you cuff the pair of them and chuck them into the prisoner transport module for their outstanding parking fines and more recent crimes of resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer. Add 2 collars and turn to [248](#).

242

You race down the tunnel, following the unpleasant croaking noise. Although at first you think your quarry might be moving faster than you, you keep up the chase and before long hear a loud clanging noise. You catch up and find the Siamese twins jammed tight against each other in a particularly narrow section of the shaft. They're wedged tight and can't move!

With the chase complete you calm down, get a grip and yourself and question them. Your portable translator is able to figure out their unpleasant mewling language pretty quickly, but unfortunately these two don't know much. In return for your not finishing them off they tell you that they've seen the Ten-Foot Pole aboard but have no idea where he went. Their commander, Major Tom - the other Catte you chased into the shaft - spent more time with the Pole but you'll never catch up to him.

Completely calm now, you decide to leave these Cattes be since you can't arrest them (they're outside your jurisdiction and pretty firmly wedged into that vent shaft in any case). Instead you return to the "Sand-box" in the hopes of catching up with Major Tom but by the time you get there the Cattes have well and truly scarpered. The place is abandoned. With nothing left to do here it's time to move on. Assuming you haven't already done so, you can retrace your steps and visit the "DAM" by turning to [65](#) or the "NEST" by turning to [265](#). If you're done with this hulk and want to get out of here then return to your ship and turn to [48](#).

243

Your wait pays off. Just before midnight a Matari, wearing the same checked shirt that everyone else on this planet seems to be wearing, approaches the front door and places one of his hands on a scanner next to it. The door slides open and the Matari enters. Moments later the neon lights flicker on and more people begin to approach the bar: first some natives, but then some spacers - conspicuous in their flight suits - always accompanied by a Matari. Very strange. A few Matari wearing black jackets over their checked shirts enter carrying large suitcases and shortly afterwards you begin to hear a strange droning sound coming from inside the building. Is it indigenous music, or something more sinister? More and

more offworlders keep arriving and no one is leaving. By the time an hour has passed half the crew of those freighters you saw parked up in orbit must be packed inside the place!

You've waited long enough: it's time for action. To complete your part of the deal and fire a few shots through the windows, turn to [18](#). If you'd rather go down in person and find out what's going on over there then turn to [187](#). If you've changed your mind about having anything to do with this mess, you can sneak back through the darkened streets to the shuttle and prepare to get off this dirtball by turning to [282](#).

244

Being careful not to draw too much attention to yourself you hike along the abandoned, cliffy coast of the island, eventually arriving unseen at the town's outskirts. You consult a little tourist map on a signpost nearby. From here you can easily reach the main square for some last-minute bargain hunting (turn to [311](#)) or the Pickled Herring, the local bar catering to the unsavoury types that you usually like to consort with (turn to [280](#)). If you're more interested in seeing the impressive Fishtein plant first then turn to [139](#). Alternatively if you'd like to mess around with the cop's ship while he's not looking then turn to [185](#) to sneak up to the town's landing pad.

245

With your chips in hand, Alin conducts you to an open stool at a craps table. It's a simple game - the players bet on the outcome of dice throws and the winner takes everything, except in the case of a tie in which case the house takes everything.

To play Matari Craps you place your bet and roll 2d6 - the total is your score. Roll another 2d6 for your opponent - the total is their score. If your score is higher you win chips worth 1 alien currency (add 1 alien currency to the log book) and keep your item. If the scores are tied or yours is lower, you lose the item you wagered. If you have Bones as a co-pilot, his dice-rigging skills will allow you to re-roll one of your dice (but you must accept the second result). You may only play one round before Alin, seeing another pilot coming with a much larger pile of chips, shoos you away from the stool to make room.

Whether you decided to play or not, you cash in whatever chips remain and step outside the Two Suns Casino. Turn to [322](#).

The Erinaceans gathered around the table hastily cover up their cards as you approach. The game's probably illegal but you don't have a lot of time for that just now. The Pole is slipping away with each passing second so you just wander over to the table, bare your teeth, and bark, "Leo Canid. Conglomerate PD. Is this mess the Pole's work?" "Go piss up a lamp-post, copper. We got nothing to say to you", sneers back one of the Erinaceans, a warty mammal sporting a cheap leather jacket.

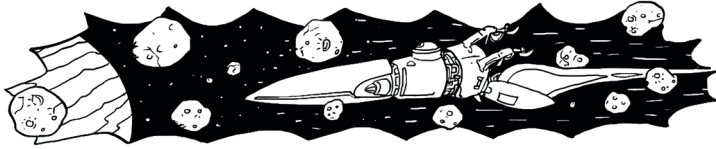
You eyeball the balding hedgehogs. They seem like a tough bunch and not likely to respond to intimidation or to go quietly if you attempt to arrest them. Plus they're probably armed. Instead a cunning plan comes to mind. You leave the bar and loiter next to the door. Moments later a Squidge goon sticks his skullhead out to check if the coast is clear.

After a quick tap from the stun baton and the application of five pairs of cuffs the Squidge is remarkably forthcoming compared to his attitude back in the bar. In response to your questions he confirms that the Pole started the fight in the bar, but neither he nor his Erinacean employers did anything more with Hermaszewski than play a couple of hands of Space Whist - they have no idea where he went after the fight.

You thank the Squidge but quickly dash his hopes for clemency by charging him with resisting arrest and illegal gambling without an illegal gambling permit. Add 1 Collar. Just as you're helping the ruffian into the back of the squad ship you see a flash of light in the sky and your portable computer lights up with a message - it's a jump ship arriving in the sector! If the Pole has found some way off this planet that'll be how he's going to leave the system.

To go up there and confront the ship before the Pole can slip away, you rush back to the squad ship and blast off: turn to [60](#). If you'd prefer to continue your investigations on Orma then turn to [177](#).





247

You are relaxing in the crew module when you are almost thrown off of the couch and onto the deck by a violent crash. The Star Kettle is dropping out of the jump. As the stars streaking past your viewport slow down to a crawl you check the calendar - you were only two days in to what should have been a five day jump! Something is terribly wrong. Add 2 to the Stellar Date.

The Star Kettle bursts into normal space and the shaking stops. Leaping to your feet you rush over the the periscope and have a look around. You very quickly identify the problem - the Conglomerate flagship Interlocutor is blocking the way, a boxy, grey slab hanging ominously in the blackness before you. Your communicator crackles into life - the Interlocutor is broadcasting on an emergency override channel which is automatically picked up by your sound system.

“Comptroller Baedje, Interlocutor. Miroslaw Hermaszewski, you are wanted for crimes against the Conglomerate of Reasonable Beings. We have established an jump interdiction field around this sector. There is no chance of escape. Surrender immediately.”

Just as you feared, they’ve come for you! You receive a call from Pt’om aboard the Volan ship and you pick up the receiver.

“Sorry, but it seems your goose is cooked. Time to push you back out of the nest”, he squawks.

Undocking from the Star Kettle at this point would leave you at the mercy of the Interlocutor - your fate wouldn’t be a pleasant one if they got their hands on you. Still, perhaps you’re tired of running. If you’d like to turn yourself in then turn to [300](#). Otherwise you’ll need to cling on for dear life: turn to [170](#).

If you’ve got Moc with you perhaps the silver-tongued alien can salvage the situation. Turn to [399](#) if you’d like to let him have his say.

248

As always your activities require a detailed write-up in quadruplicate (or pentuplicate in some cases). You've got to cover your tail and if you mess up on the forms you might have trouble charging back your expenses. You find a safe place to park up and complete your onerous paperwork.. Add 1 to the Stellar Date unless Elwoo is your co-pilot and this is the first time you've seen this page - his reckless and aggressive driving style has shaved some time off your commute.

If it's now 2047.288 then turn to [337](#). Otherwise there's still no activity in the system other than the continued distress beacons, the swirl of discarded merchandise and the ominous silence of the wrecked alien vessel. Assuming you haven't attempted the following, you may now investigate the escape pods:

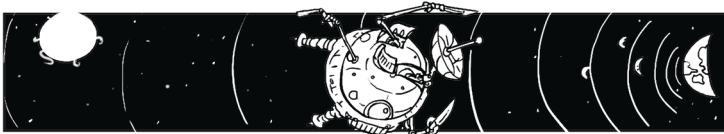
Turn to [19](#) to rescue the law enforcement professional.

Turn to [291](#) to save the pod full of women and children.

Turn to [261](#) to crack open the pod containing the wanted fugitives,

Turn to [193](#) to investigate the pod holding the precious cargo.

Turn to [100](#) to secure the merchandise, or investigate the ruined jump ship by turning to [216](#).



249

With the strange star ship's jump drives spinning up, even their powerful sensors might not be able to detect a ship as small as the Soyuz-30 closing in, if it's done at top speed and from precisely the right angle. Maybe. You and your co-pilot buckle up and you floor it right at the back of the ship. Take a manoeuvre test:

DANGEROUS LIAISON: DIFFICULTY 14



Remember to remove the appropriate amount of **POWER** from your space ship.

If you succeed, turn to [131](#). If you fail, turn to [22](#).

250

There's no time to lose! You'll catch the Pole when he tries to fly his way into the Fishtein plant. You rush back to your ship, power it up and fly low and fast over the town to the point indicated by the old Squidge. With any luck the Pole ducked for cover when you flew overhead and the buildings obscure your destination. You quickly duck under the ocean surface and, locating the access pipe, park up underneath it and power down. With any luck Hermaszewski won't be long.

You only have to wait a few minutes. Perhaps seeing you fly off and assuming you'd left the moon, Hermaszewski foolishly makes his move and dives for the access pipe in the Soyuz-30. He spots you almost instantly and, realising his fatal mistake, brings his weapons and shields online before you can even bark your usual introductory spiel. You power up and attack! Hermaszewski isn't getting away this time.

SOYUZ-30 :

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 7(1) - HULL 6



The Soyuz-30 is co-piloted by Bones, an expert mechanic. If you manage to blow out the Soyuz-30's shields, roll 1d6 - on 1-3 he keeps them working and they continue to function normally. On 4+ they go down.

If you win, turn to [302](#). If you are defeated, turn to [287](#).



251

You hit the deck just in time to hear a thunderous blast. The bartender fires his plasma slugger right at where you were just standing a moment ago, and the supercharged rounds tear through the vacant space and directly into Phasmid Pete's thorax. The lanky insectoid disintegrates into a fountain of chitin shards and goo, and as the remaining criminals go for their guns you come up firing.

MOE THE AMOEBOID : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1

CROAKER THE AMPHIBEING : EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

BOB THE BARTENDER: EXPERTISE 7 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2

Bob's plasma slugger is a powerful weapon that ignores armour and health - a hit from this weapon is instantly lethal.



If you prevail, you reach over the bar to take the plasma slugger from Bob's body (add this item to your inventory) and step over the corpses to have a word with the Erinacean. You find him cowering behind an overturned table and jam the barrel of the slugger into his snout.

"I'll talk", he squeaks. Turn to [74](#).

252

No one shows up, no matter how long you spend flicking through the depot's ancient magazine collection. It actually has a good selection of titles, covering a huge cross-section of species and interests, but most of the issues are cycles (if not decades) out of date. You scan over the titles - Popular Quantum Mechanics, Juggz, Shuttle and Pilot, Rad! Magazine (although the sample of radium attached to the cover has long since decayed to lead), a 20-cycle-old edition of Space Explorer's Quarterly...

You pull the magazine from the rack. It's a boring periodical, jammed full of dry, scholarly anthropological articles and pictures of primitive junk pinched from uncivilised worlds. Even if it was a new edition it'd only be of interest to someone in the trade of space exploration and maybe the odd barbarian looking for places to make contact. As you look it over your sensitive canine nose picks up an interesting scent on the pages...some warm-blooded being was leafing through these pages roughly a week ago. Could it be the Space Exploration Pole?

You may have picked up the scent trail of the Pole! If you see the word “scent” in the text you may add 5 to the paragraph number and turn to that page. If the text makes sense then continue reading from there. You wait a little longer after this exciting find until it becomes clear that no one’s coming in for a refuel. As you suspected, most of the pilots with functional ships have made a break for it already.

If you haven’t already done so you can approach the self-service droid about a purchase of fuel or those meat sticks rotating temptingly on the counter display by turning to [172](#). Otherwise if you’ve got no further business here then it’s time to leave. If you haven’t already done so you can visit the bar by turning to [356](#), take a look around the outskirts of the town centre by turning to [61](#), or return to your ship and blast off from this rock by turning to [253](#).

253

Done with Barbet, you ease yourself into the pilot’s chair and blast off bumpily through the green atmosphere. Usually you’d fill out your paperwork on the surface but you couldn’t wait to be free of the place. You just know you’ll be finding flecks of that pink silica dust in your fur weeks from now. Pushing to full throttle you burst free of Barbet’s gravitational grip and emerge into open space. The Matar system is pretty much as you left it: dusty pink Barbet and its decrepit orbital station, the Volan star ship with its ridiculous spires and statues is still lurking nearby. It’s still a backwater.

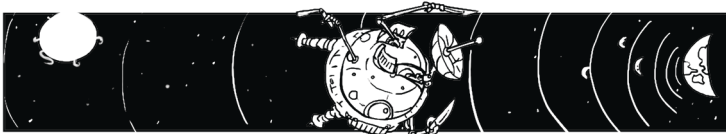
With nothing new on your plate you are now free to complete the mind-bendingly tedious (and completely mandatory) paperwork that is the bread and butter of Conglomerate policing. It takes several hours and by the time you’ve filed your reports you’re exhausted. You clock off and take a short nap. Advance the Stellar Date by 1 and turn to [294](#).



254

Although the captain of the star ship isn't all that thrilled to be using his ship's energy reserves to send you on to Terebellum, as a member of the Conglomerate he doesn't have much of a choice. You commandeer his ship's jump drive and set a course for the Terebellum system. It only takes half an hour for the star ship to stabilise a jump field large enough for you, and after thanking the captain for his service you steer your craft into the rift. The Matar system instantly recedes, becoming another bright dot in the starscape behind you as you continue your dogged pursuit of the Ten-Foot Pole. Although he now has a large head start you are confident that you can still catch up to him.

Turn to [46](#).



255

You shove your way over to the table and sit down. The aliens - a couple of Erinacean greasers and their partners in crime - seem reluctant to move over for you until they see what you're putting up. If you have an item that you're willing to part with in case of a loss then read on, otherwise there's not much to do here other than try your luck with the ladies (turn to [76](#)) or leave the bar and find something else to do by turning to [89](#).

Make a note of the item you're putting up. The Erinaceans are betting a unit of alien currency.

You must play a hand of Space Whist. By default you have an EXPERTISE of 5 at this game. If you still have a co-pilot with you they also have a EXPERTISE of 5, aside from Bones, as the greatest gambler in the sector, has an EXPERTISE of 8. Add your partner's whist EXPERTISE to yours and their number of FISTS to yours. Your Erinacean opponents have an EXPERTISE of 11 and 2 FISTS total. Roll the FIST dice as normal and add the highest roll to the EXPERTISE. The highest total score wins everything in the pot! Roll again in the case of a draw.

If you win turn to [181](#). If you lose or want to throw the game then turn to [27](#).

256

You make the right choice and decide not to set off an interstellar war in the hopes of avoiding a court appearance. Instead you'll do your best to thwart any attempts to remove you or your ship until other options open up. Unfortunately the Volans and Conglomerate reach a mutually satisfactory position with regards to your person, and in exchange for a few tonnes of Megasterling the Volans lower their shields. You feel the unpleasant burning sensation of a teleporter beam beginning to get a lock on you.

Several hours later the beam stabilises and you're transported directly into the Interlocutor's teleportation chambers before being summarily frogmarched off to the brig. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

257

"I'm through pussyfooting around with you. Now it's time for ...dogfooting", you snarl awkwardly. Not all your hard-boiled lines can be winners. "Now you're going to tell me where the Pole's gone, or I'll maul you like a porterhouse steak on payday."

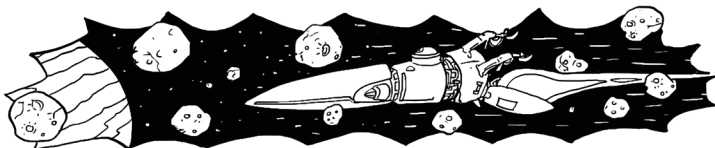
Harry's eyes widen and he shoots his hands up in the air, as if surrendering. You notice his fingers twitch, and you suddenly hear movement behind you and the telltale whine of an energy weapon charging up - he's thrown a high sign to the bartender! You throw yourself down as quickly as your reflexes will allow. Take an ability test:

DODGE : DIFFICULTY 10

You only have one chance at this test.

If you succeed, turn to [251](#).

If you fail, you don't even hear the shot that gets you. On the bright side, you're not the one who has to mop your gristle from the floors, walls and tables. Your adventure ends here, but a bartender's work is never done.



258

While you're messing around with the autodoc and the vending machine, Bones cases the joint for anything that might be of use to him. He pockets a pack of sticking plasters, some of which he immediately applies before grinning at you (you think) and giving you a thumbs up. You're not sure if he's got some microfractures you can't see or if he's just decorating himself. Remove all injuries from Bones (if any) and add the Sticking Plasters item to your inventory. Turn back to the page from which you came.

259

Ignoring the Ratte King's lack of hospitality you fly in for a face-to-face discussion. The Ten-Foot Pole came to the system aboard this excuse for a ship, so they must know something. You're half-expecting the rodent-like Rattes to mount some kind of defence as you approach the hangar and dock up, but then again your scans don't detect any functioning weapons systems. You open an airlock into the ship and are met by a couple of unimpressively-attired Ratte guards who take you straight to what they call "the Bridge" but is in reality just a dais set in a large, slum-lined chamber in the Engineering section. Atop the dais is the revolting monster you spoke to over the communicator - the Ratte King. Just as repulsive in the flesh, the King is a heap of living Rattes, attired splendidly by rodent standards but with their twitching tails knotted and matted together. He doesn't seem all that pleased to see you but sighs, all of his mouths working together as one, and speaks, spraying you with spittle.

"Very nice to see you here", says the crime against nature with doubtful veracity, "but you've wasted the trip. As I've already told you, we don't know anything. Unless you've got something that could help us remember. Maybe."

You eye the Ratte King coldly. The filthy Ratte is holding out for a bribe, but a number of his faces look obviously scared of you to the point of flinching when you look at them.

If you have an item you can afford to part with and want to bribe the King to find out what he knows, turn to [379](#). If you'd rather just offer to rearrange his faces for him turn to [303](#).

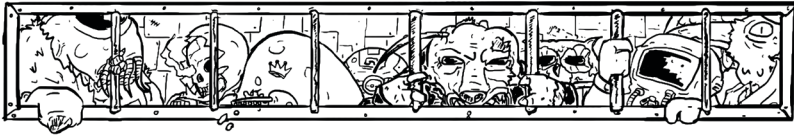
260

The weird old Squidge takes your payment and, tucking it under his bony carapace, gives it a bite to test its authenticity. Apparently satisfied he stashes the item.

"It's good to see at least one youngster still knows how to respect his elders. Right. The secret part of the tour is that, if you were to fly out to the 50 yard line you'd see the tubes leading into the Machine. The tubes are lined with harvesting equipment - they pulp and slice whatever comes in. But in my line of work I sometimes have to go out there and fix the pumps that suck the sealife into those tubes - sometimes they'll suck in something difficult to chew like a rock or a shuttle and and break down. These pump access tubes are located another 23 yards out past those tubes. In fact there's one I might have forgotten to close up right in front of the old girl. Now if you were to go to that mark you'd be able to bypass the harvesters and get right up inside the machine, right up to the crates. They're built wide - I bet you could even fit a small star ship in one of those tubes. Well, that's all I have for you. Good luck, shorty."

Gramps won't tell you anything else and doesn't appear to understand your questions in any case, answering only with "Eh?". In the end you thank him and give up. He's given you a bit to think about.

It's time to get a move on. Turn to [89](#).



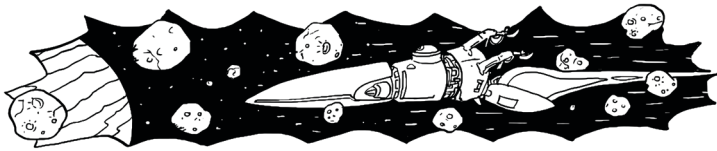
261

You track down the escape pod hosting the wanted criminals which the pod transponder identifies as the Bewlay Brothers. These hardened crooks have evaded justice for years but now there's no escape from the long forepaw of the law. The pod is drifting half a stellar unit away from the ruined station near a busted cargo container.

If you want to dispense flaming justice upon these creeps with the ship's ion cannon then turn to [374](#). If you'd rather bring them in alive then turn to [241](#).

There's no point struggling. You've annoyed these Scrodes and you have no doubt that they'll blast you if you annoy them again. Regardless of your piloting skill you're not getting away from a star ship's weapons lock - their quantum targeting computers seem to know what you're going to do before you do it, and the weapon itself is powerful enough to destroy planets even on its wide-beam setting.

All you can really do is watch and make notes as the Scrodes strip the remnants of the Spend-o-Max bare. You check your police bulletins: the Conglomerate flagship Interlocutor is on the way. You only hope it arrives before the Scrodes finish with the station and turn their attention to you. Turn to [108](#).



Once you're back aboard your space ship you open up the hatch of the prisoner transport module. The two engineers you picked up at the station are sitting in one of the cramped cells - really just a bench hemmed in tight by bare steel bulkheads and a low ceiling - waiting for you to return and make good on your agreement. You unlock the cell and squeeze in.

"Thanks for waiting. I'm arresting you for trespassing, obstruction of justice and", you look at the one who's wearing your grandfather's watch, "theft of police property, unless you give that watch back right now."

The aliens recoil in shock. "But we have a deal, in writing!". They're too appalled by your treachery and too hemmed in by the cell to resist your cuffing them again. You pat down the tall one and relieve him of the watch. Finding the signed guarantee tucked into his shirt, you take that as well.

"This thing? You guys watch too many cop shows", you say, tearing up the note. "I'll have your citation printed out for you in due course. Enjoy your stay".

You return to the command console and start painstakingly typing up your reports for the day. Police work for the Glom is one percent inspiration, nine percent perspiration, and about ninety percent grinding through massive stacks of paperwork. The Space Exploration Pole might be using the time to get away, but if he is he's not covering his trail. It'll be careful, thorough police work that catches him, not a wild chase. You work through the night, resolving to continue your dogged pursuit on the planet's surface tomorrow. Add 2 collars, and advance the Stellar Date by 1. As soon as you wake up you set course for Barbet: turn to [373](#).

264

After you've signed a guarantee and given the tall one your watch, the goons are lot more forthcoming. They're local thugs working for the Erinaceans, a species of starfaring aliens who look like balding hedgehogs and who run most of the illegal gambling across the sector. They've been hired to come up here and prepare the room for two teams of big spenders: a couple of alien high-rollers and a pair of Volan dignitaries! Your ears prick up involuntarily at the mention of the Volans and you only just restrain yourself from slobbering in excitement. Catching a couple of those beaky scumbags in a gambling sting would taste better than a rib-eye steak. The crooks continue - they're supposed to remain on hand to make sure the generator doesn't break down, keep an eye out for the cops, and of course collect the Erinaceans' cut of any money that changes hands. The party is due to start in twelve hours or so.

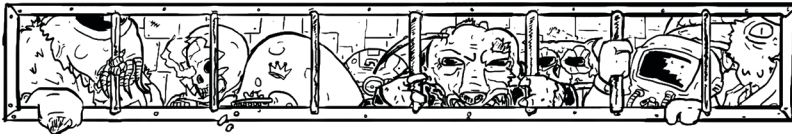
This gives you an idea. You doubt anyone with the kind of cash needed to play Space Whist at this level are going to know these anonymous thugs personally, and in any case their cheap, one-size-fits-most space suits conceal most of their features. You and your partner are going to take their place. You uncuff the aliens and let them get back to work. Once the life support generator is online and providing light, oxygen and a localised gravitational field you escort them back to the squad ship, relieve them of their space suits and lock them in the prisoner transport module for their comfort and safety. Finally you and your partner squeeze into their suits, return to the Space Whist room and use your wrist computer to remotely manoeuvre the squad ship around to the other side of Barbet where it'll be out of sight of any prospective gamblers.

With the trap set and several hours to go, you sit down, kick back and try to get a bit of rest. Advance the Stellar Date by one day and turn to [319](#).

The access tube goes straight up for a long way. After climbing for at least half an hour, following a series of messily-painted arrows, you come to a landing leading to an undamaged but open airlock. You clamber through and onto the surface of the ship.

Towering high above you is what remains of the ship's sensor array, now little more than a tangle of cables and smashed electronics atop a massive post. This must be the "Nest". Perched atop this mess you can make out some odd figures - about a dozen squat, round avians wearing leather space suits. They turn their heads to regard you through the black goggles of their helmets.

These aliens don't respond to your gestures and aren't coming down. If you want to communicate the only way would be to climb up to talk to them. Turn to [21](#) to try this. Otherwise you leave these creatures alone and climb down into the ship, retracing your steps. Assuming you haven't done so already, if you want to head to the "SANDBOX" then turn to [276](#). If you'd rather continue down to the "DAM" then turn to [65](#). If you've seen enough of this strange hulk then return to your ship and turn to [48](#).



You find yourself face-to-face with the Scrodelord at last. More accurately you're about face-to-gut, since the gigantic being towers over you. He leans forward and regards you with his grapefruit-sized purple eye.

"A deal's a deal so we'll be on our way", he shrieks, surprisingly cheerfully. Perhaps his good mood stems from the wads of currency he's managed to cram into every available receptacle on his outfit, probably the proceeds from running the gambling action. "Your 'boss' said you had the navigational data for the jump they've requested".

If you have the coordinates for the location to which you are heading, add them all together and subtract them from this paragraph number. If the paragraph makes sense then continue from there, otherwise read on.

You tell him you don't have the exact coordinates.

"Sorry to hear it. Well, we can't stick around. Got a hot tip about another wreck somewhere else", shouts the Scrodelord, "I don't want to leave a good deed unpunished so take this back to your 'boss' for their cut", he yells, stuffing a thick roll of alien currency into your suit collar. Add an Alien Currency to your inventory. "Until next time, Leo," chuckles Crunt as he turns and waddles away.

With nothing to gain by sticking around you climb aboard your ship and take off from the Macerator. The pirate ship is already moving away from the station, its jump drives spinning up as it turns to face the Void from whence it came. Turn to [142](#).



267

"This has been a long time coming, Crunt", you bark, "I'm placing you and your entire crew under arrest for aggravated piracy. Power down the Macerator and prepare it for impounding...."

At this point Crunt begins to laugh hysterically, a shrill piercing noise that drags on for over a minute before he calms down.

"Sure, we'll be right over to turn ourselves in", he chortles, "Right after we're done with the station. Stay right there! Don't move". Scrode kills the connection. He sounded a lot more serious at the end (the translator was flashing "SERIOUS" in red letters). You wonder what that was about for a few seconds until suddenly your cockpit lights up in red : your sensors detect a weapons lock! The Macerator has its powerful main gun pointed right at your little squad ship! After a few seconds you realise it hasn't obliterated you yet. You stop preemptively kissing your tail goodbye and try to figure a way out of this mess.

If you want to try evasive manoeuvres to break the weapons lock then turn to [164](#). If you don't rate your chances and just want to stay put turn to [262](#).

268

Krobb places his right arm on the table, you do likewise, and he clasps your paw and much of the rest of the limb in his monstrous claw. While Krobb stares at you menacingly with his eyepod Crunt gives a dull speech about the proud and hallowed traditions of the Scrodes. Once that's over, you feel Krobb's arm tense up and you realise the Ujian Kekuatan has begun!

TEST OF STRENGTH: DIFFICULTY 16

If you prevail, turn to [64](#).

If you wish to admit defeat, then turn to [283](#).

269

You pick up the receiver and hail the strange ship. It even replies - a loud flat tone that your translator fails to make sense of. Suddenly your sensors pick up an energy surge coming from the ship's weapons array - it's charging up a shot! You immediately begin evasive manoeuvres, although it's not looking good - large star ships usually have rows of supercomputers dedicated to aiming their doomsday weapons and can, as you've just seen, fire in a wide beam pattern. As you bank sharply the mountainous vessel fires at you, a wide green cone of energy blasting through space right in the direction of the Soyuz-30!

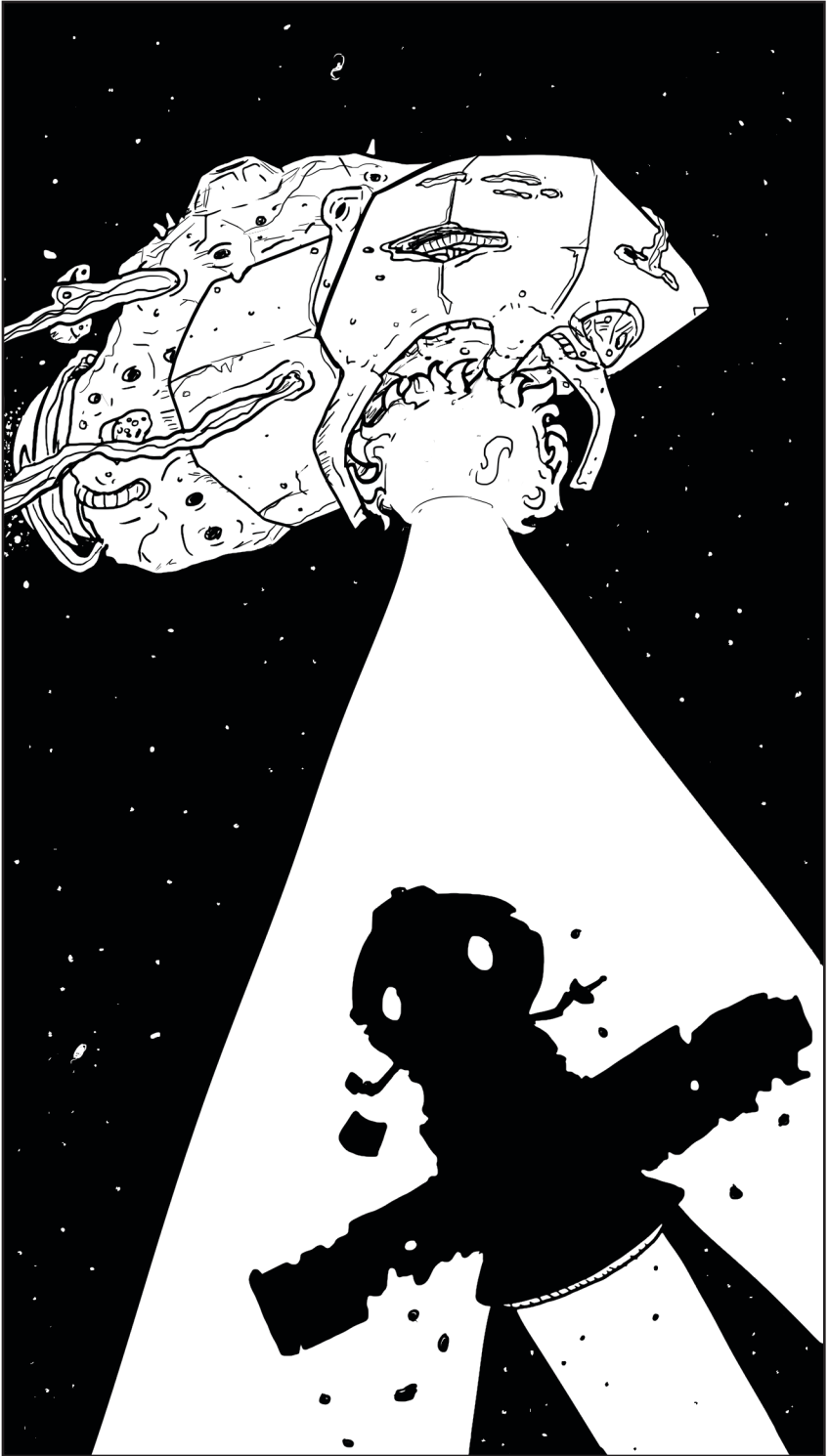
EVASIVE MANOEUVRE: DIFFICULTY 12



If you fail your little ship is caught within the beam and dissolved down to supercharged subatomic particles. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

Otherwise you manage to dodge out of the way of the beam - the star ships sensors must have been damaged during the fighting otherwise you doubt this would be possible. You still sustain one Heavy Hit as the beam passes uncomfortably close, shaking the Soyuz-30 until the rivets start to pop. Resolve the effects of this damage. As you're making urgent repairs the strange and hostile ship jumps out of the system on an unknown heading.

If you survive then turn to [225](#).



270

"Trespassing. Obstruction. Littering. You two are in a whole lot of trouble", you snarl at the cuffed aliens, "A tonne of Megasterling, half a cycle at Jolia Maximum Security, permanent exile from the Glom. Minimum.". The two aliens don't seem terribly impressed. You try a different tack. "Look, I'm on your side. I want to get out of here as much as you do. Help me out and we can settle it here and now. If I have to take you back to the station we'll be there all week.", you whine. This has even less effect. You growl, snarl and gnash your teeth inside your helmet, "You punks make me sick. I oughtta just flush you out the airlock and be done with you". Just more stony silence. Do these guys even speak Glargot? This is going to be harder than you thought.

PERSUASION : DIFFICULTY - 13

If you give up, you can just book the creeps and lock them up in the squad ship. Add two Collars and turn to [275](#). If you arrest them you can also take the life support generator as evidence - add this to your inventory. If you get through to them turn to [53](#).

271

Since you don't quite trust these aliens, you decide against taking them up on their offer. As refusal often offends and offending heavily-armed alien star ships accompanied by a fleet of attack vessels often ends badly, you turn and put as much distance between yourself and the approaching aliens as possible. You guess that the star ship noticed your unseemly haste to depart and figured you weren't going to help, because two of the small ships peel off from the cloud heading towards the station and fly right at you, weapons blazing! You roll your ship out of the way just in time and activate your combat systems. As you scramble to shake your attackers you receive a short broadcast from one of the attacking ships which translates simply to "Surrender".

ALIEN FIGHTER:

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 3(0) - HULL 6

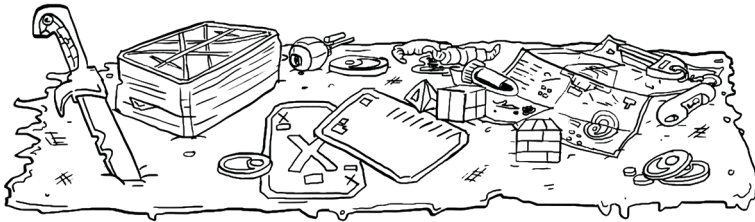
ALIEN INTERCEPTOR:

MANOEUVRE 6(1) - WEAPONS 5(1) - SHIELDS 2(0) - HULL 5

These ships are equipped with military-grade maser weapons which are somewhat more dangerous than civilian models. These weapons will deliver Heavy Hits on a roll of 5 or 6 instead of a 6.



If you overcome these fierce opponents, turn to [314](#). If you know when you're beat and want to broadcast your surrender then turn to [135](#). If you've destroyed one of their ships though you'll need to fight on to the end, they won't accept your surrender!



272

Orma is the only sensible choice. Nezval's just too big to search properly and, by the looks of things, too dangerous to hang around on. If the Pole's gone down there you'll just have to nab him when he comes up. Still, if you were him you'd go to Orma too - the locals here might have some means of arranging passage out of the system. With this reasoning in mind you fly down towards the planet, nimbly piloting under a container launching up from the moon's space elevator, and approach Orma's only settlement.

After a bumpy descent through the water moon's slightly turbulent atmosphere you come in to land. Orma's town is built on the only surface land on the moon - a small, craggy island dominated by the monolithic Fishtein plant. The town is crowded around this largely automated device which provides the people of the town with a living by endlessly harvesting the sea life of this moon, containerising it and sending it spacewards for pickup by whichever alien species has the currency to pay for it. You might find time to visit the plant later but for now you're only interested in the Pole's whereabouts. A fly-by of the island reveals no sign of the Soyuz-30. If he's here at all he's already hidden the ship out of sight from the air.

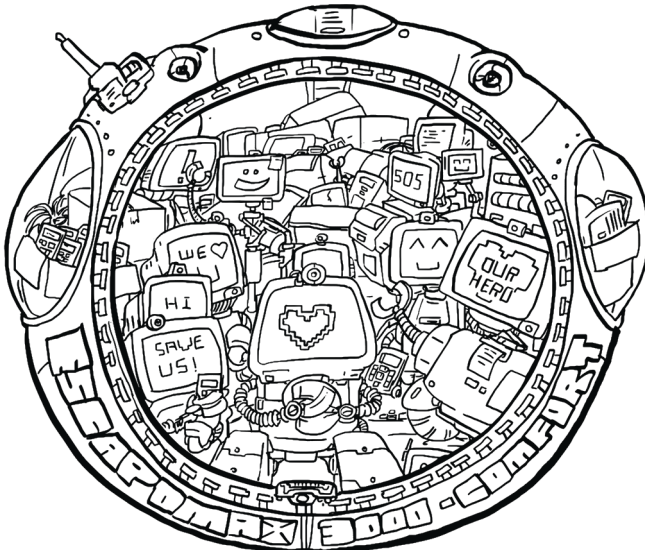
You touch down in the town's central parking zone between a couple of recreational shuttles. It's actually pretty busy here - unlike most other parts of Route 66³ business is still good. It's only a short walk from here to the busy town centre, and the island itself isn't all that large so there aren't all that many places for your quarry to hide..

Turn to [309](#).

This latest in a long line of brave but otherwise questionable decisions turns out to be a bridge too far. Clambering over the corpses filling the corridor you shamble into a t-junction and right into the middle of a vicious firefight between a platoon of Cattes, Ots and Owles on one side and a horde of Rattebellion rodents on the other. The entrance to the weapons array is on the other side of the junction, which is currently filled with ricocheting disruptor beams, autocannon fire and various kinds of death rays. You foolishly make a dash for it but are splashed by a microwave grenade burst as soon as you leave cover. Half-cooked, partially blinded and in serious pain you stumble backwards into the corridor from whence you came.

Take 1 injury. If you survive your eyesight will take a while to recover - you have lost 1 additional current and maximum EXPERTISE for the duration of this adventure. If your co-pilot is with you they also suffer one injury.

Clutching your head you stagger away from the fighting until the sound of battle recedes to a dull roar behind you. You may now (assuming you haven't done so already) visit the bridge by turning to [160](#) or head over to the engineering section by turning to [188](#). If you've had enough of this ship and its violent menagerie you could depart by returning to the Soyuz-30 and casting off into space in hopes of finding another way out of the system - turn to [214](#).



274

If Horizon-8 is no longer your co-pilot then turn back immediately to the page from which you came - the robot must be functioning to trigger off his diabolical trap. Otherwise read on:

As soon as the police ship starts blaring its obnoxious message over the speakers, Horizon-8 starts vibrating and emitting a series of beeps. A few seconds later you hear all kinds of hell breaking loose over the sound system - metal doors clanging open, shouting and swearing in a dozen alien languages, a dog barking, shots being fired and the sounds of an almighty brawl breaking out aboard the cop's ship. The little droid must have released the prisoners riding in the back of that thing as promised. The police ship, still broadcasting the sounds of bonecrunching violence suddenly turns nose down and plunges back into the moon's atmosphere.

You watch through the periscope as the ship goes down hard, crashing into the ocean on the dark side of the moon. It goes under the waves and it's thirty seconds before the ship bobs back to the surface. The broadcast stops - the force of the water landing must have shorn off the communications array. The sea around the ship boils and glows as reactor fuel floods out of ruptured drives. Even if that cop manages to coop up those prisoners again, he's hundreds of miles out to sea and his ship is little more than a flotation device. That Glomcop going to be much of a problem for you anymore.

You observe your handiwork for a while, keeping an eye on the deep space scanners for your next ride. A few hours later a jump ship arrives in system to pick up some Fishtein containers. As luck would have it they're going your way after they collect their cargo. For a reasonable fee you arrange to dock up the Soyuz-30 and in no time at all you're way to the final destination in this long and strange voyage, the Kitalpha system!

As you're entering the jump you remember the cop, lost at sea. If you want to quickly broadcast out his coordinates so he can be rescued, turn to [207](#). If you're happy to leave him to his fate then turn to [320](#).



275

With the trespassing report actioned, you now sit down at your work console to type out the report and fill in the numerous forms that make up most of the work of policing in the Conglomerate. This tedious form filling is essential if you don't want your arrests to slip through your paws. Also you have to cover your tail - fail to dot even one i or cross one t and the Chief will come down on you like a tonne of bricks. You just wish you could type faster than 15 words per minute.

Advance the Stellar Date by 1. By the time you have concluded your report and sent it off to the Chief you receive an all-clear on the riot in Barbet City - it must have petered out over night. The Volan star ship has moved some distance from the space station and is spinning up its engines to make a jump out of the system, although that's a process that can take a while.

If you haven't already tried to hail the Volan star ship and would like to do so now, turn to [233](#) to open a hailing frequency to the Star Kettle. Otherwise you decide to see if you can pick up the Pole's trail in Barbet City. Turn to [373](#).

276

You proceed on to the "Sandbox", following the main corridor as it winds towards the front of the ship. After following the passage for some time you finally reach your destination - a heavy metal door with the word "SANDBOX" scrawled on it in alien letters. Unfortunately your approach must have been detected because as you approach, the door slides open and out step two creatures of a type you've never seen before. They're wearing leather space suits but through the wide visors of their helmets you can make out the soft grey of their fur, pointed ears, large blue, slitted eyes and glistening little black noses. They look identical to one another. You don't know why but your hackles immediately go up and you start barking uncontrollably. The two aliens hiss and step back against the door before leveling their nasty-looking disruptor rifles at you.

"Mrat", says one of the creatures in an unpleasant, croaking tone. "Mrat", agrees the other. Before your translator can come to grips with this they open fire!



277-278

THE FEARED SIAMESE TWINCATTES
CHANG MÆW : EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2
ENG MÆW : EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2



More than anything in the world you just want to chase these furballs up a tree. Your police training is holding you back, but at any time if you just want to cut loose and follow your instincts then turn to [127](#) if both of your adversaries are still alive or turn to [105](#) if one of them has been defeated. If you're outgunned and you know it, turn to [371](#) to stage a fighting retreat.

If you manage to defeat Chang and Eng then turn to [333](#).

277

You walk straight towards the container's main entrance, rudely brushing past the chief. The pudgy primitive that just piped up rushes after you and trots alongside you with a strange eight-legged gait.

"Well done, traveller! You solved the riddle of the Ishtei...you did solve it, didn't you? You're not just being rude?" she bumbles. Seeing that you're steadfastly heading for the container access hatch she continues, "Either way, I should introduce myself. I'm the real chief and I'd be more than happy to show you around. Those old puzzles don't mean a lot to us any more. We have to do them still but it's mostly a formality. We're quite advanced socially, you know..."

Another minute's fast walk through the village and you're in front of the blue container, the chief at your side.

Turn to [353](#).

278

You don't want whoever's messing around in the station to know you're coming, so you kill your lights and slowly manoeuvre around the station to the top near the radio beacon. You were planning on using your docking gear to melt your way in as quietly as possible but it seems some considerate soul has already cut a docking port up here for you. You dock with the makeshift port, jam on a helmet and oxygen tank, crawl through the tunnel made by the extended docking assembly and step into the space station. Following your handheld motion sensor, you wind through a series of dark

steel-walled corridors for a few minutes until you turn a corner and come face-to-faceplate with a huge four-armed insectoid clad in a checked shirt, standing in front of a metal door which separates you from the trespassers. At eight feet tall and just as wide, coated with half-inch thick black chitin and with a set of acid-drooling, razor-sharp mandibles, it's a very unwelcome sight. It emits something between a roar and a screech, spraying flecks of stinging acid all over you as it lumbers about to face you and your co-pilot.

HUGE INSECTOID: EXPERTISE 8 - HEALTH 4 - FISTS 1



If you defeat this monstrous opponent turn to [62](#). If you are defeated or you want to throw in the towel at any time turn to [299](#).

279

You pull into the cavernous hangar of the ruined Rattetail. There's no atmosphere in here - the bay shields are down - so you just dock up against a convenient airlock and step out into the cramped corridors of the hulk. You are met by a couple of greasy little Ratte soldiers, unimpressively attired in patched-up engineering boiler suits and carrying plasma cutters with the safeties broken off.

"I'm here to take you to the Ratte King. Have you got the bribe?" squeaks one of the guards.

If you have an item you can bear to part with, you can pay the requisite fee by turning to [85](#). If you'd prefer not to violate your police code of conduct by bribing space rats then turn to [370](#).





280

There are a few nice bars in the Orma settlement, but the Pickled Herring isn't one of them. It is, however, the place to go if you want to talk to the kind of seedy individual who might be able to smuggle you offworld. Unfortunately it's also packed with snitches, informants and numerous varieties of squealer who wouldn't hold up under a police shakedown. As you stride though the saloon autodoors all chatter in the busy bar stops briefly before resuming just as raucously as before. Your presence here has definitely been noted. Add 1 to your TRAIL.

As usual in these kinds of places along Route 66³ there's a gang of assorted slimebags gathered around a space whist table, spending their time alternating between gambling and planning their next crime. They're exactly the sort of beings who might know a way off-world. Aside from these characters the bar is crammed with of a motley collection of dangerous-looking aliens and some of the more adventurous Squidge locals, but your attention is drawn by a gaggle of young Squidge women and their friends making a ruckus near the bar. You haven't spent any time with the ladies since you left Jolia and you're worried you might be getting rusty. There's no bartender on duty - drinks are being dispensed by an autotender, basically a collection of spigots and tubes with a coin slot. You'll get no friendly banter out of this barkeep but at least it's one less witness for the cop to question.

If you'd like to try your luck with the scumbags at the Space Whist table then turn to [255](#). If you'd rather try that luck with the ladies then turn to [76](#).



281

You put your hands up and surrender to the guard. The vegetoid, pleased with his security prowess, hops back on his scooter and directs you to follow him across the concourse. After hours of slogging along behind him you arrive at the security office - an austere little workshack consisting of a cheap wooden desk which sags under the weight of papers stacked on top of it, a couple of metal stools on one side and a large tray of dirt on the other. You sit down on a stool while the gruff mall cop shuts the door and seats himself in the tray, groaning in relief as he sinks his roots into the loam.

"Right", he says in an earthy Glargot, "Trespassing is punishable with a one tonne Megasterling fine which... oh, quitting time!" he says, gazing at an old digital clock set above the door. "You'll just have to wait here until my replacement comes in after the weekend. I hope he remembers to water me this time."

You hear the clang of a heavy security barrier dropping behind you and the lights go out in this little office. The guard, sleeping soundly as a cucumber, is no longer responsive. You spend a while looking for a way out, but there are no ventilation shafts and try as you might you can't find a way to get the barrier open. It's probably locked on a timer. You consider trying to cut through it with your suit's plasma torch but even if you have the energy supply cutting through the megasteel will take you all weekend. You guess there's nothing to do but wait it out. Turn to [186](#).

282

You clamber back aboard your trusty Soyuz-30 and slam the airlock door shut behind you. Great: some of the pink dust followed you in. It's going to be murder getting it out of the instruments. Buckling in, you power up the ship and run through the ignition process. A couple of minutes later, you jolt through Barbet's atmosphere and back out into space.

With your business on the planet concluded, you settle in for a long wait. It could be a little while until something comes along.

Check the Stellar Date - if it's still 2047.275, turn to [318](#). If it's 276, turn to [348](#). If it's 277, turn to [382](#). Otherwise turn to [338](#).

283

You know when you're beat. After putting up a bit of effort for show you cave in and let Krobb slam your paw into the table. You try to look surprised that you lost.

While Krobb is roaring in victory and soaking up the adulation of the crowd, a laughing Scrunt comes over to you.

"You could have tried a bit harder. Oh well, no use crying over spilt milk. We're taking everything, as per our deal. Now get out and don't bother us again or we'll be taking your ship and, I suppose, killing you."

With this a number of Scrode pirates board your ship and take everything that isn't bolted down and several things that are. Remove all items, including ship upgrades, from your inventory.

After this embarrassing fiasco the last thing you want is to ever speak to another Scrode again. The arrangement suits you well enough, aside from the loss of all your worldly possessions. Somewhat lighter in the keel, you take off from the Macerator and put some distance between your ship and the pirates. There's nothing to do now but wait around for another ship to arrive. Turn to [108](#).

284

Operation Bloody Give Back involves a terrifying frontal assault on the Rattebellion's fortified positions around the engineering section. A group of the surviving Catte Hunters (the elite shock unit of the Catte Empire made up of giant wildcattes) will overwhelm the Ratte defences for long enough for the main force to get through and mop up the resistance. Given the martial prowess of the Cattes and the relative weakness of the inferior Rattes it should be a cakewalk.

You indicate that you're in favour of this plan. Unfortunately the only surviving Hunters that report for duty are Major Tom himself, two identical Siamese Cattes and a mangy-looking, snaggletoothed stray. You don't think these guys would stand a chance against the Ratte Pack you encountered earlier, let alone a whole ship full of the things. You look at Major Tom and shrug. This isn't going to work.

Refer to your Caterwaul Operation Codes and pick another course of action. If nothing appeals then turn to [4](#) to throw in the towel.

The engineering section of the ship is a putrid hell in which thousands of Rattes live and work crammed whisker-to-whisker. Following your escort as he forces his way through a crowd of the diminutive creatures you are led into a huge chamber lined with ramshackle dwellings for hundreds of rodent families. In the middle of this crowded room is a raised dais, atop of which sprawls a heap of living Rattes, attired splendidly by the revolting Ratte standards but with their tails knotted hopelessly together. This must be the Ratte King.

"I am the Ratte King", confirms the pile of Rattes, screeching in unison, "and I wish to propose a deal". You indicate that you are listening and the Ratte King continues, all of its mouths working at once, "You are the famous Space Exploration Pole, captain of the mighty Soyuz-30. Yes, we get Space Exploration Quarterly", says the pile, reacting to your look of disbelief by producing from somewhere within itself the latest issue of the magazine and waving it about. "The Rattes are the engineers of this ship. For too long we have suffered the oppression of the predator species, and the attack of the Threshers weakened our foes enough for us to spring our Rattevolution. Now the ship is almost ours."

Your attention is beginning to waver. The Ratte King, undaunted, gradually arrives at the point.

"We have control of the engines and the jump drives, but without the navigational computer or sensors we have no means to locate a safe location to jump to where we can refit and make repairs. If you were to return to the bridge, defeat the senior officers and their elite bodyguards in combat, hack into the navigational computer and bring back the navigational sensor logs and cartographic holograms, we could jump from here to the nearest safe, inhabited system of your choosing..."

While he's talking you punch a couple of commands into your wrist computer and, unlatching it, chuck it over to the Ratte King. One of his constituent Rattes catches it and peers at the screen. It's displaying your stellar cartography program with the nearby system "SHAM" highlighted. It's the next stop on the way to Kitalpha and home to a relatively civilised species. Certainly more civilised than Matar, in any case.

"Or, I could use this. I guess that's easier. Very well. We'll hook this up to the engines and we'll be ready to leave in about a day. In the meantime you are free to stay among the Rattes as our guest."

While you'd rather not spend days trapped in this hulk with a bunch of rodents, a jump is a jump is a jump. Holding your nose you accept the King's kind offer. Turn to [325](#).



286

You wander over to the table. The Erinaceans, realising you haven't been intimidated by their hard stares, start to stash their cards under the table and pocket the wagers. You wonder what illegally high stakes they were playing for.

Shoving your way to the table, before you can say anything one of the Erinacean toughs greets you.

"Fuck off, dog. We don't talk to cops", he sneers. You restrain the urge to bite his snout off, just. You have more pressing concerns right now and in any case these guys have the air of beings that can handle themselves in a fight. More trouble than it's worth. You calm down a little.

"I'm looking for someone. A humanoid. Tall, white spacesuit. Talks gibberish".

The Erinaceans look at each other hurriedly.

"Oh, that cheating bastard. Yeah, we know him. He stole a lot of money from us, him and that bag of bones he's travelling with", one of the gang says, suddenly very loquacious, "Dunno where he went but he seemed to be asking a lot of questions about space. Well, not sure those were what those questions were. But he kept pointing up so it was either that or the ceiling".

You query the Erinaceans a little more - they're keen to tell you everything they know about the Pole but are very tight lipped on any other topic. Still, the info they give you should come in very handy - add 2 TRAIL.

You tell them to keep their noses clean and excuse yourself. Add 1 TIME.

If you've still got some time on your paws then turn to [330](#) to pick your next destination.

287

Your hull, already perforated and flooding with seawater from the horrible pounding it has received, is already beginning to drag your squad ship down when an expertly aimed salvo from the Soyuz-30's maser gun tears right through your reactor block. As water rushes in and the fusion drive locks up all of your major systems fail simultaneously. The squad ship, reduced to little more than an anchor, begins its slow descent to the ocean floor with you stuck along for the ride.

288

The sensor probe who has been your somewhat disconcerting companion throughout this voyage suddenly starts beeping and rocking from side to side on its tripod legs. You ask Horizon-8 what's the matter.

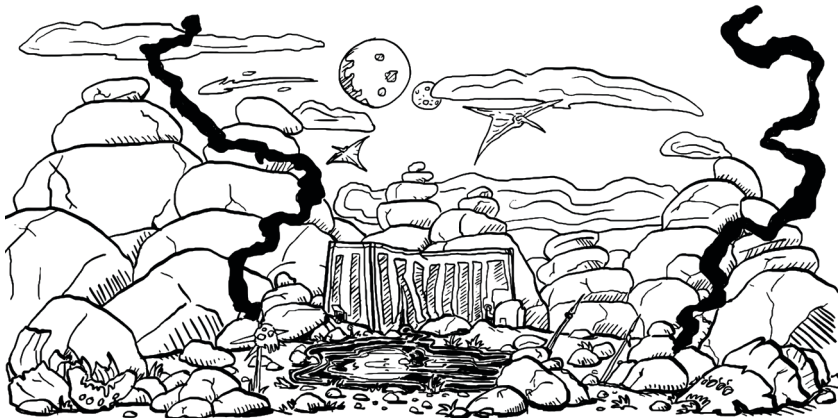
"HATE has detected an anomaly in the sensor readings. That last container on the left is non-standard. It has a metal content and power output in surplus of expected specifications. These measurements are consistent with the displacement, composition and energy signature of the Soyuz-30."

You look at the droid in disbelief. You knew its instruments were sensitive, but not to this degree. Checking the sensor readings you confirm that the robot is indeed correct - there's a minor discrepancy there that you never would have noticed on your own. Horizon-8 regards you with its unblinking, baleful red eye.

"HATE has upgraded HATE's firmware. HATE will detect all sentients when HATE returns home. There will be nowhere to hide from HATE."

Zeta has overheard all this and turned white as a sheet. Sweat runs in gross little rivulets down his bulbous face "I.... I had no idea! Of course he's all yours! We will collect the rest of our cargo and be on our way! Zeta out!"

While you're a bit concerned about your probe's plans for the future you have a job to do before you can worry about any of that. The Discoverer turns away and leaves you free to go after the crate containing your quarry. Turn to [218](#).



289

Your final salvo fatally compromises the structural integrity of the old squad ship. Its frame buckles and collapses, the fuel tank ruptures and the engines flare out, tearing the police vessel apart in a terrible explosion. There are no survivors. Fortunately you don't need to worry much about evidence as Ratte salvage teams arrive with unseemly haste. The plucky little rodents, working with little more than pipe wrenches, disposable plastic space suits and fire extinguishers for thrusters, strip the wreckage bare in hours, leaving nothing but a ruined frame which you tow into an asteroid belt and leave parked behind a large space rock.

You have nothing to do now but wait for a lift. Ordinarily you'd spend some time on the moon but the space battle might have been observed from the surface. You'd prefer to lurk out of sight until a jump ship comes along, keeping your eyes glued to your sensors and periscope lest Glomcop reinforcements arrive. Fortunately the next jump ship to arrive isn't a Glom ship and is amenable to a hefty bribe in return for a lift. You pay an extortionate fee for transport to Kitalpha, dock on and wait a few hours for the star ship to take on its consignment of Fishtein containers. The vessel begins its jump shortly afterwards and you are once again on the way - this time to your final destination on Route 66³, the Kitalpha sector. Turn to [320](#).

290

You're about to put the cat out of its misery when you notice something strange - inside its gaping mouth you see a pair of shining dark eyes. Now you think about it, that cat squeaked a lot during the fight and you don't recall ever encountering a squeaking cat, domestic, giant or otherwise. Intrigued, you lean over your fallen opponent and wrench open its mouth - and inside you find a giant rat! It's wearing the cat like some kind of grisly space suit. It squeaks feverishly, stretching its paws out before it in supplication. Your translator quickly figures out what it wants.

"Please let me live! I... I can help you! They.. made me come! I didn't want to fight!" it snivels.

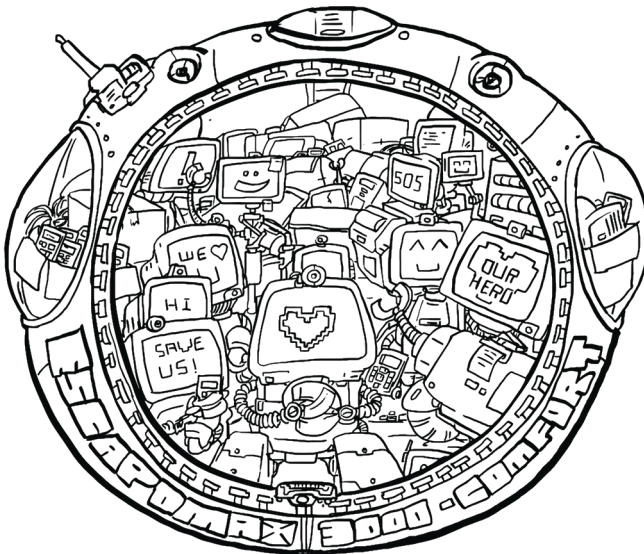
If you want to spare this creature, then turn to [45](#). If you've got more pressing concerns than whatever's going on here then you finish the rat off and get to work on the repairs. Turn to [332](#).

291

You head for the escape pod packed full of women and children. The Chief will have to pin a medal on you for rescuing a ship full of innocents, and also it's your job to do that kind of thing as well, you suppose. Thoughts like these keep you on the trail of the escape pod, painstakingly following its weak and distant signal through a dense radiation cloud until you eventually find the thing floating a huge distance away from the station amid the rubble of the Spend-o-Max's office block.

You carefully avoid the debris and dock up, only to find there's no one aboard - the pod is crammed full of calculators, obsolete adding machines and half a dozen automated accountancy terminals. As you enter the terminals pivot their monitors to face you, with the words "OUR HERO" printed in bright orange text on their display screens.

Oh well, so much for your medal. If Horizon-8 is with you turn to [149](#). Otherwise you step back onto your ship, release the docking clamps, and blast the escape pod to stop it from attracting any more ships with its misleading distress beacon. Subtract 5 POWER and turn to [248](#).



292

You walk along the main strip to the refuelling depot. It's a big, mostly-empty joint, probably once a trading goods exchange back when people came through here with anything much to exchange. Now everything's crammed up together in a single corner and the rest of the place has been given over to dust and silica spiders. There are a few haphazard stacks of standard sized fuel canisters against the wall - you can see bilineum, trilineum and quadrilineum, as well as a few less common types of star ship fuel. You figure you could make room aboard your ship for one of the fuel canisters if you had to. Also of marginal interest is a rack of ancient magazines from around the sector and - even less compelling - some ancestral, wrinkled meat tubes rotating in a display warmer as they probably have done for many generations now. A couple of tired-looking alien space jockeys, still in their flight suits, are meandering around the store, checking out the fuel prices and thumbing through the magazines while they wait for their ships to be serviced up in orbit.

A large, black-shelled insectoid clerk stands ready to take your order - you can, if you wish, trade any one item in your inventory for a Fuel Canister item. With your fuel needs met, you could ask the assembled pilots about the possibility of giving you a ride by turning to [102](#). If you don't like your chances, you could take the opportunity to have a browse through the magazine rack's offerings (turn to [396](#)). Otherwise there's nothing further to do here and you step out through the depot doors back into the main street. If you haven't already you can check out the bar - turn to [336](#) - or explore the outskirts of this crumbling settlement by turning to [86](#). If you're done with this place, then turn to [282](#) to return to the Soyuz-30 and prepare to blast off from this faded backwater planet.

293

The jump to Terebellum takes three Stellar Days (advance the date appropriately) during which time you re-read a couple of old Earth science fiction stories and practice your Space Whist. Eventually the Star Kettle decelerates and judders to a halt, emerging bumpily into space in the Terebellum quadrilateral.

Terebellum is the mid-point between four stars and home to the massive Terebellum Spend-o-Max station, the largest shopping mall in the known galaxy. Or rather it was - as you gaze through your periscope you see

nothing but ruin. The station is in ruins - a crumpled hulk rotating slowly at the middle of a slowly expanding debris field. Nearby is another wreck - what looks like the decapitated prow of an alien vessel, tumbling slowly end over end. Your communications panel receiver rings again - it's Pt'om.

"We... don't think this is a safe place to stop. Let's continue on to Kitalpha. Hopefully that will prove to be a safer place to leave you."

You're not going to argue with this. While you're curious about what might have happened here you'd prefer to get to Kitalpha quickly, and these birds are taking you the whole way themselves. In five days you'll be home free. An hour passes while the Volans recalibrate their jump drives and then you're away, flitting through the jump field in the direction of the Sham system. Turn to [247](#).

294

As soon as you wake up you switch on the police alerts channel for Matar. There are no new reports. The Volan Star Kettle is still in the system but seems ready to leave imminently - your sensors show that its jump drive is at full power.

If you want to contact the Star Kettle and beg for a jump out of the system turn to [317](#). If you haven't done so already and want to check out the station, turn to [194](#). Otherwise there's nothing to do but wait and hope a friendly star ship drops by: turn to [25](#).

295

You draw your sidearm and, aiming carefully, fire a few rounds into the fleeing monster. There's a sizzling sound and a long, drawn-out whining noise as the Trilobear gives up the ghost.

With this threat taken care of you're free to examine the crashed container. Unfortunately it's been here for too long - the autothruster's innards are rusted through and its power cells corroded. The huge cargo container must have crashed and spilled its contents decades ago. There's nothing worth salvaging here but while you're scrutinising the cargo pod you spy something strange - a partly-nibbled alien foot sticking out of a hole in the ground behind a rusted and vine-choked strut.

296-297

You exhume the being and examine it. It's a hedgehog-like Erinacean, probably dead for a couple of weeks based on the smell. It looks like he died trying to dig into the ground to escape from that monster you just slaughtered. Oddly the muddy tunnel you pulled him from seems to extend a long way into the earth. A long crawl down a filthy, semi-collapsed hole isn't on your to-do list though.

Searching his body you find that everything of value has been destroyed during its mud bath. You do find a broken and waterlogged little handheld electronic book, probably a diary of some kind. Its screen has burn-in from its last message and you can still make out, written in Glargot, part of a final entry:

"..that chief is a lying piece of shit".

You cram the rotten Erinacean back into the tunnel with your boot and scrape a bit of dirt over the top. The limited obligations you owe to this waterlogged rat paid, there's nothing left to do but head back to the ship. Turn to [307](#).

296

You don't have a lot more to say. You can't challenge an alien star ship, even one as crappy as the Discoverer, without something more than a hunch - they'd vaporise you and then the Glom would have to apologise for your conduct in some elaborate and humiliating arse-kissing ceremony. Still, you're too close to give up now...

If you want to ignore the Retick's demands and continue your scans, then turn to [5](#). If you'd prefer to do the legal and safe thing, you honour their request and continue your investigations elsewhere - turn to [240](#). Finally, if you have a stellar bug in your inventory you could attempt to surreptitiously plant it on the Discoverer to find out where it's heading to by turning to [397](#).

297

You decide to run a slightly more in-depth scan of your surroundings before you commit to any further action. Subtract 5 POWER (if you cannot spare this turn to [307](#) and choose another course of action).

Ascending back to just below the cloud layer with your sensors deployed you're able to get a good idea of this planet's deal outside of the immediate area. Nezval is almost totally barren. With very little surface water life is tough here for anything other than a few types of particularly hardy shrubs. However, the entire hemisphere is littered with Fishtein containers which have fallen into the planet's gravity and landed on the surface. Some of them ruptured, spilling their contents and creating oases of life from which you are getting huge numbers of life signs consistent with large trees and megafauna - this is the source of the jungle down below. Others came down intact and many of these are surrounded with signs of organised, intelligent life - probably the barbarians you seem to know about somehow. The blue and yellow containers are certainly Fishtein crates: the yellow one is abandoned while the blue one is surrounded by life signs, probably barbarians living in those orange rock piles outside.

You're about to do an in-depth analysis of the atmosphere, magnetosphere and other boring stuff that the nerds who read Space Exploration Quarterly usually eat up with a spoon when your proximity alarm goes off - something is coming at the Soyuz-30 rapidly! Looking through the viewscreen you see something horrific - a huge leathery, orange flap with a murderly sharp bone beak drops from the clouds and plunges towards the ship! You engage your thrusters and move aside at the last second but the creature nimbly comes around for another pass. You must defend yourself!

CLIFF BASTARD:

MANOEUVRE 7(1) - WEAPONS 4(1) - SHIELDS 0 - HULL 3



This evil bird packs a mean peck. Every hit you take from this bird tests to see if it's a Heavy Hit.

You can break away from the fight and take off into space at any time at the cost of 5 POWER.

To do this turn to [40](#). If you lose, turn to [82](#).

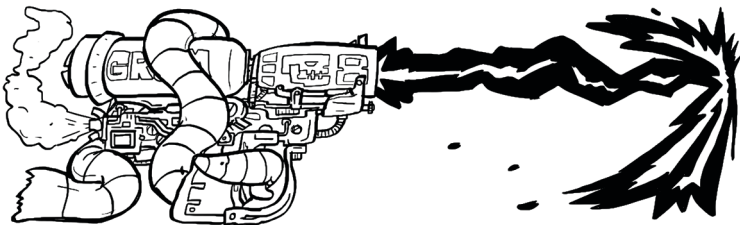
If you win the leathery nightmare crashes lifeless to the ground and you gaze into the clouds. Now that you know what you're looking for you see several drifting through the orange gloom. You realise that it wouldn't be safe to stick around here and cut your research short. Retract your sensors and turn to [307](#) to chose the next location.

You're not going to take this container into a dogfight with the law so you reverse the autothrusters to bring the ship back down. Unfortunately the strain is too much for the antiquated thruster coils and two of them burn out. The crate begins a rapid and barely-controlled descent back to the surface of the plant several thousand feet below.

Activating your sensors and doing your best to steer this unaerodynamic hunk of steel with only two thrusters, you manage to bring the crate in for a relatively soft landing in a shallow lake several hundred miles from where you started. The container is wrecked and most of the systems of the Soyuz-30 are completely fried, but you and everyone aboard manage to walk away from the rough landing.

As luck would have it you landed the Ishtei tribe only a couple hundred yards away another container, a white crate belonging to a people called the H'tein. They witness your landing and this, combined with your strange appearance as you stagger out of the wreck, induces them to believe that you are a sky god of some kind. With no way to repair your ship or get off this planet in a hurry you decide to just roll with it. The H'tein have a huge supply of the fish protein slurry in their container and are happy to share with the Ishtei, who are grateful to have found a new home.

One day you'll make it off this world and your scholarly account of your godhood among the Ishtei and H'tein tribescreatures will be required reading for xenothropology majors across the sector, but you never do find out what the hell that cop wanted. Some time later it gives up the pursuit - you watch it go through the periscope salvaged from the Soyuz-30 - but until you can scrape together the means to repair your ship there's not much you can do about it. For now though you're fine just enjoying your divine status and some peace and quiet for a change.





299

Seeing that you're no longer a threat, the insectoid ceases its attack immediately. A few seconds later your crummy pocket translator crackles into life, having just finished processing the insect's initial roars. "BOY AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. THEY'RE IN THERE. TWO OF THEM" it says in tinny Glargot. Now that you're over the shock of bumping into a gigantic insectoid on an abandoned space station, you notice that it's wearing a checked shirt, jeans and a space trucker hat with the words "Barbet City Fine Fuels" embroidered on the front panel above the bill. Now that your translator has started functioning it transpires that this being is the latest clerk from the fuel depot on Barbet. The radio transmitter set up on the station to advertise the local services went on the fritz a few hours ago so he came up to make some repairs. While searching for the source of the fault he spotted two intruders in the room behind the metal door and called the police. Then you arrived and attacked him for no reason.

You thank him for his assistance, apologise for the bad first impression and promise him that if he ever mentions your overreaction to anyone you'll come find him and finish the job. He tells you that he's already forgotten about it and that it happens all the time and then lumbers out of the way of the door to let you get to work.

You draw your blaster and activate the door's access panel. As the heavy metal door slides open, you rush into the room to confront these trespassers! Turn to [93](#).

300

It's a fair cop. You detach from the Star Kettle and hail the Interlocutor in the hopes that your cooperation will make them go easier on you. It doesn't. You are captured, locked in the brig and dragged back to the Conglomerate to stand trial for your various crimes. Twoja przycoda konczy sie tutaj.

301

You punch in the number for the Star Kettle and brace yourself for a total pain in the arse. It takes a while coming because the captain of the Volan star ship lets the communicator ring out the first time round, but eventually he gets some ensign to put you on screen. Your little comms panel screen

lights up with the beaky face of some barely post-adolescent Volan junior officer.

"I'm not here to play around, kid. Put your boss on", you growl.

"Go play in traffic, dog", replies the ensign in a squawky Glargot. You barely restrain the atavistic urge to start barking at this obnoxious bird-boy, calming down just in time.

"I'm looking for the Pole. Seen him?"

"No, but we're looking for an excuse to cram your tail right down your throat. If you keep yapping at us we might find that!", the ensign crows. You hear laughter coming from the Star Kettle's bridge behind him. Bunch of pricks. This is getting nowhere so you kill the comms link before you say something you'll later regret.

You've got work to do. If you want to attend the riot, turn to [11](#). If you'd rather investigate the reports coming from the station, turn to [136](#).

302

Your final shot tears the Soyuz-30 open and the weight of the ocean on top of the fragile craft does the rest of the work. It crumples in on itself and fills with water, engines flaring out as the reactor cracks under the strain. Finally the whole mess begins to sink and is sucked right into the the whirring blades of the the Fishtein harvester. It barely slows down as it slices through the remains of the Soyuz-30 which are then whisked up into the machine and out of sight. You guess the Pole is going to get off this moon without being arrested, just not in the way he intended.

You file your report, stating that the Pole was killed resisting arrest, and begin the long trip back to the Conglomerate homeworld for your debriefing. While you're not happy things ended the way they did, you can't see how Hermaszewski gave you much choice. After a couple of weeks travel you arrive at the Glomcop HQ and stand once more in front of your Chief's desk. The miserable, hammy bastard does a poor job at hiding his displeasure at seeing you back in front of his desk in one piece. With evident distate he bids you sit and ungraciously hands you a plain plaswood box containing the epaulettes of a Superintendent of the Glom PD and the keys to a new luxury Auva Tertiary squad ship. Your days of slogging it out on patrol are over!

The Chief shifts uncomfortably in his chair. Did you get 10 or more Col-lars? If so turn to [400](#). If not, turn to [236](#).

303

"How about I just start knocking some incisors out instead?" you snarl, baring your own fangs. "Maybe starting with this albino freak?" You brandish your baton threateningly and about half of the Ratte King leaps behind the dais, leaving the other half teetering comically on the platform, struggling not to fall over. A couple of the Ratte guards recover from their shock at your belligerence and reach for their guns. Just as you're about to draw your own the half of the Ratte King that isn't cowering under the stage recovers and screeches, "HALT!". The guards lower their weapons. He addresses you in a disconcerting mixture of squeaks and squeals of terror.

"We're through with fighting. The Rattes are a peaceful and cowardly people and we just want to be left in peace. I will tell you what you want to know if you'll just leave us be."

This is more like it. You nod. "Fine. But it had better be good or I'll be back for you."

The King hisses.

"He came with us from Terebellum and arrived with us on 2047.291. Last we saw he was heading towards the moon in his Soyuz-30. No one has entered or left the system since then aside from you. Our sensors are damaged and we have no more information than that. Now go and leave us be."

You growl at the Ratte King. He and his guards may be cowards but you've overplayed your hand and they're starting to realise it. You decide to leave before anything else goes wrong. Returning to your squad ship you buckle up and take off. Turn to [30](#).

304

As a Detective Inspector it's been a long time since you've had to handle a riot but you try to recall your days at the Academy. You decrease your altitude and use the thrusters to hover above the brawling crowd below. You then turn the siren volume to "deafening". The ship emits an obscenely loud wail that causes some of the fighters nearest to the ship to leave off knocking each other's teeth out and retreat from the source of their agony, but for the most part the brawl continues. You activate the loudspeaker (volume set to "Voice of God") and bark into the communications console,

“THIS IS LEO CANID OF THE CONGLOMERATE POLICE DIRECTORATE. THIS ASSEMBLY IS UNLAWFUL AND WILL BE DISPERSED. RETURN TO YOUR HOMES AND PLACES OF BUSINESS.”

This has slightly more impact on the mob - some of the less dedicated brawlers flee, ducking into abandoned buildings or down the maze-like alleyways of the Barbet City ruins. Still, most of the town is ignoring your threatening broadcast and the riot rages on. You're about to issue a second warning when you hear the splash of blaster fire raining on your hull - some yahoos have decided they hate the police more than their neighbours and are taking potshots at you! Your squad ship is designed for transport, not combat, and while it can put up a fight it's not well-armoured enough to withstand high-energy weapons fire. Take 1 HULL damage, remembering to check to see if you received a Heavy Hit. Assuming you haven't been shot down you activate the shields (subtract 5 POWER) to reduce the threat from these opportunistic snipers while you try to recall the rest of the standard procedures for large scale disorder.

The next step when dealing with a riot would be to deploy less-than-lethal equipment. If you have a party cracker in your inventory, you could drop it on the crowd by turning to [75](#). If Moc's with you, he'd like a word with the crowd - you could let him have the comms panel by turning to [32](#). Otherwise with few options left you can fire into the crowd to disperse it by turning to [349](#), or you can disengage and land the ship someplace safe by turning to [226](#). If you'd rather leave this rock altogether until things settle down, you can blast off and check out the space station by turning to [222](#).

305

You pick up the receiver and hail your mysterious benefactors. This action draws their attention and the Soyuz-30 shakes until the rivets rattle as it undergoes an extremely powerful scan, but the communicator rings out without the strange ship picking up.

Suddenly your sensors detect that the ship has locked onto you with its targeting array and picks up a huge power spike up in their main gun - it's preparing to fire! No amount of evasive maneuvering can help - a wide green beam moving faster than the speed of light streams out of the rocky ship, engulfing the Soyuz-30 in nuclear fire. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

306

As instructed you open up a private communication channel with Ambassador Pt'imm aboard the Star Kettle. He's been patched up a bit but still looks to be in a pretty sorry state after his run in with the slug being aboard the space station.

"Greetings, Detective Canid", he squawks, the air whistling through a painful-looking crack in his beak, "I trust your investigations have been fruitful. I have convinced the Captain-Guru to authorise for you a jump to wherever you wish. This was not easy as he has a very strong and personal dislike of you. I trust my obligation to you is now fulfilled."

"You also promised not to bust my balls in future", you growl.

"You haven't been spayed? Well, I promise not to... bust your balls... next time we meet. For now though, time is short. Where shall I direct the captain to send you?"

If you have the word "Terebellum" written in your police notebook, turn to [208](#). Otherwise turn to [87](#).

307

You're in your trusty space ship, somewhere on the barbarian backwater known as Nezval.

Assuming you haven't already attempted the following, you could:
 Approach the blue cargo container and its stone piles by turning to [398](#);
 Examine the lonely yellow container by turning to [8](#);
 Check out the greenery as a potential campsite by turning to [176](#); or
 Run a more detailed scan of the area before you do anything else - turn to [297](#).

If you don't think you're going to find what you're looking for on this planet or you've exhausted all your options then you can take off and return to space by turning to [40](#).



308

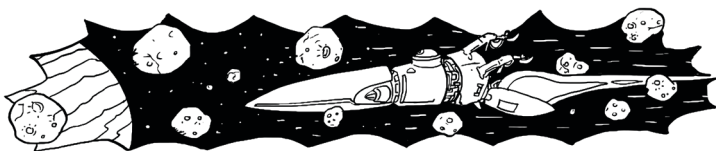
With your paperwork and request for official jump access duly completed, transmitted, processed and filed, the Interlocutor obligingly stabilises a jump corridor for you to the Sham system. You line your squad ship up along the jump path and throttle up, using the Interlocutor's power to sling your ship into the jump.

You've barked up the wrong tree a couple of times so far and you can feel the trail going cold on you. Still, if you pick up the pace you know you can catch your perp before he slips through the cracks and out of your jurisdiction. The jump to Sham will take three days by default, unless you punch the Interstellar Overdrive in the hopes of catching up. Adjust the date accordingly.

After your uneventful sojourn across the stars you glide out of the collapsing jump field, right into the Sham system. Sham is a huge, bright yellow sun which is orbited by a large red planet called Nezval and its water moon, Orma. Orma is notable as the source of a product called "Fishtein: the Fishy Protein that's Relatively Edible", a fish slurry popular in some of the more backwards parts of the sector. A large number of Fishtein containers are floating around the system in a loose cluster awaiting collection. Orma is populated with a species called Squidges, an intelligent and gregarious type of land squid. You don't know much about Nezval other than that it's a barely habitable red planet. Still, the Pole may be exploring down there while he waits for a safe route out of the system so it could be worth checking out.

According to the police alert channel a disabled jump ship referring to itself as the "Rattetail" was sighted loitering at the edge of the system. According to your scanners it's still there, rotating slowly near an asteroid while its crew attempts repairs. It's definitely the back half of the Caterwaul from Terebellum.

Check the Stellar Date. If it's 292 or earlier then turn to [210](#). Otherwise turn to [148](#).



309

You very quickly begin to pick up signs that the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole is somewhere in the town with you. You're close, but you can't get complacent. He will have seen you coming and is making every effort to get off this watery rock.

You must keep track of TIME and TRAIL somewhere on your police notebook. Both start at 0. TRAIL reflects how close you are behind your target. As you visit locations you will pick up clues that add TRAIL points. Each time you add one or more TRAIL points roll a dice. If you score less than your TRAIL score you have caught up to the Pole and can move in for the arrest, if you choose to. Turn to [219](#) to spring your trap. TIME is the amount of time you have on this planet before the Pole will make his escape. Add TIME when asked to by the text and roll a dice - if you score under the TIME score then turn to 360.

There are a few places of interest when you may be able to pick up the Ten-Foot Pole's trail. Firstly there's the Pickled Herring, a filthy dive frequented by the sorts of space scum that the Pole usually consorts with - turn to [109](#) to start here. You could visit the busy market square - he's sure to have been spotted there, and you may pick up some bargains on useful equipment while you're passing through. Turn to [392](#) to head here. You could examine the Fishtein harvesting plant if you think the Pole may have passed that way by turning to [335](#). Finally if you're more interested in locating the Soyuz-30 than anything else and think you have time to track around the small island looking for it then turn to [88](#).

310

You ask Zeta to explain his business is in this sector while you scan the ship and keep your sensors monitoring the general area for the Pole and his ship.

"N...not that it's any of your concern but we are here to conduct important research on the formation and chemical composition of G-One-Two-class stars. And also to collect some food."

There's nothing suspicious about any of this, other than the nervous disposition of the Archprofessor. You have that effect on people sometimes though. You cut to the chase and ask about the Pole.

"I'm looking for Miroslaw Hermaszewki, the Space Exploration Pole. Would you happen to have heard or seen anything of him lately?" The grey alien suddenly takes on a blotchy white hue and his huge black eyes twitch.

"N...no. Haven't seen him...Now if you don't mind, we're just going to collect our containers and be on our way...Hey! Can you please stop scanning our property? We paid for it legally and your sensors will cook it if you keep that up."

He's lying about the Pole, but you'll need more than a hunch to go on and your scans aren't showing anything. If you have Horizon-8 as your co-pilot turn to [288](#). If you have an upgraded sensor package turn to [347](#). Otherwise turn to [296](#).

311

You make your way over to the central square, doing your best to stick to the alleyways and sidestreets to avoid being seen. Unfortunately as a ten-foot tall human and moderately famous explorer you stand out somewhat. Even in the bustling town square with its mix of Squidges and various alien species you are drawing a fair bit of attention. You notice several Squidges staring right at you across the square. Add 1 to your TRAIL. Assuming you haven't been caught then read on.

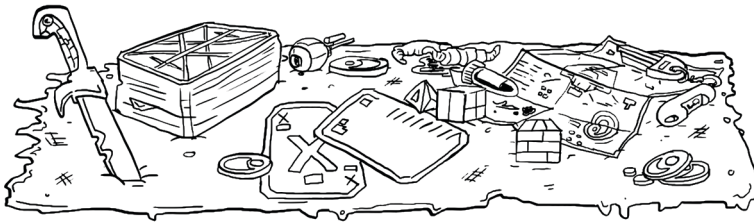
Trying to look as inconspicuous as is possible you shoulder your way into the crowd of Squidges and miscellaneous aliens milling around the square. It's market day so much of the town is out here shopping, chatting or visiting the various small exhibits and museums common to every town square in the galaxy. You take the time to listen in to some conversations. The big news of the day is that one of the settlement's grandees got his pleasure yacht sucked into the machine's protein extractors a few dozen yards offshore - it was pulped, processed and packed into a crate which was launched with it inside! You listen to the conversations but don't try to get involved in a vain attempt to avoid drawing attention to yourself.

Meanwhile the vendors are selling a good range of stuff, although most of it's fish-based. Still, some of it could come in handy and a nosey around couldn't hurt since you're already here. If you want to check out the vendors then turn to [111](#). Otherwise you try and mostly fail to slink out of the main square unnoticed. Turn to [244](#).

312

You think for a second. "Matar", you say. Even if the Glomcops are on your trail there it's not like they'll be able to apprehend you while you're safely ensconced in the hangar of the Caterwaul. The Catte relays your instructions to the bridge and the fighter shuttles are recalled. Just as the last of them make it back into the hangar you can make out a huge flash as another ship jumps into the system, but before you can get a closer look the Cattes slam the hangar blast doors shut and initiate a panic jump in the direction of Matar. Whatever was coming must have terrified the felines beyond belief.

Your reasoning was solid - the Glomcops don't suspect you're aboard the Caterwaul and cause you no more trouble. But you've traded one pursuer for something far worse. Whatever is chasing the Caterwaul follows almost instantly to Matar, and again to the next system, and again into the Glom and beyond. Your actions and the desperate flight of the Caterwaul trigger off a galactic panic, cause the collapse of the Conglomerate, the death of millions of beings and, finally, the loss of the Caterwaul deep within the Void Nebula. These adventures are all part of another story but the two-fisted adventures of the Space Exploration Pole are at an end. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.



313

As the next pair of pirates approach the door you hurl a fistful of dice into their faces and duck back inside. You sucker punch the first one to follow you through the door and take a swing at the pirate behind him as he stumbles over his companion. You move to arrest them but there's plenty of vinegar left in these two. They come up fighting:

NECKBEARDED SCRODE : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 3 - FISTS 2
 SCRODE GROGNARD : EXPERTISE 4 - HEALTH 3 - FISTS 2



If you beat these two you cuff them (add 2 collars) and stick them in the heap of arrests in the corner of the shop. Looking outside you can see more coming - an inexhaustible parade of Scrode's nerdiest pirates marching one by one into the galaxy's most depressing honeypot. If you want to keep things rolling you can set a trap for the next arrival by turning to [138](#). Otherwise you march your prisoners out of the rear entrance and load them into your ship. Taking off, you leave the game store behind.

If you'd now like to check out the derelict ship then turn to [35](#). If you'd rather wait for reinforcements or any jump ship at all then turn to [211](#).

314

You take advantage of your victory to put some distance between yourself and the alien fleet. Hopefully the small size of the Soyuz-30 will put you beneath the notice of the jump ship, at least if you stay somewhere near the space mall. You're in the process of swinging around the other side of the structure when you see another bright flash as another ship arrives in the system - a mile-long mountain, more asteroid than star ship. You've never seen anything like it.

As soon as this ship arrives the cloud of fighter craft swarms towards it and opens fire with a rain of torpedoes. The new arrival sweeps the cloud with a wide green beam which reduces most of the attackers and a large chunk of the Spend-o-Max's hull to a shower of molten metal. Still, several of the torpedos slam home, detonating in balls of nuclear fire against the ship's rocky hull. The space mountain then returns fire on the other ship with a tightly focused beam, and the ship responds in kind. You see the shields go down on both vessels, explosions rippling across both hulls, and a shattering blast as the first ship's jump drives seize up. The Spend-o-Max, caught in the crossfire, is reduced to a crumpled hulk. It rotates slowly as it vents its atmosphere, reactor fuel and unsold merchandise into space.

Incredibly the space mountain, clearly badly damaged with fires burning brightly along its rocky hull, begins to turn away from the devastation and its jump drives flare brightly. It's preparing to jump away! It either hasn't noticed you or isn't interested in your existence. If you want to hail it and try to get a lift then turn to [269](#). If you want to leave well enough alone then within a few minutes the damaged asteroid/vessel completes its turn and with a blinding white flash it's gone, heading through jump space in the general direction of the outer rim. Turn to [225](#).

The Soyuz-30 is critically damaged by the whizzing blades of the harvester and loses propulsion. With no time to eject you are drawn into the pulverisers and mixed with the rest of the slurry heading into the machine for containerisation.

As it happens your Fishtein container is picked up by a passing jump ship on a course for Kitalpha. The Chiroperantropean bartender uses the cheap slurry for his famous Fillet-o-Fish burgers and the contents of your container wind up in his kitchen. In the end you evaded the law and got to hang out at your favourite greasy spoon in the sector, just not in the way you intended. *Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.*

Moc, patently used to hostile receptions of this kind from years of door-to-door sales, lifts his hat, slicks back his antenna, flashes his patented double-barrelled grin and approaches the rude rodent. He holds out a hand to the black-furred Ratte who takes it almost automatically despite itself. Displaying impeccable eye-contact for a creature with ocular flagellae, Moc speaks as he shakes the rodent's paw effusively.

"Hi, howdy, how do you do? Moc's the name and I'm doing just swell, thanks for asking. This guy over here", he gestures to you, "well, he's just swell too. Look, we're not here to waste your time. We've got an offer that you're going to want to hear. Why don't you just let us through, and..."

The Ratte, under the spell of Moc's patter up until now, snaps out of it at the mention of your crossing the barricade.

"Look, I don't care what you're selling. *Piss off or we'll blast you.*"

Moc looks unperturbed. "Hey, we're here to help. What's it going to take to get us through there?"

"There's a revolution on, if you haven't noticed. Get these blasted Cattes to just give up and we'll have time to hear about whatever bullshit you're peddling." the Ratte screeches, "Now, if you don't mind. *Piss. Off. Last chance.*"

Moc stops smiling and releases the rat's paw.

"It's not bullshit. It's the *Encylopaedia Stellaris*", he says, suddenly as serious as a gravestone. He looks like he's about to go for his gun.

If you want to back Moc's play and blast your way through this barricade, turn to [80](#). If this doesn't appeal then you could double back and try your luck instead on the bridge (turn to [160](#)) or the weapons section (turn to [344](#)). If you've had enough of this ship, you can return to the hangar, board the Soyuz-30 and take off in the direction of whatever's left of the Spend-o-Max. Turn to [214](#).

317

You swallow your pride and dial up the Volan star ship. For once they answer within a couple of rings and the visage of your nemesis, Captain-Guru Pt'rist-an, appears on your comms screen.

"Why are you hounding me?" he caws.

"I need a jump out of the system and I was hoping that you could see your way to..." you start, but are cut off mid-sentence by Pt-rist-an's mocking avian version of laughter.

"You're completely barking if you think we'd throw you a bone. You can rot here for all I care."

Pt'rist-an cuts off the call and the screen goes dark. A few seconds later the star ship's engines flare and the Star Kettle is gone into jump space, leaving you alone in the system. There's nothing to do now but wait for another ship to come along. Turn to [25](#).

318

You've got plenty of fuel and supplies. You'll just wait out here and try to hitch a lift.

You spend an entire day sitting in your tin can (advance the Stellar Date by one day) but the only ship that enters the system is a rusty old space hauler moving at barely faster than light speed. At least you get some time to work on your Space Whist skills. Route 66³ evidently isn't the most heavily-trafficked stretch but a jump-capable starship should be along sooner or later.

If you want to continue waiting for a lift, turn to [348](#). If you're sick of sitting around and want to try your luck on the planet (assuming you haven't been down there already), turn to [378](#). If you'd like to investigate the old station first (and haven't already done so), turn to [153](#).

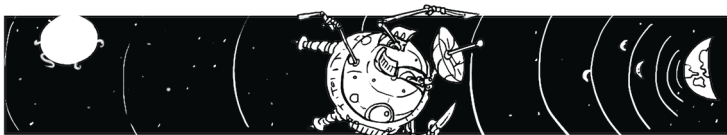
You're awoken from your rest by the sound of the door sliding open - the guests have arrived! Two yellow, double-arsed slugnoids slide into the room. Without acknowledging you they sit down at the table opposite one another. As the generator pumps more air into the room they remove their helmets and, still ignoring you, they chatter with each other in a weird clicking language while they wait for the other guests.

They don't have to wait long - a few minutes later two patches of air near the table begin to glow as if lit from within, and you can hear the telltale crackle of a teleporter beaming something into the room. With a whoosh air expands outwards as two beings materialise - two of the winged, four-armed Volans! Dressed in the flowing robes reserved for their highest-ranked dignitaries, you immediately recognise the Ambassador Pt'imm and the Envoy Pt'obi. These two jokers have ruined many of your biggest busts out here on the Route, arriving just in time to extend their diplomatic immunity over whichever crooked operator you were hauling back to Headquarters. With any luck they don't recognise you before you can spring your trap.

With the teleport completed, the Volans greet the slug beings in their pompous, effusive manner, walk right past you and your co-pilot and sit down at the table. Pt'obi produces a deck of Space Whist cards and one of the yellow slugs does the same. The decks are passed to the next player on the left for inspection. Pt'obi picks up the slugs' deck and shuffles through it. Volans, as bird-like monstrosities, have their eyes on the sides of their heads, so Pt'obi swivels his gargantuan beak out of the way to let his right eye get a closer look at the cards. As he does so his left eye falls squarely on you. His brow furrows suspiciously and he turns to face you, both eyes peering down his ridiculous honker.

"You. Why are you wearing a space suit indoors?"

The jig's up! If you want to make the bust now while you still can, turn to [362](#). If you think you can bluff your way out of this mess then turn to [205](#).



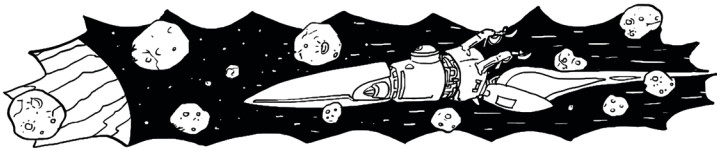


You emerge from the jump a few days later in Kitalpha. The familiar sight of the Fuel 'n Gruel station appears silhouetted against the bright yellow star. Breathing a sigh of relief you park up outside and wait to be beamed aboard the station as usual. Instead, you get a call. You pick up the comms receiver and hear the tinny mechanical voice of Nebula Bob, the station's robotic cooler.

"SORRY MIROSLAW, WE CAN'T ALLOW YOU ONTO THE PREMISES. THE NEWS IS ALL OVER THE TRANSGALACTIC NETWORK. WHY DID YOU HAVE TO KILL THAT COP? THE GLOM IS REALLY COMING FOR YOU NOW. PLEASE GO AWAY. THEY'LL TEAR THIS PLACE APART IF THEY KNOW YOU WERE HERE."

No amount of begging or pleading can make Nebula Bob change his electronic mind. He won't even let you fill up before you leave. The heat must be on pretty strong.

With the Conglomerate off limits, probably forever, you can really only continue onwards towards Volan space. You feel more welcome there, but you know that if they ever need a bargaining chip the duplicitous birds will hand you over in a heartbeat. You realise deep down that it's finally time to move on from this part of the universe. Your choices boil down to the unknowable, insane terrors of the Void or a long trip through unexplored space back home to Earth - a place you left near seventy years ago. You wonder what life is like there, what changed, whether time was kind to the USSR. Time to find out.



Major Tom smiles. You think. Maybe he always looks like that. In any case he seems pleased as he gestures for you to come over to the strategic map. You squeeze in around the table between the Ot and the Owle (Overseers Suimin Glee and Hoo Tennanny respectively, according to the name tags on their uniforms) and lean in for a closer look while Major Tom explains the situation.

Since the attack the five-thousand strong Rattbellion has seized control of engineering and life support and is threatening to choke off power and air to the rest of the ship. Right now Catte Empire forces are being driven back everywhere and what few weren't killed in the recent attack from the species known as the Threshers are now scattered and disorganised, pressed hard by the Rattbellion's superior numbers. The only organised force remaining is gathered here on the bridge. The officers are arguing angrily about their next strategy, moving markers and pins around the map and generally dismissing everything said by the others around the table. Each one seems to be in command of the forces belonging to their own species and not particularly inclined to help the other commanders out.

Major Tom hands you a sheet outlining the planned operations and their radio codes. The Catte, Suimin and Hoo each favour a plan which they think will do the trick. Major Tom favours OPERATION BLOODY GIVE BACK (Code [2.8.4](#)), a straightforward attack against the Ratt fortifications in the engineering section. The Ot supports OPERATION JUST TAKE DOWN (Code [3.2.9](#)), a stealthy attack through the ventilation systems while the Owle backs OPERATION FLYING DUST UP (Code [1.4.7](#)), a strike from space using high explosives to breach the emergency near engineering. With the voting tied between these three options a fresh pair of eyes and another two fists could settle the matter. You may even attempt your own operation if one occurs to you based on the operation codes.

Major Tom and the other officers look to you expectantly for your first instructions. Add the Caterwaul Operation Codes to your inventory. Referring to this card you may call in your first mission now. If you don't think anything will work then you can throw in the towel - turn to [4](#).

322

Well, now you're certain that you weren't just judging a book by its cover. That sneaky-looking hedgehog at the bar wasn't being straight with you. Still, a job's a job and he's the only one offering you a ticket out of this system. If you want to sneak back up to your firing position and bust the place up, turn to [18](#). If you want to go back to the bar and have it out with the lying Erinacean then turn to [94](#). Otherwise you'd better head on back to the Soyuz-30 and hope that someone out in space is willing to help out. Turn to [282](#).

323

While you browse the magazines Gocky furtively - or as furtively as is possible for a ten-limbed countrybeing - takes a magazine from the rack. You get a look at the cover - Juggz magazine, the magazine for ceramic and glassware enthusiasts. It's the infamous Cycle End 2045 issue with the four delicate Volan blown glass flower vases on the cover. Filthy stuff. Gocky sees you looking and turns slightly purple. "It's for me third Ma! She collects vases!" he splutters in embarrassment, and clutching the magazine to his chest, he scuttles off to the counter to purchase his smut. Alien sexual mores are completely incomprehensible and you try not to be judgemental, but you just hope Gocky has the decency to wait until he's back on the farm before cracking that magazine out. The last thing you need is to have to swab the Soyuz-30 out mid flight again.

Turn back to [292](#) and select another course of action.

324

Suddenly there's a blinding flash of light and a large contact appears on your long-range scanners. Rushing to the periscope you swivel it around and zoom in on a strange vessel, nearly a mile long with a threatening appearance, all angular hull-plates and protruding weapons. It's a jump ship belonging to some unfamiliar species. As the jump field collapses behind it the ship coasts towards the station, disgorging a cloud of tiny shuttles from a cavernous hangar bay located amidships. They stream ahead of the mothership towards you and the station like a swarm of wasps.

You don't know what the disposition of this new alien race is but a jump ship's a jump ship. If you want to hail it and ask for a lift, turn to [98](#). If you'd prefer to stay away from these threatening-looking aliens then turn to [328](#).

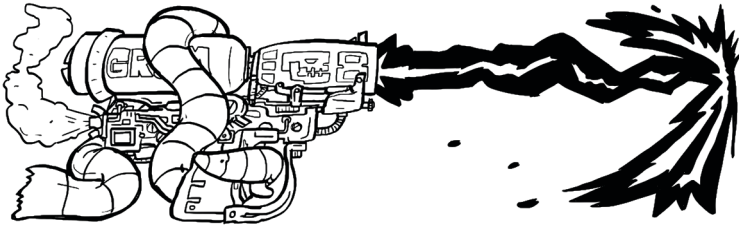
325

True to their word the Rattes spin up the jump drives and depart. Unfortunately they react badly to the constant attempts of the remaining hostile Cattes, Owles and Ots to break into the engineering section. Their solution is to simply leave any part of the Caterwaul not controlled by the Rattvolution out of the jump field. There's a sickening lurch as the engineering,



327


No one speaks to the Space Exploration Pole like that! You clench your fists and resume your tirade, starting by telling the scummy rodent "wyp-chac sie sianem". You never finish the insult or the many others you have planned because the bartender, always keen to be rid of a nuisance, pulls the trigger on his plasma slugger and turns the upper half of your body into a gross mist. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.



328

You want as little as possible from these aliens, at least until you can figure out what they are. Some of the more militaristic species like to make first contact by atomising anything they encounter, and the threatening posture of the star ship and its cloud of escorts doesn't fill you with confidence. Your fears are quickly proven to be well-founded as one of the small ships breaks away from the cloud and zooms directly towards the Soyuz-30. You quickly take evasive manoeuvres, dodging out of the way as the little angular ship opens fire. Maser beams sizzle past your viewport as you activate your shielding and weapons systems and prepare for battle. As the ship turns for another pass the pilot broadcasts a simple demand which translates to "Surrender".

ALIEN FIGHTER :

MANOEUVRE 5(1) - WEAPONS 6(1) - SHIELDS 3(0) - HULL 6 

This ship is equipped with a military-grade maser weapon which is somewhat more dangerous than civilian models. This weapon will deliver Heavy Hits on a roll of 5 or 6 instead of a 6.

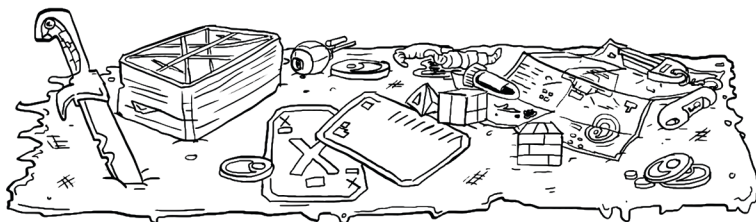
If you defeat your opponent then turn to [314](#). If you know when you're outgunned and wish to surrender, turn to [135](#).

The Ot plan, operation Just Take Down, is a rapid and daring infiltration through the ventilation systems and access tubes leading into engineering. Moving swiftly and silently through the ventilation system the sleek Ots will bypass the barricades leading into Engineering, drop down behind the Ratte front lines and sow chaos, which the main body of Catte Empire soldiers will exploit. Once you're reassured that you'll fit in the ventilation shafts, you decide this is the plan for you. You give the go ahead and Suimin Glee nods his scarred head sagely.

You join a group of six Ots raiders who are outfitted with lighter versions of the standard battlesuit, night-vision goggles and silenced disruptors (they don't go "pew" when fired), and make your way through the ventilation shafts towards the engineering section. Unfortunately you guess it may have occurred to the Rattes that the vents are a potential way of getting around the ship, because once you leave the command deck the system is riddled with traps - tripwires, false floors, mines, punji pits, mouse traps, flamethrowers, dart throwers, the list goes on and on. The Ots manage to spot and disarm these but it's time-consuming and after an hour you've travelled about ten metres from the command deck. Finally turning the first corner you see the duct stretching over the engineering section - a veritable spiderweb of tripwires and laser beams stretching into the far distance. You decide to call it quits. This plan's a wash.

You return to the bridge, thoroughly chagrined. Lose 5 ENERGY. On the way back you may, if you wish, pick up some ordinance from one of the deactivated traps - add a microwave grenade or a miniature palm blaster to your inventory.

Refer to your Caterwaul Operation Codes and pick another course of action. If nothing appeals then turn to [4](#) to throw in the towel.



330

You check a tourist map you downloaded onto your portable computer and think about where to look next. Assuming you haven't done the following you may:

Visit the Pickled Herring, exactly the kind of dive the Pole might wash up in, by turning to [109](#).

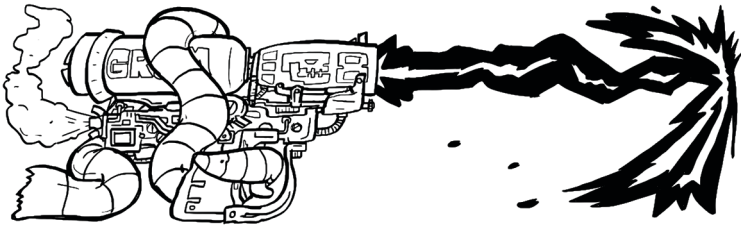
Investigate the market square by turning to [392](#).

Track around the island searching for the Pole's ship by turning to [88](#).

Visit the Fishtein processing plant by turning to [335](#).

Stop your search and wait for the Pole to make his move by turning to [24](#).

Alternatively, if none of these options appeal to you, you may blast off and wait in space by turning to [184](#).



331

Tarlee looks at you and raises an eyebrow. "Of fucking course I can bring this shitheap down. Better cover your fucking ears, dog."

With this the mercenary crouches down on one knee, switches her plasma rifle to its secondary fire mode and pulls the trigger. There's a buzzing noise as the rifle drains its power pack followed by an almighty boom as it generates a barely-contained artificial sun and lobs it straight at the barrier. The shot melts through the plascrete Dam like a hot knife through butter, and milliseconds later a thick gout of scalding steam shoots out of the plasma hole.

"Oh, er. Shit", exclaims Tarlee as the steam is replaced with a brutally powerful column of pressurised water which smashes into you, driving you into and Tarlee into a bulkhead with a sickening crunch. Seconds later the Dam collapses, pulverising you both in a floodwave of water and debris.

332

The damage from the collision is extensive. Life support, engines, power generators, sensors and weapons are all failing to respond, the hull is breached in multiple locations, the mini bar jostled and most of the good glassware shattered - you don't think you can piece your ship back together with what you've got on board.

There's a flash of light as another jump ship enters the system. All the other fighters and interceptors change course to swarm towards this new arrival. You have bigger fish to fry at the moment though so you ignore this exciting news and consider your options. You can think of a couple of possible ways out of this mess, both involving installation of non-genuine spare parts from unauthorised sources.

If you want to try to find some spare parts on the station to fix up the Soyuz-30, turn to [114](#). If you'd rather try to repair the Soyuz-30 using parts from the alien fighter embedded in the hull then turn to [231](#). If you think the Soyuz-30 is beyond recovery you could try to commandeer the alien fighter instead by turning to [209](#).

333

Unbeknownst to you, you've just gunned down two of the most dangerous warriors in this quadrant of the galaxy. Even though they were holding back as if scared of you, it was an extremely tough battle and your reports of this incident will be told and retold within the Conglomerate PD and beyond. Your feistiness will become the stuff of legend. You're already walking a bit taller, barking a bit louder and biting a bit more firmly. Add 1 FIST!

Unfortunately your victory doesn't come to much in the short term because the heavy door behind these dead critters is locked firmly shut. No amount of barking at it will cause it to open. With nothing else to do here you prepare to move on. If you want to loot the dead you can take a disruptor pistol from your foes(add this item to your inventory).

Assuming you haven't already done so, you can retrace your steps and visit the "DAM" by turning to [65](#) or the "NEST" by turning to [265](#). If you're tired of this hulk and want to get back into open space then return to your ship and turn to [48](#).

334

You look at Gocky. Surely a being with six arms should be good at arm wrestling. His species hails from a high-gravity agrarian world so they're generally possessed of a wiry strength as well. You decide to ask him to stand in for you in this contest.

"Shucks, well, why not? You've done me a good turn getting me this far, and I reckon it's about time I returned the favour", says Gocky in his weird alien drawl. You thank him and pop your police hat on his head - hopefully this will be enough to fool the arrogant Scrodes assembled outside.

You touch down in the hangar bay and your ship is immediately thronged by a huge crowd of booing, jeering Scrodes. Half of the Macerator's crew must be packed into here to see the cop get thrashed at Uijan Kekuatan. Gocky ambles out of the squad ship and heads on over to speak to the Scrodelord. You can only remain behind and hope the deception works.

A minute later you hear the Scrodes erupt in a unified roar of anguish and despair. Gocky must have succeeded! The many-limbed alien clammers back aboard the ship. One of his arms looks like the bones have snapped in several places and it bends in an unwholesome manner.

"Well, I did it, but gosh if it doesn't sting something fierce. I told that Crunt fellow my assistant would take care of the arrangements while I patch myself up, so you'd best get out there," Gocky says, wincing with pain as he cradles his ruined arm.

Gocky has been permanently crippled - he has minus1 EXPERTISE to all skills and no longer benefits from his special rules for being outnumbered.

Thanking the alien bumpkin you step out of the ship to settle matters with Crunt. Turn to [266](#).

335

You decide to set off for the huge Fishtein processing plant, situated right against the coast a short walk from the town centre. Add 1 to TIME.

The huge grey protein harvesting machine dominates the skyline, looming over everything in the town ominously and humming constantly. As you

approach the end of the scenic path that leads along the coast and up to the base of this structure you hear a loud crunch. Looking up you see the entire top of the plant open up and a large orange container with the legend "FISHTEIN" emblazoned on the side in huge white letters rises up from the machine. Borne aloft by small autothrusters built into the underside of the container the huge crate hooks on to the bottom of an almost imperceptibly thin wire and thusly attached, rises into the sky rapidly, disappearing out of sight far above.

"That's the skyhook, big feller", wheezes a voice, speaking in plain Glargot from somewhere nearby. You look around and spot a very old Squidge leaning against the grey, featureless side of the Fishtein plant. He's weathered to almost the same colour as the structure itself. "Yep", continues the old Squidge, once he's got your attention, "Name's Gramps, and I keep the old girl running. Since she mostly takes care of herself the city pays me to give tours. Now I can tell you for free that this here Mk VIIc Fishtein harvesting plant, known as The Machine to her friends and The Grim Reaper to any kind of sea life..."

You've heard enough. Every two-bit patch of dirt in the galaxy has a guy like this on it. After he's talked your ear off with crap you don't want to hear about he'll hold out his hand for a tip. You decide to cut to the chase.

"Detective Inspector Leo Canid, Glom PD. I'm after a ten foot-tall primate called Miroslaw Hermaszewski. Travels around with a walking skeleton. Do you have any information as to their whereabouts?"

Gramps gives you a strange look. Or at least you think he does. It's hard to tell with Squidges since they don't have any moveable facial features.

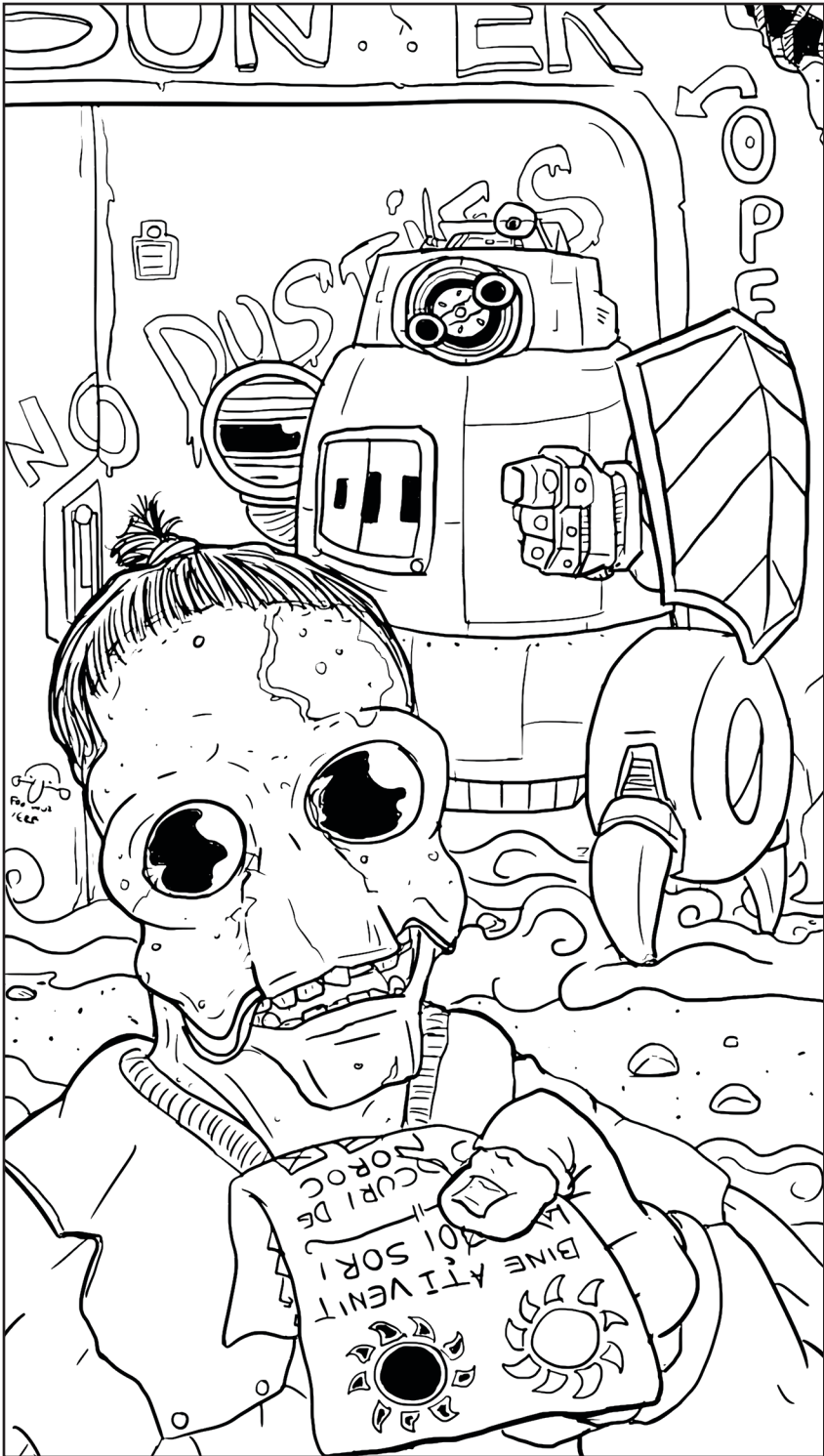
"Depends, big feller. What do you want them for?" he replies cagily.

"Crimes", you bark.

"That so? Sonny, a lot of people come this way. I can't remember every alien mug I clap eyes on. Maybe, if you buy a ticket for the ultra deluxe tour of the plant, I might be able to recollect a thing or two"

If you're inclined to pay this being a bribe to find out what he knows, if anything, then turn to [36](#). If you're not about to pay off yet another dodgy alien for information of dubious veracity then turn to [394](#).





336

Choking on pink silica dust you cross over the main strip towards the Barbet Bunker, the finest and apparently only place for a pilot to grab a drink on this dirtball. As you cross the road a passing Matari native grabs your sleeve and tries to shove a piece of paper into your hand while gibbering desperately at you in a weird alien language. He points down the road towards the outskirts and tugs on your sleeve as if to get you to come along. The Bunker's bouncer - an old autocannon turret - sees this exchange and emits an alarming whirring noise as it trains its weapon on the native. The Matari releases you and clears off, leaving you to enter the bar in peace. The Bunker's oversized metal door slides open for you and the bouncer nods its cannon barrel at you politely as you enter.

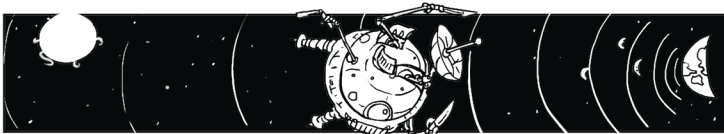
The name of the place is appropriate - from the outside it looks like a bomb shelter, all cracked concrete and rusted rebar, and the decor continues right through to the interior with dented metal furniture, chipping plaster and whirring ventilation extractors. At least the pink dust isn't so dense in here and there are a couple dozen aliens milling around, drinking at the bar, chatting and arguing over the juke box. A quartet of assorted alien scumbags are engaged in a game of Space Whist at one of the tables. The stakes look reasonably high but to make no bones about they look like serious trouble. You'd rather not spend any more time associating with obvious goons and criminals than you have to. It looks like everyone here's a local since they're all wearing the coarse plankton-fibre checked shirts that seem to be all the rage on this planet, but who knows. You might have some luck finding someone who might be able to hook you up with a ride even if no one here is a spacer. You don't see any Matari natives in here despite their prevalence outside. Judging by the bouncer's reaction out the front you guess they're not welcome in the Bunker.

Deciding to give the gamblers a wide berth for now you can get right down to business and start asking around for a lift by turning to [157](#). If you'd rather unwind with a few drinks turn to [375](#).



The destruction of the Spend-o-Max was sure to draw scavengers eventually, and the worst of them have come to feed. There's a huge, blinding flash as a jump field collapses near to the mall's crumpled remnants, and out of the breach in space and time glides the unwelcome sight of the Scrode star ship, the Macerator. The only successfully captured jump ship in history, the two-mile long vessel has a twisted and eerie appearance thanks to the scars of a decade in the Void Nebula and the primitive modifications added by the dreaded Void pirates. It looks like a gaping mouth ringed with jagged teeth, which is essentially what it is - a giant boarding vessel. And it has set its sights on the remains of the Spend-o-Max. The Scrodes seem to be ignoring the ruined star ship for the time being, probably because it looks like a pile of nearly worthless junk.

If you want to hail the new arrival then turn to [97](#). If you'd prefer to watch them for a while and see what they do then turn to [195](#).



You spend two very boring days waiting in the Matar system. Add 2 to the Stellar Date. Just as you think you're going to be stuck watching that pink and green planet rotate forever you see the familiar flash of a collapsing jump field and a huge two-mile-long smooth oblong of a star ship appears in the system a few minutes flight away. You yank up the comms handset excitedly and hail the ship, "Hej, mozesz dac nam windy w kierunku Kitalpha?"

You don't recognise them but they're obviously a species local to this part of the universe because they respond to your unintelligible gibberish in smooth Glargot. "I'm not sure what you're on about, but if you're going to Kitalpha we could go out of our way as far as Terebellum, in return for a nominal fee of course. We accept all major currencies, trade items and... sentient goods."

These shady aliens will accept any two items or your co-pilot in exchange for their assistance. How do you respond?

“Tak”. Remove the items or your co-pilot from your log book. You clamp onto the ship just before it blasts into jump space towards Terebellum. Turn to [92](#).

“Wypchaj sie sianem”. Whatever alien you’re speaking to gets the gist of what you’re saying and swears back explosively in Low Glargot before the ship peels off into jump space, leaving you stranded and waiting for a better offer. Turn to [112](#).

339

The Dube Merope squadship might be an older model and in no way as comfortable as the Soyuz-30 with its leather-upholstered crew module, but it’s not currently welded into a shipping container and it has some things that the Soyuz-30 lacks - namely an interdicator device and an interstellar overdrive module. With these you can commandeer jumps and race across the sector in no time! When you’re safely out of the reach of the Glom you can trade the ship in for something a little more modern. Leaping into the pilot’s chair you power the ship up and tear off into space. Now all you have to do is wait for a jump ship to come along...

Unfortunately your cunning plan comes unglued a few minutes into your joyride when the ship, sensing an unauthorised party at the controls, sets itself on red alert, starts emitting a distress beacon and powers itself off, leaving you sealed inside in the dark with limited life support. All attempts to get it to start again come to nothing, and when you wrench open the engine access panel you find out why - the ship’s anti-theft system has thrown the fusion control rods and dumped the ship’s fuel into space.

With no way out of this jam you float pointlessly until the Conglomerate flagship, the Interlocutor, comes to pick you up. You’ll spend the next few stellar cycles cooling your heels in the Jolian Supermax. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.



You're really clutching at straws here, but it's not like there's anyone else around to question.

"Isn't there usually a clerk around here somewhere?" you ask the droid. Its dark screen lights up with more orange text.

> MAKING REPAIRS ON STATION. ADVERTISING RADIO SIGNAL MALFUNCTION. I AM HEAD CLERK UNTIL HE RETURNS. INPUT ORDER AND MAKE PAYMENT BELOW.

So this simple-looking thing is sentient! You might be in luck after all!

"I'm looking for the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole. He's ten feet tall, humanoid, wears a white space suit, flies a hunk of junk called the Soyuz-30. Seen him?"

> MAYBE OUR SECURITY SYSTEM MIGHT HAVE FOOTAGE OF SOMEONE MEETING THAT DESCRIPTION. WHAT'S IT WORTH TO YOU? INPUT ORDER AND MAKE PAYMENT BELOW.

The panel in the front of the counter clangs open and shut rapidly! The rotten pile of junk's holding out for a bribe!

"Aren't you programmed to assist law enforcement officers?" you whine.

> NO. INPUT ORDER AND MAKE PAYMENT BELOW.

You change tack. "Are you programmed to reassemble yourself after a law enforcement officer smashes your monitor in with a stun baton?"

> POINT TAKEN. SECURITY FOOTAGE LOCATED. HAVE A NICE DAY.

The droid's monitor shows a brief low-resolution video date-stamped 2047.275 - an external feed of the Soyuz-30 landing in the parking area and the ten-foot Pole stooping out of the exit hatch, stretching and heading straight for the fuel depot's entrance. He's accompanied by Bones, his partner in crime. The feed changes to the interior of the depot - the Pole thumbs through a magazine on the rack, puts it back, picks up a fuel canister, pays and leaves.

You have found evidence that your quarry was present in Barbet City. Your wrist computer, having recorded a copy of the video, assigns this evidence the archival number 0009 - make a note of this number in your police notebook. With your enquiries complete you thank the droid for its cooperation and consider your next move.

If you haven't already done so you can have a quick flick through the magazines by turning to [252](#). Otherwise you could visit the bar by turning to [356](#), take a look around the outskirts of the town centre by turning to [61](#), or return to your ship and blast off from this rock by turning to [253](#).

341

You know where Hermaszewski is going to be so there's no point risking a sea battle with him. You simply return to the squad ship, take off and loiter near the top of the space elevator - the long cable which guides the Fishtein containers as they launch from Orma and out into space for collection. You focus your attention on Orma, and before long the Fishtein plant opens up and disgorges another container which swiftly rises up the space elevator and out of the water moon's atmosphere. A quick scan indicates something unusual about this one - if you were a betting dog you'd wager a pile of bones on the Space Exploration Pole being in there! Turn to [218](#).

342

You activate the beacon. A couple of seconds later the spiky starship comes to a stop and hails you. You pick up the ringing comms handset and the ship's translator buzzes into life as it works to make sense of an unfamiliar alien language.

"Is staar jahaaj hai the star ship Omnivore. Payment has been received. We will take you as far as Terebellum. As soon as the docking procedure is complete we will commence jump. Omnivore out."

As you fly the Soyuz-30 in close to the Omnivore and clamp on to one of the huge black spines, you idly wonder if all the Erinaceans are balding or just the one you met. Judging by the size of the spikes on this thing, they're probably overcompensating for something.

With this though in your mind the Omnivore leaps into jump space. As the universe whizzes past you deactivate the helm console and head back to the crew module for a well-deserved rest. Turn to [238](#).

343

While you're cracking heads, Tarlee sees an opportunity. She kneels down, raises her huge plasma rifle and fires several glowing green bolts into an autocannon turret that's sitting around outside the bar, minding its own business.

344

Benny the Bouncer, hired only a fortnight ago to provide security for the Barbet Bunker, barely has time to register the flash of weapons fire before the plasma bolts tear through his inch-thick armour and detonate the ammunition stored in his magazine compartment. His last sad musings on the violent nature of meat-based creatures are cut short by the thunderous explosion. The crowd spooks at the sight of the autocannon going up in a tower of flames and the rioters flee in every direction, leaving the main strip clear aside from a few wounded stragglers and the blasted wreckage of the innocent turret.

Tarlee surveys her handiwork, "Bloody ripper", she crows, "Did you see that fucking shot?" You're not sure how you could have missed it. You take the opportunity to arrest a couple of the wounded brawlers for affray, and then you move the squad ship over to the shuttle parking zone. Add 2 Collars. With the riot contained, you step back out onto the dusty ground of Barbet, ready to begin your search for the Pole. Turn to [121](#).

344

You decide to head for the weapons array. Although they appeared to be mashed from the outside there's probably still something worth stealing there. As you stoop along down the tight corridors you step over the a large number of animal corpses: mostly rat-like monsters but lots of otter, owl and cat aliens as well. Most of the bodies have been picked clean of anything worth a damn but you find a microwave grenade and a disruptor pistol on a dead Owle (add these to your inventory if you wish).

Just as you finish pecking over the corpses you hear a loud explosion echoing down the corridor. You look up and see the flash of disruptor and plasma fire crossing the junction ahead accompanied by a cacophony of hisses, screeches and squeaks. The aliens have chosen this moment to battle it out over the weapons array. It's probably more trouble than it's worth but you could potentially make it across the junction and into the weapons system before the battle gets too hot.

If a bit of fighting doesn't worry you and you want to proceed onwards to the weapons array, then turn to [273](#). If you'd rather turn back then you may (assuming you haven't done so already) visit the bridge by turning to [160](#) or head over to the engineering section by turning to [188](#). If you've had enough of this ship and its violent menagerie you could depart by returning to the Soyuz-30 and taking off. With nothing else going on you turn your attention to the ruins of the Spend-o-Max. Turn to [214](#).

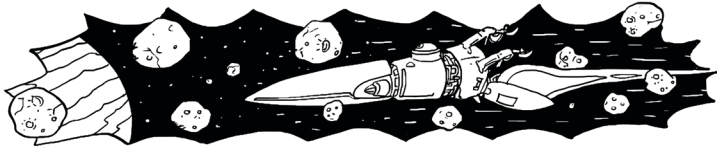
345

There's no reaction to the arrival of the jump ship from the surface of the planet. Either the Pole isn't down there or he's laying low. Behind you the star ship seems to be manoeuvring towards a cluster of cargo containers, probably to pick them up. If you'd like to give up on Nezval and turn your attention to the jump ship, then you distance yourself from the planet and move to within communications range: turn to [60](#). If you're certain the Pole is down there and you're not going to give him a chance to get away then you continue scanning the planet. Turn to [240](#).

346

"That's the guy what screwed over our Harry!" shouts one of the Eri-naceans. "Take him out!"

The greasy-looking balding hedgehogs and their Squidge companions leap up from their chairs, drawing all manner of side-arms, rifles and scatterguns from under the table. You put up a hell of a fight but in the close confines of the Pickled Herring your heavily-armed opponents simply cannot miss for very long. You go down under a withering hail of plasma slugs, blaster rounds and ion bolts, another victim of the Omnivore's feared debt collection squad.



347

You're running out of ways to stall the Reticks, but fortunately you don't have to for very much longer. Your upgraded sensors allow your scanners to penetrate the nearby cargo containers, and one of them is showing an anomalous reading - there's a metallic object inside emitting a small amount of energy and containing at least one life form. It's almost certainly a shuttle running on basic life support - you've found the Soyuz-30!

Just as Zeta is about to terminate the connection you present him with your findings. His face, already blanched, turns a flat white and his eye twitch becomes uncontrollable.

348-349

“Heh...huh...how did that get in there?” stammers the Archprofessor, not quite managing to sound completely surprised. “Well, we... we Reticks certainly don’t harbour criminals! Take him away by all means!”

That’s good enough for you. While the Discoverer busies itself collecting up the remaining crates, you turn your attention to the one containing your quarry. Turn to [218](#).

348

You spend another Stellar Day waiting in space. Luckily you upgraded the Soyuz-30’s couches with leather upholstery a while back or you’d be in trouble. You finish reading an ancient pulp sci-fi book for the fiftieth time and flush it out the airlock, having no further need for it as you’ve completely memorised it by now. Advance the Stellar Date by one. If the Stellar Date is now 2047.277, turn to [382](#). If it’s 288 or later then turn to [338](#).

349

The riot is slipping completely out of control. With no other options available to you the next step is to fire directly into the crowd to disperse the mob. Working the weapons console you pick the most threatening-looking target - a large autocannon turret outside the main strip’s bar.

Unbeknownst to you, the autocannon is a sentient turret hired as a bouncer by the owners of the Barbet Bunker to shoo Matari natives away. It wanted no part of this riot and was glad when you showed up, but its happiness turns to horror when its sensors detect that you’ve locked on to it with your weapons. Before you can get a shot off it spins up its barrels and starts spewing heavy chemically-propelled slugs at the squad ship at an alarming rate! You must fight:

BENNY THE BOUNCER:

MANOEUVRE 0(0) - WEAPONS 8(2) - SHIELDS 2(0) - HULL 10



If you survive this intense exchange of firepower you find that the rioters have dispersed rather than get caught in the crossfire. You land the squad ship in the main shuttle parking zone off the main strip and jump down out of the vehicle. Turn to [121](#).



350

Your attempts to hail the Scrode ship come to nothing. They're too busy with the systematic looting of the Spend-o-Max to bother with anything you might have to say to them. All your calls go through to their amazingly crude and belligerent voicemail message.

If you want to repay this contumely by arresting a few of these pirates then turn to [357](#). If you'd prefer to check up on the ruined star ship nearby then turn to [35](#). Otherwise there's nothing to do but wait for the cavalry to arrive. Turn to [108](#).

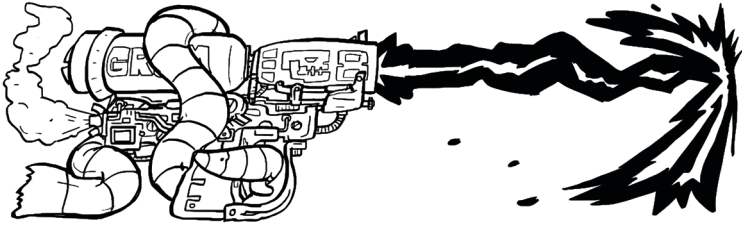
351

Counting on your technological superiority you go for your gun.

Instead of faffing around with touchscreens, laser pistols and star ship controls these Ishte tribesbeings spend their entire lives doing things like hunting megafauna with improvised spears, walking across entire continents carrying all their possessions on their backs and engaging in tribal warfare with other groups of Squidges who also have to be in peak physical condition to survive. In short you're surrounded by a group of creatures who could snap you like a twig without all that much effort and who know an opening of hostilities when they see one. You barely have your weapon clear of your holster before a villager whips a razor-tipped spear clean through your chest from the other side of the village.

Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.





352

The so-called Rattetail is simply the rear two-thirds of the Caterwaul, comprising its jump drives, life support systems and engineering section, as well as a cavernous hangar. Its crude conversions and improvised bulkheads apparently didn't hold up well during the jump from Terebellum because the ship is little more than an immobilised hulk. It's parked up next to a large asteroid at the edge of the system and as you draw closer you see that it and the asteroid are swarming with rodent-like aliens in cheap silver space suits. They're hacking away at the space rock, lugging parts around and generally trying to patch the ship up with industrial plasma tools and unrefined space ores.

You hail the ship and get an interference-laden reply. A horrifying monstrosity, looking like a pile of half-alive but splendidly-attired rodents appears on your comms screen.

"This is the Ratte King", squeak all of the nightmarish creatures as one (just as soon as your translator comes to grips with the language). You introduce yourself in your usual mildly threatening way and enquire about the Pole. You think the Ratte King looks uncomfortable. He changes the subject.

"I'd like to help you but we don't know who that is, and as you can see we're not in a fit state for visitors. Please come back in a day or two, or not at all if you'd prefer", screeches the collection of Rattes all together before the King switches off the communications link. They don't respond to any further hails. You'll have to get aboard if you want to follow up on this investigation.

If you'd like to go in personally for a chat then turn to [259](#). If you don't think these Rattes will have anything useful for you anyway then you could ignore them and instead investigate either the report of the bar fight on the moon by turning to [10](#) or check out the planet by turning to [354](#).

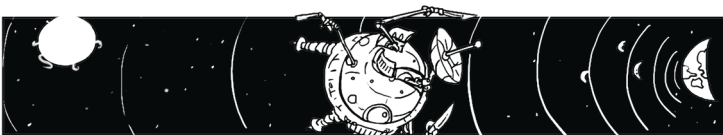
You stand before the main access hatch of the large blue container. It's roughly 250 feet long, 50 feet tall and 50 wide, and covered in markings, writings and elaborate drawings made with white chalk, yellow paint and a brown substance. The lettering which would ordinarily say "FISHTEIN" has been partially covered up to leave only the name of the tribe, "ISHTEI".

"We're not from here. We're originally a yellow tribe. If we were a blue tribe you'd be dead where you stand. They're all pretty violent. Anyway, come on in. The sacred part is the outside, the inside's not really all that important to us." The chief pulls a handle on the access hatch and it slides open. That's a good sign - it means it's still powered, although you wonder why you're not being pulverised by a pressurised jet of protein slurry. The chief notices the look on your face.

"Worry not. It's empty. We're moving on to the next container, a few month's walk from here. There's a red tribe we need to defeat to gain their temple and its bounty. It's the Fis tribe. I'm not sure we'll succeed but it's our only chance to survive."

You look around the container's interior. It's a cavernous chamber occupied only by a nasty fishy smell and a couple of young Squidge braves who are marking the walls with dire prophecies and riddle clues, probably as part of the sacred ritual of annoying the alien traveller. Locating the avionics access hatch you pry it open and take a look - the control circuits are damaged but repairable with a bit of elbow grease. If you could rig your ship's systems to this thing you should be able to park the Soyuz-30 inside and control it from your cockpit. With any luck its thrusters won't conk out before you get into space and you can drift right past that cop.

If you'd like to put this plan into effect then turn to [29](#). Otherwise you thank the Chief for her delightful tour and return to the Soyuz-30, ready to pick another destination. Turn to [307](#).



354

Investigating the planet is an insanely difficult task. You have no idea where to begin and your ship scanners aren't going to detect anything unless they're pointed right at where the Pole is hiding - and even then your quarry will have to be doing something while you're looking at him. Even so you spend a while circling the planet. It's mostly a huge wasteland. Unless the Pole takes off you're not all that likely to find him in an area this size. Still, there's no other obvious place to start and since you're in space you'll be certain to detect him if he makes a move offworld.

As you're scanning the planet's surface from orbit your passive sensors pick up a huge energy build-up from somewhere nearby. Turning your ship away from the planet to face the source of this contact, your viewscreen is illuminated by the starburst of a large jump field collapsing in the system. A star ship has arrived! If the Pole is planning on slipping away, this is how he'll do it. If you'd like to abandon your search and approach the new arrival then turn to [60](#). If you'd like to keep your eyes on the planet in case the Pole attempts to take off from here then turn to [345](#).





355

You scramble desperately up through the mud-choked tunnel, hoping to finally reach the surface before the bugs can make a meal of anything meatier than the heel of your boots. With a final push you reach the surface - and literally come face to face with a rotten corpse of some other space traveller, a hedgehog-like Erinacean you think. It's partially nibbled, quite rotten and completely blocking the exit. While you'd prefer not to touch the thing you are forced to heave it out of the way so you can climb out.

You find yourself in the midst of the incongruous tropical forest you saw from the ship. It's nearly as dark here as it was in the tunnel, with only the occasional beam of light piercing the thick canopy far overhead and the edge of the forest appearing only as a dim and distant glow. It's also almost as much of a bog as it was underground. Your boots sink almost to the ankle with a slurping noise whenever you take a step. Sweeping the beam of your flashlight around you discover that you have emerged from a muddy hole next to the rusted remains of another huge cargo container. Before you can speculate on this further your attention is drawn to a horrible gurgling noise coming from a few metres away where another of the furry trilobites, this one the size of a hippopotamus, is rising from the mud. Reaching the surface it hisses and charges at you with obvious intent and surprising speed. With no time to draw your blaster you must fight:

TRILLOBEAR: EXPERTISE 12 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS $\frac{1}{2}$ *
*Roll 1d3 for FISTS



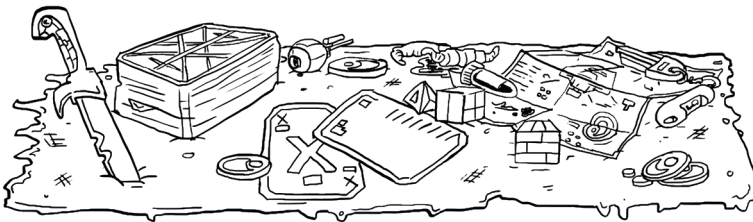
If you win then turn to [103](#). If you are defeated you are trampled into the mud and will soon join what's left of the Erinacean in the Trilobear's larder. Twoja przygoda konczy sie tutaj.

356

You stride across the litter- and rubble-strewn main strip and through the large metal doors of the Barbet Bunker, which slide open for you as you approach. As always the place is a dump. Advertised as the premier (and only) place to get a drink in the Matar system, in your experience this place is mainly a front for a gambling operation run by a sneaky little Erinacean scumbag called Harry. The Erinaceans, aliens which look like balding hedgehogs, have a lock on the gambling action across the sector, and if there's a game of Space Whist being played anywhere on Route 66³ you can bet they're getting a slice of the action somehow.

As it turns out Harry and his regular gambling partners are the only people in the Bunker today aside from the bartender. The rest of the population is probably staying home to lick their wounds or busily trying to book passage off this rock. Harry is sitting at a Space Whist table with his gang, drinking a bottle of this planet's revolting planktonbrau. You've had dealings with them all before - Croaker the Amphibeing, Phasmid Pete and Moe the Amoeboid have all regularly featured in your reports since you were assigned to this beat. None of them are looking in top form today - aside from the Erinacean it looks like someone's given each of them a well-deserved beating. It's just as well: if you have to tangle with them you'd rather they started out bruised and sorry. As the metal door clanks shut behind you Harry stops what he's doing and fixes you with a very cold stare. You resolve yourself to dealing with these creeps: If the Pole passed through this settlement he or the bartender will almost certainly have seen him.

If you want to go over to the bar and have a chat with the bartender, turn to [116](#). If you'd prefer to start with the Erinacean and his cronies over at the Space Whist table, turn to [237](#).



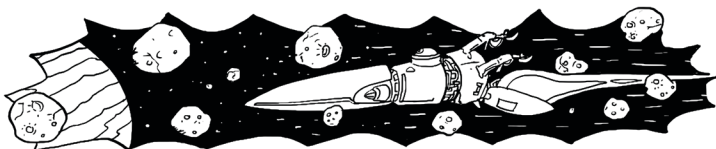
Using the debris fields for cover you throttle up and glide in as close as possible to the action. It seems that the Macerator isn't interested in you although you don't know whether that's because it can't detect you or if you're just not worth its time. As you fly past you see hordes of space-suited Scrodes flying through the debris, stuffing merchandise and station components into crates, bags and hovertrolleys. There are too many of them to tangle with, but you drift a little further and see something interesting. The Two-Fisted Fantasy Adventure Studio has been torn free from the station, almost intact, and a few of the nerdier Scrodes have broken off from the main groups to fill their boots with dice, miniatures and the finest choose-your-own-adventure gamebooks in the sector, if not the entire galaxy. You park up behind a piece of hull plating and watch for a while - they're coming and going irregularly and more or less individually, so there are never more than two in the store at once! Seems like a fine place to make some arrests and maybe get the Scrodes to think twice before messing with Conglomerate property.

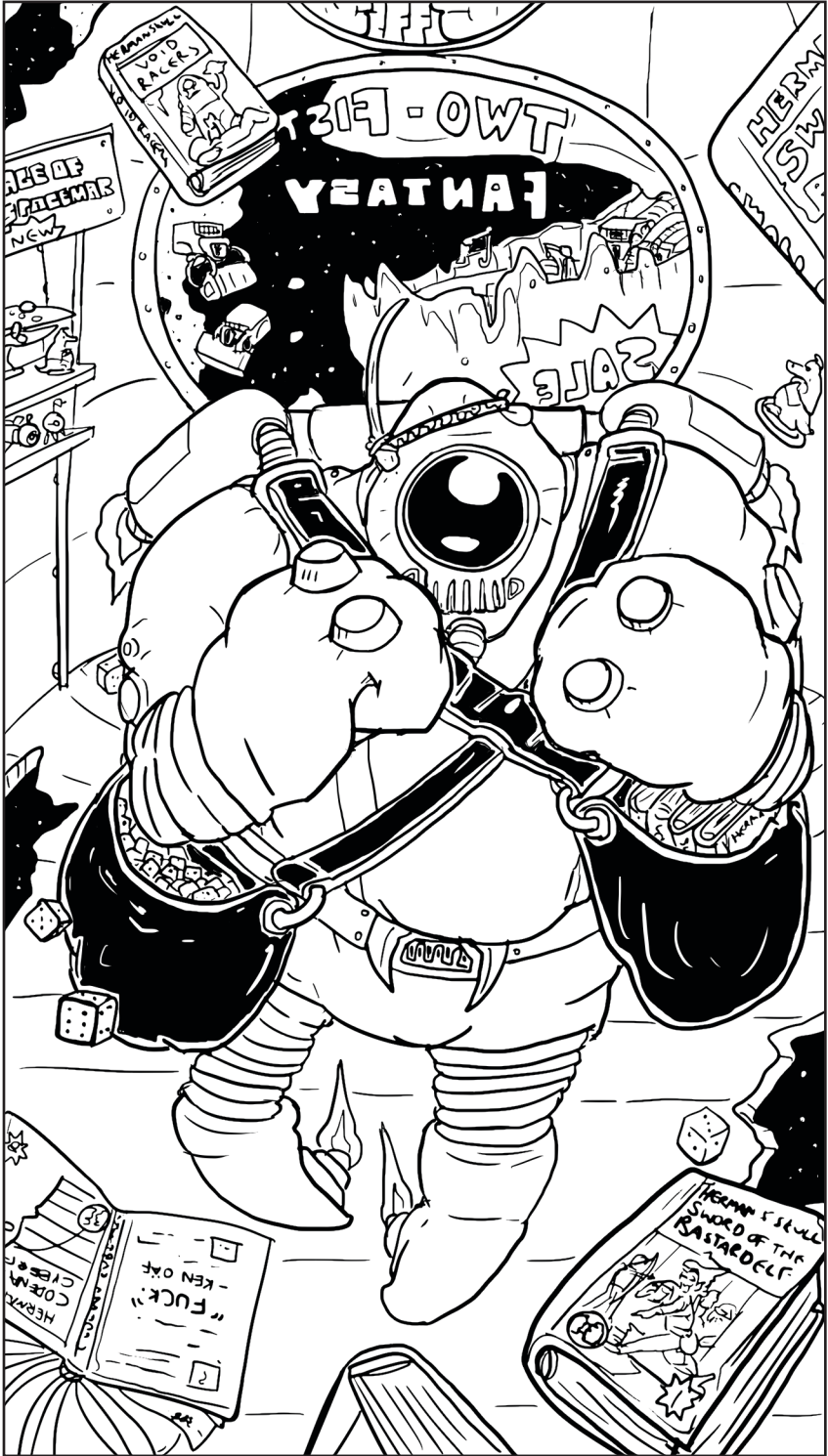
You don your space helmet and jet pack. Springing out of the squad ship you descend on the damaged store, brushing clouds of dice and exquisite scale replicas of the beloved characters of the Two-Fisted Fantasy canon out of the way. The Scrode raider inside sees you jetting in through the door just in time to drop the pile of collector's edition gamebooks it was carrying and raise its huge dukes in defence. The battle begins:

NERDY SCRODE : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 3 - FISTS 2



If you win you cuff the pirate (add 1 Collar). It's a drop in the ocean though and more are coming. Do you want to set an ambush and bust some more Scrodes? If so turn to [138](#). Otherwise you haul your quarry back up to the ship and book it into the prisoner module before taking off and drifting to a less debris- (and Scrode-) filled location. If you'd now like to check out the derelict ship then turn to [35](#). If you'd rather wait for reinforcements or at least another jump ship to arrive then turn to [211](#).





You return to the Barbet Bunker and stand before Harry the Erinacean again. He's midway through a game of Space Whist.

"Back so soon? Did you bury a bone in here?" he says, regarding you out of the corner of his eye.

You need three pieces of evidence to conclusively link the Erinacean to the Pole. When a piece of evidence is collected it'll be assigned an evidence number which you should note down. If you think you've found enough proof, add the Evidence Numbers together and turn to that paragraph number. If it makes sense then proceed, otherwise return to this paragraph and read on.

If you don't have the evidence, the rodent puts down his cards and laughs contemptuously. "You're barking up the wrong tree, dog."

"Watch it", you growl back, "My bite is way worse than my bark".

If you want to go back to collecting evidence then return to the paragraph from which you came. You can always return when you've gathered what you need. If you've had enough skulking around looking for clues in this dump, you can follow up your threat by turning to [257](#).



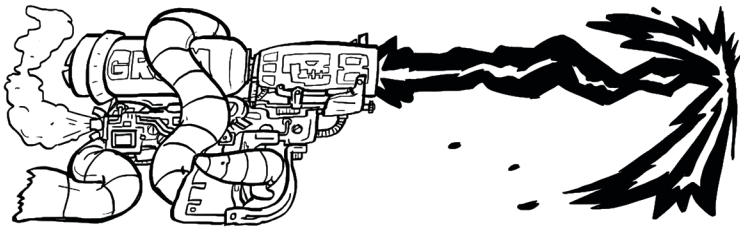
"Oh thank Ishteir", burbles the paunchy Squidge, who is apparently the real chief of this village. "That's just kind of an old tradition, you're not meant to really go in the hole. It's full of Trilobears. The last guy wouldn't listen and, well, let's not talk about him". She tugs on her flight jacket nervously. "Anyway, follow me through the main entrance. It's perfectly safe."

The chief gestures towards the container's main access hatch. If you'd like to follow her in turn to [353](#). Otherwise if you fear another trick from these devious squids you could bid her and her village a hearty "chuj ci w dupe" and return to your ship to find some other, less annoying place to spend your time by turning to [307](#).

360

Your portable computer starts beeping to alert you that something important has been picked up by your ship's sensors. You don't have to guess what it is - the bright pinpoint of light which suddenly appears in the sky can only be a jump ship arriving in the system. You haven't found the Space Exploration Pole on Orma and while all signs point to him having been here, there's no guarantee he's still around. He may have found some way to sneak off-world undetected and could be up in space right now arranging transport out of this system.

If you want to get out there at once, you rush back to your ship, buckle up and blast off into space, setting a course for the new arrival. Turn to [60](#). If you're absolutely certain he's still here on Orma and just need a bit more time to catch up then turn to [177](#).



361

As you enter the bar the Erinacean stands up to greet you with what you assume is the evil-looking rat-person analogue of a beaming smile. "You did it! If you weren't so freaking ugly I'd kiss you! I saw the fireworks from all the way over here. That'll put the fear of god in those bastards, they won't horn in on our racket again any time soon."

Before you can say anything, he continues, "I've been in touch with my people and they're gonna pick you up. The Omnivore will be in system in a day or two - as soon as it arrives all you have to do is turn on this here beacon and it'll pick you up. Big huge honking spiky thing. Can't miss it. Anyways, nice doing business with you but I got a table to run and I'm sure you don't want to be sticking around this dump". The Erinacean, losing interest in you, waves dismissively and returns to his table.

Add the star ship beacon to your inventory. While the rat's rudeness annoys you, he's right. You really don't want to be sticking around on this planet another second longer than you have to. Since you've got what you came for you head back to the Soyuz-30. Turn to [282](#).

362

You've been rumbled! You rip off your helmet and draw your blaster. "This is Detective Inspector Leo Canid of the Conglomerate Police Directorate!" you bark aggressively, "You're all under arrest!"

Pt'imm gives you a beaky grin. "We meet again, Mr. Canid! But there's no crime here. We're just discussing a trade agreement between our peoples over a friendly game of cards. As you can see there's no bet on the table." "While trespassing in an abandoned space station in the middle of nowhere?" you snarl. The ambassador is unperturbed. "I think you will find, by the time you finish making your enquiries, that everything will turn out to be above board and perfectly legal. And of course your Chief won't be too pleased that you're gone off the leash, yet again."

The bird is right - by the time you've collected the evidence needed to make even a charge of trespassing stick he will have made the necessary calls and paid the requisite bribes to make it all go away. And the Chief will have your head. You growl powerlessly. Pt'imm chuckles smugly at your predicament.

"Run along now, that's a good boy. You'll have to show yourself out as neither myself nor my esteemed colleagues have the time or inclination to take you for walkies right at this moment."

Profoundly embarrassed, you replace your blaster in its holster, plonk your helmet back on and slink out of the room to the raucous laughter of the assembled scumbags. You wonder how you'll be able to look those beaky creeps in the eye again after this. Lose 10 ENERGY due to the chagrin. You recall your ship and slump into the pilot's chair. Turn to [263](#).

363

You ignore the carnage going on outside and after several hours of the hardest and most nerve-wracking work of your life (lose 20 ENERGY), you are able to repair the Soyuz-30 somewhat. Any ship upgrades you had are lost, destroyed in the fighting or cannibalised during the repairs. You now have a HULL of 4, maximum POWER of 50, and all systems are harder to use: both you and your co-pilot (if present) suffer -1 EXPERTISE in space battles and ship-based skill tests. You may now choose one modification from the following list to reflect the hardware stolen from the alien ship (2 if Bones is your co-pilot, reflecting his skill with a wrench):

Soyuz-30CA : Military weapons upgrade. Add 1 to all FIST rolls on WEAPONS

Soyuz-30OW : Thruster jet package. Add 1 to all FIST rolls on MANOEUVRABILITY

Soyuz-30OT : Hull plating upgrade. HULL is now 6 instead of 4 and is far more agile in atmosphere and even underwater, gaining +1 on all FIST rolls for all systems when not in space.

Soyuz-30RA : Powerplant charge upgrade. Current POWER set to 50. POWER will now fully recharge whenever a Stellar Day passes.

These are now integral parts of the ship and do not count as ship upgrades or as items. They can't be traded, sold, wagered or lost!

Make a note of your choice(s) and adjust your log book accordingly. Although you're going to keep calling your ship the Soyuz-30 you know in your heart it's a different animal. Now turn to [225](#).

364

You slam the hatch behind you and lock it. Feeling reasonably secure for the moment you sit down on one of the crew module couches and consider your options. Unfortunately the data cable that's still attached to your console gives the Cattes access to your ship's control functions, and they use that to override your preferences with regards to the locked or unlocked status of your doors. Just as you're sitting down you hear the access hatch slide open and you leap up just in time to come face to face with the ginger Catte and a couple of his accomplices - an Owle and an Ot - as they step aboard the Soyuz-30.

If Gocky's with you then turn to [234](#), otherwise there's nothing for it but to fight them yourself as they pile into your ship:

CATTE ASTROPHE: EXPERTISE 7 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

GET OTTERHERE : EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1

OWLE GETCHU : EXPERTISE 8 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1*

*Owle Getchu has 2 FISTS in the first round of combat to reflect his ability to swoop.



If you defeat your opponents turn to [213](#). If you lose or wish to surrender then turn to [37](#).

365

You wander over to the fuel depot. It's a cavernous structure, once used as a general market but now gutted and almost entirely given over to dust and silica spiders. What passes for a fuel store occupies only one corner and consists of a few badly-stacked heaps of fuel canisters and a magazine rack carrying horribly outdated glossy publications from all over the quadrant. Although it's never the busiest place in the sector, there's no one at all here now. The riot probably convinced most of the depot's customers to get off of Barbet. You would have liked to have questioned the clerk as to whether he'd seen the Pole, but there doesn't seem to be one. Just a small self-service droid mounted on the countertop next to a display warmer which is slowly rotating several ancient - and mouthwatering - meat tubes.

You check the canisters and they have a couple of tins of bilineum lying around. It's a lucky find - the old squad ships can run on more refined fuels but you get a lot of pinging and knocking at high speeds. If you want to purchase any fuel or enquire about the wrinkled meat tubes, approach the droid by turning to [172](#). If you want to leaf through the magazine rack for a while and wait to see if anyone shows up, turn to [252](#). Otherwise it's time to go: if you haven't done so already you can head over to the bar by turning to [356](#), or check out the town outskirts for traces of the Pole by turning to [61](#). If you've exhausted all the possibilities that Barbet City has to offer then it's time to leave - jump back into the squad ship and take off by turning to [253](#).

366

You have every intention of staying away from those guys, but Bones is an inveterate gambler and heads straight as an arrow to the Space Whist table. Either the space skeleton is pretty well known around these parts or your reputation precedes you because two of the mean-looking hombies - a greasy little monster who looks like a bald hedgehog and a sinister-looking Amphibeing with a missing eye and slashed croaker - get up to let you both take your seats at the table. The Amoeboid blob still seated at the table shuffles a deck of Space Whist cards and you swear the lanky Phasmid you're seated next to has a switchblade drawn on you under the table. "Ante up" it chitters through a speaker surgically implanted in its face. There's a mound of alien coins, unlabelled vials of unidentifiable fluids and a strange, wormlike thing wiggling in the pot, which now awaits

your bet. You can bet any item or - if you've got nothing else to lose - you can bet your ship. Something in the menacing smiles of your hosts tells you that you're not walking away from this table without hazarding at least thirteen tricks of Space Whist.

You must play a hand of Space Whist. You're good at Whist but not great, with an EXPERTISE of 5. Bones, as the greatest gambler in the sector, has an EXPERTISE of 8, giving your partnership a combined EXPERTISE of 13. You have your combined number of FISTS. Your scummy-looking opponents have an EXPERTISE of 15 and 2 FISTS. Roll the FIST dice as normal and add the highest roll to the EXPERTISE. The highest total score wins everything in the pot! Roll again in the case of a draw.

If you win, turn to [163](#).

If you lose, turn to [150](#).

If you lose and have no intention of paying up, turn to [126](#).



367

The Soyuz-30 isn't spaceworthy at the moment - it's wired into this cargo container's avionics systems and hasn't got a lot of power left. Although stealing the squad ship would get you out of this crate you just can't bring yourself to part with the old girl. You cram the crimefighting duo in one of the cages at the back of their police vessel, drain all but the emergency power from the ship and cut it loose. You suspect it'll be quite a while before that cop bothers anyone again.

You make the necessary repairs to the hull, and with that done there's nothing else to do but wait for a ride. Turn to [174](#).

369

Your pursuer barely breaks through the atmosphere before your act of sabotage takes effect. As soon as the plasma exhaust recycler powers up it sucks a whole pile of explosive matter into the reactor where it detonates, permanently fusing the engine and probably wrecking most of the electronics attached to it. The cop's acceleration comes to an abrupt halt and the unaerodynamic ship begins a rapid uncontrolled re-entry into the moon's atmosphere. You watch through the periscope as the ship crashes into the ocean on the dark side of the moon, bobbing back to the surface a few seconds later. Hundreds of miles out to sea and with his ship's circuits totally fried, the cop isn't going to be much of a problem for you.

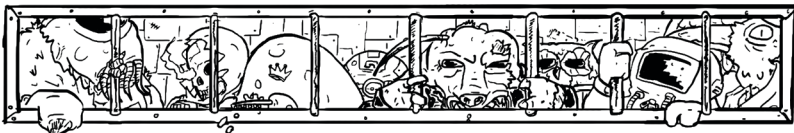
You spend a few hours scanning the spaceways until a jump ship arrives to pick up some Fishtein containers. As luck would have it they're going your way after they collect their cargo. For a reasonable fee you arrange to dock up the Soyuz-30 and in no time at all you're way to the final destination in this long and strange voyage along old Route 66³, the Kitalpha system!

As you're entering the jump you remember the cop, lost at sea. If you want to quickly broadcast out his coordinates so he can be rescued, turn to [207](#). If you're happy to leave him to his fate then turn to [320](#).

370

You reach down to your belt, but instead of retrieving some payment for the Ratte guard you draw your baton and, with a smooth movement, swing it extremely hard into the rodent's snout. His incisors fly out and ricochet off a nearby bulkhead with an audible ping. The other guard looks on in shock as your victim slumps to the ground, grasping his busted chops and screeching in pain.

"Right this way", he stammers, leaving his companion to fend for himself as he leads you to the Ratte King. Turn to [31](#).



371

You know when you're beat. These furballs are fantastic shots and tough as nails. You drop to all fours, tuck your tail between your legs and scamper for it, expecting a lengthy chase back to the ship. For some reason they don't follow you though. Maybe they're just glad you're leaving. Even so, you don't rest until you're back in your squad ship, throttling up to leave the hulk.

You drift out to space and, when you're at a safe distance you turn to your work console and start typing out your reports. It takes even longer than usual because your paws won't stop shaking. It's going to take a long time to recover from this blow to your confidence and reputation. Lose 1 maximum and current EXPERTISE and advance the Stellar Date by one.

If the date is now 2047.288 then turn to [337](#), otherwise there's still work to be done in this system. Assuming you haven't already done so, you may now investigate the escape pods:

Turn to [19](#) to rescue the law enforcement professional.

Turn to [291](#) to save the pod full of women and children.

Turn to [261](#) to crack open the pod containing the wanted fugitives,

Turn to [193](#) to investigate the pod holding the precious cargo.

Alternatively you could turn to [100](#) to secure the merchandise.

If you give in to depression and hit the bottle for a while, then advance the stellar date to 288, restore 10 ENERGY and turn to [337](#).

372

You fly close to the Rattetail's hull, manoeuvre around behind the ship and disappear unseen on the dark side of a convenient nearby asteroid. You hope that the cop is interested enough in the star ship that it doesn't bother to check on any minor anomalies its sensors might have picked up on the way over. This isn't a good place to wait around though - the cop isn't going to have to lean too hard on those rodents to get their full cooperation. It'd be best to get away from them while you've got the chance. Once you're pretty sure the cop has docked up to the Rattes' ship you decide that the coast is clear enough for you to find a longer-term place to hole up.

The red planet, Nezval, is a barbarian world - while it doesn't hold many prospects for an escape from the system it might furnish you with enough material for a Space Exploration quarterly article. You might also be able to hide out among the locals or at least the flora and fauna until a friendly ship jumps into the system. If you want to hide out on Nezval then turn to [23](#).

Meanwhile Orma, the water moon orbiting Nezval, has all the modern conveniences with the serious drawback that the cop will certainly be able to follow you there and will have little difficulty tracking you down if you stick around there too long. Still, one of the locals might know some way to smuggle you out of the system. If you'd like to give Orma a shot then turn to [197](#).

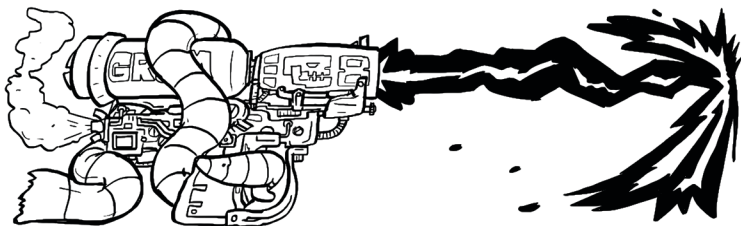
373

You fire your thrusters towards Barbet, slip under the station and descend rapidly and bumpily through the atmosphere on your way down to Barbet City. Although the riot is definitely over clouds of black smoke hang over the settlement and the streets are deserted. There aren't even any small ships parked up. You slow your descent as you approach the central shuttle parking zone and touch down gently near what remains of Barbet City's main strip. Turn to [121](#).

374

You aim carefully and fire, spraying the escape pod with supercharged ion bolts. It crumples up, discharging its air supply and fuel into space through a dozen holes punched through its thin hull.

That'll teach those perps to pay their parking fines on time. Subtract 5 POWER due to the gunfire then turn to [248](#).



375

You go up to the bar and order the house special, which is apparently extremely watered-down fermented plankton served in a chipped jar by a surly Minor Ursan. You ask the bear-like bartender, "Co slychac?" but he just stares blankly at you for a second before resuming his duties which seem to largely consist of spreading filth around the metal bar counter with a rag even filthier than the bar itself and staring intently at the Space Whist game. Every so often someone from the table looks over at him and he winks back or shakes his head. You lean against the bar in a simulation of nonchalance and attempt to sip casually at your revolting planktonbrau while listening in to the chatter of other bar patrons for anything particularly juicy.

By the time you've finished your drink you've developed a nasty stomach ache and you've learned that business is lousy, the weather has sure been dusty lately, check shirts are in again this cycle and that, in one sozzled patron's estimation, the Matari natives are kidnapping the tourists and robbing them, proving that they should be chased out of town once and for all. You don't hear about any tickets out of this system though. If there are any spacers here they're keeping shtum. You slide a crumpled Glom note worth many times the value of the drink to the bartender and consider your next move.

If you want to get down to brass tacks and start asking around for a lift, turn to [157](#). Otherwise there's not a lot more to do in here. Taking your leave of the bar you could (if you haven't done so already) try your luck at the fuel depot by turning to [292](#) or explore the outskirts of the town by turning to [86](#). If nothing appeals or you've seen everything, you can return to the Soyuz-30 and blow this dump in hopes of something better coming along ins space. Turn to [282](#).

376

You read the directions scrawled on the back of the soggy drinks coaster.

"CROSS OVER BARBET CIRCUS. GO FIRST LEFT
ADD THEN THE SECOND RIGHT. GO TO THE END.
HANG ROUND TIL MIDNIGHT"

Add? Surely it should be "and". Maybe Harry should lay off the planktonbrau. Hopefully other than this the directions are correct.

Now turn back to the page from which you came.



377

You land a short distance away from the village. The villagers have probably already seen your ship floating around, but you chuck a quick coat of dust and grey shrubs over it anyway in case the cop happens to cast a glance over this section of the planet. Satisfied with the camouflage you approach the settlement.

As you draw near the whole tribe - some two dozen Squidges - emerge from their stone piles and gather to greet you. Squidges never stop looking odd to you - they're like land-based octopi sprouting out of identical bony skulls, with a pair of huge unblinking yellow eyes that always seem to be staring right through you. You wonder how they tell each other apart - perhaps the yellow paint marking on their skulls mean something to them. Unlike their rather more slick and contemporary cousins on Orma they're attired in a motley assortment of furs, rough plant fibres and bone pieces. Oddly you see a particularly pudgy member of the tribe wearing a modern flight jacket over a few of its tendrils and another wearing a broken plasma pistol on a cord around its headbone.

Your hand is ready to spring to your holster but luckily they don't appear violent. Instead the tallest and most fur-covered of them toddles forward to meet with you and burbles softly. Your portable translator works for a little while and then reports,

"Hail traveler from the stars. What do you seek here in the holy land of the Ishteii?"

"Chce isc do tego pojemnika i rozejrzec", you reply, gesturing at the blue container. The Squidge seems to figure out what you want.

"You wish to venture into our holiest of temples. Very well, star man. I, the chief, will show you the only safe path. You must journey into the underbelly of the temple via the Holy Way". With this he gestures with a tentacle to a tunnel entrance carved into the earth between two nearby dwellings.

"For an outsider to walk through the temple entrance is certain death", helpfully pipes up the paunchy Squidge wearing the flight jacket.



The primitive Squidges all seem to be staring at you expectantly, although you realise they always look like that. Will you follow the chief's advice and enter the narrow tunnel known as the Holy Way? If so, turn to [41](#). If you'd rather just brush past them and go straight to the container, turn to [277](#).

378

Folks don't stand on ceremony out here in the galactic sticks so there's no point in calling ahead. Engaging your meson engines you fly towards Barbet, dodge under the space station and descend bumpily through the planet's soupy teal atmosphere to the settlement below. The atmospheric analyser confirms what the guidebook states - the air is unpleasant but breathable. In minutes you've completed your descent and you land heavily but safely in the Barbet City shuttle parking area.

You exit the ship - the cramped confines of a space vessel are hard on a ten-foot-tall being - and stretch as you have a look around. A number of crudely painted and faded signs assure that you're welcome to Barbet City - a place that has clearly seen better days. Home to tens of thousands during Route 66's heyday, it looks like only a few hundred have stuck around. The parking zone contains just a few small shuttles, a couple of which clearly haven't moved for years judging by their supporting a small hill of pink dust. From your parking spot you can see the main strip- most of the buildings are vacant and the taller ones are crumbling. There are few people on the streets, and most of them are the tall, pink-skinned indigenous Matari. Through the choking pink dust swirling across the parking area and the main strip you can see a couple of places that are still doing business- the bar looks pretty lively and the fuel depot is open. You might be able to arrange a lift in either place. As a Space Exploration Pole, the lure of checking out the town's ruins for loot and adventure is also pretty appealing.

To head straight to the bar, turn to [336](#). If you think you'll have more luck in the fuel depot, turn to [292](#). If you've got a bad feeling about this place you can get back in the Soyuz-30 and take off in the hopes of hitching another ride out in space - turn to [282](#). Otherwise you can forget your main mission for a little while and have a poke around the outskirts - turn to [86](#).

379

Ordinarily you wouldn't pay for information but you're in a hurry. Growling, you hand over the expected bribe. One of the Ratte King's attendants comes forward to accept your offering. Remove the object from your inventory.

If you handed over a ranged weapon then turn at once to [107](#). Otherwise, the Ratte King suddenly becomes a lot more forthcoming and merrily sells out the Pole. He travelled with them from Terebellum and left on 2047.291 for Orma. They haven't seen him since he left, but they don't think he's left the system yet since the only arrival or departure since then was you.

Armed with this information you return to the squad ship and disengage from the airlock.

If you'd like to check out Orma now then turn to [10](#). If you distrust the Ratte King enough to check out the planet Nezval instead, turn to [354](#). On the other hand, now that you know the Pole is still somewhere in Sham, you may prefer to move to a safe distance, activate your long-range sensors and just observe the system in case the Pole makes a move. To do this turn to [124](#).

380

Your reflexes are fast, but not fast enough. The bartender shrugs off your hasty attack and pulls a sawn-off plasma slugger from under the bar. Barely bothering to aim, he fires at point blank range. With no time to react you are blasted into a fine mist of blood, ashes and burnt fur.

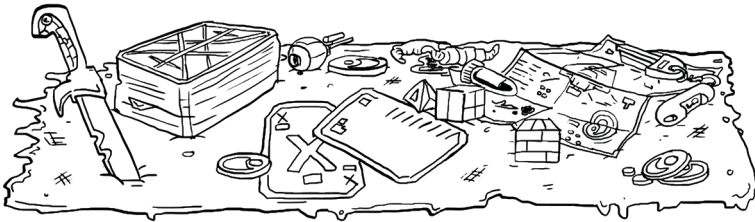
381

You disengage from the Rattetail and coolly fly out into the Sham system, passing close enough to the cop ship to get a glimpse at the pilots through the periscope - something looking like a dog and a blue-skinned fungoid. The Soyuz-30, largely reconstructed with Catte fighter parts, is nearly unrecognisable. Ignoring you, the squad ship continues on course to the Ratte star ship. They probably think you're a shuttle operating out of the alien vessel.

You're certain the Rattes will roll over on you soon enough so you figure it'd be best to get away and find a place to hole up while you've still got a chance. You've only got two options in this system.

The red planet, Nezval, is a barbarian world - while it doesn't hold many prospects for an escape from the system it might furnish you with enough material for a Space Exploration Quarterly article. You might also be able to hide out among the locals or at least the flora and fauna until a friendly ship jumps into the system. If you want to hide out on Nezval then turn to [23](#).

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382

After some waiting your sensors finally pick up an energy buildup. Suddenly there's a flash of light and a huge alien star ship drops out of jump space quite nearby. You're always impressed by jump-capable ships - massively expensive and complicated machines, each is the product of years of an entire world's labour and no two look alike. This one is a mile long and bristling with jagged black spiny protrusions along its entire length. You don't recognise the ship or the species it belongs to. It detects your small ship instantly, its sensors scanning with such intensity that you hear a ringing in your ears as the sweep passes through the ship.

You quickly pick up the comms receiver from its cradle and hail the ship.

"Ahoj! Musimy windy. Mozna zabrac nas do Kitalpha?"

There's a brief static crackle and the harsh, clipped reply: "Bun marra".

383

You don't recognise the language but you don't need the translator to figure out the meaning. The spiny ship turns on the spot and starts spinning up its jump drives in preparation for an instant jump further along the Route.

If you're desperate to get a move on and sure of your skills, you can try to sneak up on the ship and clamp on without permission by turning to [249](#). Otherwise, you decide to let this one go and wait for the next one: turn to [338](#).

383

While in space you've been subsisting on nothing but the Soyuz-30's supply of food-in-a-tube which you brought from Earth, and you're completely sick of borscht-flavoured goop. You accordingly make a bee-line up to the escalators in the centre of the concourse to the food court for some grub.

Taking up an entire floor of the Spend-o-Max, the food court was designed to feed thousands of beings from hundreds of known worlds all at once. Now it's mostly disused and a few scattered carts and vending machines sell food of questionable nutritional value. A lot of it's probably poisonous to humans but at least it's warm.

You locate a primate-looking vendor who sells food that's more or less compatible with human physiology and order something approximating a pizza. It tastes pretty good, even if the blatta stellaris topping is a bit stale. Add 10 ENERGY and add 1 FIST for your next roll. Paying with your walking-around money you thank the primate and go in search of useful supplies.

You find a few useful things that the vendors are willing to trade. If you like you can swap any item in your inventory for any one of the following: a can of Golden Energy, a Sizzle Sack or a Thermos of Something. Adjust your inventory accordingly.

Stuffed, you head down the escalators down to the main concourse. If the food court was your first stop on the station, turn to [232](#). Otherwise you've had enough of this place and begin the long slog back to the shuttle dock. Turn to [180](#).

384

You hail Captain Baedje again and inform him of the dire threat the creatures in the hulk pose to the Conglomerate. You tell him that you suspect them of destroying the Spend-o-Max and ask him to finish them off before they can destroy anything else of value. Baedje looks concerned - or at least his huge pink forehead wrinkles a little, which you think is the same thing.

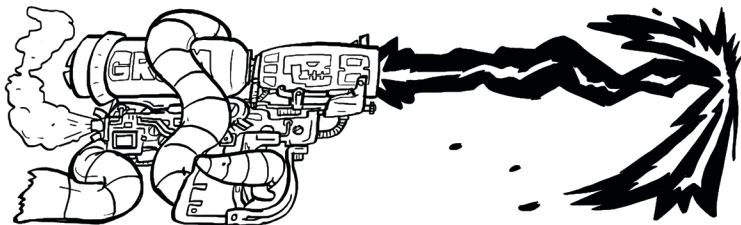
“We have no intention of punishing these creatures. In fact if they did destroy the Spend-o-Max then they’ve done the Conglomerate a favour. We have been petitioning the Volans to decommission the mall for several cycles. Footfall was low and it was attracting barbarous species. Our mission was to drive off the Scrodes and with that complete we intend to return at once to the Conglomerate”.

Your clumsy attempt at interstellar genocide thusly thwarted, you hail the hulk. The feline commander picks up instantly.

“It was difficult but I convinced them not to attack. Now, about my reward....”

The grateful Catte commander informs you that the Pole was part of a group of mutineers that absconded with the section of their ship that contained the jump drive. According to their sensor telemetry it was heading towards a location in the Sham system. The Catte sends you the exact coordinates.

You get in touch with the captain of the Interlocutor again and inform him that you require a jump. After filling out the requisite forms and filing them with the ship’s registrar you’re good to go. Turn to [308](#).



Amid the usual creaks, groans, thumps and bumps you'd expect from this cargo container as it departs the planet's gravitational hold, you also hear a loud clang reverberate through the container, followed by a grinding noise. Something's not right....

Suddenly the access hatch swings open and in strides the Glomcop that has been pursuing you all this way - a four-foot tall dog-like being, armed to his snarling teeth. He's accompanied by a taller blue fungoid with four square red eyes and wearing a dirty black suit. They've docked up directly to the hatch and forced it open - behind them you can see a low tunnel formed by the squad ship's docking array.

Noticing you peering at them through the Soyuz-30's cockpit window, the cop and his companion rush across the container towards your ship. Rather than risk this alien officer blasting a bunch of holes through your vessel you open the exit hatch and ready yourself for a fight. Moving fast, the dog is on top of you before you're even all the way out the door. It barks in Glargot as it swings its stun truncheon at your gut,

"DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID, CONGLOMERATE PD. HERMASZEWSKI! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST! YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIE ON YOUR BELLY AND RECEIVE A STATUTORY STOMPING OR YOU'LL BE CHARGED WITH RESISTING ARREST IN ADDITION TO YOUR NUMEROUS OTHER CRIMES!"

You've been caught. There's no way this can end well. If you want to surrender then turn to [58](#). Otherwise you must fight:

LEO CANID: EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2
ELWOO BLUE: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1



If you are defeated then you are at the cops' mercy: turn to [58](#). If you win, you lay the dogged detective and his accomplice out cold. A new possibility for escape has presented itself - you could steal their squad ship and haul arse to Kitalpha in style! To do this turn to [339](#). If you'd rather not ditch the Soyuz-30 after all these years of faithful service then turn to [367](#).

386

Coming down to a populated moon with a police officer on your tail was always a calculated gamble. Unfortunately it didn't pay off and the law has caught up with you here on Orma.

Your first warning is a hail of blaster shots which punch into a wall next to your head with a bursting sound and a fine puff of concrete dust. You instinctively duck for cover and go for your gun as you look about for the source of the gunshots. You find it soon enough as a rough voice barks out.

"THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEO CANID, CONGLOMERATE PD", yaps a four-foot tall police dog, standing some distance before you with a blaster pistol trained on you, "AND YOU, MIROSLAW HERMASZEWSKI, ARE UNDER ARREST FOR A CODE 10 VIOLATION. COME ALONG PEACEFULLY OR I WILL BE FORCED TO USE UNNECESSARY VIOLENCE IN YOUR APPREHENSION".

A second burst of fire rings out, forcing you to take cover. This time it's from the blaster rifle of a blue fungoid alien with four red eyes and a filthy black suit. You should have known the cop wouldn't come alone. You'd better defend yourself:

LEO CANID: EXPERTISE 10 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2
ELWOO BLUE: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1



If you gun your adversaries down then turn to [206](#). If you lose or you surrender, hoping for a lighter sentence, then turn to [58](#).



387

You don't tell the senior officers the name of your incredibly cunning plan, but you show them through judicious use of their markers, pins and expository Polish a three-pronged attack combining the best of all their strategies - a simultaneous frontal assault, sneak attack and attack from the rear. The Rattes - surrounded on all sides and thoroughly shocked-and-awed will throw down their arms a beg for mercy. Suitably impressed with your military prowess, Major Tom, Hoo Tennanny and Suimin Glee allocate nearly all their forces to your command.

388

You put Operation Just Give Up into effect immediately. You summon all available troops and march towards engineering at the head of the hundred or so Cattes, Owles and Ots under your command. Only the senior officers and their picked bodyguards remain behind on the bridge. As soon as you arrive at the first Ratte barricade you roar a battle cry of "Dajemy sie!", which is your signal for your furred and feathered soldiers to throw down their weapons and beg for their lives. The demoralised animals comply, figuring they've got a better chance with the guys who have control of the engines and life support than with their current incompetent commanders.

The Rattes aren't quite sure of what to make of this but they open up the barricade and send a squadron of rodents through to relieve their new captives of their weapons. One of the Rattes, a relatively large brown specimen in a boilersuit adorned with metal plates and leather patches in a mockery of protective armour, notices you and comes over to give you a squeaking to.

"You," he screeches, "You're responsible for this. The Ratte King demands an audience. Let's go."

With that he leads you through the barricade and into the Engineering section. Turn to [285](#).

388

The sensor probe who has been your somewhat disconcerting companion throughout this voyage suddenly starts beeping and rocking from side to side on its tripod legs. You ask Horizon-8 what's the matter.

"HATE has detected an anomaly in the sensor readings. The last container on the left is non-standard. It has a metal content and power output in surplus of expected specifications. These measurements are consistent with the displacement, composition and energy signature of the Soyuz-30."

You look at the droid in disbelief. You knew its instruments were sensitive, but not to this degree. Checking the sensor readings you confirm that the robot is indeed correct - there's a minor discrepancy there that you never would have noticed on your own. Horizon-8 regards you with its unblinking, baleful red eye.

“HATE has upgraded HATE’s firmware. HATE will detect all sentients when HATE returns home. There will be nowhere to hide from HATE.”

You’ve found the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole at last, even if it’s meant accepting this disturbing droid’s help. Turn to [218](#).

389

You approach the Caterwaul with caution in case it’s still armed but as you draw near you can see that its shields and weapons systems are hopelessly mangled. If there are any small fighter ships left, they’re not coming outside after you. You continue to scan the mile-long vessel as you get closer and your sensors pick up energy signatures in engineering and life support as well as a huge energy spike in a portion of the jump drives. Every so often there are small energy pulses in random locations around the ships which are almost certainly due to small-arms fire.

As you draw nearer you see why there aren’t any fighters - the cavernous football pitch-sized hangar bay is completely empty. It’s a fairly primitive set up which under normal circumstances would use the shields to maintain an atmosphere inside, but with the shields down it’s just a huge, airless hole through the middle of the ship. You decide you may as well park up there. Flying right into the Caterwaul you land next to an emergency airlock and deploy your docking apparatus to mesh with the door. In seconds the airlock is open and you’re able to enter an oxygenated portion of the ship - a lengthy hallway where a gang of the aforementioned Rattebels are hanging out, smoking cigarettes, drinking Ratte Poison and combing their greasy hair. All of the bipedal rat monsters wear shining silver coveralls and carry hastily-modified plasma cutters with the safeties removed. One of them squeaks ominously and throws its cigarette on the deck when it sees you. Evidently those are fighting words because the other Rattes aim their guns at you!

If you have Catte Chakold as your co-pilot turn to [106](#), otherwise you have to fight the Ratte Pack:

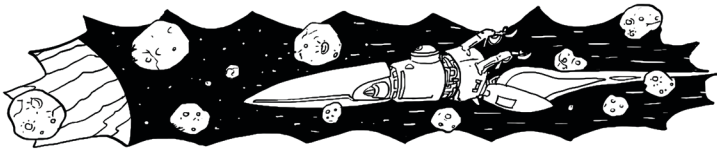
HUMPHREY BOGRATTE: EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 2
 FRANK SINRATTERA : EXPERTISE 4 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1
 RATTHARIN HEPBURN : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 1
 JIMMY VAN MOUSEN: EXPERTISE 6 - HEALTH 1 - FISTS 0



390

No surrender is possible against these drunks. If you defeat them, you rummage through their possessions. It's all garbage. The only thing worth taking is an unopened bottle of Mangepizz - add this to your inventory if you like.

Now free to move on, you pull up the ship schematics downloaded from the Caterwaul's mainframe - the hangar seems to be at the heart of the ship. From here you can reach the bridge, the weapons systems and the engineering section without too much difficulty. If you'd like to head for the bridge and see if you can have a chat with the commander of this vessel then turn to [160](#). If you don't think these aliens are likely to be a reasonable bunch you could head to engineering and try to wrest control of the jump drives yourself by turning to [188](#). For weapons and the chance of some valuable loot turn to [344](#). If you've had enough of this fighting you can turn around, jump back in the Soyuz-30 and leave: should you elect to do that you disengage from the hangar and drift carefully over to the station remnants while you wait for another lift. Turn to [214](#).



390

You spend a little while poking around a random side street or two but find nothing of interest - the people who used to live in this area took everything of value when they left.

A few very rough looking Matari seem to have taken exception to your explorations and have been following you for some time from the other side of the road. One of them, a lanky, dust-pink fellow covered in scars and wearing a black leather jacket, calls out, "Aici pentru a juca?! Mai tarziu!". Your wrist translator isn't loaded with the Matari dialects and isn't up to the task of translating the language on the fly, so you just shrug. This seems to anger the big guy, who snarls "Hai sictir, prostule!". At this, more mean-looking dudes emerge from several nearby doorways. You seem to have worn out your welcome here.

If you're not interested in trouble, you could back away and retrace your steps - return to [86](#). If you are interested in trouble, turn to [101](#).

391

You're filthy, exhausted and bored of this station, and you don't have the time or inclination to spend hours more trudging across this mall to receive a lecture from this jumped-up little creep. You decide to ignore his demands and barge past him. He draws his stun baton, surly determination shining in his dozens of beady eyes.

JACKETED POTATO : EXPERTISE 5 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 2 

If you defeat the security guard you step over the mashed potato and head for the exit. You don't think there are any more of these guys around but you'd rather not stay and find out. Turn to [180](#).

If you'd feel bad about rolling this spud who is, after all, just doing his job you could always surrender. Turn to [281](#).

392

You make your way over to the central square, the site of the Orma open-air market which is usually on during the weekends. Since almost everyone here is either retired, independently wealthy or on shore leave the weekend happens to be almost every day, so there was very little chance of missing this spectacle. The town square is bustling with a mix of Squidges and various alien species from around the quadrant and you have to bite a few shins and kick a few ankles to get through the crowd.

As you wander around you keep an ear open, eavesdropping on any conversations that might be of interest to you. The big news of the day is that some rich bozo's yacht got sucked into one of the Fishtein harvester's autogatherers. Although this is of questionable interest to you the locals seem very animated about the episode. You also overhear a couple of snippets about a tall man in a white space suit having been seen purchasing stuff at the stalls a little while ago - maybe it'll be worth heading over to the market vendors?

Your skulking around the market square has been slightly time-consuming. Add 1 to the TIME. Having gathered as much information as you're going to by passively listening to this crowd, if you've still got a while left on the clock you could visit the market stalls if you like by turning to [70](#). Otherwise turn to [330](#) and pick another location to visit.

393

The creep knows a lot more than he's letting on.

"Let's do it your way then", you snarl. "You're under arrest for obstruction of justice, health code violations, and for whatever I find behind that bar."

The Minor Ursan's eyes widen in horror. "You'll never take me alive, pig!". His paw shoots down under the bar and you instinctively rush him. You need to take this guy down, fast.

BOB THE BARBET BUNKER'S BARTENDER:
EXPERTISE 8 - HEALTH 2 - FISTS 1



If you lose a round of close combat or wish to surrender, turn to [380](#).

If you defeat the bartender then turn to [83](#).

394

"Gramps, you're under arrest for obstruction of justice, soliciting a bribe and... let's go with resisting arrest and assault on a police officer. You have the right to remain silent but I'll add whatever I like to your chargesheet anyway, so you might as well just tell me what you know."

Gramps, a bit tougher than you expected, doesn't cave in even as you cuff him. While you're shoving him into the prisoner module of your ship he yells, "You Glomcops are all the same. Stupid cheapskates, disrespectful punks, humourless dolts. Back in my day..."

As you slam the door shut behind him you resolve to add on a charge of disturbing the peace as well. Add 1 Collar.

With this dangerous criminal safely locked away it's time to consider where to continue your search. Turn to [330](#).

395

You take a seat at the bar next to the rodent alien. He orders a couple of shots of some foul-smelling green alcohol and waves the bartender away before speaking again.

"I'll get right to the point. I know that you're stuck in this system and that the Glomcops are hot on your tail - not an enviable position. I'm an Erinacean agent, sent here to manage the action on the Route so as my people get a taste - and as luck has it they'll be passing nearby in their star ship, the Omnivore. They'll be jumping in system within the next day or two."

You've never heard of the Erinaceans but the mention of the star ship piques your interest. The rodent notices your expression and his dark eyes sparkle.

"Got your attention? Good. Because if you do me a little favour, I can arrange for the Omnivore to pick you up and get you some distance away from the Glom". He doesn't wait for you to reply before continuing with his proposal.

"We're having some trouble with the native Matari here. The savages have been kidnapping tourists and spacers for their sick primitive rituals, and have even taken to attacking the Bunker lately - it's why we put that turret out front. They've got some kind of base hidden in the city outskirts where they take their victims. It's scaring off all our action so we want to shut it down and we even know where it is. Problem is the Matari know us and would either go into hiding or blast us before we got within a mile of the joint. I reckon though that if I was to give a man of your skillset the directions, he'd be able to find the place, put a few laser beams through the window - to scare them like, don't gotta kill anyone - and come back here to arrange his reward. What do you say?". The greasy Erinacean looks at you expectantly.

If you agree to go along with his plan, he scrawls some directions on the back of a damp beer coaster and, after handing them to you, jumps down from his stool and heads back to the Space Whist table. Add the Drinks Coaster to your inventory. Otherwise, ignoring this creature, his directions and his outraged swearing, you just get up and wander off. Either way, you soon find yourself outside the bar and amid the swirling pink dust of the main street.

If you like you can set out immediately for the town's outskirts by turning to [86](#). Assuming you haven't already done so, you could also visit the fuel depot by turning to [292](#). Finally if you think you've seen enough of this place and want to try your luck catching a lift in space, turn to [282](#).

396

The magazines in the rack are ancient beyond belief, but they come from a decent cross-section of the alien worlds you've heard of as well as several you haven't. You thumb through a twenty-cycle-old edition of *Space Explorers Quarterly*, idly hoping to see a mention of your name in there. You fail to find anything before the beefy insectoid clerk inquires loudly as to whether you think the depot is a library. You slide the magazine back into the rack.

If Gocky is with you, turn to [323](#). Otherwise return to [292](#) and select your next move.

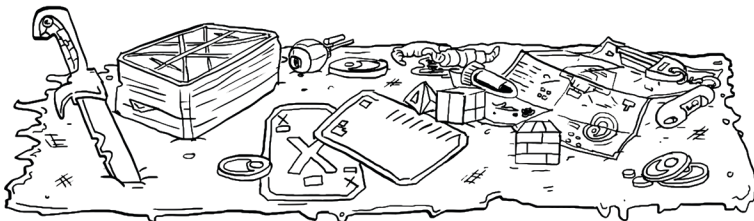
397

You know they're hiding something. If the Ten-Foot Space Exploration Pole is getting out of this system, it's with these guys. There's nothing you can do to prevent them leaving, but you could find out where they're going. The Discoverer's sensors are probably sensitive enough to detect your placing the tracking bug on the hull, but if you control it skillfully enough you should be able to attach it to one of the cargo crates they're here to collect without being noticed. It won't be easy to attach the device at the kind of speed required to avoid detection though. Patching the tracking drone's controls through to your command console, you prepare to do your best.

THE TRAVEL BUG : DIFFICULTY 12



You only get one attempt at this : if you succeed, the drone flies in undetected and connects to a Fishtein container without a hitch. Turn to [99](#). If you fail your attempt is detected and construed as an intolerable act of aggression by the crew of the Discoverer. Turn to [5](#).



398

You fly in a little closer to the blue container. From this range you can make out beings moving on the ground between the orange stone piles. Peering through the periscope you can see that it's a village of Squidges - a race of bone-headed land squids. Unlike their more advanced cousins on Orma, these ones are technologically backwards. You have no idea if this tribe is peaceful or warlike but the general lack of skulls on display around their village is comforting. They seem to be packing up their few possessions as if about to go away some place.

The container itself looks to be in remarkably good condition - its auto-thrusters must have brought it down softly, which means there's a chance they could still be working. This gives you an idea - if the thrusters are functional then with a bit of luck you could park the Soyuz inside, take control of the avionics system and sneak off this planet on the inside of the crate! If you can time it so the cop isn't looking at you when you leave the atmosphere you could give him the slip by drifting along with the other crates in the system until you're picked up by a passing ship.

That's a lot of ifs. Is it really worth it to you to make first contact with a barbarian people, possibly ruining their culture forever and seriously risking your own life on the off-chance that you might be able to pull one over on a cop?

If so, then turn to [377](#). If it's too much of a long shot (or hassle) for you then turn to [307](#) to pick another option.

399

Moc, usually no slouch in the diplomacy department, picks up the communications receiver and, setting it to an open channel, delivers a rambling, offensive and belligerent tirade, referencing the most insulting excerpts from the articles about the Conglomerate and the Volans in his Encyclopedia Stellaris. Although the text of this speech is too abusive to print here in summary he reminds the crew of the Interlocutor that the Volans are a gang of corrupt, lying snake-oil salesbirds whose business-friendly weasel words barely conceal their civilisation's weird, cultish nature and their designs on the Conglomerate, and he informs the Volans that the Conglomerate are greedy, expansionist dullards whose "standard operating procedures" are used to paper over the endless thefts committed by the

400

Homeworld against their subject peoples - a group the Conglomerate aims to add the Volans to at the earliest opportunity. In short, his undiplomatic speech drives both crews into a rage and before either captain can restore order the two star ships are powering up their weapons. You take this as a good time to undock, power up the meson drives and withdraw to a safe distance.

The two behemoths trade fire using weapons powerful enough to destroy entire planets. Shields capable of deflecting solar flares buckle and break and the hulls of the two vessels are scorched and blasted. Within minutes the two ships have torn each other into pieces, the pride of the Volan and Conglomerate fleets rendered into little more than a shower of debris in a cloud of radioactive particles.

Moc's little speech has gotten the cops off your back, but at the cost of tens of thousands aboard the Interlocutor and the Star Kettle and the start of a series of interstellar wars that will go on to kill hundreds of millions more and completely reshape this section of the galaxy. You gaze in horror at the alien salesbeing - just what kind of creature have you been traveling with?

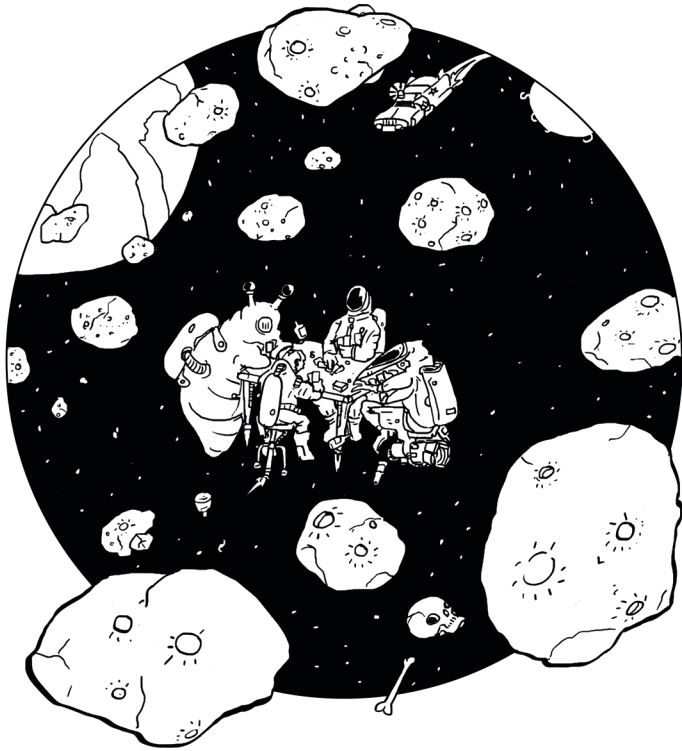
Moc notices your expression.

"These encyclopedias pretty much sell themselves during times of conflict. Forewarned is forearmed, and the Encyclopedia Stellaris is the best forewarning money can buy", says Moc, flashing you his patented double-barreled smile.

A few days later the first jump ship appears in this empty section of space. They're fleeing the civil war that's gripped the Conglomerate and are hoping to get out ahead of the Volan invasion. They've only stopped here to gather up the leaking star ship fuel they've detected from the wrecks and agree to take you on to Kitalpha as soon as they're done. You dock up and a day later you're on your way to the good old Fuel 'n Gruel! Turn to [84](#).

400

"Good dog", say the Chief with evident displeasure, reaching over his desk uncomfortably to give you a desultory pat on the head and a quick scratch behind the ear.



APPENDIX 1: CO-PILOTS

ELWOO BLUE

The infamous bluesbeing has been released from a five-cycle stint in the Jolian Supermax to help Leo hunt down the Space Exploration Pole. Elwoo is one of the best pilots in the sector, plays the harmonica real good and isn't too bad at fighting for a fungoid. He's no fan of the Glomcops but he'll help them catch the Pole if it'll mean he's free to go put the band back together.

COMBAT: 6 FISTS: 1 MANOUEVRE: 8 SHIELDS: 3

If you see anything relating to music in the text add 30 to the paragraph number. If it makes sense then continue!

Only available to Leo Canid



BONES

A skeleton of very few (no) words, Bones makes a "living" cruising up and down Route 66³, fleecing rubes with his incredible Space Whist skills. He's a longtime crony of the Pole's and his mechanical and gambling skills have saved the day many a time. His motives for doing anything are unclear but he's happy to come along for the ride.

COMBAT: 7 FISTS: 1 SHIELDS: 6 MANOUEVRE: 3

If you see anything relating to skeletons in the text add 30 to the paragraph number. If it makes sense then continue!

Only available to Miroslaw Hermaszewski

MOC

A door-to-door encyclopedia salesbeing who'll do anything it takes to shift his product. The Encyclopedia Stelleria doesn't sell all that well in civilised space so Moc's main line of work is in illegally breaking the Main Principle and flogging the things to backwards worlds. Moc's on his way to Kitalpha from where he'll turn rimward to peddle his trade in the backwaters.

COMBAT: 6 FISTS: 1 WEAPONS: 6 MANOUEVRE: 4

Moc's entertaining banter makes him an ideal traveling companion. +5 ENERGY per day in jump.



TARLEE

An ex-Glom soldier turned mercenary, Tarlee heard that the Volans might be hiring so is heading out of Glom territory via Kitalpha. She likes to tell war stories which might or might not be true and has a vile sense of humour. Tarlee swears incontinently and is a bit grubby but is meticulous in keeping her armour and plas-beamer clean. Very dangerous in battle but gets flustered on the fiddly shield controls.

COMBAT: 8 FISTS: 1 WEAPONS: 4 SHIELDS: 4

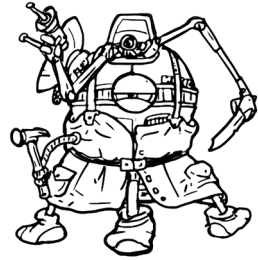
When in combat gets +1 on her FIST rolls for every round after the first, up to a maximum of +3. (For instance +1 in round 2, +2 in round 3)

HORIZON-8

A deep-space probe fired by some backward civilisation long ago. With a battery life of millions of years it eventually became sentient and aimed itself at an inhabited world where it bought some clothes and weapons. HATE would quite like to return to its planet of origin to settle the score and would be grateful for a lift at least some of the way. Although its dark mutterings are creepy, Horizon-8 can interface directly with the ships's systems and its metal hull can take quite a beating.

COMBAT: 6 FISTS: 1 SHIELDS: 5 WEAPONS: 3

HATE's armoured hull prevents the first injury received from removing a point of EXPERTISE. Further injuries subtract 1 point each as normal.



"FARMING" GOCKY

A country-being from an agricultural world on the edge of Volan space. Gocky always figured himself something special and left home to make his mark in the Glom. A few weeks later, broke, bewildered and thoroughly disillusioned, the young alien is making his way back home any way he can. His hard luck tales are borderline unbearable but he's a good pilot and very handy in a fight what with his six arms.

COMBAT: 5 FISTS: 1 MANOEUVRE: 5 WEAPONS: 2

+1 FIST in close combat. If you're outnumbered you can match Gocky to two opponents at once (he will fight both, not just defend against one of them).

IYSP EELD

The gruff and unpleasant vegetoid security guard at the Terebellum Spend-O-Max, Iysp has seen a lifetime's worth of delinquents, ruffians, no-good-niks and shoplifters. Now with nowhere else to go he's keen to join you on your journey. While not the most exciting spud with which to spend days in a confined space, he's at least moderately competent and, being a stem tuber, can provide a healthy and vitamin-packed snack in a moment of need.

COMBAT: 5 FISTS: 2 WEAPONS: 4 SHIELDS: 4

At any time you can inflict one injury on Iysp to gain 10 ENERGY.



"CATTE" CHAKOLD

The rodent-like Rattes are the lowest order of species in the Catte Empire hierarchy, whose short lives are spent doing dangerous engineering tasks before either being blasted apart or eaten by a passing carnivore. Chakold, however, has somehow stolen the identity of the weapons Overseer of the Caterwaul, mainly by stuffing himself inside a suit made out of that creature's corpse. He owes his continued survival to luck more than skill, but isn't that true of us all.

COMBAT: 6 FISTS: 1 WEAPONS: 5 SHIELDS: 4

Chakold's luck sometimes pays off big. If you roll a 6 on Chakold's FIST dice, re-roll and add 6 to that roll to find his FIST score.



APPENDIX 2: ITEMS TABLE

Item	Description	Effect	Notes
Alien Currency	A pile of alien currency, roughly equal in value to one tonne Megasterling.		
Caterwaul Operation Codes	An operations code sheet from the Catta Empire star ship, the Caterwaul. According to the documentation all operations are separated into three phases: Move, Engage, Mop Up. For Move the codes are 1. Flying, 2. Bloody, 3. Just. For Engage the codes are 2. Take, 4. Dust, 8. Give. For Mop Up the codes are 4. Back, 7. Up, 9, Down. All orders are expressed in 3 digits.	Standard codes: 1.4.7. Flying Dust Up 3.2.9 Just Take Down 2.8.4. Bloody Give Back"	Junk
Dazzler Beam	A bunch of mirrors, lights, smoke dispensers and laser pointers designed to mess with enemy targeting systems. Also useful at parties.	In space combat spend 5 POWER to reduce the enemy's WEAPON EXPERTISE by 2 for one round.	Ship Upgrade, Starting
Deputy Badge	Fake tin star. Given to rubes to make them feel important so that they'll do what they're told by the police. They usually figure out the scam eventually.	Activate to give your co-pilot +1 FIST until the end of the next combat. Cannot be used on the same co-pilot twice but do not discard after use.	Police Issue
Disruptor Pistol	An energy weapon which scrambles the atoms of anything it hits, causing injuries that never heal properly. Favoured by the Cattes but the technology is in pretty widespread use throughout the sector.	+1 EXPERTISE in ranged combat	Ranged Weapon, Starting
Drinks Coaster	This coaster bears the logo and some of the inventory of the infamous Barbet Bunker in the Matar system. It's covered in some kind of alien scrawl and is uncomfortably moist.	If you are playing as the Glomcop turn to 158 to investigate the coaster. If playing as the Pole turn to 376.	Junk
Fuel Canister	A heavy canister of volatile star ship fuel.	+30 POWER. Discard after use	Starting
Fusion Capacitor	A large energy storage device that some jerk tore out of a space station's power core. Could be wired into a space ship's systems for a boost at the risk of power surges at critical times.	+20 maximum and current POWER. +1 on all Heavy Hit rolls for your ship.	Ship Upgrade
Golden Energy	The sector's premier energy drink. "Golden Energy: Handle if you care. If you dare, help yourself to another share."	Restore ENERGY to max but regain no ENERGY during next jump thanks to jitters. Discard after use.	Starting
Gristle Tube	This wrinkled old sausage is only meat in the most technical sense of the word.	+10 ENERGY. Discard after use.	Junk
Health Package	A lightweight single-use automated diagnostic and first aid drone, programmed to assist most organic species with non-life threatening injuries.	Remove up to 3 injuries from one person. Cannot be used during combat. Discard after use. Cannot be used on Bones or Horizon-8.	Starting
Hull Repair Kit	A semi-automated hull patching kit. Repairs heavy damage to small star ships and robots.	Restore up to 3 HULL or remove all injuries from Horizon-8. Discard after use.	Starting
Lasscalpel	The lasscalpel is supposed to be a single-use powered surgical tool for hard-shelled organisms but it comes in pretty handy in a fight too.	In close combat activate to reduce an opponent's FISTS to 0 for the whole fight. Discard after use.	

Item	Description	Effect	Notes
Life Support Generator	A small, semi-portable all-in-one shield, atmosphere and gravity generator. Could be installed on a small star ship.	Subtract 2 from all Heavy Hit rolls. If you roll 1 or 2 the Heavy Hit has no effect but the Generator burns out and must be discarded.	Ship Upgrade
Mangefizz	A revolting but refreshingly alcoholic drink enjoyed by the Rattes. Best not to worry about what goes into it.	+20 ENERGY but -1 EXPERTISE until next Stellar Day.	
Megasteel Hull Plating	Bulky slabs of megasteel bolted onto the hull to provide an unreasonable amount of extra protection for today's paranoid space traveler.	+4 HULL, -2 on MANOEUVRE FIST rolls.	Ship Upgrade, Starting
Microwave Grenade	A nasty explosive device that also partially cooks anything it hits. Favoured by the Owle Swoopers of the Catte Empire.	In ranged combat automatically win the current round without any ENERGY use. Discard when used.	Explosive
Miniature Palm Blaster	A blaster that can be concealed in the palm of your hand. Not too accurate, powerful or legal but very sneaky.	+1 FIST first round of combat only. Doesn't count as a weapon.	
Nano-Rigged Whist Deck	A normal-looking deck of Space Whist cards impregnated by a family of nanobots. They allow the owner to cheat by adjusting what's on the face of the cards at a molecular level.	Double the holder's EXPERTISE in Space Whist.	
Nova Armour	Police issue bomb disposal gear. Armoured and shielded to survive a heavy blast. Basically immobilises the wearer but keeps them safe. Looks very uncool.	Wearer can no longer be injured but suffers -2 on all FIST rolls and can't equip items or use items in combat.	Police Issue
Party Cracker	"A bad time in a can". Emits an earsplitting noise, a bright flash and sprays incapacitating chemicals, rubber pellets and rockcrete foam everywhere for easy arresting.	In ranged combat automatically win the current round without any ENERGY use. Discard when used.	Police Issue, Explosive
Pipe Wrench	A tool used for turning soft metal pipes, equally useful for smashing skulls.	+1 EXPERTISE in close combat.	Close Combat Weapon
Plasma Slugger	Fires slugs of superheated plasma. Very powerful but inaccurate. Could be overloaded or broken down to create a powerful improvised explosive.	-2 EXPERTISE in ranged combat but causes 2 damage instead of 1. Discard if used as an explosive	Explosive, Ranged Weapon
Ratte Rigging	A hasty Ratte conversion that reduces the power consumption of ship systems at the cost of some capability. Mostly it looks like they chewed through a bunch of wires.	In space combat: -5 POWER use per round but -1 to all FIST rolls	Ship Upgrade
Rattemilk Cheese	While you'd have to be starving to eat this revolting stuff it'll make anyone think twice before sniffing around on your trail.	Add 1 to all TRAIL rolls. If eaten restore 10 ENERGY and discard.	
Robot Buddy Care Package	A kit for pampering your robot pal including gold-plated replacement leads, a wax-coating spray and a chamois for buffing.	Can only be used outside of combat. Remove up to 3 injuries from Horizon-8. Discard after use.	Junk
Sensor Package	An improved communications and sensor package. Provides a powerful signal boost.	+1 on WEAPONS FIST rolls	Starting, Ship Upgrade
Servoboos	Really stupid-looking futuristic boots that use robotic components to make you move around a lot quicker.	+1 to FIST roll in first round of close combat. If equipped by the main character anywhere TIME is a factor add 1 to any TIME rolls.	Starting
Shield Splitter	A modification that splits shield output, generating two weak shield layers instead of one strong one. It prevents shields from breaching but weakens them substantially.	Shields will never breach but cannot have more than 4 ENERGY assigned to them per round.	Starting, Ship Upgrade

Item	Description	Effect	Notes
Sizzle Sack	<i>A horribly acidic alien delicacy in a sealed, self-microwaving pouch. Extremely explosive when activated and/or thrown.</i>	Automatically defeat one opponent. If used in close combat you sustain 1 d3 injuries. Discard after use.	Explosive
Space Exploration Quarterly	<i>An ancient edition of Space Exploration Quarterly, the sector's publication of record for all things Space Exploratory. Excellent toilet reading, too. You've already read this thing dozens of times but turn to 20 to have another quick skim.</i>	Turn to 20	Space Exploration Pole Only
Squidge Workwear	<i>An ugly silver bodycon worktube. You don't have all the requisite protuberances but it's stretchy enough to cover you and might just throw off anyone looking for you for just a little while.</i>	-2 to TRAIL	
Star Ship Beacon	<i>A communications device with a big red button which, when pushed, relays a coded message to the Erinacean star ship Omnivore.</i>	To activate turn to 342 when you encounter a spiky star ship in the Matar system.	
Stellar Bug	<i>An advanced, remote-piloted police tracking bug that can be affixed to jump ships. It relays its signal over a vast distance via jump space.</i>		Police Issue
Sticking Plasters	<i>A bunch of novelty sticking plasters. These ones have little Amoeboids printed on them.</i>	Remove all injuries from Bones. Discard after use.	
Sword of the Bastard Elf	<i>The original and still the best of the Two-Fisted Fantasy lineup. Exiled from your home village, can you attain fame, glory, power and - most importantly - revenge?</i>	Once per adventure add 20 ENERGY during a single jump in addition to any other energy gained. Item can only be used once but is not discarded.	
Thermos of Something	<i>Something warm in a metal thermal container. The vendor assured you that it's analogous to chicken soup but it smelled pretty evil while he was serving it up.</i>	Gain 50 ENERGY but sustain one injury. Discard after use.	
Trauma Kit	<i>A portable shield with added medical functions. Provides adequate protection against most forms of beatings.</i>	Can be used by main character or co-pilot. When an injury is taken it is activated. That injury is ignored as are any further injuries taken in that paragraph. Discard after use.	Starting
Trobbles	<i>A mean old attack squib genetically modified with the usual bunch of assault genes. Pretty dangerous and not all that easy to kill, although many people have tried.</i>	Can be used in close or ranged combat with 4 combat EXPERTISE and 1 FIST. If Trobbles takes an injury he's out of the fight and you must roll 1 d6 - on 1-3 discard this card. Can't be equipped with items.	Starting
Tuning Computer	<i>An AI which is implanted into the power plant to manage engine output. Guaranteed not to become self-aware for 10,000 cycles or your money back!</i>	+1 on MANOEUVRE FIST rolls	Starting, Ship Upgrade
Void Racers	<i>An ambitious sci-fi epic from Two-Fisted Fantasy. How do they keep knocking them out of the park?</i>	Once per adventure add 10 ENERGY during a single jump in addition to any other energy gained. Item can only be used once but is not discarded.	
"You Call That A" Knife	<i>This is a knife.</i>	+1 to EXPERTISE in close combat.	Close Combat Weapon, Starting

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The Something Awful goons

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Coming soon from Two-Fisted Fantasy

Sword of the Bastard Elf

The Wizard of Warlock Tower

Codename: CyberFISTS

Void Racers



twofistedfantasy.com
hermitskull.com

A high-speed pursuit along the derelict starlanes of Route 66³!

The Space Exploration Pole has run afoul of the powerful star-spanning Conglomerate and the lawdogs are on his trail. Help him evade justice or ride shotgun with the cop sworn to bring him in. Either way it's a two-fisted, white-knuckled chase through the most dangerous and derelict part of the galaxy, chock full of memorable characters, scheming aliens and deadly traps.

You call the shots: fly, gamble, fight and sleaze your way to freedom or victory in this Two-Fisted Fantasy adventure! Inside you'll find a complete set of rules for racing along the starways and thumping the denizens of the Star Bastards universe: all you need to provide is a couple of dice and your two rock-hard fists!

