



206 OGL SCI-FI

PIRACY AND PRIVATEERING



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CEPHEUS



ENGINE
— COMPATIBLE —



STELLAGAMA
PUBLISHING

WRITTEN BY JOSH PETERS

PIRACY AND PRIVATEERING

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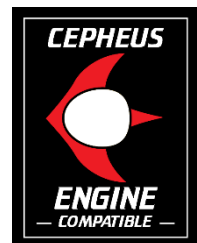
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AVAST YE SCURVY DOGS!

Pirates are the scourge of the space-lanes. Cutthroats, bandits, and scum, their actions render them *hostis humanis generis*: enemies outside of humanity. Captured pirates are not entitled any due process, they have few rights, and they can expect no mercy, only grim justice for their heinous crimes. Despite the risks, this book encourages science fiction roleplayers—Gamemasters and players alike—to embrace their inner space pirate and set forth to the stars to carve a bloody swath across the galaxy!

Let us begin by asking you two simple non-rhetorical questions:

1. *Haven't you always wanted to be a space pirate?*
2. *Why aren't you, a science fiction roleplaying game player or GM, in a space pirate campaign?*

Science fiction and space opera are genres filled with pirates, privateers, and other shady characters. A piracy or privateering campaign is an ideal starting point for a grand sandbox-style sci-fi campaign: the player characters possess a small, capable warship that relies on surprise, speed, and stealth to overcome opponents. The PCs are not bound by many commitments or obligations tying them to any one place. Their actions, good, bad, or ugly, will have very real consequences. The PCs will have freedom of action, allowing them to also be merchants, mercenaries, and explorers, as well as bandits; they can also become ideologically motivated, redistributing their ill-gotten gains to those in dire need—after they've covered their operating costs, of course. Pirate PCs might end up leading rebellions against interstellar governments. Such a feat would require the

players to use every bit of diplomatic and military cunning at their disposal; it might also necessitate having a somewhat flexible set of morals—a perfect fit for pirate player characters with aspirations of grandeur.

Exploration, politics, looting, conquest, and glory: what's stopping GMs from running space piracy campaigns instead of the more common tramp-merchant-adventurer campaigns we all know and love? Well, there are some issues that need to be addressed.

There are several challenges inherent in a piracy or privateering campaign. First and foremost, a GM must develop a game world in which piracy is feasible: piracy must be lucrative enough to be sustainable, and it should operate according to how space travel works in the game. How does a pirate reliably find prey? How can pirates quickly and efficiently overcome their prey without major incident? What's to stop a pirate crew from simply commandeering a bigger, better ship and making off with it? Where do pirates sell off their ill-gotten merchandise, and how much will they get for their booty? Where can they hole up to repair and refit their ship without getting harassed by the local Space Patrol? Finally, since ship combat can be quite dangerous, how do GMs avoid multiple Total Party Kills?

This book sets out to answer these challenges. My goal is to provide a solid basis for piracy and privateering sandbox campaigns by furnishing GMs with a set of system-neutral tools. Chapter 1 outlines the answers to the above questions and more, helping aspiring pirates and privateers and their GMs as they set out to plunder. Chapter 2 presents a full set of

random encounter rules to help GMs populate their systems with fat merchant ships to loot, asteroid bases to spend their ill-gotten gains, and pirate-hunting patrol frigates to run away from. The encounter rules are system and setting neutral. GMs will have to rely on whichever ruleset they are using to develop the game statistics needed for the encounters generated here. Chapter 3 discusses some of the nitty-gritty mechanics of selling stolen cargoes, ships and other ill-gotten booty. Finally, chapter 4 provides the GM with some adventure seeds, as well as NPC patrons, merchants, pirate-hunters, and other rival pirates and privateers for use in campaigns.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

This sourcebook is generic to interstellar science-fiction role-playing; you can use it with a wide variety of games and rulesets, from the Cepheus Engine by Samardan Press™ to Stars Without Number by Sine Nomine Publishing™ to White Star by Barrel Rider Games™. What you need to use this book is your favorite

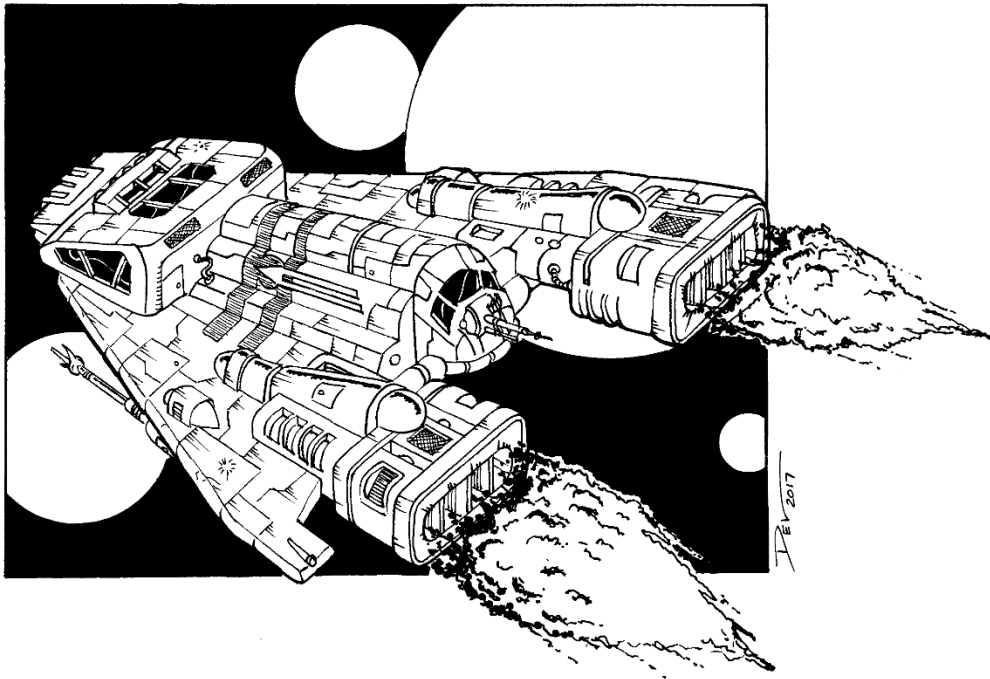
interstellar sci-fi ruleset, appropriate dice, and some writing supplies or a computer.

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STELLAGAMA PUBLISHING

Stellagama Publishing is a small, independent, international role-playing game publisher focused on science fiction gaming. We publish stuff for the White Star™ RPG; Stars Without Number, Sword & Wizardry: White Box™; the Cepheus Engine; and other 2D6 Sci-Fi OGL rules; Our interests are first and foremost to put forth enjoyable, immediately playable supplements, settings, and adventures for these games, for the enjoyment of our fellow players and GMs.



PIRACY AND PRIVATEERING CAMPAIGNS

You have taken the plunge and are ready to run a campaign where the player characters are pirates or privateers. Your players hunger for adventure, they thirst for gold, and they were talking like pirates for the entire character generation session. Now what? As GM, you have a few things to do before your players can run roughshod over the galaxy.

STEP 1: GENERATE YOUR SETTING

There are several science fiction roleplaying games available that have built-in world generation rules which allow GMs to develop their own game universe specific to their needs. Other games have pre-generated settings, which are licensed from other intellectual properties, or are long-standing gaming universes.

There are benefits to developing your own setting, such as being able to play god, and to be the final arbiter in all things relating to your game world. It is also fun to use random tools to generate worlds and then figure out how they actually work. However, many GMs find the task of setting generation quite daunting and time-consuming. Others worry that the setting might not make sense and could lack the verisimilitude needed for players to really engage with the setting. Making a coherent setting that is fun to play in is a difficult skill, and we at Stellagama Publishing encourage GMs to develop this skill as much as possible.

Using a pre-existing setting might be more fruitful for a GM who is strapped for time and would just like to get the ball rolling on a campaign. There are plenty of great games out there with well-developed settings based on IPs from movies, books, and TV shows. These

piracy and privateering rules are designed to work with them, with minimal effort to adjust their mechanics. The only drawback to using a pre-existing game universe—even Stellagama Publishing’s *These Stars Are Ours!* setting—is that the specifics of the setting might not meet your needs as a pirate GM.

STEP 2: HOW DOES PIRACY WORK IN YOUR SETTING?

Regardless of which option you choose, you will have to figure out how piracy works in your game. Here are some basic premises that you can work with as you flesh out your setting:

Piracy exists because of interstellar trade. There will always be those who are willing to ambush ships and rob them of their cargoes to sell later the black market. The sheer distances involved in interstellar trade make piracy viable because often there will be no one who can come to the aid of a vessel beset upon by pirates. However, there are many factors that can affect that basic viability. Fundamentally, pirates are extorting more legitimate traders by forcing them to give up a percentage of their overall incomes to avoid being killed by the pirate ship’s guns. Piracy is just one of the myriad *overhead costs* of interstellar commerce. This means that, in most cases, *no one has to die* when a pirate ship captures prey.

Of course, things might not be so simple. Pirates might also act as raiders, attacking isolated worlds where the locals are unable to match the firepower of the pirates. Like the Vikings of old, these sorts of pirates will plunder, pillage, and leave, only to return a few months later to do it all again. Paying off raiders is a time-honored tradition, but that only

encourages more extortion, and the arrival of new raiders looking for easy money. Other pirates might also carry off captives to serve as slaves, concubines, or even food, depending on the setting. Those sorts of pirates are far worse than the ones that can be considered “overhead,” and anyone who values stability and human life will oppose them whenever possible.

How piracy will work in your setting will also depend on what sort of politics exist in your setting. There are three main types of settings that I will address here. The first setting has a large galactic empire; the second has several smaller interstellar states; and the third is a setting with almost no interstellar polities at all.

Large interstellar empires require large navies to keep the empire politically stable and safe for commerce. Inside the empire, citizens feel safe enough to ship enormous amounts of freight, and there is regular traffic along well-established shipping lanes. These trade routes are patrolled by the empire’s navy. This means that piracy, when it occurs, exists on the fringes of the empire, on the frontiers, far away from naval bases and regular patrols. On the frontier, there may be regular shipping lanes, but they are not travelled by the enormous mega-freighters owned by interstellar corporations. Instead, smaller freight companies, and even independent merchants, ply the stars between the more developed worlds that sell manufactured goods to the frontier, and the less developed worlds that buy those goods. Moreover, the frontier has untapped resources to extract and ship back to developed worlds where they are processed into manufactured goods. Not all raw materials make ideal cargoes for pirates to steal, but some do. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of large empires

is that commerce is well-developed enough to support insurance on most cargoes and vessels. The importance of insured cargoes and ships is discussed below.

Pirates operating on the fringes and frontiers of large empires must keep a few things in mind. Firstly, and most importantly, they should never attract too much attention to themselves. Large empires have the means to aggressively hunt down the worst criminals. The trick, then, is to not be the worst criminal in the empire. That means that pirates should take care to avoid inflicting casualties and should certainly not commit atrocities. That would force the government to act and send a few patrol frigates, or even a cruiser or two to hunt down the offending pirate crew. Dovetailing with this first edict is the second: pirates should focus on capturing cargoes, not ships. Depending on the setting, commercial vessels can be vastly more expensive than the cargoes they haul, and both cargoes and ships are insured. The insurance corporations would much rather occasionally pay a trader the value of goods lost to pirates than to have to pay out the value of an insured vessel. Stealing vessels will irk powerful economic interests in the empire, who will lobby for increased patrols to hunt down the pirates in question. Pirates should only seize a vessel if it truly is worth the trouble such an act would bring down on their heads. Thirdly, pirates should not stand in the way of progress. This means that as the frontier develops economically, it will be time for the pirate ship to move on to the new fringe of the empire and start all over again. Finally, pirates should generally remain apolitical in ideology. Robbing traders will bring the inevitable patrol frigate by; however, robbing traders and using the proceeds to declare that a system is now a politically independent pirate kingdom is an

affront that invites the arrival of a battlegroup carrying a large detachment of marines.

In a setting with several **smaller interstellar polities**, much of what was described above for a large empire still applies. Unless an interstellar state has a particularly weak navy, much of its peacetime activities will involve securing trade routes and space lanes. This means that pirates are still forced to operate on the fringes of these governments' territories. However, this fringe will be larger, and often will be contested territory between two or more states. This means that pirates will have greater opportunities to prey on very lucrative merchant traffic that passes through independent territory. It will also be more difficult for any polity to send a large pirate hunting force beyond its borders: that could be read as prelude to an invasion of another state, after all. Trade between interstellar states may be common, or it may be rare. In the latter case, pirates might be able to catch a big prize when it ventures beyond a government's borders. However, pirates should be cautious: powerful military vessels escort these lucrative convoys.



If your setting is one with few or **no interstellar polities** to speak of, where each system is politically independent from the rest, then piracy is often the default activity for many starship crews. There simply aren't navies large enough to enforce the law and deter pirates from preying upon whatever shipping there is. However, this doesn't mean that piracy is easy. In these sorts of wild-and-woolly settings merchant captains are so cutthroat and desperate that they will readily engage in piracy, raiding, and slaving as a sideline to their more legitimate business activities. Pirates are as much entrepreneurs as they are criminals, because everyone in space is operating under the same business model: *do unto others before they do unto you*. This situation also works for many post-apocalyptic science fiction games, where a large empire experienced a major collapse. Now, some time later, individual societies have managed to regain the technology to reach the stars and start again. New space explorers and merchants will be the first to encounter strange new worlds and new civilizations—and rob them blind.

Finally, when developing your setting for piracy campaigns, make sure to consider where the closest **free port** is located. This is where the clear majority of the PCs' loot will be sold. It need not be a massive pirate den run by criminals—though that can be fun. It just needs to have at least one morally flexible customs inspector, some dockworkers who can be induced to look the other way, and at least one contact that will connect the PCs with the local black market where they can fence their captured cargoes. An open port will serve as something of a home base for the PCs as they begin their pirate careers, and it should be located close enough to the trade lanes to make piracy and travel viable, but not too close

as to be on a patrol frigate's regular route. Neither the players nor the GM should get too attached to any free port. Players being players, their characters will likely attract too much attention, forcing them to move on to another world.

PIRACY 101: HOW DOES A SPACE PIRATE OPERATE?

Interstellar piracy depends on the ability for pirate vessels to reliably locate a merchant vessel, overtake it, force it to surrender, dock with it, board it, and then transfer valuables from the merchant over to the pirate ship. All this must happen before the local authorities arrive. Let's examine each step in turn to help you, the GM and players, to understand how to run the specifics of a piracy campaign.

TARGET ACQUISITION

Finding a ship for a pirate to prey on easily is the most important part of successful piracy operations. There are fundamentally two ways to go about acquiring a target. The first, and least efficient, method is to lurk in ambush on a trade lane. This requires there to be some sort of arrival zone for faster-than-light vessels to appear in when they enter a system. Some science fiction games put their arrival zones at the edge of the system, others at some distance from the destination world. Travel from the edge of a solar system to a destination within the system is often time consuming, and could take days, if not hours. If an FTL arrival zone is closer to the destination, like say, one hundred planetary diameters away from a given planet, then pirates will have only a few hours to capture a ship and offload its cargo.

There are many problems associated with simply lying in ambush on a trade lane. The pirates will have to sit and wait, which

consumes expensive life support and food supplies. Remaining undetected is a challenging priority and might require the pirate vessel to power down most of its systems. Waiting for long periods of time, in the dark, with only basic life support and sensors operating, hoping for a target to pass into range is hardly the glamorous life most pirate crews sign on for. Furthermore, if they do detect a merchant ship in range, the pirates will have next-to-no idea what cargo, if any, is in its hold. Every pirate hopes to be offloading a plum cargo of illegal recreational drugs, but without knowing what's in the cargo hold of a target beforehand, a pirate crew will most likely be offloading xenocows and bottle cap making machines to a grey market fence at their next port of call. This lack of intelligence also extends beyond the cargo hold contents: nothing is known about the ship's overall disposition. Is the merchant part of a convoy that is running only hours behind? Is it a decoy, or worse, a Q-ship armed to the teeth with hidden weapons? Once the prey is detected, the pirates might have very little time to spring into action before the merchant engages its FTL drive and leaves the system, or before it makes port. This is especially the case if it only takes hours to reach a point where it is safe to activate the FTL drive.

As you can readily see, the "wait and lurk" approach to piracy is for rank amateurs. The second and more effective way of conducting piracy operations is to gather as much intelligence about merchant traffic going in and out of a given system as possible and combine this intelligence with social engineering techniques to maximize chances of successful piracy. The result should provide at least one target worth chasing down and robbing. So how exactly does this work?

Merchant traders will only visit worlds that have something to trade. For pirates, this means locating a world that is eager to export a product that is worth stealing. Usually, this will mean some sort of finished, processed, or manufactured good, but a good pirate will not neglect a world that has rare raw materials like gemstones, radioactives, or esoteric life forms. Once a suitable world is located, the savvy pirate will send an agent or two onto the planet incognito to do field work. This entails tasks like learning about the local starport, cargo facilities, customs agents, defense forces, and even local criminal elements. The goal is to find “friends” among the right well-connected locals to pass on information about the comings and goings of merchant ships laden with rich cargoes. These “portwatchers” should be well-paid, bribed, extorted, or otherwise leveraged to ensure that they discreetly transmit reliable information to the pirates in a timely manner. Thus, suitably armed with information about schedules, ships, defenses, and (hopefully) cargoes, a pirate vessel can now lurk and wait, knowing that a fat, juicy, merchant is headed right into its clutches.

In addition to making successful, lucrative piracy more likely, this approach also brings with it additional benefits to the gaming group as a whole. Encouraging the players to plan, use reconnaissance, and think before they take decisive action is never a bad thing. It also enables players to engage in roleplaying as they talk to NPCs. As well, this sort of legwork enables characters who concentrated on social skills at the expense of starship combat skills to meaningfully engage in piracy operations: the con artist PC, the sneak thief PC, and the diplomat PC all have important roles to play in planning and executing a successful pirate job.

CATCHING PREY

Once a suitable target has been found, it’s time for the pirate ship to chase it down! This is where good sensors, piloting, navigation, and engineering skills come in handy. A solid set of engines and maneuvering thrusters will also be necessary. Whoever is plotting the courses and minding the engines should be expected to make some skill rolls. There is very little opportunity for stealth and surprise once the engines are fired up and the intercept course is laid in. What other business than piracy would an unknown ship have as it burns towards a merchant heading to or from port? At this point, the clock is ticking, because the prey will be making for the quickest point at which it can engage its FTL drive, or land at a starport. In some settings, where FTL drives can operate only at the edge of a system, this means that pirates will have more opportunities to catch their prey. In other settings, where FTL drives can be engaged much sooner, this means that the pirate crew must have perfect timing. If the pirate vessel is attacking a ship that is heading towards a planet, then the clock is still ticking. The pirates will have a small window of opportunity to catch, board, and offload cargo before coming into range of local patrol ships which will be accelerating out from the world, or their base, to prevent an honest pirate from making a few credits.

SURRENDER, DOCKING AND BOARDING

If the pirate ship can catch its prey, then it must force it to stop accelerating, surrender, and allow boarders. Pirate gunners should be capable of reliably targeting the engines or fuel reserves of their prey if a well-placed warning shot doesn’t do the job. This will prevent prey from escaping, one way or another. It is imperative that pirates do not destroy their

prey. This is disastrous from an economic perspective, and it gives the pirates a reputation for being *murderers*, which will make future targets less likely to surrender. After engines and fuel tanks, pirate gunners will try to disable any active weapon systems that could harm their vessel. However, once the engines are shot out, it makes little sense for a crippled merchant ship to resist. Of course, there are always exceptions to this rule.

Gaining the surrender of the prey is important, though one can never be too trusting of merchant ship captains and their so-called surrenders. A canny pirate captain will keep the ship's guns locked on the prey until the merchant crew has been properly restrained. Once the prey has surrendered, docking and boarding can proceed smoothly, albeit with great caution. The goal is to get the prey to open its airlocks and allow boarders to enter with little effort. Many pirate vessels carry specialized equipment for boarding operations, should a merchant ship not willingly open its airlocks. Specialized cutting torches, explosive charges, or black-market security override routines can get pirate crews into their prizes. The drawback to using these sorts of devices is that they consume valuable looting time and require crewmembers to don space suits and get onto the exterior of the merchant ship. Once aboard, the crew must be policed and restrained. One never knows what to expect from a merchant crew: a hotheaded crewmember willing to stand up to pirates can cause major headaches for a captain engaged in an otherwise simple robbery. Any passengers aboard must be similarly restrained. The bridge and engineering must be secured to prevent any mischief. Once this is all accomplished, the looting can begin.

PILLAGE AND PLUNDER

Pirates look for high-density loot. This means that they are more interested in cargoes that are portable, small, and highly valuable. A bearer bond worth 50,000 credits is more valuable to a pirate than ten tons of merchandise worth 5,000 credits per ton. The bearer bond takes up less space, is easier to conceal, and its value is less subject to arbitrary market forces than any physical cargo. This means that pirates have looting priorities that might seem a bit counter-intuitive. Savvy pirates who have boarded a merchant will make a bee-line for the ship's safe and the ship's computer. Cracking open the former might take time, but that is a perfect opportunity for a specialist PC to have an opportunity to shine. The ship's computer is useful for finding passenger lists and cargo manifests, as well as any strange discrepancies that might represent illegal items hidden away in obscure locations aboard ship. There also might be valuable information in the ship's computer that can later be sold for a premium to the highest bidder. Hacking the computer might be difficult and time consuming, so intimidating the crew into unlocking the files and opening the safe is the quicker means to success.

Merchant vessels are designed to haul large amounts of cargo. A similarly sized pirate vessel will have a much smaller cargo hold. This means that pirates will have to pick and choose the most lucrative cargoes to steal from a large variety of cargoes present in a merchant's hold. Having the ship's cargo manifest will certainly help locate good plunder, but an experienced pirate crew will have specialists on board who have learned how to find the good stuff in a prey's cargo hold. Here, the same principle

holds: small, high value cargoes are more worthwhile than larger, bulkier cargoes. This is not only a space-saving measure in the pirate ship's cargo hold. It will also take less time to offload smaller cargoes than larger, bulkier cargoes. This is crucial because of the ever-present chance that a local patrol ship is coming to the merchant's aid. Every second counts.

The ship itself can also serve as plunder. By this we mean the parts and components of a spacecraft are themselves quite valuable. If there is enough time remaining, the pirate crew can begin salvaging as much as possible from the ship: wiring, electronics, spares, fuel, food supplies, and anything else that can be of use to a busy pirate ship on the go.

“WHAT ABOUT JUST TAKING THE SHIP?”

This is a valid concern among GMs who are otherwise eager to run a space pirate campaign. There is nothing stopping a pirate captain from dispatching a prize crew to take a merchant ship to the nearest open port. However, this is not as simple as it seems. Firstly, the captured ship might have been damaged in the encounter or sabotaged by its crew to prevent just such an occurrence. As well, each ship has its own quirks and idiosyncrasies that make it more difficult for an unfamiliar crew to pilot. This can be reflected in die roll penalties to perform even the simplest tasks until the prize crew acclimatizes itself to the ship.

This is all well and good, but players are nothing if not determined. GMs should embrace the fact that they are running a piracy campaign, and by stealing a ship the players have just decided to join the big leagues and face the consequences: they've become *insurance liabilities*. This sounds laughable, until one realizes just how expensive ships might be. A small independent merchant trader may or may not have its cargo insured against acts of piracy. But if the vessel is owned in part by a bank, and the ship's captain is paying off a forty-year mortgage, you can rest assured that the bank has taken out an insurance policy on its investment! A large interstellar corporation will certainly have its freighter fleet and the cargo contained on those ships insured. Loss of cargoes to pirates, as mentioned above, is considered a part of the overhead costs of interstellar trade. Only when cargo losses have become particularly egregious will the government be forced to step in and send a patrol to hunt down the overly hard-working pirate crew. Steal a ship, however, and a pirate captain is signalling to insurance firms in more civilized regions of space that they are not abiding by the unspoken *rules* of the game. The corporations involved will ruthlessly press for government intervention against the pirate ship in question. Pirate hunting fleets will be dispatched, and punishment will be swift and merciless.

In settings where there are no interstellar freight companies with ships large enough to warrant insuring, there are no unspoken rules. Players might decide that they are better off stealing the ship they are looting and selling it off to the highest bidder. Or they may transfer their belongings over and appropriate the prize as their new ship. As a GM, you should embrace this boldness on the part of your players and develop the in-game consequences of such a brazen act. We will deal with the mechanics of selling captured ships in chapter 3. The important thing for the players to remember is that the NPC prize crew being detached must be sufficiently skilled, and above all, *trustworthy*, to assign to their new prize. If the players have been abusing their NPC crew members, they might discover that they have lost their prize to a new pirate crew that knows the disposition of the PCs' current vessel inside and out.

EXPEDITIOUS RETREAT

Once the looting has been completed, or the clock has run out and a patrol gunship is closing in—or both—it is time for the pirates to leave, and quickly. Pirates who wish to avoid entanglements with better-armed and faster ships designed to hunt them down had better know exactly how long they have once they've detected a patrol ship on an intercept course. Crewmembers that dilly-dally are liable to be left behind to face harsh justice.

FENCING STOLEN CARGO

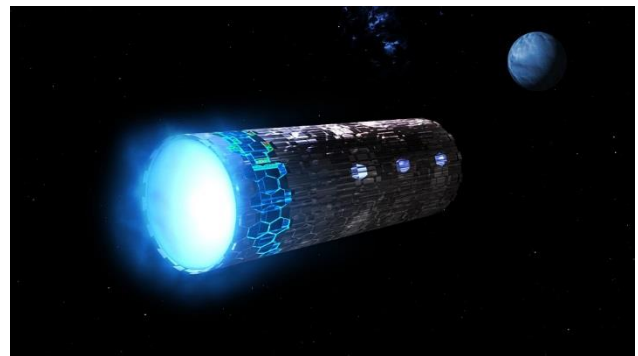
With their hold filled with loot and plunder, the pirates must now find a port open enough to allow them to land, and a fence that is willing to buy their stolen cargo. The specific mechanics of fencing stolen goods is discussed in chapter 3. Many ports outside the jurisdiction of a large interstellar government will have no qualms

Throughout this book we use the generic term Credit (Cr) for money. The values presented below assume that the value of a Credit is approximately equivalent to three US dollars or Euros. If the gaming system being used has a different value of a credit (such as *Stars Without Number*), then the number of credits should be adjusted.

handling stolen goods, though some dockmasters may need their palms greased. Inside a state's territory, if bribing dockmasters is out of the question, it will be necessary for pirates to have direct contacts with criminal organizations that can handle cargoes quickly and discreetly. Like the pre-planning of the initial raid, setting up the network for disposing of their ill-gotten gains is another area ripe with role-playing opportunities.

OTHER CONCERNS

In games using the original 2d6 OGL Science Fiction roleplaying system, one of the main critiques of the piracy campaign idea is that ships are too expensive to risk in acts of piracy. Moreover, the most valuable object a pirate can plunder from a target ship is the ship itself. Consider a standard merchant trader vessel that would be the target of many pirates. The *Cepheus Engine* rules price such a vessel at just under 35 million credits, new. If we consider that a merchant trader's cargo will rarely



exceed a total of one third of that value, then there is some validity to this argument. Stealing cargo from such a ship will be lucrative. Yet, barring a particularly rich cargo, pirates will find that they are living from hand-to-mouth, eking out a less-than-glamorous lifestyle than they may have originally hoped for. As mentioned above, there is enough in-game deterrent to stealing the ships themselves.

There are two schools of thought regarding this problem. The first argument in favor of piracy in a setting with expensive ships is that, like in the modern world, most pirates *do* live a marginal existence on the fringes of society. Piracy should be a career choice made after a series of other bad choices have led to desperation. Most pirates end up in some combination of being captured, starving, or dead. Only the boldest, luckiest, and most desperate survive to retire in the lap of luxury.

The second argument in favor of piracy in the classic 2d6 OGL Science Fiction roleplaying game like the *Cepheus Engine* dovetails with the first. When we think about space pirates and space piracy, and indeed piracy in general, we immediately think about the Golden Age of Piracy on Earth, but in space. This Golden Age was financed by the very plunder that gives it its name: the gold and silver of the New World. The reason piracy was so endemic to the Caribbean during this era was because of the sheer wealth being transported by boat from Central and South America back to Spain. Spanish galleons filled with silver, gold, and other valuable commodities were juicy and inviting targets for all sorts of scoundrels and opportunists filled with entrepreneurial spirit. Capturing just *one* galleon filled with Mexican silver was enough to make a pirate richer than many European principalities. This real-world

historical situation can be emulated in a space piracy campaign to great effect. All an enterprising GM needs to do is stock the setting with large merchant ships, filled with untold riches, travelling from the fringes of known space back to civilization. The appearance of pirates is almost a logical imperative.

PRIVATEERING: A HUNTING LICENSE

There is a long historical tradition of states hiring private citizens with vessels to engage in piracy on their enemies. This phenomenon is known as privateering, and it is, without a doubt, one of the most effective vehicles for running a memorable science fiction roleplaying campaign. Privateering is state-backed piracy, carried out by civilian captains and crews operating according to the Laws of War. It is a means of striking at an enemy economically: disrupting supply lines, stealing cargoes, and driving up the prices of needed goods. Privateering forces interstellar navies to divert valuable assets to protect shipping lanes, and privateers can also constitute an “insurgent navy” in the most desperate conflicts. Most of the procedures and concerns laid out in this chapter apply equally to privateering crews, with a few minor changes.

Firstly, and most crucially, privateers are officially licensed by a recognized state to carry out hostile actions. The state does this by furnishing the privateering captain with a Letter of Marque that acts as official authorization to commit piracy against ships belonging to stated enemies. Letters of Marque are issued by governments to trustworthy captains or vessels with sufficient firepower to constitute a threat to commercial shipping. The Letter of Marque is almost worthless as a legal document, that is, until the privateers have been captured by pirate hunters. Then, it is imperative that the

Letter of Marque be produced, and the privateer captain demand that the privateers not be treated as outlaws, but rather as enemy combatants entitled to protection under the Laws of War.

This sounds straightforward in theory, but the reality can be far less cut-and-dry. Depending on who has captured the privateers, the Letter of Marque may be honored, or it may be torn up and burned. If, for example, the state that issued the Letter of Marque is not recognized as legitimate by enemies, then the privateers are just pirates with a make-believe hunting license.

The Letter of Marque also obligates the privateer captain to adhere to the Laws of War, if they wish to be treated in the same manner. Stealth and subterfuge are fair game, but before any hostile action can be taken, the privateer must announce that it is actually an enemy combatant. On the high seas this was done by striking whatever flag of convenience the privateering ship was flying and raising the colors of the state that issued the privateer its Letter of Marque. In space, this is usually done by changing its transponder signal, or by broadcasting the truth to its target. Regardless of method, this must be done *before* (even mere seconds prior) hostilities begin. Furthermore, captured crews must be treated humanely, and civilians must not be harmed. Following the rules will make it much more likely that the enemy will follow the rules if the privateers are captured, too. Many privateer captains make it a point to garner an honorable reputation for just this reason. Some, on the other hand, feel that a more fearsome reputation is more effective, despite the costs.

Because privateering is ostensibly a legitimate activity, several piracy-related concerns or

problems are mitigated: the fencing of goods, black marketeering, and the need to hole up away from patrols are not serious concerns for privateers. Instead of needing a free port to offload their stolen cargoes like a typical pirate, the privateer can make its way to any port in the territory of the state that issued the Letter of Marque. Once in port, a Privateer Court is convened. This is usually a public auction, where the spoils of the privateering cruise are sold at fair market prices. The only drawback to this arrangement is that the state takes half the proceeds of the Privateer Court. This procedure also applies to captured vessels. The in-game mechanics of privateer economics are discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

A NOTE ON LETHALITY

Player Character death in roleplaying games is a contentious issue, and one that we need not address directly here. Suffice it to say, some players don't mind rolling up a new character after their old one took one too many blaster bolts to the face one evening and see each character as nearly completely expendable. Others are a little less calloused regarding their in-game avatars and reserve character death for big dramatic moments only. Where each player, GM, and group falls between these two extremes should be discussed in the group.

What concerns us here is the special circumstances surrounding space pirate and privateering games. In any adventure where ship combat occurs, the entire PC group is concentrated in a single metal coffin, surrounded by volatile fuel that powers a controlled thermonuclear explosion. Not only is individual character death a real possibility, but a total party kill situation might also arise due to few rounds of bad luck with dice. There are,

again, a few schools of thought on this problem.

The first says “let the dice fall where they may, we’ll just roll up a new crew if a TPK happens.” This might be fine for some, but generating an entire crew of new player characters, non-player characters, a new ship, new cargo, *et cetera*, might be a bit daunting, as well as downright *time-consuming*. While some gamers may be blessed with an abundance of time, this is probably not the case for the majority. Another way of thinking is that, like many science fiction series, the ship and the crew might be bashed around from week to week, but in the end, they survive—they have dramatic immunity from the Grim Reaper. This is deeply unsatisfying because it denies players and GMs some real opportunities for tension and drama: the potential for character death or ship destruction make the combats serious business.

I have two pieces of advice for GMs and players who are putting all their eggs in one basket by focusing a little more on ship combat than normal a science fiction roleplaying campaign. The first is that GMs should encourage good *planning* and *realistic expectations* from their players. This might entail running a trial piracy engagement where the players are exposed to the realities of space combat and space piracy. Perhaps subjecting the PCs’ ship to a round of fire from a typical naval vessel might be a useful exercise. It should be clear to players that their pirate ship is not designed for stand-up fights with naval vessels, and that they should be avoided as much as possible. Running away from a heavily armed ship is a time-honored tradition among pirates.

The second piece of advice is that GMs *might* want to use whatever means they have available—in storytelling techniques or in the rules—to prevent horribly unlucky rolls from ending a campaign prematurely. This should not be read as a call to fudge die rolls in favor of the players’ ship during combat. But instead of immediately converting the PCs’ ship to a rapidly expanding cloud of ionized gas and debris when reduced to zero hit points (for example), GMs can be somewhat charitable and *only* turn the vessel into a dangerous, radioactive, place that is half on fire, and with an increasingly unstable power plant that needs immediate tending to. Most science fiction games use longer space combat turns than personal combat turns, the GM can use this difference to their advantage. This way, the players still have a way to engage with their characters’ dire circumstances. They might even pull off something spectacular and save their own skins, as the naval boarding party approaches. Or they might die ignobly after being captured and tried for piracy. The goal here is not to remove the threat of a total party kill due to exploding space ship, but to at least make it something that happens without a



distressing amount of nihilistic randomness.

RANDOM SPACE ENCOUNTERS

There are a few schools of thought regarding space encounters in different roleplaying games. Some insist that since space is just so vast and expansive, the chances of randomly encountering anything or anyone, regardless of location, are too minute to contemplate. When they do include random encounter generators, these games rely on the conceit that there must be an element of storytelling and the unknown for a game to be enjoyable. The random encounter tables are truly random, in that there is no in-game context of where the player group is located when they encounter something.

We present a set of encounter tables that takes a different approach, and fully embraces the fact that while space is vast, the chances of encountering anything at random while travelling are not nil. This is because there are many common traffic zones in each system, and in some cases, there have been a few millennia worth of traffic. Some of these zones, like the system's mainworld, are going to have the most activity, and thus the highest chances for a random encounter. Others, like a gas giant, are useful stopovers for refueling or smuggling, but will not have many random encounters. Asteroid belts supply the raw materials for many high-tech spacefaring societies, so there are usually many opportunities to run into someone or something there.

These rules use two characteristics to describe star systems: Traffic and Security. Each characteristic has three different levels and combining the different levels of Traffic and Security provides eight meaningfully distinct encounter tables. Each type of system has five

different zones that are most commonly travelled by player character ships. The different ship and item types are described below, with rules to generate more details about the encounter. If the GM wishes, they can easily develop specific encounter tables for each system the player characters visit, using the specific material developed for their own setting and campaign. This way, the GM can take the Independent Backwater system table, and develop the specific encounter table for Yukatan, a failed colony world with a marginal population that is being constantly raided by slavers from the neighboring system of Joma, a Dangerous, busier world similarly detailed.

A. ENCOUNTER TERRAIN

There are five distinct zones provided in each encounter table, based on common science fiction roleplaying assumptions. If your campaign setting has different assumptions about starship travel, refuelling, asteroid mining, and trading, then it is a simple enough exercise to rename the five zones to suit your purposes, or to invent a specific encounter chart for your system.

MAINWORLD

The mainworld is usually the reason for visiting a given system. Most of the population lives on the mainworld. Subsequently, much of the economic and political activities that make a system ripe for adventure can be found here. A mainworld does not necessarily have to be a planet: a large space station or asteroid base will do nicely. If it is the principle location of the population and the star port in the system, it is probably the mainworld.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE ZONE

Some faster-than-light travel technologies are instantaneous and deposit a vessel exactly at its destination. Most FTL drives are not so generous; vessels will have to travel hours, or days, to reach their destination. When it is time to leave a system, these ships usually must travel away from the system's main world for a similar amount of time before engaging their FTL drives. These arrival and departure zones are busy places. There may be a few such zones in a system, depending on the game rules for making FTL travel possible. No matter how they work in the game rules, the system's arrival/departure zones are where many space combats occur: pirates prey on traders, or patrol ships prey on pirates before the latter can prey on traders.

GAS GIANTS

Another staple of science fiction games, gas giants offer a free source of fuel if a ship is willing to enter the upper atmosphere and skim hydrogen gas. Not every system has a gas giant, but many do, and they are absolutely essential for long-range explorers who rely on natural sources of hydrogen for fuel. Gas giants are great places for pirates to mount ambushes on unsuspecting—and out-of-fuel—traders. Refuelling stations, where hydrogen gas has already been skimmed and refined for sale, are also common encounters near gas giants. Many systems have more than one gas giant, but there is usually one that is the easiest to mine and therefore becomes the primary refueling location.

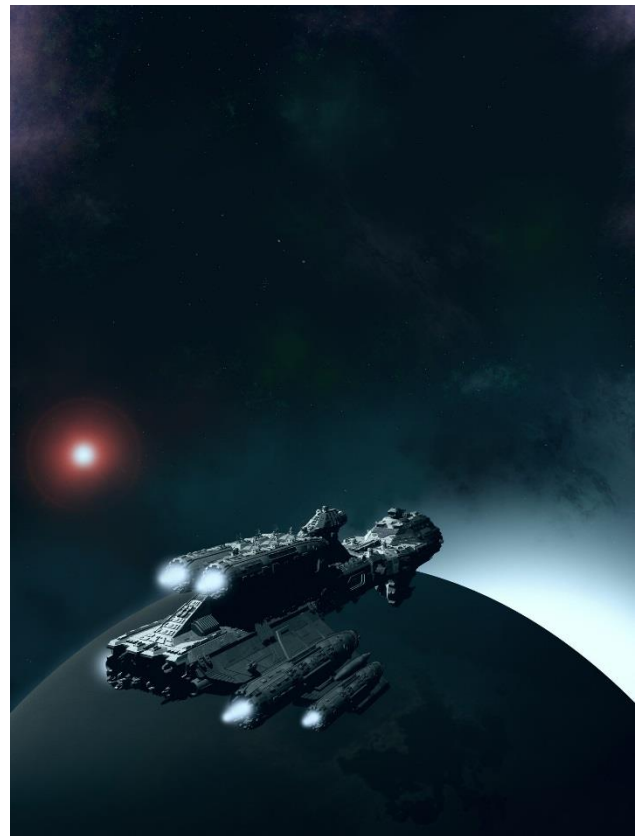
ASTEROID BELT

What system is complete without an asteroid belt for high-risk industrial mining? Or perhaps a smuggler is looking to find the perfect

location for a hidden cache. There are plenty of places to hide in an asteroid belt. Many belts have long been exploited for their supplies of rare earths, radioactives, and water ice, meaning that there are all sorts of encounters to be had in them.

THE PERIPHERY

This catch-all zone denotes the places in the system that no one really ever visits. This could refer to the very edge of the solar system, assuming it's not an arrival/departure zone, or lonely rock-ball or ice-ball planets, moons, or even high above or below the system's elliptical orbital plane. Wherever it is, there is not much there, and even less of a chance of meeting anyone or anything. This makes it all the more interesting when a group *does* encounter something on the periphery.



B. TRAFFIC

This describes the relative number of starships and space stations that are in the system at any given time. It can be useful to think of traffic as the relative *importance* of a system to trade, transit, and politics. There are three distinct levels of traffic.

HUB

This represents the busiest and most economically important systems. Starships are constantly coming and going. The arrival zones and mainworld of this system are well-populated—even clogged—with ships and stations. The mainworld, or space station, or asteroid base, has a large and well-equipped star port that sees all sorts of visitors. In civilized parts of space, hubs come equipped with some sort of traffic control system, navigation beacons, and custom inspections. In more wild-and-woolly sectors, a hub could be just as busy, and twice as dangerous, both on the ground and in the system.

STOPOVER

This level of traffic often represents a system that sits astride a space lane and engages in regular interstellar commerce with all manner of merchants, to everyone's profit. Stopover systems are usually part of some interstellar polity: stability and security drive increased traffic, and these systems have benefitted economically. However, there are plenty of Stopovers that have increased traffic without much security: some are important traffic nodes due to their position relative to other stars, or they have abundant resources that lure off-world traffic. Whatever the case, Stopover systems are able to sustain interstellar trade on a regular basis, and they have the infrastructure to do so.

BACKWATER

The systems with the lowest level of traffic are those with no reasons for people to visit. There might be nothing worth trading for on the main world, or the asteroid belt mines all dried out. Perhaps the system was colonized by some marginal religious group that wanted to worship and toil away in obscurity. For whatever reason, there aren't many permanent residents in the system, and even fewer visitors. Backwaters can serve as quiet places for rebellions to grow, or for pirates to hole up discreetly. Whatever the case, no one is really going to bother patrolling these systems more than once or twice a year, and the locals are essentially powerless to stop dangerous outsiders from setting up shop.

C. Safety

The level of safety a system enjoys is an important factor in determining the frequency of encounters, since safer systems tend to attract more traffic. However, the relative safety of a system has a much greater influence on the *types* of encounters to be had. Safer systems will see fewer pirates, more patrols, and even warships if they are important enough. Less safe systems might not be pirate dens, but they might still have a reputation as places where anything goes. These questionable places can be filled with economic and social opportunities that one normally would not find in more civilized locales. However, with greater opportunity comes greater risk.

SECURE

These systems are well-patrolled, safe, and represent orderly civilization, whatever that may be in a given sector. The mainworld is able

to patrol its space effectively, or a local interstellar government regularly sends armed patrols to keep the peace. Conversely, some places are safe because there just isn't anything to steal, and no one has noticed the backwater world in a century or more.

INDEPENDENT

Some systems are on the frontier or are populated with people that are averse to having too many outsiders enforce their laws. Sometimes, this means that criminals, pirates, and raiders are able to operate with some leeway—often they are welcome to trade in these systems, so long as they leave the locals unmolested. Other independent systems can be futuristic versions of free cities: most are welcome, as long as they keep their disputes from spilling over into the streets and hurting everyone else's business. Some independent systems are on the frontier of civilized space. These worlds are important trading posts for the vast diaspora of colonies beyond the civilized frontier. They are futuristic boom-or-bust worlds, where resource extraction and supply trading are the only businesses worth doing. Pirates, smugglers, and other criminals can be quite common here, and patrol ships struggle to limit the worst abuses.

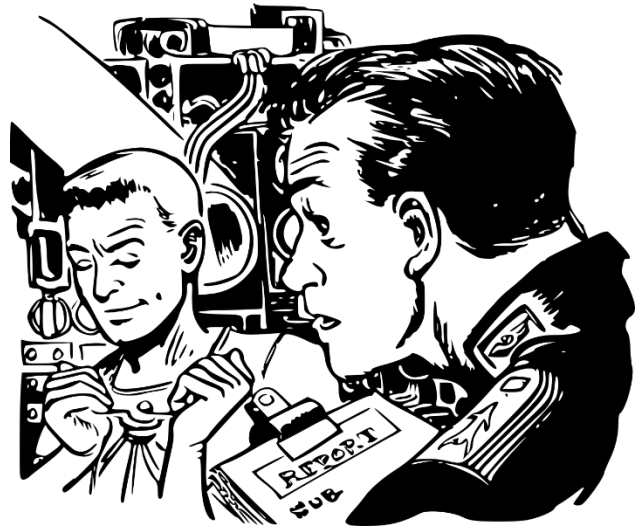
DANGEROUS

A dangerous system is characterized by very little ability for the locals to patrol their own solar system. Alternatively, they are in the process of failing to do so. Pirates, brigands, and other criminals abound here. Raids on local populations are common, and free traders entering a dangerous system should do so with good reason, and with good weapons. If there are laws here, they are rarely enforced, and it

will take a great deal of effort to earn the trust of any of the insular locals. Dangerous systems can even be ruled by pirates, in which case their word is law, and punishment is harsh, but usually consistent.

COMBINATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The two characteristics of Traffic and Safety each have three distinct settings. Combining them together produces nine different types of systems for encounters. Of these, there are two combinations that produce the same effective result, leaving eight different system types that are meaningfully different.



D. THE EIGHT SYSTEM TYPES

1. **Middle of Nowhere** (Secure or Independent Backwater): Nothing ever happens here, and why would it? This system is far off the space lanes, has nothing of value worth stealing, and a patrol frigate visits every year.
2. **Bandit Territory** (Dangerous Backwater): This system and its populace are terrorized by numerous pirate raiding parties, and there is very little anyone can do about it. The system is not of sufficient value to warrant sending a pirate hunting battlegroup there. Alternatively, this system could be the home of a small pirate gang or other small-time criminals.
3. **Going Concern** (Secure Stopover): A prosperous medium-traffic system that is quite happy to engage in interstellar trade. Regular patrols pass through, and often a small fleet of local patrol craft keep pirates at bay. There is usually regular passenger and mail service to and from this system.
4. **Rail Head System** (Independent Stopover): This system is either right on the frontier or is some sort of free port. There is a lot of economic opportunity here as raw materials from colonies arrive for shipment to more civilized locales, and manufactured goods are traded to the colonies. Either way, the locals are happy to trade, and piracy, while not unheard of, is rare. Rail Head Systems are not usually open to dealing with pirates. Some diplomacy, bribery, or outright extortion might be required to get the locals to open their port for a pirate cargo.
5. **Wild West System** (Dangerous Stopover): These sorts of systems are where pirate legends are born. Piracy is a major threat in a Wild West system, and the law, where it exists, is under-staffed and under-gunned. The only thing saving these systems from falling into complete anarchy is that there is enough traffic or natural resources here that the criminals themselves are competing with each other and need periods of relative peace; or they might even be keeping the peace, as long as they get their cut.
6. **Capital System** (Secure Hub): This system is a paragon of security and economic prosperity. Capitals are usually the busiest systems in the sector, and the space lanes to and from the star port are heavily patrolled. There might even be a naval base, with an occasional visiting battlegroup. There is money to be made here, but capitals might be too stifling for the more opportunity-minded trader.
7. **Bazaar System** (Independent Hub): A trader's paradise, the Bazaar will have plentiful jobs to be done, rich cargoes to haul, and very few questions asked. There are untold opportunities to be had here, and because of the high traffic through these systems, nearly anything is available to be bought and sold. Bazaars can serve as excellent free ports for pirates, as long as they keep a low profile and commit their crimes somewhere else.

8. **Hive of Scum and Villainy** (Dangerous Hub): A free-for-all of corruption, iniquity, crime, and opportunity. Laws, when they are enforced, exist to maintain some modicum of civilization for the purposes of encouraging trade, since there is no other honest reason to be visiting this system. Piracy is rampant, and protection rackets and pirate turf wars are common. If this system is actually ruled by a pirate gang, traders had better be prepared to pay whatever “tolls” are required, to prevent their blood from coagulating too quickly in deep space.

E. GENERATING ENCOUNTERS

The process of generating an encounter is a simple one, but it involves a few steps.

1. First, figure out **how often** encounters happen in a given system’s regions. This is the Encounter Frequency.
2. Roll on the Encounter Tables themselves (below) and **generate the specifics** of the encounter.
3. Determine the **range** at which the PCs detect the Encounter.
4. Determine if the other party in the encounter has **detected** the PCs.
5. Determine how the other party will **react** to the PCs.

ENCOUNTER FREQUENCY

How often the GM rolls for an encounter is a function of the overall traffic level of a system, and the location of the PCs’ vessel in that system. The following table provides a good

guideline for encounter frequency. The GM should always roll for a potential encounter at a system’s particular Arrival Zone when the PCs’ ship arrives in the system. After that, the table below indicates how often the GM should roll for a random encounter if a PC ship is spending time moving around a given system. Remember that just because it is time to roll, this does not mean that the PCs will actually encounter anything. GMs should feel free to adjust the



frequency table to the specific realities of their campaigns.

Encounter Frequency Table

Roll on the encounter tables (pp. 26-32) as often as indicated in this table.

Traffic/Location	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
Backwater	1 week	1 week	1 month	1 month	4 months
Stopover	6 hours	12 hours	1 day	1 week	1 month
Hub	3 hours	6 hours	12 hours	1 day	1 week

GENERATE THE ENCOUNTER

Using the Encounter Tables, roll a d6 and consults the relevant zone column to determine if there is an encounter: an Item or a Ship. Then consult the relevant Ship or Item sub-tables, rolling a d10 to determine the specific type of encounter. Each encounter type is explained in greater detail, with rules on how to flesh out the encounter to generate something memorable.

Legwork and Modifiers: If a pirate or privateer spends time and effort to gather intelligence on ship traffic in a given system, the GM should simply roll up 1d3 target vessels from the system’s ship encounter table. The GM should inform the players of the vessels that are coming and going, though they might not have access to all the details. All that advance legwork should pay off, after all. Alternatively, grant a -1 or even -2 die roll modifier to the d6 roll to determine if an encounter occurs. Treat a result of 0 or below as 1.

ENCOUNTER RANGE

The tables below assume that most encounters with ships or items in space will happen at longer ranges, but still within a relatively small distance from the PCs’ vessel when compared

to a solar system. These rules take a decidedly *Canadian* approach to encounter ranges: since distances are so vast in space, it is often more meaningful to list the amount of time, in hours, it would take the PCs’ ship to intercept or otherwise close with the encounter. These ranges assume that a ship’s sensors are not powerful enough to easily detect vessels and objects across solar systems; thus, we limit encounters to the region where the PCs’ ship is found. In games where sensors are capable of such feats, double or even triple the times given in the tables.

When using the tables below, simply divide the amount of time listed by the vessel’s thrust rating in Gees of acceleration to determine the time it takes to meet an encounter.

To determine the Encounter Range, the player character handling the ship’s sensors should make a standard difficulty roll, modified by things like the ship’s sensor capabilities, the active or passive stealth capabilities of the encounter, the background radiation levels, and anything else the GM might want to throw in to make the lives of the player characters more difficult. The GM can then consult the table below. The result is the range at which the player characters have detected the encounter.

Encounter Range Table

Result of Sensor Skill Roll	Margin of Success in 2d6 OGL	Range (in hours) to intercept
Failure	Failure	Visual Range: Forces an encounter!
Barely Successful	0	1 hour
Average Success	1	3 hours
Solid Success	2	4 hours
Gold Star Success	3-4	6 hours
Complimentary Beer Level Success	5+	12 hours

Divide the range (in hours) by the thrust rating in Gees of acceleration to determine the amount of time it will take the PCs’ ship to intercept the encounter.

OPTIONAL RULE: ARRIVAL ZONES

Due to the difficult and oftentimes unpredictable nature of FTL travel, it might be very hard to predict exactly where a ship will end up when it first arrives in a system—especially in relation to other vessels and objects. This means that when the PCs’ vessel

appears in the Arrival Zone, there might be an encounter waiting for it, and there is no way for the players to control the encounter range.

Whenever a PC ship first appears in a system, roll for an encounter in that specific Arrival Zone (see the tables below), using the following range table:

Encounter Range/Times in Arrival Zones

2d6	Range (in hours) to intercept
2	Roll 1d6: 1-5: 1 hour away; 6: Visual range, which forces an encounter
3	2 hours
4-5	3 hours
6-8	6 hours
9-10	3 hours
11	2 hours
12	Visual range, forces an encounter

As with the range table above, divide the indicated time by the Gee rating of the ship to determine the actual time to intercept.

ENCOUNTER DETECTION

Remember that the range tables above indicate the ranges at which the PCs become aware of the encounter. You still must roll to learn if the other party has detected the PCs' ship! Use the sensor and detection rules of whatever game system you are using to determine this. Roll first when the PCs detect the encounter, and then every few hours. There are only a couple of possible results:

1. **The PCs and the NPCs are aware of each other.** No group has a chance to ambush the other or avoid the encounter. Whether or not the NPCs were hoping to catch the PCs by surprise is a matter of determining their motivations (below). If the players fail their ship sensor roll, then both groups stumble into each other at visual range!
2. **The PCs have detected the NPCs, but the NPCs have not noticed the PCs yet.** This is the ideal time for the PCs to mount an ambush, or avoid the encounter, depending on the firepower and likely cargo of the NPC ship.

THE NPC REACTION ROLL

Before actually running the encounter, it is helpful to know how the NPCs will react to the player characters. It might be simple to say "well, the PCs are pirates, so the reaction will probably be pretty negative." This might be true in principle, but these encounter generation rules do not make any assumptions in the hopes that they will provide a more varied and entertaining roleplaying experience.

That being said, no one *likes* being robbed. So, we've provided a standard NPC Reaction Table below, and suggested some of the ways the table's results can be interpreted for possible NPC ship and crew attitudes in the context of a piracy or privateering campaign. Simply roll on the table to determine how the vessel and its crew react to the pirates/privateers, and then act accordingly. GMs should encourage players to roleplay their interactions with the crews they are robbing; remember that some characters may have abilities that can alter the NPC reaction result to the benefit of the player characters.



NPC Reaction Table (Roll 2d6)

2d6	Result	Attitude Towards Pirates and Privateers	Possible Actions
2	Hostile	Will take risks to oppose being robbed.	Attack, interfere, escape, flee. The crew hates pirates and will do their best to fight the robbery.
3-5	Unfriendly	Wishes the pirates ill.	Avoid, insult, lie, misdirect, mislead, waste time. The crew hates pirates but is unwilling to resort to direct action. However, every moment wasted is another moment a patrol frigate closes in.
6-8	Indifferent	Not happy with the situation but unwilling to do anything about it.	Any socially acceptable action. The crew will do what they're told but are otherwise unhelpful.
9-11	Friendly	Not looking for trouble, will comply.	Chat, offer limited help. The crew has a protocol to give pirates what they want. This minimizes any risk of harm.
12	Helpful	Ideologically inclined to help. Perhaps bordering on Stockholm Syndrome.	Heal, aid, support. The crew is willing to move their cargo onto the pirates' ship. Perhaps they are being forced to move cargo for an oppressive government. Perhaps the pirates are notorious enough to be minor celebrities...

F. THE ENCOUNTER TABLES

To determine if a random encounter happens in a given region of a system, roll 1d6 and consult the specific region where the PCs are travelling.

A Ship result should be followed by a 1d10 roll on the Ship Encounter table. Likewise, an Item result on the Item Encounter table. If no encounter occurs, then the GM should consult the Encounter Frequency table (p. 23 above) to determine when next to roll for another random encounter.

It will become clear that smart pirates and privateers must rely on their network of spies, informants, and corrupt star port administrators to find suitable prey, rather than take a chance and wait for a random encounter to come to them.

The following tables represent the eight generic system types as discussed in the previous section (p. 17). GMs are encouraged to modify these tables to create system-specific versions for their game world.

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE SYSTEM (Secure or Independent Backwater)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Item	Item	None	Item	Item
3	None	None	None	None	None
4	None	None	None	None	None
5	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2, 3	Large Station	
Courier/Scout	4	Derelict Large Station	1
Research/Survey	5	Small Station	2, 3
Liner/Yacht	6	Derelict Small Station	4
Merchant	7, 8	Derelict Ship	5, 6
Patrol	9	Planetoid	7,8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	10		

BANDIT TERRITORY (Dangerous Backwater)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Item	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
3	None	Item	None	Item	Item
4	None	None	None	None	None
5	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	
Courier/Scout	3	Derelict Large Station	1
Research/Survey		Small Station	2, 3
Liner/Yacht		Derelict Small Station	4, 5
Merchant	4, 5, 6	Derelict Ship	6, 7
Patrol	7	Planetoid	8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	8, 9, 10		

GOING CONCERN (Secure Stopover)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Item	Item
3	Item	Ship	Item	Item	None
4	Item	Item	None	Item	None
5	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	1
Courier/Scout	3, 4	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey	5	Small Station	2, 3, 4
Liner/Yacht	6	Derelict Small Station	5
Merchant	7, 8	Derelict Ship	6
Patrol	9	Planetoid	7, 8
Warship	10	Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate			

RAIL HEAD SYSTEM (Independent Stopover)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Item	Item
3	Item	Ship	Item	Item	Item
4	Item	Item	None	Item	None
5	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	1
Courier/Scout	3	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey	4	Small Station	2, 3, 4
Liner/Yacht	5, 6	Derelict Small Station	5
Merchant	7, 8	Derelict Ship	6
Patrol	9	Planetoid	7, 8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	10		

WILD WEST SYSTEM (Dangerous Stopover)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
3	Item	Ship	Ship	Item	None
4	None	None	None	Item	None
5	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	
Courier/Scout	3	Derelict Large Station	1
Research/Survey		Small Station	2, 3
Liner/Yacht	4	Derelict Small Station	4, 5
Merchant	5, 6	Derelict Ship	6, 7
Patrol	7	Planetoid	8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	8, 9, 10		

BAZAAR WORLD (Independent Hub)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Item	Ship
3	Ship	Ship	Item	Item	Item
4	Ship	Item	Item	Item	Item
5	Item	Item	None	None	None
6	Item	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	1, 2
Courier/Scout	3	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey		Small Station	3, 4
Liner/Yacht	4, 5	Derelict Small Station	5
Merchant	6, 7, 8	Derelict Ship	6
Patrol	9	Planetoid	7, 8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	10		

CAPITAL (Secure Hub)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Item	Ship	Item
3	Ship	Ship	Item	Item	Item
4	Item	Item	None	Item	None
5	Item	Item	None	Item	None
6	Item	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1	Large Station	1, 2
Courier/Scout	2	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey	3	Small Station	3, 4
Liner/Yacht	4, 5	Derelict Small Station	
Merchant	6, 7	Derelict Ship	5
Patrol	8	Planetoid	6, 7
Warship	9	Hazard	8
Capital Ship	10	Junk	9, 10
Pirate			

HIVE OF SCUM AND VILLAINY (Dangerous Hub)

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Gas Giant	Asteroid Belt	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
3	Ship	Ship	Item	Item	Ship
4	Ship	Item	Item	Item	Item
5	Item	None	None	Item	None
6	Item	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	D10	Item Encounters	D10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2, 3	Large Station	1
Courier/Scout	4	Derelict Large Station	2
Research/Survey		Small Station	3, 4
Liner/Yacht		Derelict Small Station	5
Merchant	5, 6, 7	Derelict Ship	6, 7
Patrol	8	Planetoid	8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	9, 10		

G. SHIP ENCOUNTERS

Below are the descriptions and instructions for generating ship encounters. If a result makes no sense given the GM’s vision of the setting or the specific circumstances of the roll, GMs should feel free to change or ignore the results to their taste. However, we encourage GMs to use the encounter charts and rules here as-is, and then build the setting and story on the results of any encounters.

SALVAGE/MINING/PROSPECTOR

These ships are common in most systems, since there is always a need for new sources of raw materials. Prospector ships are usually small vessels with no more than four crew members, some sample analysis gear, and a large number of claim beacons on board. Mining ships usually come in two forms: small independent belter vessels, and large semi-automated

mining/processing ships that hop from asteroid to asteroid, consuming as they go. Salvagers represent a marginal breed of spacers who have no qualms picking over battlefields, derelicts or ruins, and taking everything that isn’t nailed down, and much of what is. Many of these ships will not be FTL capable. Roll 1d6: 1-3, the ship has an FTL drive.

Generation: Roll 1d6 to determine the ship type, referring to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-2	Salvage Ship	Carrying 1d6x10 tons of salvage and spares
3-4	Mining Ship	Roll 1d6: 1-5: A small belter : crew of 4, 12 mining drones, 2d6x20 tons of raw ore 6: Large semi-automated mobile mining and ore processing platform . This will have 2d6x1000 tons of ore, crew of 2, and 40 mining drones.
5-6	Prospector	Crew of 1d6.

Salvage Ships will be small or medium sized vessels with a small crew (4-6). They will have compact salvage handling gear, including grav-lifts, drones, and laser cutters.

Mining Ships: There is a 1 in 6 chance that their ore contains high quantities of rare earths and radioactives, making it quite valuable.

Mining platforms will have a portion (3d6%) of valuable ore but getting at it will require 2d6 hours of processing.

Prospectors: Usually prospector crews are experts in geology, but not necessarily. Prospecting ships will have a dozen claim beacons, and 1d6-1 claims and samples on board. Roll 1d6: on a 6, one of the claims is very lucrative.

COURIER/SCOUT

Courier and Scout ships are small, inexpensive vessels with decent range. In some sectors they are ubiquitous, and they often represent the most reliable and self-sufficient ship designs around. Scout and Courier ships are lightly

armed and have small, dedicated, experienced crews. They usually make a poor choice as a target of a privateer or pirate, but occasionally these little ships carry important or even priceless documents, relics, or intelligence.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-4	Courier	Couriers have 1d3 crew. Carrying (roll 1d6): 1-4, mail; 5, 1d6 passengers; 6, high priority messages or sensitive intelligence.
5-6	Scout	1d3+1 crew Scouts often carry something interesting. Roll 1d6: 1-2: Navigation/system data 3-4: mail 5: 1d3 passengers 6: Something rare and unusual: an artifact or otherwise unknown bit of potential research and adventure.

Courier ships are fast, small, and very lightly armed.

Scouts are small and have relatively long range and endurance given their size.

RESEARCH/SURVEY

These vessels comprise private and government-backed science ships investigating any number of esoteric phenomena, as well as more mundane survey vessels quietly updating and double-checking known navigation routes, planetological data, and the social demographics of inhabited worlds. Many research vessels are mundane ships crewed by

professional spacers; these ships have dedicated, modular, laboratory sections. Others are more specialized science/research ships specifically commissioned for deep space research. Survey ships usually have advanced sensors for their work, but little in the way of dedicated equipment otherwise. Many survey ships are private contractors doing government work and may have very unique crews.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

D6 Roll	Ship Type	Description
1-2	Research Vessel	2d6+6 crew, 3d6 scientists and assistants.
3-6	Survey	Crew: 1d4+1, including a pair of planetary surveyors. Roll 1d6: on a 6, the survey ship has very useful data about a nearby system.

Research ships are often large, purpose-built vessels for scientific study of specific phenomena. A research ship will usually have a launch or two, used to collect samples and jaunt around the system. These ships carry expensive and rare scientific instruments,

experimental laboratories, and high-powered computers to run simulations. GMs can justify just about any weird, wonderful, or dangerous thing being on board.

Survey ships are like scout ships, but they focus more on data collection.

LINER/YACHT

Space liners are large merchant ships dedicated to transporting passengers. Liners are common in more civilized regions of space where passenger routes are commercially viable. They are far less common in less civilized parts of space, except where they are used transporting new colonists to frontier worlds. Liners are usually no-frills ships designed to pack as many passengers on board as possible. However, it is also possible to encounter luxury space cruise

liners. These ships are designed for space tourism and may only exist in the most civilized of sectors. Liners tend to have professional civilian crews, with a small security detail for on-board incidents. Yachts, conversely, are the personal vessels of wealthy individuals or corporations. Most are unarmed ships designed to transport those on board in relative luxury. However, some yachts are designed for high performance, and are equipped with the most shockingly advanced technologies.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-2	Liner	Crew: 24, Passengers: 1d6x10+50. Roll 1d6: 1-3: Frontier liner with 3d6x10 tons of colonial supplies, 1d6x1000 credits in passenger valuables. 4-6: Regular passenger service liner. 1d6x10 tons of trade goods. 2d6x1000 credits in passenger valuables. Mail packets optional.
3	Cruise Ship	Crew: 24, Passengers: 2d6x10. 3d6x5000 credits in passenger valuables. 2d6x10 tons of luxuries.
4-6	Yacht	Crew: 4, Passengers: 2d20. 4d6x20000 credits in liquid assets, 1d6x20 tons of luxury cargo. Roll 1d6: 1-2: Corporate Executive Transport 3-4: Pleasure craft for a hedonist (like a rock band's private ship) 5: Privately owned safari ship 6: Government spy ship masquerading as a pleasure ship.

Note: in some settings, liners or cruise ships may be entirely inappropriate, meaning that this will always be a yacht encounter.

Liner passengers might be colonists going to a frontier world, or tourists enjoying a long space cruise.

A **yacht** encounter could represent any sort of independent vessel backed by well-funded patrons. Yachts are great prizes, since they usually carry people that own all sorts of expensive things, and that require all sorts of expensive luxuries, or both.

MERCHANT

There is a plethora of merchant vessels available in any game setting. We will divide them into two main categories: independent traders and corporate freighters. Independent traders are smaller vessels that engage in speculative trade, eking out a marginal existence in the hopes of making a big score. These ships and their crews vary very widely, but they are usually lightly armed and have no desire to engage in protracted engagements

with pirates or privateers. Traders will often have cargo stored specifically for pirates or privateers to loot. Corporate freighters are larger vessels capable of transporting enormous cargoes. These ships operate under corporate ownership or sponsorship, and rarely venture far from established and secure space lanes. Large freighters are lightly armed, instead relying on the presence of reliable escort ships to ensure their safe passage.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-4	Free Trader	Crew: 1d3+3 Cargo: 1d6+2 different types, 2d6x20 for total tonnage of all cargoes. Passengers: 2d6-2
5	Freighter	Crew: 12 Roll 1d6: 1-2: Corporate freighter; 1d6x1000 tons of cargo 3-6, Subsidized free merchant; 2d6x100 tons of cargo Armed Guards: 2d6 Passengers: 3d6
6	Convoy	Composition: 1d3+3 Free Traders, 1d3-1 Subsidized Merchants or Freighters, 1d3 Escorts. For Escorts, roll 1d6 for each: 1-3: Patrol Gunship 4-5: A pair of fighters 6: Patrol Frigate

Note that large freighters or convoys might be inappropriate in some settings. Use these at the GM’s discretion.

Free Traders will be carrying cargo and passengers. Use the random trade goods table of your science fiction game of choice to determine what these cargoes are. Optionally, roll 1d6: on a 6, the ship is carrying something particularly valuable: 1d6x10000Cr worth of luxuries or contraband hidden away in secret compartments. Otherwise the ship is carrying 3d6x10000 worth of merchandise.

Freighters are either corporate owned behemoths, or much larger free merchant ships

that enjoy government subsidies to support trade in far corners of the sector. . Merchant or freighter, these heavily laden vessels are juicy targets, and feature better ship weapons, as well as a handful of armed guards for protection.

Convoys are always a juicy target for pirates, but the escorts can be quite pesky. Remember to generate the cargo and passengers for each vessel, as above.

PATROL

Patrol encounters entail a variety of smaller armed security vessels. The largest and most powerful are patrol frigates, which conduct long-duration sweeps of multiple systems, looking for threats and handling all sorts of trouble on the frontier. These frigates are occasionally pressed into escort duty, but that is usually the job of patrol gunships. These smaller ships rarely have more than two dozen crew and marines on board, and they handle the day-to-day tasks of escort duty, customs

inspection and anti-piracy operations. Many are equipped with interstellar drives, but it is also common to find patrol gunships with system drives only. This provides them with more firepower and endurance, at the cost of being unable to pursue pirates that leave the system. Finally, some patrols consist of small groups of 2-4 fighters. These small, agile ships are capable of taking out civilian vessels and even small warships. Fighters are nearly always bound to one system, though some possess interstellar drives.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-2	Patrol Frigate	Crew: 1d4x10, spacers and marines.
3-5	Patrol Gunship	Crew: 1d4x5 spacers and marines
6	Fighters	Roll 1d3+1 for the number of fighters in the patrol. Each is a single or two-seat fighter.

Patrol Frigates are the most common warship that a government will send out on regular space patrols. They are fast, small warships crewed by spacers and marines, and are armed well enough that only the most heavily armed pirate or privateer would pose a threat. Patrol frigates are often commanded by young, up-and-coming officers who have been put on patrol to make a name for themselves, and they are given a wide mandate to deal with situations as they see fit. A patrol frigate's route will take it as far away as their fuel and endurance will permit it, and it is common for patrol missions to last a year or even more.

The most common patrol encounter in a system is a **Patrol Gunship**. These are small, fast, vessels often used for customs inspections,

anti-piracy patrols, convoy escort duties, and system security. Gunships are crewed by spacers and marines. Patrol gunships on escort duty are equipped with FTL drives and are armed heavily enough to give most small-time pirates pause. Gunships that have no FTL drives are more heavily armed, and often serve as a system's first line of defense against pirates and other aggressors.

Fighters perform many of the same patrol functions as gunships, though they are also used to intercept unidentified craft and smugglers. Depending on the weaponry they mount, fighters may pose a significant threat to civilian craft and pirates. Fighters consist of well-coordinated teams of vessels.

WARSHIP

Warships are dedicated combat vessels. Encountering one means that hostilities might break out in this system, or a neighboring one very soon. Warships can include combat frigates, which are used as picket vessels for

fleets, but are quite dangerous on their own. Larger warships may include light or heavy cruisers. A warship encounter can even entail encountering a small battlegroup of fighters, gunships, and frigates, all supporting one large cruiser.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-3	Combat Frigate	Crew: 50, and 50 marines.
4-5	Light Cruiser	Crew: 100, and 50 marines. Support Craft: roll 1d6: 1-2: None 3-5: 1d3+2 fighters ready for deployment 6: 1d3+3 fighters, and 1d2 Patrol Gunships
6	Heavy Cruiser	Crew: 100, with 1d6x10 + 50 marines. Support Craft: 1d6+3 fighters, 1d3+2 patrol gunships, and 1d3-1 (0-2) patrol frigates.

Combat Frigate: Unlike a Patrol Frigate, a Combat Frigate is a heavily armed small warship with less endurance and much more weaponry and armor. Combat Frigates usually serve as the scouts and pickets of a larger battlegroup. When encountered while on a solo mission, Combat Frigate will be the largest ship in the vicinity and is to be rightfully feared by smaller ships.

A **Light Cruiser** is a fast, heavily armed, but lightly armored warship designed for commerce raiding and skirmishing with other warships. Light cruisers are in some ways larger versions of patrol frigates, though their mission profile is more aggressive. Depending on where the encounter takes place, the cruiser might represent a hostile power and attack. A light cruiser might also have support craft, consisting

of fighters and gunships. These vessels are carried inside the cruiser, and so typically will not have their own FTL drives.

Also called a Battlecruiser, a **Heavy Cruiser** is an even larger and more dangerous warship designed to slug it out with all but the largest combat vessels. Encountering a heavy cruiser anywhere but near a naval base is a sure sign that trouble may be close by. Heavy cruisers are capable of handling nearly any threat; they are heavily armed and are well-stocked with marines. However, since they are designed to reach a trouble spot quickly, they must sacrifice some armor for speed. Heavy cruisers have support craft: fighters, gunships, and even patrol frigates for detached scouting duties. The Gunships and Fighters lack FTL drives and are stowed in the Heavy Cruiser.

CAPITAL SHIP

A capital ship encounter represents meeting a battleship, or carrier, and possibly its supporting battlegroup of smaller vessels. These ships represent the apex of naval

construction: they are large, bristling with weapons, marines, and small craft and can destroy most pirate ships without breaking a sweat.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Ship Type	Description
1-3	Battleship	Crew: 1d4x100, spacers and marines. Support Ships: 1d3 Patrol Gunships without FTL drives Battlegroup: Roll 1d6: 1-2: the battleship is alone; 4-6, it is with its battlegroup. The battlegroup is comprised of 1d3-1 Light Cruisers, 1d3+2 Combat Frigates, 1d4+1 Patrol Frigates, and 2d6 Patrol Gunships with FTL drives.
4-6	Carrier	Crew: 1000 spacers, pilots, and marines Aerospace wing: 2d6+20 Fighters (no FTL drives) 2d6+3 Patrol Gunships (no FTL drives) Battlegroup: see Battleship, above. Carriers are <i>never</i> encountered without their battlegroups!

Battleships are the most powerful warships an interstellar polity can produce. They are heavily armed, heavily armored, and capable of slugging it out with any other ship and emerging victorious. Battleships sport the most destructive weaponry capable of being mounted on a starship, and they are also large enough to mount powerful FTL drives. Battleships usually carry a small number of support ships for scouting and light duties. If a battleship is encountered alone, this means that the mere presence of the vessel is enough to intimidate a rebellious world into compliance. However, most battleships are encountered with their battlegroup. Generate each ship separately using the appropriate table.

The largest capital ship, the **Carrier**, is a sight to behold. These behemoths are the dedicated force-projection platforms for those interstellar governments rich enough to build them. A carrier itself is moderately armed and armored, and capable of average speeds. It has a crew of at least 1000, including its aerospace wing. Its main strength lies in its aerospace wing of fighters and patrol gunships. These smaller vessels do not have FTL drives enabling them to make room for as much weaponry and armor as possible. Carriers are *never* encountered alone. In addition to its smaller vessels on board, the carrier will also have its escort battlegroup. This is generated exactly like the Battleship battlegroup, above.

PIRATE/PRIVATEER

Pirate vessels come in three main categories: small independent craft that will engage in “occasional, spontaneous” piracy to make ends meet; dedicated pirate gunboats that are well-armed and crewed by professional criminals and spacers; and large pirate raiders that are the flagship of a small pirate fleet, and the scourge of a sector. Many pirates also deploy fighters in their raids. Some use false distress

beacons to lure civilian ships into a trap. Pirates might instead be privateers: a private vessel that has been given government sanction to engage in piracy against enemies of the state. The difference between pirates and privateers might be nonexistent, but privateers are technically armed combatants, carrying out legal raids, and thus subject to the rules of warfare.

Generation: Roll 1d6 and refer to the table below

1d6	Type	Ship Type	Description
1-5	Pirate: Roll 1d6	1-3: Independent Pirate	Up-gunned Free Trader with an extra 2d6 pirate boarders.
		4-5: Pirate Gunship	Roll 1d6: 1-4: Pirate Patrol Gunship with 2d6 extra pirate boarders 5-6: Pirate Patrol Frigate with 3d6 extra pirate boarders
		6: Pirate Raider	Use Light Cruiser, with additional 1d4x10 pirate boarders Roll 1d6: 1-4: add 1d3+3 Fighters carried in the Raider, without FTL drives. 5-6: None
6	Privateer: Roll 1d6	1-3: Armed Free Trader	Use up-gunned Free Trader with an additional 2d6 boarders
		4-5: Patrol Gunship (privately owned)	Use Patrol Gunship with 2d6 additional boarders.
		6: Patrol Frigate (privately owned)	Use Patrol Frigate with additional 3d6 boarders.

Privateers represent individual civilian vessels that have obtained legal sanction from a government to engage in raiding and reprisals against a specific enemy. The legal document that privateers carry to prove that they are not pirates is called a Letter of Marque. Any small vessel can be up-gunned and turned into a privateer. For our purposes, however, most privateers are either armed Free Traders,

privately-owned Patrol Gunships, or privately-owned Patrol Frigates.

A common course of action for the desperate or unprincipled interstellar merchant is to engage in a bit of piracy on the side to make ends meet or to fill their coffers. These **Independent Pirates** will only attack at an opportune time: when a target vessel is refuelling, performing in-flight repairs, or otherwise unable to easily escape or mount an

effective defense. Independent Pirates often employ false distress signals to lure civilian ships close, and then spring their trap. Their goal is to use surprise to overpower unsuspecting targets, since these vessels are not designed for prolonged space battles, nor bloody boarding actions.

A **Pirate Gunboat** is a dedicated pirate ship that travels the spacelanes looking for easy prey. Most of these ships are old, rebuilt, refurbished, or otherwise acquired by questionable means. Many are captured Patrol Gunboats, repurposed to carry larger boarding crews. Successful Pirate Gunboats sport sensor-spoofing technologies, such as false transponder signals, or even cannibalized electronic warfare jamming gear. Pirate Gunboats are armed and armored well enough to handle all but the most determined civilian target and are usually equipped with powerful engines to catch their prey—and to outrun patrol ships. These ships also have dedicated boarding troops who double as salvage technicians once a prey has been captured. Their job is to locate and loot all compact

valuables, and then strip the prize for as many spare parts as possible.

The largest pirate vessel is a **Pirate Raider**; these ships are effectively light cruisers, but no pirate captain would ever risk their Raider in a stand-up fight. Instead, they prey on the largest merchant vessels: fat subsidized merchant freighters and even larger corporate cargo ships that ply lucrative worlds on the frontier, where government patrols are not yet an effective deterrent. Raiders are the largest and most feared pirate vessels, and often carry fighters which are used as scouts. Their crews consist of veteran spacers, as well as scores of boarding pirates. The latter overcome any resistance among the crews of prize vessels, but their main purpose is to locate all valuable goods aboard their enormous captured prizes and move all valuable cargoes to the Raider as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Raiders are capable combat ships, but they will turn and run at the first sign of serious trouble. Battle damage is both demoralizing and bad for business.

H. ITEM ENCOUNTERS:

Item encounters require a bit more care than ship encounters, if only since many of these places and phenomena can be revisited time and again by player characters. These rules encourage the dynamic generation of system landmarks, since not every GM can anticipate the day-to-day development of a system's space infrastructure. More importantly, while an otherwise boring system with a population of a dozen miners might be the middle-of-nowhere *now*, perhaps it was once a bustling center of interstellar commerce. So, it is entirely conceivable for the player characters to encounter a heretofore unknown refuelling station out in the asteroid belt, an abandoned mine in the periphery, a rogue comet previously undetected in the system, or a long-dead scientific research base.

Because of the relative permanence of these encounters, it is important to emphasize that the GM should feel free to ignore an item encounter result which would not fit the mood or flow of the session. However, it might be more surprising and rewarding if a seemingly weird or ill-fitting item encounter be used to help establish the GM's setting in a more dynamic way.

LARGE STATION

These massive facilities are constructed to hold hundreds or even thousands of souls, and many serve as the centerpiece of a system's starport facilities. Large Stations are often military in nature, but many large and well-established communities comprise civilian habitat orbitals as well. Most large stations will have some form of starship repair facilities, as well as all sorts of amenities for spacers and non-spacers alike. Many incorporate design technologies that are no longer replicable by modern techniques and hold many mysteries in their nooks and crannies. Large stations are abuzz with activity and will often have any number of smaller vessels either docked or in orbit. They are also well-defended.

Large stations should only be encountered in places where it would make sense for them to be found. Running into a station with 1000 people on board at the periphery of a system where no one else goes might not make sense. Or perhaps it will. Either way, the GM has final discretion on whether or not to accept the random encounter roll, or to re-roll.

GENERATION

The first step to generating a large station is to determine its primary purpose for existing. Use the table below:

Large Station Generation Table

1d6	Station Type	Description
1	Naval Base	A large military facility with starport, ships, repair facilities, and possibly a shipyard.
2	Habitat	A major space colony with a cargo and passenger starport, accommodations, and major food production facilities.
3	Factory	A large space manufacturing facility. This station will have all sorts of heavy equipment and is almost always thirsty for raw materials.
4	Research	This station is intended to serve as the base for major scientific research. What it lacks in normal civilian infrastructure it makes up in laboratories, arcane scientific instruments, and many scientific and academic experts working together.
5	Commercial	Commercial stations are space trading hubs <i>par excellence</i> . The starport is designed to accommodate all sorts of cargo. Inside, space travellers can find any sort of goods and service.
6	Mining	These enormous facilities are designed to sit on an asteroid or moon and serve as the central ore processor for any and all mining operations in the system. The facilities on a mining station are always a bit rough, but the miners make up for it by being wild and rowdy when they are off shift.

Large Stations have a well-equipped starport, with fuel processing and life support recharging facilities. There can be 1d6 or more starships docked at the station or keeping position nearby. Use the relevant system Ship encounter table to determine the specific ship types. Naval bases are important military outposts: roll 4d6 for the number of military vessels found there or generate a Warship or Capital ship encounter. Starship repair facilities at large stations are extensive, but only the largest (roll of 6 on 1d6 if this fits in your campaign) will have the necessary infrastructure to construct the largest vessels.

POPULATION

Next, the station needs to be populated. Roll 3d6x100 for a rough total number of people on the station, including the crews from visiting

ships, and any passengers or other transients on board. Although some of these massive stations might be fully independent, most are not, and thus are governed as territories of the system's main world. The GM should roll up two or more trade goods that are for sale at this station should the player characters wish to engage in some high-stakes speculative trade. As well, it is at this point that the GM should stock the station with a handful of patrons, contacts, or even enemies that might be visiting. Either use pre-existing NPCs from the campaign or generate a few using the tools available in any high-quality science fiction RPG.

Once the general infrastructure of a large station has been determined, it is time to generate a local crisis or other problem that the

player characters might have to contend with while on board. Roll 1d10 and consult the table below:

Large Station Problem Table

1d10	Station Problem
1	Corrupt Officials run the station and require bribes, favors, or other considerations before anything the PCs want to happen gets done.
2	Criminals run the docks. The PCs can expect to pay dearly for their ship berth, or they run the risk that their cargo is “accidentally” damaged. The PCs might also experience intimidation by goons, or having contraband planted on board their cargo for convenient discovery by port authorities. The fun is endless!
3	An Engineering Malfunction occurs: power fluctuations occur, machines break down, a robot runs amok. This can be a local problem that only affects the PCs’ ship, or their quarters, cargo, or persons, or it can be a larger concern for the station as a whole.
4	Union Strike: the support staff on board the station goes on strike to protest their terrible working conditions. How do the PCs react to picket lines, privately hired strike-breakers, and disruption of essential services?
5	The Security Crackdown on crime, or civil disobedience. Do the PCs get caught up in the riots? Do they offer their services to the station administrators, or the leaders of the unrest?
6	Political Unrest is ongoing in this station. No one is really happy to see newcomers, who are only going to get in the way. People talk in hushed voices, the shops are shuttered, and there can be acts of terror at any moment, followed by a harsh security response.
7	A Disease Outbreak strikes the station! This is a terrible misfortune in a closed environment like a large space station. Perhaps the PCs can act quickly and help out. Or perhaps they are infected, and must search for a cure before it is too late.
8	A Tragic Accident strikes: a reactor explodes and the inhabitants begin suffering acute radiation poisoning symptoms, a section of the station undergoes explosive decompression and dozens of people are sucked out into the void. Whatever the tragedy, it should have a massive impact on the station as a whole.
9	The Life Support System Breaks Down , and panic spreads among the residents. Can the PCs escape the turmoil, or help by procuring new supplies of oxygen and water?
10	News of an Impending Attack causes tension and panic. The PCs can help organize an evacuation, or a defense of the station.

DERELICT LARGE STATION

Encountering a derelict hulk of a large space station can be downright depressing. Whatever happened to turn this massive edifice into a derelict must have caused untold human tragedy. Derelicts of this size will have already been picked over by scavengers, but most will undoubtedly still have some relics, supplies, and even denizens remaining to be discovered. It is also possible that a desperate group of scavengers or drifters have moved into the

parts of the station that are still inhabitable. This might be to their detriment, as any number of minor life support malfunctions could have long-lasting effects on the population.

Generation: Like an inhabited Large Station, the derelict’s original purpose should be determined first. Use the **Large Station Generation Table** above to start.

It is important for the GM to know why the station is derelict. There are numerous reasons:

The Station is Abandoned Because...

1d6	1d4	What Horrible Event Transpired Here?
1-2	1	Intense Solar Flares made the station intensely radioactive.
	2	A Meteor Storm pulverized the station.
	3	A Rogue planetoid’s gravity destabilized the station’s orbit.
	4	Alien life forms have infested the station. They now hibernate, awaiting new victims.
3-4	1	Catastrophic power core explosion.
	2	Life support failure left frozen bodies floating in the vacuum.
	3	An epidemic outbreak wiped out most of the population, and still lingers in the corridors.
	4	An out of control ship collided with the station. The hulk is embedded in the superstructure, and debris floats around everywhere.
5-6	1	An attack by a terrible enemy wrecked the station and killed most of its inhabitants. Signs of battle remain.
	2	A terror attack crippled the station.
	3	Political unrest led to violence, and the station’s population dwindled.
	4	The station succumbed to the forces of economics and demographics. People moved on.

SMALL STATION

These structures are the most common facilities in most systems, and include anything from deep space scientific research facilities, to ore processing stations, space factories, scout stations, listening posts, weapons platforms, refuelling stations, and smaller star ports, to name but a few. Most small stations have their own maintenance and cargo vessels, and many are host to system patrol vessels.

Generation: First, determine the type of station this is. Note that if a station does not fit the region or system that it is found, feel free to re-roll. However, we encourage GMs to try to get creative and figure out why an ore processing station might be quietly working away on the

periphery of a system, far from the asteroids it is processing.

The various basic characteristics of a small station are determined from the table below.

Station Type gives a reason the station was built, and what it is being used for today.

Population on board a small station can vary greatly. Roll 1d6 to determine if there are any

Ships Present: a result equal to or below the given number indicates that a ship is either docked or holding station nearby. Use the system's ship encounter table to generate the ship that is at the station. If multiple ship types are present, choose or roll randomly to determine which it is.

Finally, each type of station might also be stocked in a specific type of cargo. These are detailed below.

1d12	Station Type	Population	Ships Present	Supplies
1	Listening Post/Monitoring Station	2d6	2 Patrol	-
2	Medical facility	1d6x10	3 Liner, Patrol, or Trader	Medicine
3	Research Outpost	4d6	3, Research or survey.	Scientific Samples
4	Naval/Military Outpost	1d10x10	Yes: 1d6 Patrol ships	Military, Fuel
5	Scout Station	1d10x5	3, 1d4 Scouts	Fuel, Parts
6	Trading Post	2d6	3, 1d3 Traders	Goods
7	Factory	2d6	3 Trader	1-3, Goods; 4-6, Parts
8	Ore Refinery	2d6	2 Trader	Ore
9	Refuelling base/fuel refinery	2d6	4, Any!	Fuel
10	Habitat Station	1d6x20	3, Trader	Parts, Food
11	Smuggler's Cache	3d6	3, Trader, or Pirate	Goods
12	Pirate Base!	1d6x20	Yes, 1d3-1 Pirates	Military, Goods

Medicine: 1d6x10 tons of space-age medical supplies are available for trade, or for

humanitarian purposes. Convincing the station to part with these supplies without adequate payment will be difficult.

Scientific Samples: a research station has 2d6x10 samples of its research present. This could include reams of mundane astronomical or planetological data; however, stranger and more dangerous possibilities abound. The research station could be investigating Things that Humans Were Not Meant to Know.

Military: this refers to ample (1d6x10 tons) amounts of military weaponry, ammunition, and supplies. The station will not part with these supplies unless given a very good reason to; even then, they will only be given to known allies.

Goods: the station is storing 1d6 different types of trade goods, generated using the GM's favorite trade good table. There will be 2d6x10 tons of each trade good present.

Parts: the station carries 1d6x10 tons of spare parts for repairing ships, vehicles, or other high-tech equipment present on the station. The inhabitants of the station may be willing to share their spares, but never for free.

Ore: 3d6x1000 tons of unprocessed ore is present at an ore refinery.

Fuel: this station will have 3d6x1000 tons of fuel available for sale.

Food: this result includes survival supplies such as oxygen and water, as well as foodstuffs. The station will have 2d6x10 tons of food supplies available to trade.

DERELICT SMALL STATION

Depending on the sector, there could be many derelict stations in a given system. These ruins are sometimes the result of apocalypses, battles, and natural disasters. However, a derelict station is the result of something much less sinister: economic fluctuations. An

abandoned mining station could just be all that remains of an asteroid mining operation that dried up. Depending on what the station's original function was, there could be anything in there now.

Generation: Use the following table to determine what sort of station this once was. Remember that just because a system might now be a busy hub of commerce and trade does not mean that it always was. Derelict stations might reflect a system's very different past, which means that almost anything can be encountered.

Once you have determined the type of derelict station, roll 1d6 to see if it is still inhabited. A roll equal to or less than the number in the **Inhabited** column means that the derelict supports a small population. Roll the indicated dice to determine the exact number of inhabitants. This population will often consist of desperate survivors, deranged cannibal savages, or scavengers with questionable motives. Regardless of habitation, roll 1d6 to see if any interesting or valuable **Supplies** can be scavenged: if the result of the roll is equal to or below the listed number in the Supplies column means that something of value remains to be scavenged. The explanation for each type of potential salvage is detailed above. Only the lowest possible die roll should be used to determine the amount of salvage, unless the GM decides that this derelict has never been salvaged before.

Mysterious Ruins: this result indicates something completely strange, like the ruins of a lost cloning facility, or an alien ruin. Uninhabited ruins are more likely, but some ruins contain remnant populations lurking among the relics of their ancestors. The sudden

intrusion by a group of tech-hungry space scavengers into their domain might drive these aliens to react in an aggressive manner. We invite GMs to use this result to spice up what might otherwise be a more mundane encounter result for a group of jaded players.

1d12	Station Type	Inhabited	Supplies
1	Listening Post/Monitoring Station	1, 1d6	-
2	Medical facility	2, 3d6	3, Medicine
3	Research Outpost	1, 2d6	2, Samples
4	Naval/Scout Outpost	2, 2d6	2, Parts
5	Trading Post	1, 1d6	3, Goods
6	Factory	1, 1d6	3, Parts
7	Ore Refinery	1, 1d6	4, Unrefined Ore
8	Refuelling base/fuel refinery	2, 3d6	3, Fuel
9	Habitat Station	3, 1d6x1d6	2, Parts
10	Smuggler's Cache	1, 1d6	2, Goods
11	Pirate Base!	1, 2d6	2, Parts
12	Mysterious Ruins	2, 4d6	Strange Relics

DERELICT SHIP

The floating remains of spacecraft can be relatively common in some parts of space. A GM can justify encountering a derelict of any hull type. However, it is useful to know what major events may have occurred in the system in the past: a battle, a solar flare, or perhaps pirate raids. These all might be reasons for having a derelict hull drifting in an otherwise civilized system. Of course, a botched interstellar journey could be the culprit.

Derelict ships may have valuable supplies remaining on board for intrepid salvagers; some may have hidden dangers waiting as well.

Generation: Roll on the table below to determine what type of ship is encountered. Using the ship encounter generation rules above, develop the details of the encounter. Note that a derelict ship encounter always means encountering *one* ship. Convoy, squadron, and battlegroup-type results should

be ignored, unless the GM is feeling particularly ambitious about the encounter.

Escape Pods: these are occupied on a roll of 4 or less on 1d6. An escape pod will have 1d6 occupants who will undoubtedly be very happy to be rescued.

The **Salvage** column indicates whether or not and what type of salvage can be found on the ship. Roll 1d6, if the roll is equal to or less than the listed number, there is salvage to be had. Note that any derelict can provide a small number of spare parts as salvage. To determine the quantity of salvage, use the same rules as the Derelict Station rules above.

Note: derelict ships are almost always uninhabited and have no functional life support. Should the GM wish to incorporate a chance of encountering inhabited derelicts, roll 1d6: on a 1, the ship is still inhabited. The number of denizens should be 1d6 for a small ship, 3d6 for a medium sized ship, and 6d6 for a large ship. Capital ships are so large that it is feasible to find as many as 2d6x10 inhabitants in a derelict capital hull. In any case, these denizens need not be human: alien infestations may be the cause of the ship's current state of dereliction.

1d10	Ship Encounters:	Salvage
1	Salvage/Mining/Prospector	3, Ore and Samples
2	Courier/Scout	2, Information and Samples
3	Research/Survey	2, Samples
4	Liner/Yacht	3, Goods
5	Merchant	3, Goods
6	Patrol	2, Military
7	Warship	3, Military
8	Capital Ship	Yes, Military
9	Pirate	3, Military and Goods
10	Escape Pod	2, Goods, Information

PLANETOID

Asteroids, small moons, and comets are common in space, but this encounter means that something about the planetoid is unusual or special. An asteroid could be inhabited, or it could be a very rich find for prospectors. Planetoids could have abandoned facilities, or even alien ruins.

Generation: roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

1d6	Planetoid Type	Description
1-3	Asteroid	Roll 1d6: 1-2, the asteroid is rich in valuable minerals 3-4, the asteroid has an inhabited base 5, the asteroid has a derelict base 6, the asteroid has strange uninhabited ruins in it.
4-5	Moon	Roll 1d6: 1, the moon is rich in valuable minerals 2-3, the moon has an inhabited base 4-5, the moon has a derelict base 6, the moon has strange uninhabited ruins in it.
6	Comet	Ship's Sensor Operator : roll to detect the comet before it is a threat. If this roll is failed, roll again: if successful, the Pilot has a chance to effect evasive maneuvers. If the second sensor roll failed, the comet impacts the ship and causes serious damage!

In the case where planetoids have valuable minerals, remember that the PCs are in the pirate business, not the mining business. The presence of valuable minerals means that they should be waiting to rob a prospector of their claim. Alternatively, the PCs could ambush the mining vessel that comes along to harvest and process the minerals. It is always easier to steal valuable minerals than to mine them yourself!

Where planetoids have inhabited or derelict bases, use the appropriate Small Station generation rules to determine the sort of inhabited asteroid or moon base the PCs encounter... For alien ruins, use the Derelict Small Station "Mysterious Ruins" entry to determine what the PCs have found.

HAZARD

Space is filled with dangers, and this encounter represents those that are inherent in the hostile environment of space, as well as those that are the result of human activity.

1d6	Hazard Type	Description
1	Comet	See the above entry under Planetoid encounters.
2	Dust Cloud	A cloud of debris or space dust is headed right towards the PCs' ship! If it is detected, the ship's pilot will be able to avoid it with a standard skill roll. If not, then the dust cloud will cause damage. Roll 1d6: 1-3, the cloud does minor damage; 4-5, the cloud does major, but not catastrophic damage; on a 6, the dust cloud has crippled the ship.
3	Meteor swarm	As a dust cloud above, except: 1-2, minor damage; 3-4, major damage; and 5-6 crippling catastrophic damage.
4	Solar Flare	The system's star emits intense radiation: 1-4, this jams sensors and communications; 5-6, this also endangers the ship's crew—they need to find cover fast, before being exposed to a lethal dose of radiation.
5	Distress Beacon (True)	Generate a random ship according to the ship encounter table for this system. It is stricken and needs immediate assistance. It is possible to pick up distress beacons at longer ranges than normal. Feel free to double the encounter ranges.
6	Distress Beacon (False)	Generate a pirate encounter for this system. When the PCs' ship gets close, the pirates spring their trap and attack! It is possible to pick up distress beacons at longer ranges than normal. Feel free to double the encounter ranges.

JUNK

There are untold bits of floating debris from the centuries that humanity has been voyaging out amongst the stars. Some of this space junk is of little value or might even present a bit of a navigational hazard to the careless. However, occasionally one does come across things of interest that might make for a memorable encounter: old astrogation beacons, cargo pods jettisoned by smugglers, or even semi-functional defense satellites might be mundane, or they might be something else entirely.

1d6 Roll	Type	Description
1	Astrogation Beacon	This old bit of junk is broadcasting a weak, steady signal. It is of little importance. It is easy to recover and strip for parts. Roll 1d6: on a 6, the beacon contains useful navigation data.
2	Communications satellite	A hunk of junk that harkens back to the system's old days. It may be broadcasting a nuisance signal: old TV re-runs, a really terrible pop song, or even a private message on a broken loop cycle. It is easy to recover, but probably not worth much in the way of parts.
3	Debris	A small collection of debris that might pose some risk to the ship. Roll 1d6: on a 6, treat this encounter as a Dust Cloud, above. Otherwise, it is harmless junk.
4	Defense Satellite or Probe	Abandoned defense arrays or old probes are a common enough hazard to be included here. They are still operational. Roll 1d6: 1-3, this is a defense satellite; 4-6, a sensor probe. Either way, the device will attempt to detect the PCs' ship using active sensors. If successful, it will broadcast its discovery on a wide frequency. For Defense satellites, roll 1d6: 1-3, nothing happens (out of ammunition). 4-5, the satellite will target the ship with laser weapons! On a 6, the satellite will launch 1d4 primitive nuclear-tipped missiles
5	Jettisoned Cargo Containers	Unlike typical debris, this is a rare encounter. The PCs have come across 1d6x10 tons of cargo pods. Randomly generate the cargo using whichever cargo goods generation rules you like
6	Escape Pod	This escape pod is powered down and drifting. Roll 1d6: 1-3, the pod is empty; 4-5, the pod has 1d3 corpses in it; on a 6, the pod contains a survivor in cryogenic sleep!

AN ENCOUNTER GENERATION EXAMPLE:

The *Zorya* is an armed merchant pirate that is currently looking for some unfortunate prey. It has just arrived in the Gavdos system after a week in FTL transfer. Gavdos is a Rail Head System (Independent Stopover), and the *Zorya's* captain hopes for some happy encounters before discreetly making for the mainworld. Since the *Zorya* has just arrived in a new Arrival Zone, the GM rolls 1d6 on the Arrival Zone column for a Rail Head System and gets a 6: no encounter. The crew does some last-minute maintenance as the *Zorya* transits to the closest Gas Giant. This takes a day, so the GM rolls for another Arrival Zone encounter, which occur every 12 hours in an Independent world. The result is a 1: a ship!

The GM picks up the d10, and rolls on the Rail Head System Ship Encounter table, getting a result of 2: a salvage/miner/pro prospector ship. The GM follows the rules and rolls up a run-of-the-mill mining ship with 4 crewmembers, 140 tons of unprocessed ore, of which very little is valuable. The miner has probably just found some unremarkable asteroid, filled its hold, and is now making for port. The GM asks the player running the *Zorya's* sensor operator for a skill roll: a Beer Level Success! This means that *Zorya* has spotted the miner from very far away. The captain of the *Zorya* has very little interest in robbing miners of their dirt, so she instructs the pilot to continue to the gas giant. The GM takes a second to determine if the miner spotted the *Zorya* in turn: a quick roll indicates that the *Zorya* remained undetected.

The *Zorya* makes the gas giant in a day, and the GM notes that the encounter frequency for a Stopover's Gas Giants is one day. Another encounter roll gives a result of 5, no encounter. The *Zorya* will lurk in the upper atmosphere of the gas giant for another day, just to be sure.

The next day, the GM rolls for an encounter and the result is an Item. The *Zorya* has detected a small station in orbit of one of the gas giant's moons.

The GM takes out a d12 and rolls on the Small Station generator: a Trading Post, which has 2 Free Traders docked or in orbit. Jackpot! The two ships are rolled up: one is carrying 3d6x10000 = 120000 in random cargo. The other has only 60 000 credits in random cargo, but also has a secret stash of highly illegal contraband worth 500 000 credits tucked away in a smuggler's compartment. The first ship is carrying four passengers, while the ship with the contraband is also carrying three passengers.

The station itself has seven people on board: the trader and his family. There are also four different types of trade goods on board the station: 100 tons, 70 tons, 50 tons and 50 tons of Housewares, Industrial Supplies, Polymers, and Textiles, respectively. With the encounter fleshed out somewhat, the GM asks for another sensor skill roll from the comms operator: Barely a Success means that the *Zorya* detected this trading post once its orbit brought it very close. The comms operator was not paying attention! One hour does not give the pirate crew much time to get their eyepatches on, and fake prosthetic legs attached! The GM rolls to see if the station and the Free Traders detect the *Zorya*. He rules that one of the Traders (the one without the contraband) is busy on the station. The station does not detect the *Zorya*, but the more vigilant of the Free Trader crews does, alas.

The *Zorya's* captain orders the attack! The comms officer reports that one of the Traders has already fled the station and is making for the system's Mainworld. Since the *Zorya* can manage to accelerate to 3Gs, it will only take it 20 minutes to arrive at the station. The other Free Trader and the trading post itself will be sitting ducks for the *Zorya's* plasma cannon. The GM decides that the station is lightly armed and does not pose a major threat.

The GM rolls the three reaction rolls for the NPC crews as follows: the station crew is Indifferent (7). They have been raided by pirates before and know that their best course of action is to do what they're told, but only what they're told, and remain passive otherwise. The station sends out an alert to the local authorities on Gavdos and its crew sits tight.

The Free Trader still docked is also Indifferent (6). Its crew knows the drill, and the captain has already drawn up a cargo manifest—and then deleted it from the computer—to remind himself of what he will likely be missing if the pirates are thorough. He has the insurance claim to think about, after all.

The fleeing Free Trader carrying contraband is Unfriendly (10). It will do its best to evade the *Zorya*, and will fire on the pirate if it follows. Because it is carrying contraband, it has not sent out an alert to the local authorities.

With all this in mind, the GM asks how the players are planning their robbery, and an evening's piracy begins!

MAKING MONEY

The holds are full with stolen cargo, that patrol frigate is too far away to pose a threat, and the crew has patched up the holes from when the merchant ship thought it would put up a fight. Now it is time for the pirates to head to a safe port, unload their cargo quickly and quietly, and find someone to take everything off their hands. This chapter discusses the economics of selling stolen goods, and presents a simple set of game mechanics to answer that all important question: how much is all this stuff worth?

A. THE ECONOMICS OF PIRACY

Pirates have a number of expenses. These include the mundane costs that all ship operators must pay: crew salaries, ship maintenance, life support, and other upkeep costs. There are also costs that are more specific to engaging in piracy: bribes to gain intelligence on potential targets and payoffs to dockworkers to unload hot cargo are two common expenses. Pirates might also have to pay a percentage of their haul—after expenses—to the local crime boss, or whoever runs the free port. Being an outlaw pirate is not quite as lucrative, or glamorous, as it is portrayed in the holo-dramas.

The main concern for pirates, however, is how much their stolen cargo is worth. Optimistic players might point to the list price of a given trade good and expect to receive comparable value for their cargo. GMs should explain before the game begins that pirates should not

expect to receive a fair price for stolen goods. That would violate the law of supply and demand, the main factor that determines the value of any commercial transaction.

When selling stolen goods, supply and demand considerations play out like this: a pirate cannot expect to sell stolen cargo for its market price because no legitimate buyer will purchase stolen goods and pass them off as legal. This is because any society that has any semblance of order and respect for property—private or otherwise—does not tolerate the legitimate sale of stolen goods for long. Doing so would only encourage theft and banditry! The demand for stolen goods is therefore very low. Thus, when a pirate or other criminal wishes to sell goods obtained illegally, they must accept whatever price whoever is willing to pay. Moreover, the individuals who buy stolen goods do so knowing that they are providing a valuable service: they are allowing criminals and others who live outside legal society to interface with it and prosper. Criminals never have to interact with legitimate businesses, and can continue to operate outside of the law, with very little evidence connecting them to the stolen property. *Fences* buy the stolen goods and then do their best to pass them off as having been legally obtained somehow, usually through a combination of forgery, small scale distribution, and low prices—but this is beyond our concerns here.

After having bribed any number of dockworkers, port administrators, customs officials, and crime bosses, pirates must then sell their cargoes to fences who will gouge them on prices *because they can*. Fences can, and will, drive sale prices even lower when they are better connected to organized crime syndicates. Prices will drop even more when PCs attempt to offload cargoes that are either dangerous, in high quantity, or easily identifiable as being stolen—or some combination of these three. The end result is that, barring a particularly rich haul, pirates live very marginal lives on the fringes of space.

BRIBERY AND YOU: THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

The best way of getting ahead in piracy or privateering is to minimize or even eliminate the randomness of the random encounter tables presented in the preceding chapter. GMs should take great pains to show eager players that relying on random encounter generators is a good way to plunder a hold full of unrefined asteroid, or worse, to run into a light cruiser. It's far better for pirates to have advance information on hand about potential targets.

One way to acquire this information is to hack computer networks, steal cargo manifests, and perform other high-risk operations. As if boarding a hostile merchant ship wasn't dangerous enough! No, there is a simpler, safer way: bribe the people who work with merchant traders. Dockworkers, port administrators, traffic controllers, brokers, and more, all have insider information regarding the comings and goings of merchant ships, and more importantly their cargoes. This is where player characters with social skills like "investigation", "seduction", or "bribe" come in very handy.

A solid bribe that greases the correct palm will provide untold information that would



otherwise be near-impossible and highly risky to obtain. Of course, roleplaying game *players* being generally honest folk, the size of the bribe might not be immediately obvious. Here we present a sample of different occupations, favors, and the rough size of the bribe required to make things happen. A skill roll of some kind can accompany the offer of a bribe, with failure indicating that more money is required, and a critical failure indicating that the authorities have been alerted to the bribery attempt!

If the players are not particularly interested in playing out the social interactions on the ground, the GM can ask for a relevant skill roll, and upon success, present the players with a list of potential targets. In this case, the GM should levy a 5-20% "Bribe Fee" on any cargoes that the PCs acquire in this way. It's the price of doing business, after all.

Occupation	Potential Favors or Information	Bribe Amount
Dockworker	Ship names, potential cargoes, crew sizes, ignore stolen goods	2d6x50cr
Bartender	Ship names, crew morale, some potential cargoes, rumors	2d6x20cr
Prostitute	Ship names, crew morale, cargoes, secrets and rumors	3d6x50cr
Customs official	Ship names, cargo manifests, ignore stolen goods	1d6x1000cr
Traffic Controller	Ship names, arrival and departure schedules	3d6x1000cr
Cargo Master	Ship names, cargo manifests, cargo irregularities, ignore stolen goods	3d6x1000cr
Broker	Ship names, rough estimate of the ship's financial liquidity (cash on hand), specific cargoes	1d6x10000cr
Fence	Ship names, liquidity, illegal cargoes, rumors	1d6x10000cr
Port Administrator	Ship names, crew manifests, cargo manifests, schedules for arrival and departure	4d6x10000cr

Note that these prices are per encounter, per month. If the PCs wish to develop long-term relationships, the bribe amounts should be 10 to 20 times higher per year.

B. THE MECHANICS OF SELLING STOLEN GOODS

The game mechanics presented here are designed to give some system-neutral details and procedures for selling stolen cargoes. If players and GMs are less interested in this side of piracy, then it might be best to simply pay out 20% of list price for stolen cargoes, and call it a day. However, this does skip over many roleplaying opportunities, as well as opportunities for more adventures.

1. THE FENCE

The first step in selling stolen goods is to find a fence willing to buy the goods in question. If the PCs do not know such a shady individual—perhaps because they have not been pirates for long—then they will have to use their skills to find one. These skills can include things like “Streetwise” or “Larceny”. Characters might also do well using other interpersonal skills in their repertoire.

When looking for a fence, PCs must be able to tell if the fence will have the funds available to receive the merchandise. Buying a cargo of stolen holo-playback units will require less cash on hand than buying a rich haul of laser rifles. Richer fences can be found in places with more traffic, but richer fences are also better connected and can drive prices down. Richer fences might also be under surveillance from local law enforcement, or be a police informant. Worse still, the fence might actually be an undercover police officer!

2. MAKING THE DEAL: ROLL 3D6

The table below shows the percent value the fence is willing to pay for the stolen cargo. This is the percentage of the cargo’s list price, per unit. The pirate’s goal is to get the highest value for the loot, so the player tasked with rolling 3d6 must hope to get as high a result as possible. Each cargo type should be rolled for separately.



The Fence Sale Price Table

Roll Result	Sale Percentage of List Price
-1 or lower	1%
0	2%
1	5%
2	5%
3	10%
4	10%
5	10%
6	15%
7	20%
8	25%
9	25%
10	30%
11	30%
12	35%
13	35%
14	40%
15	40%
16	45%
17	45%
18	50%
19	60%
20	70%
21	80%
22 or higher	90%

The following modifiers should be applied to the sale price roll:

Situation	Modifier to the roll
Goods are Hot	-4
Fence Purchasing Power:	
Under 10 000 Credits	0
10 000-100 000 Credits	-1
100 000-1 million Credits	-2
Tens of Millions of Credits	-4
Demand Modifier:	
Little Demand for Good	-2
Low Demand for Good	-1
Some demand for good	+1
High demand for good	+2
The PC's highest relevant skill level	Variable
The PC's highest relevant attribute modifier	variable

Savvy readers might notice that the main obstacle preventing a determined pirate from quickly retiring on a pleasure planet surrounded by an entourage of gold-plated serving robots is a well-connected fence, and the high likelihood the pirate will have to deal in hot merchandise.

Hot Goods: these include any item that is easily identifiable as stolen after a reasonable examination. Many items possess anti-theft ID tags or other markings. Some items are hot simply because they are one-of-a-kind, or kind of a big deal. Examples include works of art, weapons with serial numbers, archaeological artifacts, specialized industrial equipment, luxury vehicles, and starships. It is possible to defeat anti-theft tags by using forgery skills, but failure usually ruins the item, or alerts the authorities to the item's location.

Fence Purchasing Power: fences that are able to afford to buy expensive stolen goods are able to drive the price down. They are often the only ones around who can handle large quantities of goods and large sums of money. Establishing a working relationship with a fence over time should be a secondary goal for most pirates—smart GMs should reduce the penalty by -1 in that case—the fence will hopefully recognize that good customer service is essential to staying in business.

Demand Modifier: the laws of supply and demand can work in favor of the criminal trying to offload stolen property. On worlds where the stolen goods are in demand, the sale price will be higher. Naturally, on worlds where the good exists in abundance, the sale price will be lower. For example, on a hostile frozen world that relies on food imports to supplement its meager supply of hydroponically grown crops, a cargo palette of high-density military-grade

food supplies would sell for a pretty penny. Conversely, the same world has little use for a large cargo haul of high-fashion swimsuits, and the sale price would drop. If the PCs are attempting to fence a captured starship, then they should almost always receive a +1 or +2 Demand Modifier (mitigated by the -4 penalty for the ship being considered hot).

Note that the Demand Modifier is the same as the "Sale DM Modifier" used in the *Cepheus Engine* and other 2d6 OGL SciFi games. Apply the Sale DM Modifier for the specific cargo being fenced instead of the Demand Modifier if you are using those rules.

PC's Highest Relevant Skill: the 3d6 roll is always modified by one (possibly two) skill levels. This skill is usually a "Trade," "Broker," "Liason," or "Business" skill—whichever skill governs the negotiations of buying and selling in the game. This modifier is always a positive modifier to the 3d6 roll. It should rarely exceed a +3.

PC's Highest Relevant Attribute Modifier: the 3d6 roll is always modified by a single relevant attribute. This is usually a "Wits" or "Intelligence" modifier, or a "Charisma" or "Moxie" attribute. The modifier can be negative, denoting a naturally poor negotiator, though one questions the wisdom of allowing such a person to be responsible for negotiating the sale of stolen goods. This modifier should almost never exceed +3.

Example: the crew of the *Zorya*, an armed tramp trader that has crossed the line into piracy, has managed to steal the contents of a large merchant ship. The *Zorya* makes for Ruyo, a busy Bazaar world a single parsec away where no questions will be asked. There, the *Zorya's* captain knows a well-established fence who can handle the transaction, named Patricja. The crew decide to not ask how the captain would know a notorious underworld personality.

The *Zorya's* pirate booty includes:

15 tons of Advanced Manufactured Goods at 200 000 credits per ton.

3 tons of Survival Gear at 4000 credits per ton.

9 tons of Industrial Supplies at 75000 credits per ton

And 7 tons of Animal Products at 1500 credits per ton.

(These were generated using the *Cepheus Engine* SRD, but any cargo generation table will do)

The GM determines that the Advanced Manufactured Goods and Industrial Supplies are most definitely hot items. As well, Patricja has a purchasing power of roughly 1 million credits.

The Modifiers are as follows:

Advanced Manufactured Goods: -4 (Hot), +2 (Demand Modifier), +2 (PC skill modifier), +1 (PC attribute modifier), -2 (Fence Modifier) = -1 total.

Survival Gear: -1 (Demand Modifier), +2 (PC skill modifier), +1 (PC attribute modifier), -2 (Fence Modifier) = 0 total.

Industrial Supplies: -4 (Hot), +2 (Demand Modifier), +2 (PC skill modifier), +1 (PC attribute modifier), -2 (Fence Modifier) = -1 total.

Animal Products: -2 (Demand Modifier), +2 (PC skill modifier), +1 (PC attribute modifier), -2 (Fence Modifier) = -1 total.

The player responsible for trade rolls at the table rolls the following:

Advanced Manufactured Goods: $10 - 1 = 9$, for 25% of list value, or 750 000 credits.

Survival Gear: $11 - 1 = 10$, for 30% of list value, or 3 600 credits.

Industrial Supplies: $4 - 1 = 3$, for 10% of list value, or 67 500 credits

Animal Products: $16 - 1 = 15$, for 40% of list value, or 4 200 credits

The grand total worth of the *Zorya's* haul is thus 825 300 credits. Not terrible at all, considering that the crew did not have to purchase any of that cargo! Hopefully, after the captain pays off the maintenance fees, outstanding debts on the ship, and bribes another batch of portwatchers, there will be enough money to pay the crew, buy a hot meal, and a few rounds of adult beverages.

C. THE ECONOMICS OF PRIVATEERING

Although the methods privateers use to acquire cargoes are often the same as those of pirates, the economic outcome might be much different. This is because that, while questionable, privateering is a legitimate act of war sponsored by a government. This means that privateering is ostensibly legal. Privateers can sell their goods openly according to the rules and regulations set forth by their sponsoring government. There are no fences to gouge privateers on their prices.

To enjoy such an advantage over the pirate, the privateer is required to give over a large percentage of the proceeds of their sale of captured cargoes to their sponsor. Privateers are usually informed of this tax when they receive their Letter of Marque, and it is usually 50%. Only the most well-armed and well-established privateers can demand a higher share of the return on sales, but it will rarely be over 60%. This is the price of legitimacy, and most privateers pay it with only a little grumbling. Governments may randomly select privateers for audits. Defrauding the government of its share of privateering revenues may land the privateer a long prison term, or worse: revocation of the Letter of Marque, and a charge of piracy laid on the crew.

1. PRIVATEER COURT

In addition to legitimacy, the privateer enjoys the advantage of convenience: after a successful cruise, the privateer must only return to any sufficiently well-equipped port in their sponsoring government's jurisdiction. Once in port, the administrator will convene a

Privateer Court. This assembly investigates the privateer's cargo, and determines if it was legally acquired—that is, in an act of war. If so, public bidding on the cargo may proceed. If the cargo is deemed illegitimate, then it is confiscated by the government, and criminal charges may be pressed against the privateer. It is common for privateer captains to hire legal advice during a Privateer Court, if only to make sure that everything proceeds smoothly. In terms of game mechanics, a decent lawyer/agent should give the PCs a minor edge in getting more value for their prizes: a +1 modifier on a 2d6 roll is appropriate. Lawyers are not cheap: this bonus should cost anywhere between 5-10% of the prize value. If this seems steep, remember that the lawyer's main job is to argue that the privateer's prizes were legally obtained according to the letter of marque.

Once the cargo has been cleared for sale, it is sold on the open market, and half the proceeds are given over to the government. The privateering captain can then pay the costs of running a ship, and then split whatever is left among the crew.

2. AUCTIONING OFF CAPTURED CARGO: ROLL 3D6

Like pirates, privateers use a table to determine the percent value of goods sold on the open market. This is the percentage of the cargo's list price, per unit. Like before, the goal is to sell the cargo for the highest value, so the player rolling must hope to get as high a result as possible. Each cargo type is rolled for separately. Once the sale price is determined, remember to divide that value in half: that is the privateer's share.

The Privateering Sale Price Table (3d6)

Roll Result	Sale Percentage of List Price
1 or lower	5%
2	10%
3	20%
4	30%
5	40%
6	50%
7	60%
8	70%
9	80%
10	90%
11	100%
12	110%
13	120%
14	130%
15	140%
16	150%
17	160%
18	170%
19	180%
20	200%
21	250%
22 or higher	300%

The following modifiers should be applied to the sale price roll:

Situation	Modifier to the roll
Demand Modifier:	
Little Demand for Good	-2
Low Demand for Good	-1
Some demand for good	+1
High demand for good	+2
Goods Are Damaged	
	-4
The PC's highest relevant skill level	Variable
The PC's highest relevant attribute modifier	variable

The modifiers listed above operate exactly the same as they do for pirates.

Goods are Damaged: this is less of a concern for pirates and fences, who are often obliged to handle slightly worn goods that have “fallen out the back of a cargo bay.” However, privateers are selling their goods to legitimate buyers who have higher standards than criminals. The GM can consider cargo damaged if it was exposed

to vacuum, weapons fire, or used as a melee weapon when it shouldn’t have been. Handling cargo in a hurry is also the leading cause of damaged goods. Good privateers invest in high tech gear to minimize potential damage to cargo after their target has surrendered.

Sample Cargo-Handling Goods

Item	Cost (Cr)	Description
Forklift	150	An electric powered vehicle with a single operator. The forklift’s hydraulic prongs can lift several cargo palettes at once, though more than one or two is considered unsafe. This vehicle is common on small traders.
Cargo-handling Exoskeleton	1500	This augments the operator’s strength and endurance, allowing whoever is wearing this large exoskeleton (2.5m tall) to work tirelessly for hours. The arms have large cargo-handling forks instead of hands. This exoskeleton will provide very little protection in a gunfight.
Cargo Waldo-arm with cargo claw unit	50000	A large robotic arm that is usually mounted in a large cargo bay. This robotic arm is operated from a work station with good visibility of the cargo bay. Waldo-arms are common on the largest freighters and greatly speed cargo loading and unloading.
Grav lift	2000	An advanced forklift that can fly, albeit slowly. Grav lifts are common on small and medium sized freighters.
Grav palette	300	A reusable palette with anti-gravity technology built in. It can not move on its own, but can lift a container a meter high.
Cargo Handling Mech	100000	A 4m tall robot that can be operated by a single pilot using a VR control rig with joysticks. This mech has a specially designed engine that delivers high torque, perfect for lifting and moving enormous cargo containers.

Example: The *Gilded Witch* is a small privateer gunboat that has just captured the *Doublecross*, a free trader with a full cargo hold. The *Witch* returned to port first, and when the *Doublecross* arrived with its prize crew, the *Witch's* captain rubbed her hands with glee in anticipation of the Privateer Court.

The captured cargo includes:

Advanced Electronic Components: 5 tons at 25 000 credits per ton. This lot was damaged.

Frozen Produce: 20 tons at 500 credits per ton.

Luxury Consumer Goods: 35 tons at 10 000 credits per ton.

Note that the prices listed here are generated using Suns of Gold, a supplement for Stars Without Number. The value of a Credit in Stars Without Number is different than the usual 1Cr = \$3 rate used in the 2d6 OGL Science Fiction rules, hence the discrepancy between the two examples.

The *Doublecross* itself is an old free trader worth 1 million credits. It suffered some damage when it was captured.

The modifiers for this sale are as follows:

Advanced Electronic Components: -4 (Damaged), +2 (High Demand), +1 (PC skill level), +1 (PC attribute modifier) = 0 total.

Frozen Produce: -2 (Little Demand), +1 (PC skill level), +1 (PC attribute modifier) = 0 total.

Luxury Consumer Goods: +1 (Some Demand) +1 (PC skill level), +1 (PC attribute modifier) = +3 total.

The *Doublecross*: -4 (Damaged), +1 (Some Demand), +1 (PC skill level), +1 (PC attribute modifier) = -1 total.

The player responsible for trade rolls at the table rolls the following:

Advanced Electronic Components: $12 + 0 = 12$, for 110% of list value, or 137 500 credits.

Frozen Produce: $10 + 0 = 10$, for 90% of list value, or 9 000 credits.

Luxury Consumer Goods: $12 + 3 = 15$, for 140% of list value, or 490 000 credits.

The *Doublecross*: $5 - 1 = 4$, for 30% of list value, or 300 000 credits. (*ouch!*)

The total sale value is 936 500, of which the government takes half. This leaves the captain of the *Gilded Witch* with 468 250 credits to pay for fuel, repairs, and maintenance. It almost makes the captain of the *Gilded Witch* wish she was a pirate—almost.

D. OVERHEAD AND PAYING THE CREW

Once a privateer or pirate has sold whatever was captured during their cruise, the captain usually must pay whatever costs are associated with maintaining a ship. These costs are usually determined in the specific science fiction roleplaying game, but often include things like docking fees, fuel, supplies, life support, ship maintenance, and even the mortgage on the ship. If a game does not require players to keep track of such things, we suggest that GMs calculate 1%-5% of the ship’s value to charge as monthly upkeep fees.

SHARES

Once the overhead costs are taken care of, the pirate or privateer captain can now pay the

crew. Unlike the crews of more legitimate ships, pirates and privateers are not paid regular wages. Instead, they are paid out portions of the prize money called shares. Each crewmember is paid a number of shares when they sign on for a cruise aboard the ship. The table below is representative of a typical pirate or privateer crew’s share structure, but GMs and players are encouraged to work out share structures that suit the specific context of their campaigns and crews. More egalitarian share distribution is completely realistic, and certain regular crew positions—like boarders—might be entitled to more shares than others. But it is important that the pay structure is sorted out *before* the ship sets out.

Rank or Position	Number of Shares
Captain	10
Mate	8
Other Officers (gunner, navigator, engineer, comms, etc)	5
Crew	1

To determine the value of a share for a given prize, add up the total number of shares that the officers and crew of the vessel are to be

paid. Then divide the prize money total by the total number of shares. This is the value of one share.

To illustrate how this works out when it comes time to distribute prize money, let’s refer back to the two examples above. If these examples read like they are out of a math textbook, that’s alright. This accounting might seem boring, but remember that the moment a pirate feels cheated out of prize money, blasters will be drawn.

Example 1: The *Zorya* is an armed merchant with only six crewmembers. Its crew is comprised of a captain, pilot, engineer, gunner, medic, and sensor operator. The engineer is the first mate on board. The total number of shares on board the *Zorya* is:

Position	Shares
Captain	10
Engineer/Mate	8
Gunner	5
Pilot	5
Medic	5
Sensors	5
Total	38

The *Zorya* earned 825 300 credits for its ill-gotten cargo in the above example. If we assume that the ship’s operating costs totalled 250 000 credits, that leaves a profit margin of

$$825\,300 - 250\,000 = 575\,300 \text{ credits.}$$

This sum is then divided by 38, the total number of shares, for an individual share value of

$$575\,300 \div 38 = 15\,139 \text{ credits (rounded to the nearest credit).}$$

Each crewmember is paid the following amount:

Position	Shares	Payout at 15 139 cr/share
Captain	10	151 390
Engineer/Mate	8	121 112
Gunner	5	75 695
Pilot	5	75 695
Medic	5	75 695
Sensors	5	75 695
Total	38	575 282

The 18 credits remaining are enough to buy a case of beer for the crew to enjoy together.

Example 2: The *Gilded Witch* is a gunboat with 20 crewmembers. There are seven officers on board: the Captain, the Pilot/Mate, Chief Engineer, Surgeon, Chief Gunner, Sensor Operator, and Boarding Party Commander. The other thirteen crewmembers are under the command of one or more of the officers, or they are dedicated boarders. Their share structure is as follows:

Rank or Position	Number of Shares
Captain	10
Pilot/Mate	8
Gunner, Surgeon, Sensors, Engineer, Boarding Commander	5 x 5 = 25
Thirteen Crew	1 x 13 = 13
Total	56

The *Gilded Witch's* final prize total, after deducting an arbitrarily determined 100 000 credits in expenses, is:

$$468\,250 - 100\,000 = 368\,250 \text{ credits}$$

This is then divided by the total number of shares to determine the value of an individual share:

$$368\,250 \div 56 = 6\,575 \text{ credits per share (rounded down to leave some left over)}$$

Each crewmember is paid the following amount:

Rank or Position	Number of Shares	Payout at 6575 cr/ share
Captain	10	65 750
Pilot/Mate	8	52 600
Gunner, Surgeon, Sensors, Engineer, Boarding Commander	5 each for 25 total	164 375
Thirteen Crew	1 each for 13 total	85 475
Total	56	368 200

The fifty remaining credits are used to repaint the ship's nose art.

ADVENTURE SEEDS AND NPCs

This chapter provides a few adventure seeds, some campaign ideas, and then a few interesting NPC personalities for the player characters to interact with.

IT COULD BE THE PERFECT CRIME...

This adventure is designed for pirates or privateers. The PCs have learned that on a war-torn planet, there is a bank vault filled with untold riches just waiting to be picked up.

Character Type: Crew of a pirate or privateer ship. Ground combat skills, as well as demolitions, electronics assets would be very helpful.

Required Equipment: A fast pirate or privateer that is able to slip through a blockade and land on a planet.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The war on Aziv has been getting increasingly bloody as both planetary governments and their interstellar backers dig in for the long-haul. The players might have already taken jobs smuggling or privateering for one of the factions, but they have been blessed: they have come to learn that a large shipment of precious metals, gems, artifacts, or other highly valuable goods has been sitting in a bank, under heavy guard. The valuables were probably looted from the civilian population, or they could simply be temporarily misplaced in the chaos of a global war. There is a lot of money here for the taking, and the players know about it.

REFEREE INFORMATION

This is a bank robbery on a war-torn world. The bank is located in the town of Kriam, large

enough to support the approximately 100 soldiers who guard it. These men are not front-line combat troops, but they are not pushovers either. In addition to the six trucks they have to move the treasure, they've also got some support vehicles with light cannons, missiles, and support weapons.

The PCs will have to bypass the blockade of Aziv. Both sides are also fighting in the solar system. The Arrival Zone and Mainworld are guarded. There are some merchants holed up with their small frontier trader in the asteroid belt. They are looking for a good opportunity to deliver their cargo of luxuries made scarce by the fighting.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The defenders also have some heavy tanks or even mecha crewed by ideologically devoted soldiers not prone to surrender.
2. A group of mercenaries hired by one of the factions is also attempting to rob the enemy bank: they have a small group of operators on the ground headed for Kriam.
3. Another privateer or pirate has heard of the bank shipment. The hit on Kriam's bank is now a race.
4. Combine 2 and 3! It's now a three-way race to see who can get to the bank and load up the treasure first.
5. The treasure has been moved very recently! The PCs will have to do some legwork and reconnaissance, but they will be able to track down the convoy just as it comes under heavy artillery fire!
6. The treasure is false intelligence that was planted to lure privateers and pirates into a trap!

YOU REALLY SHOULD KEEP UP WITH CURRENT EVENTS!

The privateers sell a captured ship to an ally, only to find out that the alliance has ended, and the ally is an enemy!

Character Type: A privateer crew.

Required Equipment: The PCs' vessel should be armed. They have also just captured an older warship that can be quite a threat.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs must capture an enemy warship, the *Cyclone*. The *Cyclone* is larger than the PCs' ship, but it is slower, less maneuverable, and has a less professional crew. It does have more guns and armor. The fight should be tough. If the PCs manage to take the *Cyclone*, they'll be eager to sell it off as a prize.

The PCs can then make their way with their prize to the Yathrim system, which is ostensibly allied with the PCs' patron government. They can sell the *Cyclone* off for a pretty penny here, and be done with it, since they do not have the manpower to crew the ship. The government of Yathrim purchases the ship, and the PCs can spend a bit of time in port relaxing.

REFEREE INFORMATION

It turns out that not having faster-than-light communications can be a real pain. While the PCs were capturing the *Cyclone*, a courier ship arrived. It seems that a diplomatic shift occurred, and the PCs are now technically at war with Yathrim! They find out about this new tidbit of information while sipping space-cosmos and whiskeys in Yathrim's enjoyable port district. Now, they have to get back to

their ship quickly before it is seized, and they are all imprisoned as pirates. Unfortunately, the *Cyclone*, now crewed by the new Yathrim enemy, is waiting for them!

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The government of Yathrim is nothing more than a tinpot dictatorship. "God King" Joao Germaz II demands exceptionally high diplomatic treatment—23 gun salutes and whatnot—and when he turns against the PCs, he will be brutal. Fortunately, his crew is not as good as the PCs are. Unfortunately, the *Cyclone* is still a tough ship.
2. The crew of the *Cyclone* are cooperative and professional. They are going to be treated brutally by the government of Yathrim.
3. A player character runs afoul of the authorities while in port and is cooling his or her heels in the local jail. A rescue mission is in order before the Yathrim authorities execute the crewman for piracy.
4. The PCs' ship is being repaired. 1d6 systems do not work at the start of the second combat with the *Cyclone*.
5. The Yathrim government has hired a mercenary captain to command the *Cyclone*. She is extremely capable, though her crew remains of questionable worth.
6. The message to the Yathrim government is false! The PCs can race to figure this out while they avoid the authorities.

THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

The privateers are tasked to rescue a noblewoman who has been taken hostage by pirates.

Character Type: Privateer crew, some diplomacy and stealth skills might be useful.

Required Equipment: a privateering ship. Possibly some *panache* and derring-do.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs' sponsor government contacts the privateers: a VIP has been captured by pirates, and they are the closest thing to a naval asset in that area. "Mount a rescue. You will be paid."

REFEREE INFORMATION

The Her Excellency Baroness Ilanya Blake is a minor noble from an important core world. She is a career diplomat and government administrator. Blake was on a VIP yacht headed to her new posting as administrator on an important and troubled frontier world (perhaps Ruraku!) when she was ambushed by pirates and taken prisoner. The pirates rightly ascertained that Blake was worth more alive than dead, and made their demands known through various intermediaries. What they are asking for Blake's safe return is a bit pricey, and the government does not negotiate with terrorists and bandits.

Depending on what the GM decides, the pirates could be rebels, revolutionaries, or just very ambitious criminals. Blake is being held in

captivity but is not being treated badly. That could change, depending on the players' actions.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The pirates' base is a veritable fortress teeming with ruffians and ne'er do wells.
2. The PCs are acquainted with the pirates in question. This might complicate matters, since the PCs do occasionally have to do business with criminals.
3. The pirates are full-blown ideologically driven rebels and renegades. They have no intention to return Blake alive. The PCs can learn about this beforehand, and hopefully it should influence how they proceed.
4. Her Excellency the Baroness was not kidnapped. She willingly joined the pirates. The PCs cannot be allowed to escape.
5. The PCs' patron government is highly factionalized. It turns out that another government faction opposed to Blake's posting set her up to be captured by pirates. The PCs might get tangled in a web of intrigue.
6. As 5, above, but the other government faction has dispatched a kill-team to deal with the heroic PCs, the pirates, and the Baroness. They will make it all look like a terrible tragic accident.

PRIVATEER CAMPAIGN SEED: BLOCKADE RUNNING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

The privateers are hired to save a colony from starvation. They will have to obtain supplies, and then run the blockade of the planet, land at the colony's starport and offload the supplies.

Character Types: A privateer crew, preferably with a good pilot.

Required Equipment: A fast blockade runner is ideal, though a merchant with secret smuggling holds might do as well.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The colony on Raraku has been blockaded by a private corporate fleet belonging to the AZKRU mining corporation. The corporation is demanding payment for damages to its facilities on Raraku. The colonists are not willing to pay the corporation. The governor of Raraku has gotten the word out that he is hiring privateers to smuggle food and supplies into the colony. They will be paid handsomely upon delivery. Naturally, the privateers who help Raraku would be able to capture AZKRU corporation ships as prizes.

REFEREE INFORMATION

The PCs will have to get food and other essential supplies to Raraku on their own. That is, they'll have to engage in privateering—preying especially on AZKRU shipping—to get food and other supplies. The blockade of Raraku is layered: a listening post and a pair of fighters wait in the main arrival zone, while a heavy frigate, and two patrol gunships sit in orbit around the planet itself. There might be another way into the system, if the PCs are willing to take the long way around and make

the trip from a different system than is normally used to get to Raraku, thus enabling them to avoid the patrolled arrival zone. GMs should certainly adopt this problem to their own campaign's FTL travel rules and their own setting geography. The PCs will have to slip past the blockade in orbit, and land quickly, before the AZKRU ships can get a fix on their position. Then, they'll have to leave the planet without being stopped by the blockade. GMs should encourage creative methods for blockade running.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The AZKRU corporation is plotting a sharp, bloody raid to end the standoff and retake its facilities on the planet. The PCs learn about this while they are privateering elsewhere.
2. The Raraku resistance to AZKRU has descended into a terror: the locals are quick to find traitors hiding under every rock, and in every cargo pallet.
3. The PCs have friends in the AZKRU blockade fleet.
4. AZKRU has successfully petitioned the government to intervene: the blockade running mission has just changed into an evacuation mission. Time is running out before the government fleet arrives with a detachment of marines.
5. The locals found something terrible in the AZKRU facility. They need the PCs to investigate it and get evidence of AZKRU's malfeasance to the government.
6. The PCs are hired by AZKRU to infiltrate the Raraku colony and collapse its defenses.

THE MAIN EVENT: DYTON

The PCs have just learned that a new trade route has been opened up, and a resource rush is beginning. If they can get there quickly, they'll be the first to plunder the shipments.

Character Type: Space Pirates.

Required Equipment: A space pirate ship.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs have learned that an extremely valuable commodity has just recently been found in the Dyton system. Merchants, corporations, and governments are all rushing there to stake claims and regulate the rapid exploitation of the resource. Colonies are being planned, and a lot of money is being invested. So, if the PCs get to Dyson early enough, they'll be able to raid shipments and get stinking rich themselves!

REFEREE INFORMATION

This adventure seed is a framework for repeated pirate raids. The commodity, whatever it is, is valuable enough that even in its barely processed form, piracy is going to be profitable. Some suggestions are rare high-grade crystals for advanced computing technology, a rare isotope of a heavy metal suitable for FTL drives, the raw form of a

naturally occurring anti-aging drug, strange polymers with untold materials applications—the options are limitless. Suffice it to say, Dyton has lots of it, and it is valuable. The PCs need to get there fast and start raiding before the navy patrol cruisers show up and ruin all the fun.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. Another pirate crew has heard the same news. Will they be amenable to sharing the wealth, or will there be no honor among thieves?
2. The commodity is hazardous to human life. This will greatly complicate its transfer aboard the PCs' ship.
3. The PCs' nemesis, a navy patrol cruiser captain, has arrived and is hunting pirates.
4. There is no mainworld in the Dyton system. The resource is found in the asteroid belt or on a hostile moon. The PCs will have to be quick about raiding ships before they engage their FTL drives.
5. A hostile government has sent a small fleet to claim Dyton for itself.
6. A corporate agent contacts the PCs and suggests an agreement to not attack its facilities or ships in Dyton.

WE'RE PIRATES, BUT WE HAVE STANDARDS... WAIT, DO WE?

The pirates capture a ship filled with slaves. What do they do?

Character Type: Pirates. Medical and social skills might be useful.

Required Equipment: A pirate ship.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs have just attached their boarding tubes to their latest prey, a fat merchant ship that they know is filled with valuable cargo. Huzzah! Only when they board the ship and enter the cargo hold, they discover the truth: the cargo is valuable because it is filled with captured humans destined for sale in a nearby illegal slave market. What do they do?

REFEREE INFORMATION

This adventure should start like any other, with the PCs hunting shipping in a system. If they are mis-informed about a ship's cargo, it is because of deception in the star port. Someone did not do a thorough enough job of learning the true contents of this merchant's hold!

Depending on the setting, slavery might be an unfortunate fact of life in the sector, or it might be a vile scourge that should always be eradicated. Or both. How the PCs handle the poor souls they've just discovered should tell the players and GM a lot about the nature of the characters. It goes without saying that great care should be taken to handle the subject of slavery with sensitivity, maturity, and thoughtfulness.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The PCs are allied with an organized crime boss who deals in slaves. These slaves belong to him.
2. The patrol frigate is inbound, and the PCs might not approve of how the local authorities handle slaves. If slavery is legal in this system, then the PCs have a real chance to help people *and* still commit an act of piracy.
3. The merchant ship is part of a secret network to move escaped slaves to freedom, and the PCs have just interfered with a humanitarian smuggling mission!
4. Trading in slaves is especially lucrative in a nearby system. Will the PCs pass on this opportunity because of their ethics? Aren't they space pirates?
5. The PCs board the ship just as the slaves manage to revolt!
6. Another ship arrives to free the slaves, and they are not too discerning about non-civilian targets.

ROBBIN' THE HOOD

The poor people of planet Domugra are being oppressed and need help. The pirates can help, all while deducting reasonable expenses.

Character Type: Pirates with hearts of gold or another valuable substance.

Required Equipment: Pirate ship.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs are contacted by an old friend who tells them about Domugra: a planet currently under the boot of a repressive off-world power. A corporation, or government has decided that the inhabitants of Domugra are to be used to strip their own world of its natural resources and reap none of the material benefits. This old friend calls in the massive favour the pirates owe him: go to Domugra, help the locals organize, and fight. The situation is win-win, he says: while the PCs are raiding and plundering the horrible people putting the boot to the Domugrans' neck, they are also helping the Domugrans win their freedom.

REFEREE INFORMATION



The Domugrans are willing to throw off the yoke of tyranny, but they are woefully under-equipped. The PCs will have to help them acquire weapons, supplies, and some training. Additional pirate/mercenary do-gooders might also come in handy. The oppressors can be as stereotypical and clichéd as the GM desires, or they could be nuanced villains that are acting out of a valid position.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The Domugrans might need help, but they are a backward, oppressive society in their own right.
2. The villains are desperate and tried negotiations first. Now, they need to plunder Domugra to save their own world.
3. Regular pirates arrive to spoil the PCs' perfectly good story.
4. The PCs are betrayed by one of their local allies, who gives away the location of the PCs and their nascent army of rebels.
5. The Domugrans learn that the PCs are villainous pirates!
6. The PCs must contend with a radical rebel faction that is all too willing to commit atrocities.

PIRATE CAMPAIGN SEED: SPACE VIKINGS. YES, SPACE VIKINGS.

The PCs are invited to pillage some planets, trade with some traders, explore a new planet and start a settlement, perhaps.

Character Type: Pirates, traders and other spacers.

Required Equipment: A pirate ship, and possibly some trade goods.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The PCs are pirates, raiders, or trading pirate-raiders looking for new business opportunities. They have a ship, and a burning desire to explore and find new worlds, seek out new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before, and raid, pillage, and settle wherever and whenever profitable. Perhaps their home planet is overcrowded. Perhaps they are the youngest sons and daughters of noble families and have been told that they will not be inheriting anything worthwhile. But they have a ship, and the surrounding sector is ripe for plunder and trade. Or just plunder.

REFEREE INFORMATION

The GM will have a fair amount of prep to do here for this sort of campaign. Space Vikings will only work well in a setting where there is no large interstellar government to crack down on raiders. In most other settings, the PCs will be able to operate with relative freedom, and

their actions will be based solely on their desires, and the realities of the places they visit. Some planets will be weak and ripe for plunder. Others will be too strong to attack, so the PCs will trade—and plan their eventual raid. There should be at least one planet that is rich and relatively uninhabited: perfect for the Space Vikings to begin settling.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. There are other interstellar powers. The Space Vikings will have to tread delicately in some parts of the sector until they are well-established.
2. One planet is filled with hostile alien life forms that will try to take over the PCs' ship.
3. A rough FTL transit has left the PCs stranded, their ship disabled. They will have to scavenge parts from the ruins of a dead world—but what awaits them in the ruins?
4. The virgin world perfect for settlement is already inhabited by a large low-tech population.
5. A harsh settlement of allied Space Vikings is in need of supplies and reinforcements against a nomadic group of locals who are better-equipped for the local conditions.
6. The PCs' successes are so great that their families wish to fleece them of their newfound wealth.

SPECIFIC SYSTEM ENCOUNTER TABLES: TWO EXAMPLES

The following are specific encounter tables for two briefly described systems. The tables have been customized to reflect the specific conditions in that system.

SATYAVATI: GLIMMERING, DANGEROUS JEWEL.

Most large trading hubs are regulated by interstellar governments. Not Satyavati, which exists just beyond the fringes of controlled space, on the high frontier. The system has no viable mainworld. Satyavati is a large, ancient space station that predates known human settlement in the region. Over decades of slow settlement, the frontier needed a place to do business, and Satyavati eventually grew to fill that role. Now, the station is a busy hub of frontier commerce and remains independent from any central power. A Merchant Council rules the station, ensuring smooth day-to-day operations and profits. Laws are few, but

strictly enforced, and only the vilest products are banned from anyone’s stalls. Thus far, weapons of mass destruction, slaves, and other sapient species are not for sale. Indentured servitude contracts are drawn up on the station, however. There are many underhanded deals made in the tight confines of the Satyavati Bazaar.

Satyavati is also home to a band of outcasts that has set up in one of the far asteroid belts. These disgruntled spacers keep to themselves for the most part. Anyone who enters their domain is attacked. The Merchant Council has struck up a bargain with these spacers. They now operate as a sort of defensive navy for the system in exchange for being left strictly alone.

1d6	Satyavati Station	Arrival Zone 1 (Bremerhaven)	Arrival Zone 2 (Hulao)	Arrival Zone 3 (Dafna)	Asteroid Belt	Gas Giant
1	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship	Ship
3	Ship	Item	Ship	Ship	Ship	Item
4	Ship	None	None	None	Item	None
5	None	None	None	None	None	None
6	None	None	None	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	1d10	Item Encounters	1d10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2	Large Station	
Courier/Scout	3	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey	4	Small Station	1, 2
Liner/Yacht		Derelict Small Station	3, 4
Merchant	5, 6, 7, 8	Derelict Ship	5, 6, 7
Patrol		Planetoid	8
Warship		Hazard	9
Capital Ship		Junk	10
Pirate	9, 10		

RAZMIRAZ: DANGER, AND OPPORTUNITY!

The frontier world of Razmiraz was a quiet system in the middle of nowhere that had been settled by a group of aesthetic monks a century ago. It is a harsh planet of tundra, deserts, and salt water. All was well until last year, when a prospector discovered an enormous lode of valuable minerals on the world! Since then, Razmiraz has become a chaotic boom-town planet, as everyone rushed there to strike it

rich. Needless to say, the monks are less than pleased, but at least most of the mining operations are located on the other side of the planet—for now.

Meanwhile, at the starport Fort Sunshine, lawlessness, violence, and greed reign supreme. Justice is carried out by the mob, or by powerful corporate interests that have the ear of the nominal, very ineffective, governor.

1d6	Main World	Arrival Zone	Periphery
1	Ship	Ship	Ship
2	Ship	Ship	Ship
3	Item	Ship	Ship
4	Item	Ship	Item
5	None	None	None
6	None	None	None

Ship Encounters	1d10	Item Encounters	1d10
Salvage/Mining/Prospector	1, 2, 3	Large Station	
Courier/Scout	4	Derelict Large Station	
Research/Survey		Small Station	1
Liner/Yacht	4	Derelict Small Station	2
Merchant	5, 6	Derelict Ship	3, 4, 5
Patrol	7	Planetoid	6, 7
Warship		Hazard	8
Capital Ship		Junk	9, 10
Pirate	8, 9, 10		

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Below are a handful of briefly described NPCs to help GMs start populating their pirate and privateering campaigns.

PATRONS

Commander Salome Jarva, 45, female. She hires privateers for the government and keeps them in line. Commander Jarva is a fair employer and has never once cheated a privateer. She completely distrusts the privateers she has to liaise with and considers them beneath her. Her current posting is the result of some bad career moves.

Kenneth Pedersen, 31, male. A corporate operative (spy) who hires pirates to hit the competition. Pedersen is not especially intimidating in his sweater, horn-rimmed glasses, and cargo shorts. However, he does his best work when he operates clandestinely, funnelling money to pirates to target his employer's competition. Despite his decidedly nerdy image, none of the pirates he works with trust him.

FENCES

Patricja Marte, 76, female. Patricja is a well-connected fence that has many jobs for PCs. She presents a matronly, grandmotherly façade, but is a ruthless shark of an operator. Patricja often has many opportunities for enterprising pirates looking to make money: goods need smuggling, dropping off, picking up, or liberating from other cargo holds. Patricja pays well but is never to be crossed: she has never forgotten a slight or insult, and holds grudges tightly enough that they no longer count as items for encumbrance rules. Patricja can handle goods up to Cr1000000 in value.

Otis "Skinny" Parker, 32, male. "Skinny" is an ironically-named criminal who can be relied on to take large amounts of hot merchandise—perfect for a pirate desperate for cash. Unfortunately, Skinny has become a confidential informant, passing on tips about pirates and other criminals to local law enforcement. For this, he is kept out of jail. Skinny can purchase goods from the PCs up to Cr100000 in value.

MERCHANTS

Kriss Seevy, 37, female. Seevy is captain of the *Limited Time Offer*, a small frontier trader. Her cargoes regularly include sensitive information packets, so she would rather give pirates whatever is in her hold and prevent them from nosing around the computer banks too much. Captain Seevy has an Unfriendly attitude towards pirates.

Henry Singh, 50, male. Captain of the *Enfant Terrible*, a rich merchant ship that constantly evades pirate attacks. Henry is so successful at avoiding pirates because he was once a pirate and knows the game. Captain Singh is Friendly towards pirates.

PIRATE HUNTERS

Commander Paulus Abadan, 39, male. Commander Abadan is a hungry and ambitious naval officer in charge of the patrol frigate *Exactor*. He is a dogged and professional naval officer who considers pirates the enemies of humanity. He is not a monster, but hunts pirates because it's the right thing to do.

Colonel Jan Kirwan, 64, male. The Colonel is a mercenary hired to clear the region of pirates. He and his private military contractors

Star/Force are notorious for getting the job done—whatever the cost—and cleaning up after themselves. He is not above using civilians as shields or targeting the families of pirates and privateers.

PIRATES

Beili Tan, 40, female. As much an entrepreneur as a black-hearted pirate, Beili is a pirate queen who commands a small fleet of four raiding ships. She occasionally hires out one or two for deniable mercenary jobs that more respectable private mercs won't touch. Her flagship is the corsair raider *Delight*.

Abraham Zacuto, 49, male. Exiled from his home, his family taken from him, Zacuto wages a one-ship war against the corporation that sold him out. He captains a stolen, up-gunned, frigate he has named *Golden Lily*.

PRIVATEERS

Kloe Katsaros, 37, female. A pirate gone legitimate, Katsaros is wanted for her earlier crimes halfway across the galaxy. But now she is fighting for the fledgling government that has issued her a letter of marque. If her backers win, all will be forgiven. Her corsair is the *Kat's Kradle*.

Simon Reis, 38, male. A religious outcast on his homeworld of Razoon, Reis and his crew are currently fighting on behalf of another power that is in a protracted war with Razoon. This allows Reis to strike back at the society that does not accept him. Reis captains the small, but powerful gunship *Stubborn*.

NPC CREWMEMBERS

These colorful individuals can be used to help populate the PCs' ship, if necessary.

Archie Preston, 43, male. A grumpy and uncouth asteroid miner who has extensive

experience crewing ships. He is well-versed in spacecraft operations but prefers to handle general maintenance. He is also an excellent damage control specialist. In a boarding operation, Archie uses his heaviest wrench to great effect.

Marta von Apfel, 29, female. A shipping magnate's daughter who rebelled. Marta seems like the wrong choice for a pirate crew, but she has two essential skills that keep her on the roster: she is a solid pilot, and she knows the ins and outs of shipping logistics and freighter layouts.

Zila Sinesh, 25, female. This pirate is a fearsome close combatant. She won't say where she picked up her martial arts skills. She expects to be paid well for boarding operations. Zila is also a reasonably competent spacer and is handy at maintenance tasks.

Jagdish "Jag" Hunt, 29, male. A skilled gunner with a knack for disabling shots, Jagdish is a bit of a prima donna when it comes to weapons systems. Whichever gun he is assigned to he will claim as his own, and not allow anyone to perform maintenance on it. He will not allow anyone to sit in his gunner's chair, or pull the trigger, or press their sweaty brows against the optics, or even look at it too long.

