

SCUM AND VILLAINY



A FORGED IN THE DARK ROLEPLAYING GAME
STRAS ACIMOVIC & JOHN LEBOEUF-LITTLE

UNWISE DEALS. BLASTER FIGHTS. HIGH ADVENTURE AMONG THE STARS. WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF SCUM AND VILLAINY.

Scum and Villainy is a Forged in the Dark game about a spaceship crew trying to make ends meet under the iron-fisted rule of the Galactic Hegemony.

Work with the members of your crew to thrive despite powerful criminal syndicates, warring noble families, dangerous aliens, and strange mystics. Explore the ruins of lost civilizations for fun and profit. Can your motley crew hold it together long enough to strike it big and insure your fame across the sector?

Scum and Villainy is a stand-alone RPG based on the Forged in the Dark game engine. In this book, you'll find:

- ▶ A clear gameplay structure that puts the focus on the criminal undertakings of the crew. A session of play consists of a job followed by recovery, downtime projects, and advancement.
- ▶ Ship "character sheets" that allow for XP spends, upgrades, and leveling up alongside your characters.
- ▶ Crew advancement opportunities to reflect the change from a ragtag group barely flying in the black to a reputed crew that has built a name across the sector.
- ▶ Forged in the Dark tools to help keep the focus on the action of the job rather than the extensive planning needed to make it happen.
- ▶ Character and ship types to help create a unique and interesting crew at light speed.

MAY YOUR SHIP FLY TRUE, AND MAY YOUR BLASTERS NEVER JAM.



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SCUM AND VILLAINY

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A Forged in the Dark Game
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Visit the website for character sheets and other game materials
www.offguardgames.com/scumandvillainy

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CHAPTER 1

THE BASICS

THE GAME

Scum and Villainy is a game powered by **Blades in the Dark** about the crew of a spaceship, trying to keep flying and make ends meet while under the iron-fisted rule of the Galactic Hegemony. There are heists, chases, escapes, unwise deals, blaster fights, deceptions, betrayals, victories, and high adventure among the stars.

We play to find out if our spaceship crew can thrive amidst the teeming threats of powerful criminal syndicates, warring noble families, dangerous aliens, strange mystics, ruins of lost civilizations, and each crew member's own foibles and vices.

THE SETTING

The year is 1261 since the founding of the Galactic Hegemonic Alliance. The Hegemony united the warring factions of the galaxy out of the Dark Age that preceded it. Near the center of the galaxy lies the seat of the Hegemon, who rules with the Grand Council—a consortium of powerful families, greedy merchant Guilds that control entire categories of technology, and the heads of powerful state-sanctioned Cults.

The Procyon sector, however, is too many jumps away from the Core to matter to those important players. There are a few well-mapped Hyperspace lanes, four systems, and jumpgates to more and less fortunate parts of known space. This far out, there is less of a Hegemonic presence, and local powers include pirate queens, criminal syndicates, and legitimate corporate interests.

The worlds here are peppered with ruins of the Ur—an ancient civilization officially referred to as the Precursors—and mystics claim the flow of the Galactic Way lines are strong in the sector. Humans and aliens live and work side by side in common interest against both Hegemonic rule and the organized criminals that prey on the weak.

THE PLAYERS

Each player portrays a daring, conflicted space-opera adventurer who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means. The players work together to bring life to their ship and their crew, and—with the oversight of the game master (GM)—decide as a group on the tone and style of the game, from swashbuckling space adventures to gritty crime.

The players take responsibility as co-authors of the game with the GM and make judgment calls about the mechanics, dice, and consequences of actions.

THE CHARACTERS

Your crew will attempt to develop their enterprise from a ragtag group barely flying in the black to a serious and reputed ship that has built a name for itself, leaving their own unique mark on the sector in the process.

You do this by taking risky jobs (both legal and illegal), planning your own escapades, forging alliances, outsmarting your enemies, and trying to stay one step ahead of the Hegemony. You'll upgrade your ship, gain the respect of the factions you help, and suffer the ire of the factions you get in the way of.

There are several character types to choose from:

- ▶ **MECHANICS** are gearheads and hackers.
- ▶ **SCOUNDRELS** are scrappy and lucky survivors.
- ▶ **MUSCLES** are dangerous and intimidating fighters.
- ▶ **SPEAKERS** are respectable people on the take.
- ▶ **MYSTICS** are galactic wanderers in touch with the Way.
- ▶ **STITCHES** are spacefaring healers and scientists.
- ▶ **PILOTS** are ship-handling wizards and danger addicts.

You can have a mix of character types in your crew, or play a crew that is all of one type. It's up to you.

THE SHIP

In addition to creating characters, you'll also pick which ship they fly in. The ship gets its own sheet, just like a character.

Your ship type determines the jobs that you'll focus on, as well as a selection of special abilities that support that kind of action. There are three different ships to choose from:

- **STARDANCER:** Illicit merchants, smugglers, and blockade runners.
- **CERBERUS:** Bounty hunters and extraction specialists.
- **FIRE Drake:** Labeled as criminals, these rebels fight the Hegemony.

This isn't meant to be restrictive—the Stardancer might sometimes engage in bounty hunting (like the Cerberus) or antagonize the Hegemony (like the Firedrake)—but the core activity of the ship type is the most frequent way that crew earns **CRED** and xp for advancement.

THE GAME MASTER

The GM establishes a dynamic world around the characters, especially the law-abiding civilian world and the shadowy criminal underworld. They play all the non-player characters (NPCs) in the world by giving each one a concrete desire and preferred method of action.

The GM helps organize the conversation of the game so it's pointed toward the interesting elements of play. The GM isn't in charge of the story and doesn't have to plan events ahead of time. They present interesting opportunities to the players, then follow the chain of actions and consequences wherever they lead.

PLAYING A SESSION

A session of **Scum and Villainy** is like an episode of a TV show. There are one or two main events, plus some side-story elements, which all fit into an ongoing series. A session of play can last anywhere from two to six hours, depending on the group.

During a session, the crew chooses a job to accomplish and makes dice rolls to jump into the action of the job. The player characters (PCs) take actions, suffer consequences, and finish the operation (succeed or fail). Then the crew has downtime to recover, pursue side projects, and indulge their vices. The players then look for new opportunities or create their own, and play to find out what happens next.

A single session might be one job and the following downtime, plus some free play. As you become more familiar with the game, you might pack more into a single session, doing several jobs in an extended evening of play.

A campaign may be the culmination of a dozen sessions or so, as your crew aligns with a faction and throws your weight behind their agenda, prompting a long-term shift in the sector. You might take a break at that point and before starting up a new campaign and a new chapter in the story, possibly with an entirely different set of characters and new starting situation.

TOUCHSTONES

Here are some media touchstones you can use when pitching the game, which players might be familiar with.

MOVIES: *Guardians of the Galaxy* by James Gunn. *Serenity* by Joss Whedon. *Star Wars* by George Lucas.

TV: *Cowboy Bebop* by Keiko Mogumoto. *Firefly* by Joss Whedon. *Killjoys* by Michelle Lovretta. *Lost Universe* by Hajime Kanzaka. *Blake's 7* by Terry Nation. *Outlaw Star* by Takehito Iho.

THEME SONG: *Ain't No Rest for the Wicked* by Cage the Elephant.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

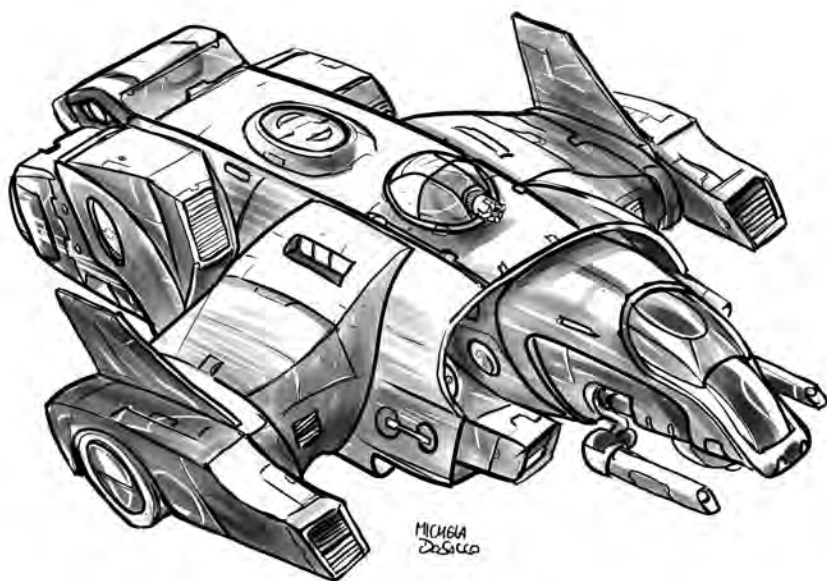
- ▶ Two to four players and one game master.
- ▶ A handful of six-sided dice (at least six).
- ▶ Printed character and ship sheets, reference sheets, and planet sheets. (<http://offguardgames.com/scumandvillainy>)
- ▶ This book, for reference.
- ▶ Blank paper, index cards, and other materials for note-taking.

IT'S YOUR GAME

This game is about exciting space adventures with scoundrels in a science-fiction world with fantastical elements. Before you get too far into actually playing the game, you should have a talk with your table about what sort of themes you'd like to see in play. Not every game is for every group of players, and you need your potential crew to buy into the conceit of the game.

Some of this is indirectly decided by what sorts of characters you make and what type of ship you select. For example, if you want themes of rebellion, maybe pick up the Firedrake. But you should be talking through your decisions so that everyone is on the same page about what you're trying to do. If someone is uncomfortable with a direction, negotiate with each other to ensure everyone has fun.

There will be questions that come up in your story for which this text has no answer. Where did the Ur go? How does the Way function? These are questions you should answer through play. For your world, the answer may be different than someone else's, and that's okay. The things not expressly stated in this book are yours to create, and we look forward to hearing the answers your group comes up with.



THE CORE SYSTEM

THIS IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME

Playing **Scum and Villainy** is a collaborative discussion between the GM and the players in which narrative uncertainty is resolved with dice. The GM presents the world to the players, and the players determine their character's actions within that context. Everyone works together to make sure the game is played fairly and correctly. The outcomes of the dice rolls dictate changes to the story, which leads to new situations, actions, and eventually more dice rolls.

Importantly, this isn't a story with an outcome that we know about in advance. Maybe our heroes will succeed or maybe they won't. The mechanics will tell us what happens and we will decide what to do next. In this way, the direction of the story will take unpredictable turns and reach exciting conclusions that we could have never predicted.

JUDGMENT CALLS

Each kind of decision has a particular set of people in charge of resolving it.

When you play, you'll make several key judgment calls. Everyone contributes, but either the players or the GM gets final say for each:

- ▶ Which actions are a reasonable solution to a problem? *Must we **SCRAMBLE** across the tarmac past the Legion or could we quietly **SKULK** our way around the crates here?* The players as a whole have final say.
- ▶ How dangerous is a given action in this circumstance, and also how effective will it be? *How risky is this? Can this person be **SWAYED** very little or a whole lot?* The GM has final say.
- ▶ What consequences are inflicted to manifest the dangers in a given circumstance? *Do you break your leg falling from the hovercar? Do the House Malklaith guards merely become suspicious or do they already have you trapped?* The GM has final say.
- ▶ Does this situation call for a dice roll—if so, which one? *Is your character in a position to make an **action roll** or must they first make a **resistance roll** to gain initiative?* The GM has final say.
- ▶ Which events in the story match up with the xp triggers for character and crew advancement? *Did you express your character's beliefs, drives, heritage, or background?* The players have final say.

The decisions you make can set the tone of your game between realistic and fantastical, and between action and drama. These choices say what **Scum and Villainy** is for you and your group. There aren't wrong answers here! Make the world one you want to play in!

ROLLING THE DICE

Scum and Villainy uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the single highest result.

- ▶ If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**—things go well. If you roll more than one **6**, it's a **critical success**—you gain some additional advantage.
- ▶ If the highest die is a **4/5**, that's a **partial success**—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences—trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.
- ▶ If the highest die is **1-3**, it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly. You likely don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.

If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **critical** when you have zero dice.

All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. This will let you keep the game moving; you can look up the exact rule later when you have time.

Even with sizable dice pools, the most common result will be **4/5**—partial success. You'll tend to succeed, but at a cost. Life out in the fringe of space is rough and tumble, and the die mechanic will continue to push towards complications. Don't shy away from these! While it can be tempting to try at all costs to avoid partial successes, it will make for a much more enjoyable story if you embrace the middle road.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a **trait** (like your **SCRAMBLE** or your **PROWESS**, your ship's **crew quality**, or the **wealth** of the system you're in) and take dice equal to its **rating**. You'll usually end up with one to four dice.

Even one die is pretty good—a 50% chance of some sort of success. The most common traits you'll use are your **action ratings**. A player might roll dice for their **SCRAP** action rating when they fight an enemy, for example.

There are five types of rolls that you'll use most often in the game:

- ▶ **ACTION ROLL.** When a PC attempts an action that's dangerous or troublesome, you make an **action roll** to find out how it goes. Action rolls and their effects and consequences drive most of the game. See page 18.
- ▶ **DOWNTIME ROLL.** When the PCs are at their leisure after a job, they can perform downtime activities in relative safety. You make **downtime rolls** to see how much they get done. See page 184.
- ▶ **ENGAGEMENT ROLL.** The **engagement roll** is made at the beginning of each job. It helps jump past the planning, and showcases what position the PCs are in when the twists and complications of the job hit them. See page 150.
- ▶ **FORTUNE ROLL.** The GM can make a **fortune roll** to disclaim decision making and leave something up to chance. How loyal is an NPC? How much does the bounty hunter find out? How valuable is the information on those Guild drives? See page 38.
- ▶ **RESISTANCE ROLL.** A player can make a **resistance roll** when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much stress their character suffers to reduce the severity of a consequence. When you resist that "Broken Leg" harm, you take some stress and now it's only a "Sprained Ankle" instead. See page 35.



THE GAME STRUCTURE

Scum and Villainy has a play structure of three parts. By default, the game is in **free play**—characters talk to each other, they go places, they do things, they make rolls as needed.

When the group is ready, they choose a target for their next criminal operation, then choose a type of plan to employ. This triggers the **engagement roll** (which establishes the situation as the operation starts), and the game shifts into the **job phase**. See page 150 for more details.

During the **job**, the PCs engage the target—they make rolls, overcome obstacles, call for flashbacks, and complete the operation (successfully or not). When the job is finished (or abandoned), the game shifts into the **downtime phase**.

During **downtime**, the GM engages the systems for payoff, **HEAT**, and entanglements, to determine all the fallout from the job. Then the PCs each get their downtime activities, such as indulging their vice to remove stress or working on a long-term project (see page 184 for details on downtime). When all the downtime activities are complete, the game returns to free play and the cycle starts over again.

Each phase works towards a different goal. Free play is, for example, very fluid. Time can move very quickly, with several weeks passing in a few moments of play. Characters often split up to do things on their own or work their own personal projects. But the job phase is more concrete and focused. Play becomes about finishing the job, and watching as the crew overcomes each successive obstacle and challenge. After they finish the job, play shifts into downtime and the focus of play moves to the consequences of the characters' actions and resulting changes in the world.

The phases are a conceptual model to help you organize the game—they're not meant to be rigid structures. Think of the phases as a menu of options to fit whatever it is you're trying to accomplish in play. During a job, players can use flashbacks to situations that they had set up, effectively backtracking into free play, if need be. And almost any concrete action in free play might signal the start of a job. But remembering these phases can help keep play pointed at the right ideas.

ACTIONS & ATTRIBUTES

ACTION RATINGS

There are 12 actions in the game that PCs use to overcome obstacles (see list on page 64).

Each action has a rating (from zero to 3) that tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Action ratings don't just represent skill or training—you're free to describe how your character performs that action based on the type of person they are. Maybe your character is good at **COMMAND** because they have a scary stillness to them, while another character barks orders and intimidates people with their military bearing.

You choose which action to use to overcome an obstacle. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation may be less effective and may put the character in more danger, but they can still be attempted. Usually, when you perform an action, you'll make an **action roll** to see how it turns out.

ATTUNE
COMMAND
CONSORT
DOCTOR
HACK
HELM
RIG
SCRAMBLE
SCRAP
SKULK
STUDY
SWAY

ACTION ROLL

You make an **action roll** when your character does something potentially dangerous or troublesome. The possible results of the action roll depend on your character's **position**. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. If you're in a **controlled** position, the possible consequences are less serious. If you're in a **desperate** position, the consequences can be severe. If you're somewhere in-between, it's **risky**—usually considered the “default” position for most actions.

ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

There are three **attributes** in the game system that the player characters use to resist bad consequences: **INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, and **RESOLVE**. Each attribute has a rating (from zero to 3) that tells you how many dice to roll when using that attribute.

INSIGHT
PROWESS
RESOLVE

If there's no danger or trouble at hand, don't make an action roll. You might instead make a **fortune roll** (see page 38), a **downtime roll** (page 184), or the GM will simply say yes, and you accomplish your goal.

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of dots in the first column under that attribute (see the examples below). The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their attribute rating.

RESISTANCE ROLL

Each attribute resists a different type of danger. If you get stabbed, for example, you resist physical harm with your **PROWESS** rating. **Resistance rolls** always succeed—you diminish or deflect the bad result—but the better your roll, the less **stress** it costs to reduce or avoid the danger.

When the enemy has a big advantage, you'll need to make a resistance roll before you can take your own action. For example, when you fight the master assassin sent by the Ashen Knives, she disarms you before you can strike. You need to make a resistance roll to keep hold of your weapon if you want to attack her.

The GM judges the threat level of the enemies and uses these "preemptive" resistance rolls as needed to reflect the capabilities of especially dangerous foes.

EXAMPLE ACTION & ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

INSIGHT

- ▶ ▶ ▶ DOCTOR
- ▶ ▶ ▶ HACK
- ▶ ▶ ▶ RIG
- ▶ ▶ ▶ STUDY

*This character has a **DOCTOR** action rating of **2**. Their **INSIGHT** attribute rating is **1** (The first column of dots).*

PROWESS

- ▶ ▶ ▶ HELM
- ▶ ▶ ▶ SCRAMBLE
- ▶ ▶ ▶ SCRAP
- ▶ ▶ ▶ SKULK

*They also have **SCRAMBLE 1** and **SCRAP 2**. Their **PROWESS** attribute is **2**.*

RESOLVE

- ▶ ▶ ▶ ATTUNE
- ▶ ▶ ▶ COMMAND
- ▶ ▶ ▶ CONSORT
- ▶ ▶ ▶ SWAY

*Finally they have **ATTUNE 1**, **CONSORT 2** and **SWAY 1**. Their **RESOLVE** attribute rating is **3**.*

STRESS & TRAUMA

STRESS

Player characters in **Scum and Villainy** have a special reserve of fortitude and luck called **stress**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can take stress instead. The result of the **resistance roll** (see page 35) determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

*During a shootout, Alice's character, Hayley, gets shot in the chest. Alice rolls her **PROWESS** rating to resist, and gets a **2**. It costs 6 stress, minus 2 (the result of the resistance roll) to resist the consequences. Alice marks off 4 stress and describes how Hayley survives.*

The GM rules that the harm is reduced by the resistance roll, but not avoided entirely. Hayley suffers level 2 harm "Chest Wound" instead of level 3 harm "Punctured Lung."

PUSHING YOURSELF

You can use stress to **push yourself** for greater performance. For each bonus you choose below, take **2 stress** (each can be chosen once for a given action):

- ▶ Add **+1d** to your roll. (See **Action Roll**, page 18.)
- ▶ Add **+1 level** to your effect. (See **Effect**, page 26.)
- ▶ Take action when you're incapacitated. (See **Consequences & Harm**, page 32.)

Being able to **push yourself** is one of the key techniques of the game. Since even a single die gives you a 50/50 chance of success, being able to push yourself means you almost always have a chance of pulling off whatever stunt you're trying to pull. Characters in **Scum and Villainy** have a knack for pulling themselves out of the fire.

It's important to remember you have this option! It can be easy to dismiss the actions for which you have zero dots, on the basis that you'd have to take the worst of two dice. But if you have the stress available, you can boost your roll with an extra die and at least have even odds of succeeding.

TRAUMA

When a PC marks their last stress box, they suffer a level of **trauma**. When you take trauma, circle one of your **trauma conditions** like *Cold, Reckless, Unstable*, etc. They're all described on the next page.

When you suffer trauma, you're taken out of action. You're left for dead or otherwise dropped out of the current conflict, only to come back later, shaken and drained. When you return, you have **0 stress** and your vice has been satisfied for the next downtime (see **Vice**, page 190).

Trauma conditions are permanent. Your character acquires the new personality quirk indicated by the condition, and can earn xp by using it to cause trouble. **When you mark your fourth trauma condition**, your character cannot continue as a starfaring scoundrel. You must retire them to a different life. (See **Stash & Retirement**, page 49.)

TRAUMA CONDITIONS

- ▶ **COLD:** You're not moved by emotional appeals or social bonds.
- ▶ **HAUNTED:** You're often lost in reverie, reliving past horrors, seeing things from your past or that others may not see.
- ▶ **OBSESSED:** You're enthralled by one thing: an activity, a person, a goal, an ideology.
- ▶ **PARANOID:** You imagine danger everywhere; you can't trust others.
- ▶ **RECKLESS:** You have little regard for your own safety, best interests, or well-being.
- ▶ **SOFT:** You lose your edge; you become sentimental, passive, gentle.
- ▶ **UNSTABLE:** Your emotional state is volatile. You can instantly rage, fall into despair, act impulsively, or freeze up.
- ▶ **VICIOUS:** You seek out opportunities to hurt people, even for no good reason.

You can play your trauma conditions as much or as little as you like. They can totally transform your character's persona or have only a small impact—it's up to you. If you do play them strongly, though, allowing a trauma condition to complicate your character's life, you earn **xp** for it. (See **Advancement**, page 50.)

PROGRESS CLOCKS

A **progress clock** is a circle divided into segments (see right). Draw a progress clock to track ongoing effort against an obstacle or the approaching trouble.

Sneaking into a guarded hanger? Make a clock to track the patrolling dock police alert level. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill in segments until the alarm is raised.



Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock. A basic obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-segment clock. More difficult problems may have as high as 12 segments.

The **effect level** of an action should guide how segments on a clock are ticked (see **Effect**, page 26). Sometimes circumstances change to radically alter the fiction. Adjust clocks so that the progress measures the effect the PCs are having.

Don't create clocks with fewer than four segments. If a situation is simple enough for one action to complete, you don't need a clock. Use the effect level and position to determine how the action resolves.

When you create a clock, make it about the obstacle, not the method. Clocks for an infiltration should be "Exterior Patrols" and "Perimeter Door," not "Sneak Past the Guards" or "Hack the Perimeter Door." The patrols and the door are the obstacles—the PCs can overcome them in multiple ways.

Complex threats can be broken into several "layers," each with its own clock. For example, the Governor's mansion might have "Perimeter Security," "Automated Defenses," and "Vault Security" clocks. The crew would have to cut through all three to breach the Governor's personal safe and access the Ur artifact collection within.

Remember, a clock tracks progress. A clock is like a hyperspace nav-readout. It shows you where you are—it doesn't get you there.

SIMPLE OBSTACLES

Not every obstacle requires a clock. Use clocks when a situation is complex and you need to track something over time—otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.

Examples of progress clocks follow. These are some of many ways to use clocks, but feel free to come up with new ones!

DANGER CLOCKS

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like the growing suspicion during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert of a system being hacked or guard patrols being bypassed. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the consequence level. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the killer drones, etc. (See **Consequences & Harm**, page 32.)

RACING CLOCKS

Create two opposed clocks to represent a chase. The PCs might have a progress clock called “Escape” while the House Malklaith guards have a clock called “Cornered.” If the PCs finish their clock before the guards fill theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they’re cornered and can’t flee. If both clocks complete at the same time, the PCs get to their ship and are safely hidden on board, but the guards are outside and have control of the spaceport!

You can also use racing clocks for environmental hazards. Maybe the PCs are trying to complete the “Search” clock to find an ancient star map on a derelict ship before the GM fills the “Engine Overload” clock and the vessel explodes.

LINKED CLOCKS

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it’s filled. For example, the GM might make a linked clock called “Trapped” after an “Alert” clock fills up. Once the guards are alerted and working to trap the PCs, any following actions would lead to them becoming trapped.

When you fight a veteran soldier, she might have a clock for her “Defense” and then a linked clock for “Vulnerable.” Once you overcome the “Defense” clock, you can attempt to overcome the “Vulnerable” clock and defeat her. You might affect the “Defense” clock with violence in a gunfight, or lower her defense with deception. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

MISSION CLOCKS

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission is scrubbed or changes—the target escapes, the household wakes up for the day, etc. Such a clock can be ticked as a consequence, or if the PCs take actions that eat up too much time.

TUG-OF-WAR CLOCKS

You can make a clock that can be filled *and* emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. You might make a “Revolution!” clock that indicates when the Cobalt Syndicate laborers riot over their poor treatment and working conditions on Aleph. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. If it empties completely, the workers are satisfied with their lot—at least for now. Once it fills, the revolution begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing turf war between two factions.

LONG-TERM PROJECT

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project (like jury-rigging up a new feature for a device) is eight segments. Truly long-term projects (like creating a new stardrive) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all the phases of development, testing, and manufacturing. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project. Take a look at **Crafting** on page 282 for some ideas on this.

Long-term projects are the default tool to deal with any unusual player goal, including things that change elements of the mechanics or the setting. For example, by default, trauma is permanent. But maybe a player wants to work on a project where they lock away traumatic memories and rehabilitate themselves by visiting a powerful psychic xeno mystic—reducing a character’s trauma but perhaps losing some cherished memories in the process. It will be a long and dangerous task to set up everything needed to begin and work on a project like this, but almost anything can be attempted as long as the group is interested and it seems feasible to everyone.

FACTION CLOCKS

Each faction has a long-term goal (see the faction write-ups, starting on page 320). When the PCs have downtime (page 184), the GM ticks forward the faction clocks that they’re interested in. In this way, the world around the PCs is dynamic and things happen that they’re not directly connected to, changing the overall situation in the Procyon sector and creating new opportunities and challenges.

The PCs may also directly affect NPC faction clocks, based on the missions and jobs they pull off. Discuss known faction projects that they might aid or interfere with, and also consider how a PC operation might affect the NPC clocks, whether the players intended it or not. You can find more information on faction clocks and how the PCs may discover and affect them in **Faction Clocks**, page 260.

PROGRESS CLOCKS IN PLAY

Infiltrating Malklaith's Mansion

The crew are infiltrating Governor Malklaith's mansion to erase records of their Ashen Knives employers. The GM makes a progress clock for the alert level of Malklaith's staff. She makes an 8-clock because on a sprawling estate with many staff on retainer, a few suspicious events can easily be overlooked. During the operation, Ray rolls to **SKULK** past some guards and rolls a **4/5**. She gets past, but the complication is two ticks on the "Alert" clock. The fairly well-trained guards are not especially wary. Later, when Hayley rolls a **1-3** on a desperate action to **RIG** the door into Malklaith's bedroom, the GM fills three segments—the Governor's bodyguards are Tier III professionals and are experts at spotting trouble.



ALERT

This proceeds until the job is complete or the clock ticks over—in the latter case, the estate alarms go off and guards come rushing down the corridors.

Racing at Bright Wind

The crew enter an illegal space race in the Brekk system, in an attempt to impress the Echo Wave Riders and earn their trust for an elite smuggling job requiring fancy flying.

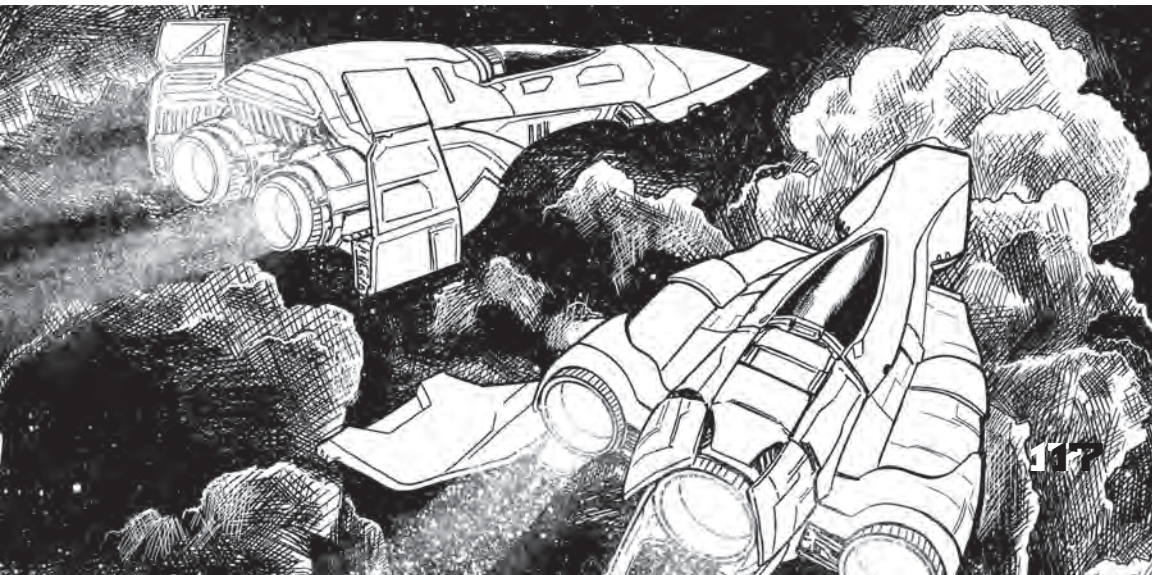


**PC
CREW**



**YAST
JOR**

The GM decides the other front-runner is the famed Yast Jor of the Guild of Engineers. The GM makes one clock for the crew and another for Yast. As PCs take actions and suffer consequences, the GM ticks the clocks to show the progress of each side. When one side's clock is filled, they've reached the finish line.



ACTION ROLL

When a player character does something challenging, we make an **action roll** to see how it turns out. An action is challenging if there's an obstacle to the PC's goal that's dangerous or troublesome in some way. We don't make an action roll unless the PC is put to the test. If their action is something that we'd expect them to simply accomplish, then we don't make an action roll.

*Each game group will have their own ideas about what "challenging" means. This is good! Coming to consensus about what difficulties look like establishes the tone and style of your **Scum and Villainy** series.*

To make an action roll, we go through six steps. In play, they flow together somewhat, but let's break each one down here for clarity:

1. The player states their **goal** for the action.
2. The player chooses the **action rating**.
3. The GM sets the **position** for the roll.
4. The GM sets the **effect level** for the action.
5. Add **bonus dice**.
6. **The player rolls the dice** and we judge the result.

1. THE PLAYER STATES THEIR GOAL

Your goal is the concrete outcome your character will achieve when they overcome the obstacle at hand. Usually the character's goal is pretty obvious in context, but it's the GM's job to ask and clarify the goal when necessary. It never hurts to be clear and avoid any confusion.

You're punching him in the face, right? Okay, what do you want to get out of this? Do you want to take him out, or just rough him up so he'll do what you want?

2. THE PLAYER CHOOSES THE ACTION RATING

The player chooses which action rating to roll, following from what their character is doing on-screen. If you want to roll your **SCRAP** action, then get in a fight. If you want to roll your **COMMAND** action, then order someone around. You can't roll a given action rating unless your character is presently performing that particular action in the fiction.

Some actions overlap and the same end result can come via several methods. If you want to hurt someone, you might **SCRAP** with them or use **DOCTOR** to poison them. If you want to scare an enemy, you might **COMMAND** them through terrifying presence or **SWAY** them with tough lies. Which action to perform is the player's choice.

3. THE GM SETS THE POSITION

Once the player chooses their action, the GM sets the **position** for the roll. The position represents how dangerous or troublesome the action might be. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. To choose a position, the GM looks at the profiles for the positions below and picks one that most closely matches the situation at hand.

POSITIONS

CONTROLLED

You're set up for success. You're exploiting a dominant advantage.

RISKY

You go head-to-head. You're acting under duress. You're taking a chance.

DESPERATE

You're overreaching. You're in real trouble. A very dangerous maneuver.

By default, an action roll is risky. You wouldn't be rolling if there weren't any risk involved. If the situation seems more dangerous, make it desperate. If it seems less dangerous, make it controlled.

Negotiate with your GM over the position you find yourself in and what you might do to improve it. Sometimes the position is risky for reasons that aren't clear until you ask questions.

"It's risky? It seems like this dockworker isn't a real threat to me, given that I'm strapped and a dyed-in-the-wool pirate. Shouldn't this be controlled?"

"No, the danger isn't the dockworker, but that you're roughing this guy up in public. One of his buddies could step in or maybe someone will find a Cobalt Syndicate enforcer to deal with you. You could make it controlled if you wait until the guy is alone."

The GM gets final say over the position of the roll, but should explain and clarify so no one is caught by surprise. Talking about the position will help establish the fictional situation much more clearly and set the tone of the game.

4. THE GM SETS THE EFFECT LEVEL

The GM assesses the likely **effect level** of this action, given the factors of the situation. Essentially, the effect level tells us how much this action can accomplish—will it have **limited**, **standard**, or **great** effect? Effect level is explained in detail in the next section, starting on page 26.

The GM's choices for effect level and position can be strongly influenced by the player's choice of action rating. If a player wants to try to make a new friend by **SCRAPPING** with someone, maybe that's possible, but the GM wouldn't be out of line to say it's a **desperate** roll and probably **limited** effect. Seems like **CONSORTING** would be a lot better for that. Players are always free to choose the action they perform, but that doesn't mean all actions are equally risky or potent.

5. ADD BONUS DICE

You can normally get three bonus dice for your **action roll** (some special abilities might give you additional bonus dice).

For one bonus die, you can get **assistance** from a teammate. They take 1 stress, say how they help you, and give you +1d.

For another bonus die, you can either **push yourself** (take 2 stress) or you can accept a **Devil's Bargain** (you can't get dice for both, it's one or the other). Note though that pushing gives you the option of taking +1 effect. You can push for effect and accept a Devil's Bargain for an additional die on your roll.

For a third bonus die, you can spend a **gambit**. A gambit is a limited resource shared by your whole crew, and earned by taking a few risks. For more about gambits, take a look at page 121.

THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

PCs in **Scum and Villainy** are heedless adventurers who often shoot first and ask questions later—they don't always act in their own best interests. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus die to accept a Devil's Bargain. Common bargains include:

- ▶ Collateral damage, unintended harm.
- ▶ Sacrifice **CRED** or an item.
- ▶ Betray a friend or loved one.
- ▶ Offend or anger a faction.
- ▶ Start and/or tick a troublesome clock.
- ▶ Add **HEAT** to the crew from evidence or witnesses.
- ▶ Suffer **harm**.

The bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You pay the price and get the bonus die. Don't force it if there's no interesting bargain in a situation. Sometimes there's not one, and that's okay.

*"These pirates aren't the most trustworthy scum, so if we leave them alone with the cash, there's a good chance they'll bolt with it while we're on the other ship. I'm gonna get all up in their faces and **COMMAND** them to keep their dirty hands off."*

"Ooh, I have a Devil's Bargain. You can take +1d but they don't take well to the threats. I'll start a new 4-clock called 'Pirate Revenge' and tick it three times. Push them around again and you're going to have a second group to fight."

"Nice. I like it! Maybe I'll try to untick some of that clock in downtime..."

Some players like to inject something new in the story with Devil's Bargains, or use them to focus on a character's backstory or nature.

Someone here is a member of your old platoon—the one you left for dead.

One of the mystics becomes obsessed with you.

The crates you're stealing have clear Guild markings. Your Guild friend is going to be miffed when she hears!

A Devil's Bargain is always a choice. If you don't like one, reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just push yourself for that bonus die instead.

If needed, the GM has final say over what Devil's Bargains are valid.

6. ROLL THE DICE AND JUDGE THE RESULT

Once the goal, action rating, position, and effect have been established, add any bonus dice and roll the dice pool to determine the outcome. (See possible outcomes, by position, on the next page.)

The **action roll** does a lot of work for you. It tells you how well the character performs and how serious the consequences are. They might succeed at their action with no consequences (on a **6**), or succeed but suffer consequences (**4/5**) or it might all go wrong (**1-3**).

On a **1-3**, it's up to the GM to decide if the PC's action has any effect or if it even happens at all. Usually, the action just fails completely, but sometimes it might make sense or be more interesting for the action to have some effect even on a **1-3** result.

Hayley RIGS up a neural interface to mine a defunct AI core she found in the ruins of an Ur temple. The roll is a 1-3. The GM could say Hayley fails to tap the AI core and the backlash from the desperate failure manifests as level 3 mental harm. But it would be more interesting if the equipment worked and Hayley was confronted with a horrific intelligence, mind-to-mind, right? Hayley touches the incomprehensible memories of that ancient entity and the long-dormant madness within overwhelms her. She suffers level 3 mental harm, sure, but also gets a new 6-clock, "Get Rid of These Corrupted Memories."

Each **4/5** and **1-3** outcome lists suggested **consequences** for the action. The worse your position, the worse the consequences are. The GM can inflict one or more of these, depending on the circumstances of the action roll. Consequences are explained in detail on page 32. PCs have the ability to avoid or reduce the severity of consequences by **resisting** them. See page 35 for details about resistance.

When you narrate the action after the roll, the GM and player collaborate together to say what happens on-screen. *How do you vault to the other ship? What do you say to the Legionnaire to convince her? When you face the Nightspeaker in single combat, what's your fighting style like?* The GM will tell you the results of your actions.

DOUBLE-DUTY ROLLS

Since NPCs don't roll for their actions, an action roll does double duty. **It resolves the action of the PC as well as any NPCs that are involved.** The single roll tells us how those actions interact and which consequences result. On a **6**, the PC wins and has their effect. On a **4/5**, it's a mix—both the PC and the NPC have their effect. On a **1-3**, the NPC wins and has their effect as a consequence on the PC.

ACTION ROLL

▶ **1d** for each **ACTION** rating dot

⊕ **+1d** if you **PUSH YOURSELF** (you take 2 stress)
— OR —
if you accept a **DEVIL'S BARGAIN**

⊕ **+1d** if you **SPEND A GAMBIT** (can only spend 1 per roll)

⊕ **+1d** if another crew member **ASSISTED** you

CONTROLLED

You act on your terms. You exploit a major advantage.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **lesser harm**, you end up in a **risky** position.

1-3: You're blocked or you falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

RISKY

You go head-to-head. You act under fire. You take a chance.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect** and add a **gambit** if you haven't spent one on this roll.

6: You do it. Add a **gambit** to your crew as above.

4/5: You do it but, there's a consequence: you suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity**.

DESPERATE

You overreach your capabilities. You're in serious trouble.

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer **severe harm**, a **complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity**.

ACTION ROLL SUMMARY

A player or GM calls for a roll. Make an **action roll** when the character performs a dangerous or troublesome action.

1 The player states the outcome they want to achieve when they overcome the obstacle in the fiction (it's good to be clear).

2 The player chooses the action rating to roll. Choose the action that matches what the character is doing in the fiction.

3 The GM establishes the position of the roll (controlled, risky, or desperate). This governs the consequences of the roll.

4 The GM sets the effect level of the action. The choice of position and effect is influenced strongly by the player's choice of action.

5 Add up to three bonus dice. 1) Assistance from a teammate. 2) Push yourself (take 2 stress) or accept a Devil's Bargain. 3) Use a gambit from the crew.

6 Roll the dice pool and judge the outcome. The players and GM narrate the action together. The GM has final say over what happens and inflicts consequences as called for by the position and the result of the roll.





EFFECT

In **Scum and Villainy**, you achieve goals by taking actions and facing consequences. But how many actions does it take to achieve a goal? That depends on the effect level of your actions. The GM judges the effect level using the profiles below. Which one best matches the action at hand—limited, standard, or great? Each effect level indicates the questions that should be answered for that effect, as well as how many segments to tick if you're using a progress clock.

EFFECTS

TICKS

LIMITED

*You achieve a partial or weak effect.
How is your impact diminished?*

1

STANDARD

*You achieve what we would expect
as "normal" with the action.*

2

GREAT

*You achieve more than usual. How
does the extra effort manifest?*

3

ASSESSING FACTORS

To assess effect level, first start with your gut feeling, given this situation. Then, if needed, assess three factors that may modify the effect level: **potency**, **scale**, and **quality**. If the PC has an advantage in a given factor, consider a higher effect level. If they have a disadvantage, consider a reduced effect level.

POTENCY

This factor considers particular weaknesses, taking extra time or a bigger risk (page 28), or the influence of strange powers. A high-end Guild device may be a potent safe-cracker. An Ur artifact may be potent against a Nightspeaker's charms. A thief will be more potent **SKULKING** in the dark.

QUALITY / TIER

Quality represents the effectiveness of tools, weapons, or other resources, usually summarized by crew quality or faction Tier. Fine items count as +1 bonus in quality, stacking with Tier/crew quality.

Hayley is picking the lock to a Malklaith warehouse. Her crew quality is I and she has fine lockpicks—she's at Tier II. Malklaith is Tier III. Hayley is outclassed in quality, so her effect on the lock will be limited.

SCALE

Scale represents the number of opponents, size of an area covered, scope of influence, etc. Larger scale can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the situation. In battle, more people are better. When infiltrating, more people are a hindrance.

When considering factors, effect level might be reduced below limited, resulting in zero effect—or increased beyond great, resulting in an extreme effect.

If a PC special ability gives “+1 effect,” it comes into play after the GM has assessed the effect level. For example, if you ended up with zero effect, the +1 effect bonus from your Pilot’s Exceed Specs ability would bump them up to limited effect.

Also, remember that a PC can push themselves (take 2 stress) to get +1 effect on their action. (See **Stress & Trauma**, page 12.)

For a master table of factor examples, see **Magnitude** on page 278. Every factor won’t always apply to every situation. You don’t have to do an exact accounting every time, either. Use the factors to help you make a stronger judgment call—don’t feel beholden to them.

DOMINANT FACTORS

If one effect factor overshadows the others, the side with that advantage dominates the situation. It doesn’t matter if you have a fine vibro-blade and extra effect if you try to fight 20 people at once. Their scale dominates the battle and you’re left with very limited effect, or no effect at all. The same principle applies to “impossible” actions.

*Aleera wants to shoot down a gunship harassing them with her fine blaster pistol, Krieger. She says, “I take Krieger and I **SCRAP** with the ship, shooting out the engines. Ha! I rolled a **crit!** Great effect!”*

Obviously, this isn’t possible. A person can’t shoot down a gunship with a blaster. We know it’s inherently silly, like jumping over the moon. But this is also codified in the effect factors. The ship is dominant in quality, scale, and potency. Unless those factors are countered somehow, Aleera’s effect level is zero before she starts. No matter what she rolls for her action, she’ll have no effect. This concept is useful when assessing other very tough (but achievable) situations.

But this situation isn't entirely hopeless. This is where effect factors can help make sense of the situation. If the ship is dominant in quality, scale, and potency, then the PCs can try to understand the factors and take actions to address them. Is there a weakness in the armor of the ship? They can use that to remove its potency (and seize that advantage for themselves). What scale is it? They need a bigger gun. And so on.

Effect factors are a way to codify the situation into a few key factors so it's easier to talk about what needs to change in order to have the desired effect.

TRADING POSITION FOR EFFECT

After factors are considered and the GM has announced the effect level, a player might want to trade position for effect, or vice versa. For instance, if they're going to make a risky roll with standard effect (the most common scenario, generally), they might instead want to push their luck and make a desperate roll but with great effect.

This kind of trade-off isn't included in the effect factors because it's not an element the GM should assess when setting the effect level. Once the level is set, though, you can always offer the trade-off to the player if it makes sense in the situation.

*"I **SKULK** across the hanger and vault over the cargo crates, hiding in the shadows by the Hegemony ship and the forklifts."*

*"I don't think you can make it across in one quick dash. The scale of the hanger is a factor here, so your effect will be limited. Let's say you can get halfway across with this action, then you'll have to **SKULK** through the other half of the space (and the rest of the guards there) to reach the other side."*

"I didn't realize it was that far. Hmmm. Okay, what if I just go as fast as I can. Can I get all the way across if I make a desperate roll?"

"Yep, sounds good to me!"

EFFECTS IN THE FICTION

After the **action roll**, make sure to explain what the achieved effect looks like in the fiction. Leaving it as simply a number of clock segments will keep the story static, whereas explaining the new situation allows the players a way forward into new actions and subsequent rolls. Look at the questions for the effect level as a guide for the kinds of things to explain.

Actions can be simple (resolved entirely in one roll) or complex (resolved by filling up a clock).

If the player says, "I lie to the guard and tell him I'm there on official business," that could be a simple action. It might be limited, standard, or great effect, resulting in a number of possible new situations. The guard may be skeptical but willing to hear you out (limited), wave you through without questioning (standard), or clear you through all the checkpoints in the area (great), depending on the factors in the story so far.

*If the player says, "I'm fighting this exotic beast with the knife I have tucked in my boot," that might be a complex obstacle. The GM creates a clock for the creature, then there are several **action rolls** to resolve the fight, each ticking the clock according to effect level (risking consequences from the outcome of each).*

There's no rule for what is a simple action and what is complex. As a guide, think about whether you'd want to see this taken up a few beats, or whether it's just a tense moment. For the latter, use a simple obstacle, and for the former, use a complex one.

WHY WE DO THIS

The biggest reason for setting effect is to set expectations about the result of a roll and the situation at hand.

You grapple the mercenary. Do you break his neck in a swift wrenching motion? Do you daze him in a single jab? What goes into the effect that you're having? Can that be changed?

Establishing effect and describing how it looks in the story shows players what they're accomplishing and what might go wrong. By understanding the effect of their actions, the group will have a sense of how many actions (and consequences) will achieve their goals. Sometimes a black eye is all you need to prove your point. Maybe nothing short of death will do. After each roll, the players have a clear picture of what has happened and can make decisions about what to do next.

CONSEQUENCES

PCs affect the world around them. When a PC suffers an effect from an enemy or a dangerous situation, it's called a **consequence**. Consequences are the companion to effects. See page 32 for details on consequences and how they impact the player characters.

SETTING POSITION & EFFECT

The GM sets **position** and **effect** for an **action roll** after the player says what they're doing and chooses an action. Usually, **risky/standard** is the default, modified by the action being used, the strength of the opposition, and any applicable effect factors.

When you first start learning the game, you might cautiously step through the process with some deliberation, but after a bit of practice, you'll be able to set position and effect with a quick "gut feeling" that can then be tweaked if a PC has a particular ability, item, or some other element to consider as a special case.

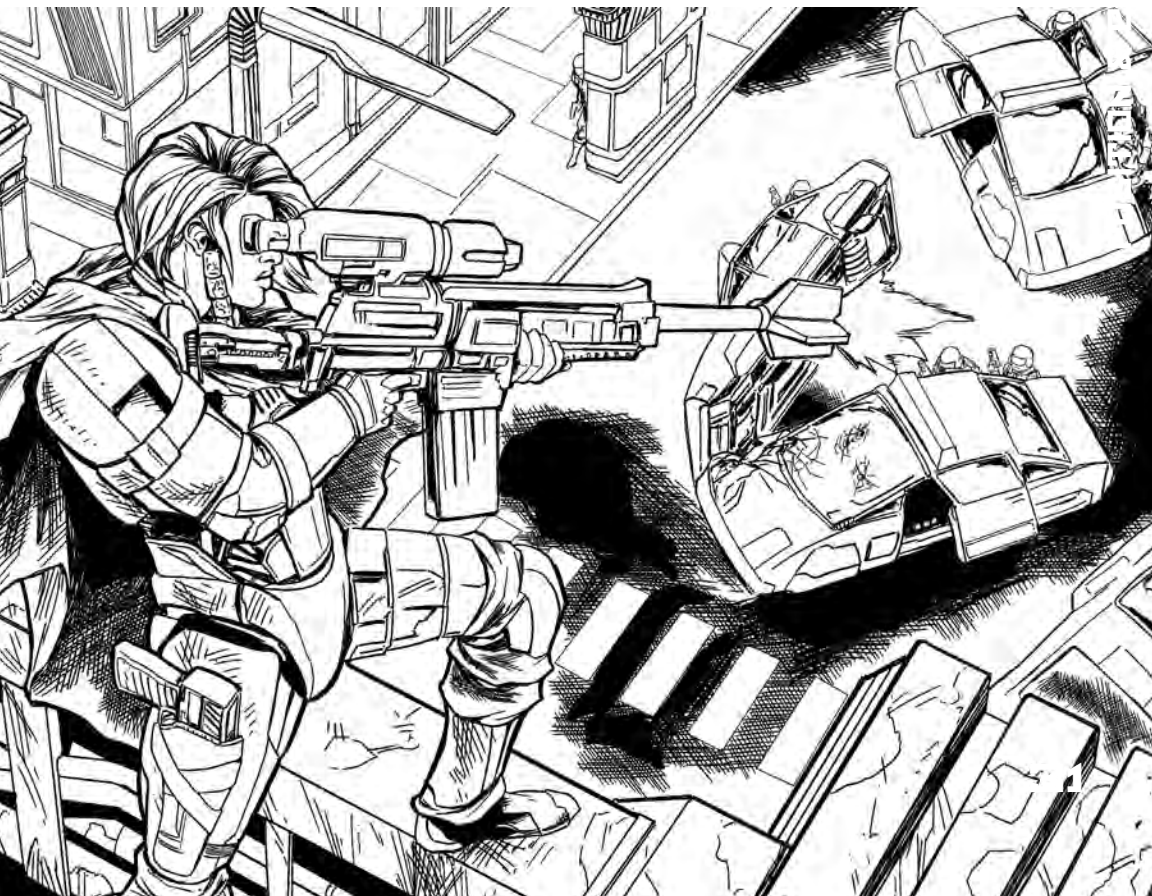
If anyone is unclear why something is set at a specific position/effect ("Wait why is this desperate?"), feel free to drop back to stepping through the process individually. Frequently there just happens to be a factor someone hasn't anticipated or remembered (or they envisioned the scenario and threats differently).

The ability to set position and effect as independent variables gives you nine combinations to choose from, to help you convey a wide array of fictional circumstances.

For example, if a character is facing off alone against a small group, the situation might be:

- ▶ *She fights the group straight up, rushing into their midst, punching and hacking away in a wild **SCRAP**. In this case, being threatened by the larger force lowers her position to indicate greater risk, and the scale of the group reduces her effect (Desperate / Limited).*
- ▶ *She fights the group from a choke point, like a narrow alleyway where their numbers can't overwhelm her at once. She's not threatened by several foes all at once, so her risk is similar to a one-on-one fight, but there are still a lot of enemies to deal with, so her effect is reduced (Risky / Limited).*
- ▶ *She doesn't bother to fight the group directly, instead trying to **SCRAMBLE** her way past them and escape. She's still under threat from many enemy attacks, so her position is worse, but if the ground is open and the group can't easily corral her, then her effect for escaping isn't reduced (Desperate / Standard).*
- ▶ *If she was trying to leave without focusing on a fight, and she had some immediate means of getting away (like leaping onto a nearby hovercar), then while the enemy numbers still make her position worse, her effect might even be increased (Desperate / Great)!*

► The group isn't aware of her yet—she's set up in a sniper position on a nearby roof. She takes a shot against one of them. Their greater numbers aren't a factor, so her effect isn't reduced, and she's not in any immediate danger (Controlled / Great). Maybe instead she wants to fire off a salvo of suppressing fire against the whole group, in which case their scale applies (Controlled / Limited). If the group is on guard for potential trouble, her position is more dangerous (Risky / Great). If the group is alerted to a sniper, then the effect may be reduced further, as they scatter and take cover (Risky / Limited). If the group is able to muster covering fire while they fall back to a safe position, then things are even worse for our scoundrel (Desperate / Limited). If she happens to have brought the heavy ammo her weapons dealer conatact sold her, we'd see the effect change again as such rounds easily penetrate the cover (Desperate / Standard).



CONSEQUENCES & HARM

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of a roll can inflict consequences on a PC. There are five types (see list).

A given circumstance might result in one or more consequences, depending on the situation. The GM determines the consequences, following from the fiction and the tone established by the group.

REDUCED EFFECT
COMPLICATION
LOST OPPORTUNITY
WORSE POSITION
HARM

REDUCED EFFECT

This consequence represents impaired performance. The PC's action isn't as effective as anticipated. *You hit him, but it's only a flesh wound. She accepts the forged invitation, but she'll keep her eye on you throughout the night. You're able to scale the wall, but it's slow going—you're only halfway up.* This consequence essentially reduces the effect level of the PC's action by one after all other factors are accounted for.

COMPLICATION

This consequence represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. The GM might introduce an immediate problem that results from the action: the room catches fire, you're disarmed, the crew takes **+1 HEAT** from witnesses, you lose status with a faction, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc.

The GM might tick a clock for the complication instead. Maybe there's a clock for the alert level of the guards at the spaceport. Or maybe the GM creates a new clock for Legion suspicion at the checkpoint and ticks it. Fill one tick on a clock for a minor complication or two ticks for a standard complication.

A **serious complication** is more severe: the room catches fire and falling ceiling beams block the door, your weapon is broken, the crew suffers **+2 HEAT**, your target escapes out of sight, reinforcements surround and trap you, etc. Fill three ticks on a clock for a serious complication.

Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll. If a PC tries to corner an enemy and gets a **4/5**, don't say that the enemy escapes. The player's roll succeeded, so the enemy is cornered, but maybe the PC has to wrestle them into position and during the scuffle the enemy grabs the PC's gun.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

This consequence represents shifting circumstances. You had an opportunity to achieve your goal with this action, but it slipped away. To try again, you need a new approach—usually a new form of action or a change in circumstances. Maybe you tried to **SCRAP** with your bounty target to trap her on the balcony, but she evades your maneuver and leaps out of reach to another balcony. If you want to get to her now you'll have to try another way—maybe by **SCRAMBLING** across the gap yourself.

WORSE POSITION

This consequence represents losing control of the situation—the action carries you into a more dangerous position. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next balcony, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. You haven't failed, but you haven't succeeded yet, either. You can try again, re-rolling at the new, worse position. This is a good consequence to choose to show escalating action. A situation might go from controlled, to risky, to desperate as the action plays out and the PC gets deeper and deeper in trouble.

HARM

This consequence represents a long-lasting debility (or death). When you suffer harm, record the specific injury on your character sheet equal to the level of harm you suffer. If you suffer **lesser harm**, record it in the bottom row. If you suffer **moderate harm**, write it in the middle row. If you suffer **severe harm**, record it in the top row. See examples of harm and the harm tracker on the next page.

Your character suffers the penalty indicated at the end of the row if any harm recorded in that row applies to the situation at hand. So, if you have "Tired" harm in the bottom row, you'll suffer reduced effect when you try to run away from the Legion guards. When you're impaired by harm in the top row (severe harm, level 3), your character is incapacitated and can't do anything unless you have help from someone else or push yourself to perform the action.

If you need to mark a harm level but the row is already filled, the harm moves up to the next available row. So, if you suffered moderate harm (level 2) but had no empty spaces in the second row, you'd have to record severe harm (level 3), instead. If you run out of spaces on the top row and need to mark harm there, your character suffers a **catastrophic, permanent consequence** (loss of a limb, sudden death, etc., depending on the circumstances).

NON-PHYSICAL HARM

Harm doesn't just have to be broken ribs and knife wounds. "Snubbed" harm can happen at a fancy Governor's dinner party. If you **ATTUNE** poorly to an artifact, you might get level 2 harm "Screaming Voices in Your Mind." It applies -1d (as per level 2 harm) whenever you're taking an action that having screaming voices in your head might affect.

Harm is removed through the recover downtime action (see page 187), but it can also fictionally vanish. When applying unusual harm to the crew, let them know how they can remove it. If you're unsure, for example when dealing with those screaming voices, discuss with your table what sort of long-term project might remove it.

This can be a way to showcase powerful opponents without killing the crew. A tough bounty hunter might punch you in the gut, leaving you with level 3 harm "Can't Breathe." The harm clears after 10 minutes of rest, but leaves you unable to do much for the rest of the scene.

HARM EXAMPLE

HARM		
3	<i>Shattered Right Leg</i>	NEED HELP
2		-1D
1	<i>Burned</i>	<i>Grazed</i>
		LESS EFFECT

This character has three harm: a "Shattered Right Leg" (level 3) plus "Burned" and "Grazed" (level 1). If they suffer another level 1 harm, it will become level 2 (since both level 1 slots are filled). If they suffer another level 3 harm, it will move up to level 4—Fatal.

HARM EXAMPLES

FATAL (4): Spaced, Drowned, Shot through the Heart

SEVERE (3): Impaled, Broken Leg, Shot in Chest, Crushed Rib, Terrified

MODERATE (2): Exhausted, Deep Cut, Concussion, Panicked, Seduced

LESSER (1): Bruised, Drained, Distracted, Scared, Sprained, Confused

Harm like "Drained" or "Exhausted" can be a good fallback consequence if there's nothing else threatening a PC (like when they spend all night going over those safe schematics, looking for any weaknesses before they raid a Counters Guild vault).

RESISTANCE & ARMOR

When your PC suffers a consequence that you don't like, you can choose to resist it. Just tell the GM, "No, I don't think so. I'm resisting that." Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM says if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Make a **resistance roll** to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance.

You make the roll using one of your character's **attributes** (**INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, or **RESOLVE**). The GM chooses the attribute, based on the nature of consequence:

- ▶ **INSIGHT:** Consequences from deception or understanding.
- ▶ **PROWESS:** Consequences from physical strain or injury.
- ▶ **RESOLVE:** Consequences from mental strain or willpower.

Your character suffers **6 stress** when they resist, minus the highest die result from the resistance roll. So, if you rolled a **4**, you'd suffer **2 stress**. If you rolled a **6**, you'd suffer **0 stress**. If you get a **critical** result, you also **clear 1 stress**.

*Juan's character Captain Aman is in a desperate shootout with several Cobalt Syndicate thugs when one of them lands a blaster shot. Since the position was desperate, the GM inflicts **severe harm** (modified by any other factors). She tells Juan to record level 3 harm "Sucking Chest Wound" on Aman's sheet. Juan decides to resist the harm instead. The GM says he can reduce the harm by one level if he resists it. Juan rolls 3d for Aman's **PROWESS** attribute and gets a **5**. Aman takes 1 stress and the harm is reduced to level 2, "Scorched Ribs."*

Usually, a **resistance roll reduces severity** of a consequence. If you're going to suffer fatal harm, for example, a resistance roll would reduce the harm to severe, instead. Or if you got a complication when you were sneaking into the manor house, and the GM was going to mark three ticks on the "Alert" clock, she'd only mark two (or maybe one) if you resisted the complication.

Each consequence can only be resisted one time.

The GM also has the option to rule that your character **completely avoids** the consequence. For instance, maybe you're in a sword fight and the consequence is getting disarmed. When you resist, the GM says that you avoid that consequence completely: you keep hold of your weapon.

By adjusting which consequences are reduced vs. which are avoided, the GM establishes the overall tone of your game. For a more daring game, most consequences will be avoided. For a grittier game, most consequences will only be reduced with resistance. As a general note, we suggest that you reduce consequences by two levels. Especially foolish or dangerous actions will still have daring consequences, but risky and controlled actions can often benefit characters at only a small stress cost. This seems to hit a daring space opera vibe, but may not be appropriate for grittier games.

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may choose which ones to resist (and make rolls for each).

"She hits you with a stun baton and then leaps off the balcony.

Level 2 harm and you **lose the opportunity** to catch her for the moment."

"I'll resist losing the opportunity by grappling her as she attacks.

She can shock me, but I don't want to let her escape."

Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll, you suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take, then decide whether or not to resist.

RESISTANCE ROLL

- **1d** for each **ATTRIBUTE** rating.

You **reduce** or completely **avoid** the effects of the consequences (GM chooses).

Suffer 6 minus the highest die result stress.

CRITICAL: Clear **1 stress**.

ARMOR

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid a consequence, instead of rolling to resist.

Aman is taking level 2 harm "Scorched Ribs," and the fight isn't even over yet, so Juan decides to use Aman's armor to reduce the harm. He marks the armor box and the harm becomes level 1, "Winged." If Aman had an ability that gave him additional armor, such as the Cerberus's crew ability Loaded For Bear, he could mark a second armor box and reduce the harm again, to zero.

When an armor box is marked, it can't be used again until it's restored. All of your armor is restored when you choose your **load** for the next job.

DEATH

There are a couple of ways for a PC to die:

- ▶ If they suffer level 4 fatal harm and they don't resist it, they die. *Sometimes this is a choice a player wants to make, because they feel like it wouldn't make sense for the character to survive or it seems right for their character to die here.*
- ▶ If they need to record harm at level 3 and it's already filled, they suffer a catastrophic consequence, which might mean sudden death (depending on the circumstances).

When your character dies, you can create a new scoundrel to play. Maybe you "promote" one of the NPC allies to a PC, or create a brand-new character who joins the crew.

Scum and Villainy characters are fairly competent and viable from the get-go, but if you're portraying an NPC you may want to take different starting actions or abilities to reflect their current state in the fiction. Discuss with your table what might be the best way to proceed.

FORTUNE ROLL

The fortune roll is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making. You use a fortune roll in two different ways:

When you need to make a determination about a situation the PCs aren't directly involved in and don't want to simply decide the outcome.

House Malklaith and the Starsmiths are fighting over control of a small planetoid near Vet rumored to contain Ur artifacts. How does that turn out? The GM makes a fortune roll for each. Malklaith gets a good result, but the Starsmiths get limited effect. The GM decides that Malklaith takes over the asteroid, and the Starsmiths have stopped supplying the Governor's ships in protest.

When an outcome is uncertain, but no other roll applies to the situation at hand.

While Hayley Griffen is attempting to find some data she can sell in a Legion outpost, guards begin breaking down the door to the room. With limited time, Griffen starts pulling drives randomly, hoping she gets at least something of value for the trouble. How valuable? Is the drive corrupted in the process? Who knows? The GM makes a fortune roll to see how it turns out.

When you make a fortune roll you may assess any trait rating to determine the dice pool of the roll.

- ▶ When a faction takes an action with uncertain outcome, you might use their **Tier** rating to make a fortune roll.
- ▶ When something happens aboard the players' ship, use the appropriate system **quality** rating for the roll.
- ▶ When a Way power or artifact manifests with uncertain results, you might use its **magnitude** for a fortune roll.
- ▶ When a PC **gathers information**, you might make a fortune roll using their **action rating** to determine the amount and quality of the info they get.

If no trait applies, roll **1d** for sheer luck or create a dice pool (from one to four) based on the situation at hand. If two parties are directly opposed, make a fortune roll for each side to see how they do, then assess the outcome of the situation by comparing their performance levels.

FORTUNE ROLL

► 1d for each **TRAIT** rating

➕ 1d per **MAJOR ADVANTAGE**

➖ 1d per **MAJOR DISADVANTAGE**

CRITICAL: Exceptional result / Great, extreme effect.

6: Good result / Standard, full effect.

4/5: Mixed result / Limited, partial effect.

1-3: Bad result / Poor, little effect.

The fortune roll is also a good tool to help the GM manage all the moving parts of the world. Sometimes a quick roll is enough to answer a question or inspire an idea for what might happen next.

Other examples of fortune rolls:

- The PCs instigate a war between two factions. How does it turn out? Does either side dominate? Are both made vulnerable by the conflict? Make a few fortune rolls to find out.
- A strange sickness plagues the industrial world of Indri. How has the outbreak affected the populace? The GM assigns a **magnitude** to the plague and makes a fortune roll to judge its spread.
- The Muscle stakes out a good spot and makes a sniper shot against a gang leader entering his office. The controlled **SCRAP** roll is a success, but is great effect enough to instantly kill a grizzled gang leader? Instead of making a progress clock for the target, the GM decides to make a fortune roll to see if he survives the attack. The roll is a **4/5**: it's a mortal wound. He has only hours to live unless his gang can get him to a doctor in time.
- The Legion have been tracking the PCs' crew of smugglers for a while now. How quickly will they get enough evidence to result in a warrant? The crew's **WANTED LEVEL** in their current system counts as a major advantage for the Legion.
- The PCs face off in a fight with a Nightspeaker captain and her crew. The battle goes in the PCs' favor, and many crew members are killed. One player asks if the captain will surrender to spare the rest of her crew. The GM isn't sure. How coldhearted is this Cultist? She's seen things in the void that would still the heart of lesser women—is there anything human left inside her? The GM makes a 2d fortune roll for "human feelings" to see if a spark of compassion remains in her heart. If so, maybe one of the PCs can roll to **CONSORT**, **SWAY**, or **COMMAND** her to stand down.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The flow of information from the GM to the players about the fictional world is very important in a roleplaying game. By default, the GM tells the players what their characters perceive, suspect, and intuit. But there's just too much going on to say everything—it would take forever, and be boring, too. The players have a tool at their disposal to more fully investigate their world.

When you want to know something specific about the world, your character can **gather information**. The GM will ask you how your character gathers the info (or how they learned it in the past).

If it's common knowledge, the GM will simply answer your questions. If there's an obstacle to the discovery of the answer, an **action roll** is called for—set the position based on the obstacle. If it's not common knowledge but there's no obstacle, a simple **fortune roll** determines the quality of the information you gather.

Each attempt to gather information takes time. If the situation allows, you can try again if you don't initially get all the info that you want. But often, the opportunity is fleeting, and you'll only get one chance to roll for that particular question.

Some example questions are on the bottom of the character sheet. The GM always answers honestly, but with a level of detail according to the level of effect.

The most common gather information actions are **STUDYING** the situation to reveal or anticipate what's going on, or **HACKING** a system for secrets and intelligence.

Sometimes, you'll have to maneuver yourself into position before you can gather information. For example, you might have to **SCRAMBLE** to a good rock outcropping first and then **STUDY** the Janus Syndicate goons during the handoff.

INVESTIGATION

Some questions are too complex to answer immediately with a single gather information roll. For instance, you might want to discover the network of dark hyperlane smuggling routes in the system. In these cases, the GM will tell you to start a **long-term project** that you work on during downtime.

You track the investigation project using a progress clock. Once the clock is filled, you have the evidence you need to ask several questions about the subject of your investigation as if you had great effect.

GATHER INFORMATION

Ask a question and make an **action roll** or a **fortune roll**. The GM answers honestly with a level of detail depending on the effect level.

GREAT: You get exceptional details. The information is complete and follow-up questions may expand into related areas or reveal more than you hoped for.

STANDARD: You get good details. Clarifying and follow-up questions are possible.

LIMITED: You get incomplete or partial information. More information gathering will be needed to get all the answers.

EXAMPLES AND QUESTIONS

- ▶ You might **ATTUNE** to see echoes of recent Way activity. *Have any powerful mystics been here? How can I find the Ur artifact that speaks to me in my dreams? What should I be worried about?*
- ▶ You might **COMMAND** a local Guilder to tell you about the secret meetings held in the factory at night. *What's really going on here? What's he really feeling about this? Is he part of this secret group?*
- ▶ You might **CONSORT** with a well-connected friend to learn the secrets of an enemy or rival. *What do they intend to do? What might I suspect about their motives?*
- ▶ You might **SKULK** across the city, following a courier to discover who's receiving prototypes from a high-level Guild engineer. *Where does the package end up? Who signed for the delivery?*
- ▶ You might **STUDY** an Ur artifact to discover a mystic secret. *How can I power this device? Will anyone sense if it's activated?*
- ▶ Or you might **STUDY** a person to read their intentions and feelings. *What are they really feeling? How could I get them to trust me?*
- ▶ You might examine a plague as a **DOCTOR**. *Where did this disease come from? How can I cure it?*
- ▶ Or you might **DOCTOR** a wounded pirate when you ally with their gang. *Are they going to betray us? What do they really want?*
- ▶ You might **SWAY** a powerful Noble at a party to divulge his plans. *How can I convince him I might be a good partner in those plans?*
- ▶ Or you might **SWAY** his bodyguard to confide in you about recent events. *Where has he been lately? Who's he been meeting with?*



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

PROFESSIONAL DISCOURTESY

The Cobalt Syndicate has been butting heads with the crew of the Faraday ever since that deal on Rin went south. A fair number of these struggles have been on Outpost SB-176, a fairly important shipping nexus and prime turf for finding smuggling jobs.

After returning from a job, the crew finds their friend T'kala nervously pacing at their berth. She greets the crew with an anxious smile and a welcoming hand, but the prominent Cobalt stripe, indicating membership in the Syndicate, can't be missed. "Sorry to do this to you friends, but you may have heard about the recent dock acquisitions. There's a matter of a new fee you'll have to pay..." In the background, loitering in close distance, are several dockhands/gang members ready to respond.

Captain Aman smiles and makes pleasantries. "T'kala! So good to see you. We aren't prepared to make any donations just yet. I'm sure we can send something along at some point to your office. We've known each other long enough, so that should be sufficient, no?" Sounds like a **SWAY** roll, and Juan (Aman's player) goes with this. The GM reveals that T'kala is being leaned on by her new bosses, and they've sent a watchful crew to ensure T'kala puts the screws to the PCs. She can't just walk away with empty promises—this is a **risky** roll with **limited effect**.

Juan gets 3d for Aman's **SWAY** rating, plus 1d for an assist from Aleera Suhn, the crew's Muscle and all-around intimidating presence. Suhn's player Rachel describes walking up behind the aging dockmaster and looming over her shoulder while Aman is all smiles. Juan rolls 4d and gets **4/5**—partial success.

Aman convinces T'kala that deferring the discussion to a more appropriate time is the best course of action. The GM describes T'kala's reactions: "Nervously, she swallows and nods, backing away and going on about regulations and forms that need to be filed. The Cobalt dockhands look at each other in confusion and then anger."

It was a partial success, so Aman also suffers a consequence. Harm isn't really appropriate (yet). A simple complication makes sense though, and the GM says that while T'kala is satisfied, the gang members sent here to ensure the crew paid their dues will not be. "The gang picks up rebar and pipes lying around the place and surrounds the crew," the GM says.

SHOWDOWN AT THE DOCKS

Juan wants to **resist** the consequence of the last roll. Being surrounded sounds like a bad idea. Since there's no gunfire yet, Aman simply moves back to the catwalk before the gang can surround them. Juan rolls 2d for Aman's **PROWESS** attribute and gets a **4**. He takes **2 stress** and avoids the complication. The Syndicate still outnumberes them, but the crew will have somewhere to go if this gets ugly.

Juan and Rachel discuss some options for how to get the Cobalt Syndicate to back down. Perhaps brandishing some heavy weaponry would deter them from closing in. But Alice (playing Hayley Griffen, the Mechanic) is still onboard the ship. "I blare over the ship's PA while angling the ship's guns at them. 'Not a chance, scumbags. Drop the weapons and get lost.'"

So what action is this? Alice considers it and says, "Well, I'm trying to force them to leave. I'm technically using ship weapons, which would be **HELM**, but I'm not going to miss at this distance, and I'd rather not even fire. I think this is **COMMAND**... which I have zero dice in. No time like the present!" Rachel volunteers to take a stress to give Alice a die from the **assist**—Suhn is quite imposing herself. Rachel asks for a Devil's Bargain, and the GM has one—no matter how this turns out, T'kala is going to catch hell for this. "Never loved that woman anyway," Rachel says as she picks up a second die. There's also a **gambit** left in the crew's pool, and Rachel opts to add that to her roll, for three dice.

The GM says it's a **desperate** roll because lighting up the dock with ship weapons would definitely cause the crew a ton of other problems, and the Syndicate knows that. Alice rolls and gets a **6**! She smiles confidently and says, "Yeah! That's what I thought!" But is this enough to make them back down? They're certainly not going to press forward into the maw of particle cannons, but are they just going to leave?

The GM says, "I think you'd get them to back off, but I don't think they'd leave the dock entirely. The Cobalt Syndicate are looking for ways to get into it with your crew. They'll probably move to a safe distance and wait you out, even setting up shifts if they have to. You'll still have to figure out how to get that smuggled cargo of yours into the station proper."

"Yeah, that makes sense, but hold on," Alice says. "I can **push myself** for extra effect, right? If Hayley takes 2 stress for +1 effect, to make it great effect, is that enough to clear us a path to our contact?"

"Oh, wow, yeah, that would do it. Normally you would push for effect before your roll, but since we didn't really talk about what standard effect was up front, I'd be fine with you pushing now. Maybe you fire a few shots into some unimportant crates and they all scatter? No additional **HEAT** needed, just flavor. A few crates explode dramatically, Cobalt thugs go running, and that's the end of things."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Could T'kala's relationship with the crew (as a crew contact) have made the situation easier or more complicated than it already was? Would you have given Aman a controlled position? Or should the situation have been desperate because of the obvious leverage the Syndicate had over T'kala, and the crew owing her as a friend?
- ▶ What about Griffen's effect level? Do you think she needed great effect for that result, or was standard enough already? How would you judge it at your table?



PC VS. PC

It's common for two or more PCs to come into conflict. Mechanically, the rules for PC vs. PC action are the same for PC vs. NPC action. You still use action, resistance, fortune rolls, effects, and consequences. These resolve into new situations that may require more rolls. But though it's mechanically straightforward, it's not exactly the same. There are guidelines you should follow when PCs start to battle it out.

- ▶ **Halt play for a bit.** When two PCs conflict, it's like two writers arguing over the direction of the story they're working on. You don't need to rush to roll dice. Instead, pause what you're doing and figure out how things should proceed. "Who acts first" is sometimes a sticking point for players, especially when blasters are drawn. Usually the answer is clear from the situation—one player is acting while the other is reacting. When it's not, you can make fortune rolls to see who gets the drop on whom—have each player make an **action roll** and compare the results.
- ▶ **Decide how to resolve the conflict.** Determine what's at stake, what actions need to be rolled, and what outcomes might occur from those actions. If you want to go down a different road, speak up! This is why pausing play is important—it gives you the moment to really consider what's going to happen. If you can't agree on how to resolve the conflict, you're at an impasse.
- ▶ **Ask about the situation to establish how things will resolve.** You might ask, "Can your character be **SWAYED** into going along with my plan?" or "Are you all up in my character's face or are we shouting from across the room?" or even "Is your character out for blood here, or is this about your appearance to the rest of the crew?"
- ▶ **Live with the results.** Once you decide on the resolution method, follow through with that method and stick to the outcomes. Rather than argue with the process, use the outs the system already gives you—bad results can be resisted, armor is often an option, and the future remains open to new courses of action.

There are no specific player vs. player mechanics. When the PCs fight, the players are still collaborating and making judgments about what happens, like any other event. Conflicts between players are outside the scope of the game; no roll or mechanic can resolve a dispute between people. Talk with your friends and resolve any interpersonal conflicts that come up so PC vs. PC conflicts can just be about the story you're telling.



CRED & STASH

CRED

We use **CRED** as an abstract measure of cash and liquid assets. Most forms of currency these days are backed by Counters Guild technologies or by Guild interests. Numerous physical currencies exist but most exchange these denominations through the Counters Guild into standard Hegemonic credit. These creds are carried on devices provided by the Guild, colloquially called “sticks.”

The few nominal credits or bills PCs use in their daily lives are not tracked. If a character wants to toss a few creds around to achieve a small goal (bribe a doorman), use the PC's lifestyle quality for a fortune roll (see **STASH** on the next page).

MONETARY VALUES

1 CRED: A stick full of credits. A month's wages.

2 CRED: A fine weapon. A weekly income for a small business. A fine piece of art. A set of luxury clothes.

3 CRED: An exquisite jewel. A case full of hard currency.

4 CRED: A good monthly take for a small business. A small safe full of rare metals and valuables. A rare artifact.

6 CRED: Liquidating a significant asset—a hovercar, a small house.

8 CRED: A treasure trove.

10 CRED: A small personal ship.

More than 4 **CRED** is an impractical amount to keep unnoticed by the Guild. You must spend the excess or put it in your **STASH** (see below). A crew can also store 4 **CRED** in their ship, by default. Any **CRED** beyond their limit must be spent as soon as possible (typically before the next job) or be distributed among the crew members.

CRED USE

Spend **1 CRED** to get an additional **activity** during **downtime** (see page 184).

Spend **1 CRED** to increase the **result level** of a **downtime activity** roll.

Spend **CRED** to avoid certain crew **entanglements** (see page 180).

Put **CRED** in your character's **STASH** (1-for-1) to improve their lifestyle and circumstances when they **retire** (see the next page).

Spend **CRED** when you advance your **crew quality** (see page 51).

STASH & RETIREMENT

When you mark your character's final Trauma and they retire, the amount of **CRED** they've managed to stash away determines their fate. Your **STASH** tracker is on your character sheet.

STASH 0-10: Poor soul. You end up in the gutter, awash in vice and misery.

STASH 11-20: Meager. A tiny hovel that you can call your own.

STASH 21-39: Modest. A simple home or apartment, with some small comforts. You might operate a bar or small business.

STASH 40: Fine. A well-appointed home or apartment, claiming a few luxuries. You might operate a medium business.

In addition, each full row of **STASH** (10 **CRED**) indicates the quality level of the character's **lifestyle**, from zero (street life) to 4 (luxury).

Ray Aman, Captain of the Faraday, is dressed to impress his sometime-rival Rhin, a fellow smuggler. Aman flouts his newfound wealth from several successful jobs as he crows in the bar about how a smuggler like Rhin will never have as fine a coat as his. But Aman is just a criminal with a ship, so how impressive a coat is it, really? The GM can call for a fortune roll using Aman's lifestyle as the dice pool to find out how elegant the coat really is.

*Aleera Suhrn is the wrong sort of trouble for the bouncer at an elite Nightfall dance club. Tired of cracking skulls to get what she wants, she offers to bribe the guard to get past the door. The GM decides that there isn't a substantial risk—this is just about whether Aleera can afford to get in. The GM asks for a fortune roll using Aleera's lifestyle rating to see if she has enough **CRED** to bribe the bouncer.*

REMOVING CRED FROM YOUR STASH

If you want to pull **CRED** out of your **STASH**, you may do so, at a cost. Your character sells off some of their assets and investments in order to get some quick cash. For every **2 STASH removed**, you get **1 CRED** in cash.

ADVANCEMENT

PC ADVANCEMENT

Each player keeps track of the experience points (**xp**) that their character earns.

During the game session, mark xp:

- ▶ When you make a **desperate action roll**. Mark **1 xp** in the attribute for the action you rolled. For example, if you roll a desperate **SCRAP** action, mark **xp** in **PROWESS**. When you roll for a **group action** that's desperate, also mark **xp**.

At the end of the session, review the **xp triggers** on your sheet. For each one, mark 1 xp (playbook or attribute) if it happened at all, or mark 2 xp if it happened a lot during the session. The xp triggers are:

- ▶ **Your playbook-specific xp trigger.** For example, the Muscle's is: *Address a challenge with force or threats.* To "address a challenge," your character should attempt to overcome a tough obstacle or danger. It doesn't matter if the action is successful or not. You get xp either way.
- ▶ **You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background.** Your character's beliefs and drives are yours to define, session to session. Feel free to tell the group about them when you mark xp.
- ▶ **You struggled with issues from your vice or traumas.** Mark xp for this if your vice tempted you to some bad action or if a trauma condition caused you trouble. Simply indulging your vice doesn't count as struggling with it (unless you **overindulge**).

You may mark end-of-session xp on any attribute xp track or your playbook xp track.

*Rachel is playing a Muscle. At the end of the session she reviews her xp triggers and tells the group how much xp she's getting. She rolled two desperate **SCRAP** actions during the session, so she marks 2 xp on her **PROWESS** xp track.*

She addressed several challenges with force or threats, so she marks 2 xp. She expressed her Colonist heritage many times while dealing with the Cobalt Syndicate, so she marks another 2 xp. She also showcased her character's beliefs, but 2 xp is the maximum for that category, so she can't earn more for that. She didn't struggle with her vice or traumas this session, so no xp there. She explains her choices to her table and lets them know that she got 4 xp at the end of the session.

When you fill an xp track, clear all the marks and take an **advance**. When you take an advance from your playbook track, you may choose a new **special ability**. When you take an advance from an attribute, you may add an **additional action rating** to one of the actions under that attribute (up to a max of 3).

*Rachel decides to put it all in her **PROWESS** xp track. This fills the track, so she adds a new dot to **SCRAP**.*

You can also earn xp by training during **downtime**. When you **train** (see page 188), mark xp in one of your attributes or playbook tracks. A given xp track can be trained only once per downtime phase.

CREW ADVANCEMENT

At the end of the session, review the crew xp triggers and mark 1 crew xp for each item that occurred during the session. If an item occurred multiple times or in a major way, mark 2 crew xp for it. The crew xp triggers are:

- ▶ **Your crew-specific xp trigger.** For example, the Stardancer's is: *Execute a successful transport or smuggling operation.* If the crew successfully completed a job that matches this trigger, mark xp.
- ▶ **Contend with challenges above your current station.** If you tangled with factions of higher Tier than your crew quality, or simply opposition more dangerous than your crew, mark xp for this. If you have any questions about this, the GM can help you decide.
- ▶ **Bolster your crew's reputation or develop a new one.** Review your crew's reputation. Did you do anything to promote it in play this session? Also mark xp if you developed a new reputation for the crew.
- ▶ **Express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew.** This one is very broad! Essentially, did anything happen that highlighted the specific elements that make your crew unique?

When you fill your crew advancement tracker, clear the marks and take a crew advance.

You have many choices when advancing your ship and crew. An advance may be an additional **crew special ability**, two **ship upgrades** (any two boxes amongst ship modules, or crew/ship upgrades), one **ship quality** (**comms**, **engines**, **hull**, or **weapons**—up to the listed maximum on your ship), or one **crew quality**. Advancing crew quality also has a **CRED** cost equal to four times the new crew quality (so 8 **CRED** if you're going to crew quality 2). Fund this from character and ship **CRED**, or converting **STASH**.

*For example, when the Cerberus earns an advance, they could take a new crew **special ability**, like **Deadly**. Or they could mark two upgrades, like Medical Bay and Particle Cannons (if they have an adequate weapons rating). Or they could gain a **hull quality** (if their current hull quality is less than 2) Or they could upgrade their **crew quality** (up to 3, with appropriate **CRED** costs each time).*

Say how you've obtained these upgrades or abilities. Where did they come from? How does it become a new part of life on the ship?

PROFITS

Every time the crew advances, each PC gets **STASH** equal to the **crew quality**+2, to represent profits generated by the crew.

SWITCHING SHIPS OR CHANGING PLAYBOOKS

You might want to change your character to a different playbook (such as a Mystic becoming a Muscle) or the group may decide a different ship matches their playstyle better (such as the Stardancer crew taking over the Firedrake).

If the PC or ship was created a few sessions ago, but it's later realized that a different playbook is more appropriate, just recreate the character or ship with a different sheet, keeping the same number of advancements. No harm done.

If, however, this change in playbooks represents a growth of the character, transfer the action ratings of the PC. You can keep some special abilities already earned through Veteran advances, and the PC's starting ability is replaced with the new playbook's starting ability.

Similarly for a crew, when transferring ships you might be able to bring over certain upgrades (a bounty hunter's cache of stun weapons for example) and abilities. A crew might also keep some of their contacts or unique crew upgrades—assess each one to see if it makes sense to keep it with the new crew type. Discuss this at the table and decide what makes sense to carry over.

ADVANCING THE CAMPAIGN

Campaigns of **Scum and Villainy** are not intended to run indefinitely, taking roughly a dozen to twenty sessions to complete (depending on your crew). End-of-campaign expectations are described on page 264, and how to create tie-ins for future games.

GOING BEYOND PLAYBOOKS

A playbook describes a broad archetype of a space-opera adventurer, but doesn't cover the details of rituals, practices, prestige and rites that may come about from joining certain factions, or practicing certain Mystic beliefs.

In addition to the special abilities available to your playbook and the ability to take special abilities from other playbooks, you can also take advanced abilities and permissions. These represent training unique to a special group in Procyon, from the Memish mystics who study their own form of the Way, to the daring escapades of the explorers that brave Ur-sites for artifacts, to elite members of the Hegemony such as members of the various guilds.

Some examples are provided on page 348, but you should work with your table to detail and customize those that may become important in your game.



CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERS

The uncaring Hegemon rules from an artifact throne amongst a den of vipers known as the Houses. Little attention is paid to Procyon, which leaves you to fight a battle for existence amongst Cults, corrupt Governors, scheming Syndicates, and the ancient Ur ruins. Any move you make is going to make waves.

CHARACTERS

Every player character in **Scum and Villainy** is a daring outlaw, following their destiny out on the galactic fringe. All of them are familiar with the feats represented by the actions of the game. They're all able to **SCRAP** with enemies, **SKULK** in the dark, **ATTUNE** to the Way, **CONSORT** with contacts, and so on.

Because of the way the dice system works, every character can roll at least 3d for any action in the game (+1d from pushing or a Devil's Bargain, a +1d assist from a teammate, and +1d from a gambit). A roll of 3d is fantastic—an 87% chance of success. The "zero rating" actions on your character sheet aren't things your character can't do, but actions for which you're likely to burn stress and rely on teamwork. When your crew has your back and you set your mind to it, you can attempt almost anything.

Of course, you'll also have particular talents. You may want to be able to bend the Way to your will and observe things far beyond your senses, or perhaps you want to be the best pilot in the sector. In this chapter, you'll learn how to create your own unique character and choose the abilities that suit the style of play you prefer.

CHARACTER CREATION

CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

Your playbook contains all the specific rules needed to play a certain character type in **Scum and Villainy**. There are seven basic playbooks. By choosing a playbook, you're determining which type of crew member your character is. The playbooks are:

MECHANIC

Play a Mechanic if you want to make new devices, keep your ship in good shape, or hack systems.

MUSCLE

Muscles are good at winning fights. Play a Muscle if you want to be unstoppable in combat.

MYSTIC

Mystics are good at dealing with the Way. Play one if you want to use artifacts and weird powers.

PILOTS

Play a Pilot if you want to be a daredevil at the wheel and widely traveled.

SCOUNDREL

Scoundrels love getting into and out of trouble. Play a Scoundrel if you want to press your luck.

SPEAKER

Play a Speaker if you want to be the respectable one and use connections to get your way.

STITCH

Play a Stitch to deal with science, patch people up, and be the crew's moral compass.

Each playbook is a set of **special abilities** (which give your character ways to break the rules) and **xp triggers** (which determine how they earn experience points for character advancement). Each playbook also has a **starting ability** unique to them. No playbook has a monopoly on their focus—a Muscle could be amazing at **HELM**, or a Mystic might be excellent at **SCRAP**.

By selecting a playbook, you select a set of initial **action ratings** and **special abilities** that will be easiest for you to access. You determine your character's essential nature, and both your skills and nature can evolve over time.

Your playbook also describes how others in the sector view you. When Syndicates plan a job, they think in terms of crews that have a "pilot," "mechanic," and "muscle."

If someone solves their problems with the Way, they're often called a "mystic." If they present a respectable face and have deep connections, they're called a "speaker." Your playbook is also a reputation.

Each playbook is detailed in this section, starting on page 69.

Once you've chosen your playbook, follow the steps below to complete your character.

CHOOSE A STARTING ABILITY

Playbooks begin with their **starting ability** marked. Each playbook has a starting ability that only members of that playbook get. This helps define your role on the crew and how factions in the sector view you. Note that starting abilities cannot be chosen via the Veteran special ability.

If you want to play a xeno (a member of an alien species) with a decidedly exceptional physique or abilities, you can replace your playbook starting ability with the following:

Xeno: You may spend stress (0-2) to perform an inhuman feat only members of your species can do.

See page 296 for more information on playing a xeno. If you choose to go with the Xeno ability, now might be a good time to discuss with your table what some common traits of your people can be.

When playing a xeno, you still have the special abilities and starting action dots on your playbook.

CHOOSE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Each playbook also has a list of special abilities. Choose one special ability for your character.

If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. If you're familiar with the other playbooks, you can start with a Veteran advance if you like. Each character can have up to three Veteran advances (which can be earned through play).

SPECIAL ARMOR

Some special abilities refer to your **special armor**. Each character sheet has three boxes to track usage of armor (armor, heavy, and special). If you have abilities that use your special armor, tick the special box when you activate one of them. If you don't have any such special abilities, then you can't use that armor box.

CHOOSE A HERITAGE

Your character's **heritage** describes their upbringing or family. Pick a heritage and decide if you're native to Procyon or from elsewhere in the Hegemony. When you choose a heritage, mark it on the list on your playbook, then write a detail about your family life on the line above. For example, you might choose **IMPERIAL** heritage, and then write *Once powerful Core-world Nobles, now destitute*. Or you might choose **COLONIST** heritage and write *Dathalak farmers from closer to the Core*. Each heritage is described briefly below.

- ▶ Those with **IMPERIAL** heritage hail from Warren or the Core worlds. You were brought up educated in ways of the Hegemony, through a Guild vocational education, Cult teachings, or Noble family tutors.
- ▶ If you'd rather be more at home on a creaking ship, you could be from a **SPACER** family. Ice miners, station mechanics, and most merchants are born, grow old, and die in space—and may or may not view your terrestrial ventures with suspicion.
- ▶ The exact opposite are **COLONIST** families. Farmers, miners, and terraformers form the backbone of the Hegemony. Fighting for a living on the borders of planets, these folks deal with alien beasts and odd Precursor ruins more than most.
- ▶ **MANUFACTURED** "families" are fundamentally controlled in some way by the Guilds—for example, a Yaru clone who's escaped from a facility or a Urbot that's avoided routine memory wipes. You may often have to hide your origin and independence.
- ▶ If you want to be without a planet to call home, you could be from a **WANDERER** heritage. A small but notable portion of the Hegemony move from planet to planet, as opportunities emerge and galactic economic cycles shift. Or just follow where the Way takes you.
- ▶ **XENO** families are as diverse as the countless kinds of xenos in the galaxy. You were raised in a non-human culture. Xenos struggle to find acceptance in the Hegemony, and many of their practices are seen as strange or unusual.

CHOOSE A BACKGROUND

Your heritage covers how you were raised, but your **background** covers what you've been doing before you joined the crew. Pick a background option from the list on your playbook, then write a detail about it specific to your character. For example, you could choose **LABOR**, and then write *Gas miner on Aleph*. Or you might choose **SYNDICATE** and write *Former assassin for the Ashen Knives*.

Backgrounds are briefly detailed below:

- ▶ **ACADEMIC:** A professor, student, researcher, or other knowledge-driven vocation.
- ▶ **LABOR:** A factory worker, driver, dockhand, miner, or other tradesperson. The majority of the Hegemony is of this background.
- ▶ **CULT:** Part of a Cult, officially sanctioned or not. A holy warrior, priest, or religious devotee.
- ▶ **GUILDER:** Involved in the of machinations of a Guild, such as a ship designer, financial analyst, or logistics officer.
- ▶ **MILITARY:** A Hegemonic soldier, mercenary, intelligence operative, strategist, training instructor, etc.
- ▶ **NOBLE:** Living the life of luxury, such as a dilettante, someone caught up in House politics, etc.
- ▶ **SYNDICATE:** Part of an organized criminal gang, from the lowest lookout to ousted former crime lord.

ASSIGN FOUR ACTION DOTS

Each playbook begins with one action at level 2, and one at level 1. You get to add four more ratings, to bring you to a total of seven dots assigned. During character creation, no action rating may be higher than 2 (unless a special ability tells you otherwise). Brief descriptions of all the actions follow, on pages 64 and 65.

Assign your action ratings like this:

- ▶ Increase by one any action that you feel reflects your character's **heritage**.
- ▶ Increase by one any action that you feel reflects your character's **background**.
- ▶ Increase two more actions anywhere you like (max rating 2).

CHOOSE ONE FRIEND AND ONE RIVAL

Each playbook has several NPC friends. It's important to note that you know all these people well. Choose one from the list who is a close relationship (a good friend, a lover, a family relation, or similar). Mark the up-pointing triangle next to their name.

Then pick another NPC on the list who is now your rival or enemy. They may have been a friend once. Mark the downward-pointing triangle next to their name.

CHOOSE YOUR VICE

Fighting the odds of the galaxy is stressful. Each crew member has a way to blow off stress, described by their **vice**. Choose one or two from the list below, and write in specific details. For example, you might choose **pleasure**, then write *Rare delicacies from distant planets*. Ask your table if you get stuck on what kinds of vice might be fitting with the story and your character.

- ▶ **FAITH:** You're part of a Cult, or observe specific ceremonies at regular intervals.
- ▶ **GAMBLING:** You crave games of chance, or bet on sporting events, etc.
- ▶ **LUXURY:** You seek the high life with expensive, ostentatious displays of wealth.
- ▶ **OBLIGATION:** You're devoted to a family, cause, organization, charity, etc.
- ▶ **PLEASURE:** You seek hedonistic gratification from lovers, food, drink, drugs, art, etc.
- ▶ **STUPOR:** You dull the senses with drug abuse, excessive drinking, fighting to exhaustion, etc.
- ▶ **WEIRD:** You perform strange experiments, explore the Way, commune with Ur artifacts, and so on.

When picking a vice, bear in mind that it's something you do to blow off steam, but it can also land you in trouble. How much your vice consumes you and how much it drives your character to bad decisions is up to you, but the more it does so the more xp you'll earn. Discuss this with your GM—not every player may want their demons to rear their heads every session.

RECORD YOUR NAME, ALIAS, & LOOK

Choose a name for your character from the sample list or create your own.

Many hotshots, muscles, and the like pick up monikers that the underworld of the Procyon sector knows them by. If you use an alias or nickname as part of your identity with the crew, note that as well.

Describe your character's look (some examples are provided on page 62).

REVIEW YOUR DETAILS

Look at the **xp triggers** for your playbook (like “Earn xp when you address a challenge with deception or influence,” for example) and the **special items** available to a character of your type (like the Pilot’s Urbot, for example). You begin with access to all of the items on your sheet, so don’t worry about picking specific things—you’ll decide what your character is carrying later on, when you’re on the job (see Loadout, below).

That’s it! Your character is ready for play. When you start the first session, the GM will ask you some questions about who you are, your outlook, or some past events. If you don’t know the answers, make some up! Or ask the other players for ideas.

LOADOUT

You have access to all of the items on your character sheet. For each job, decide what your character’s load will be.

- ▶ **1-3 LOAD: LIGHT.** You’re faster, less conspicuous; you blend in with ordinary folk.
- ▶ **4-5 LOAD: NORMAL.** You look like you’re ready for trouble.
- ▶ **6-8 LOAD: HEAVY.** You’re slower. You look like a scoundrel on a mission and ready for trouble. Nobody will mistake you for anything other than what you are.

Your chosen **load** determines how many items you can carry. Items in *italics* count for zero load and can be taken freely with any loadout. Some larger items (like Heavy Blasters) require you to mark two boxes (2 load) in order to have them on hand. They’re marked on the sheets with multiple boxes with a connected line between them.

You don’t have to decide what items you’re taking on the job at the start of it. You’re playing smart capable scoundrels who think ahead, and bring the kinds of items they’ll need. During the operation, you can fill in any box on your items list to have that item available—up to the maximum load you have chosen.

Review your personal items and the standard item descriptions on page 66.

NAMES

Abra, Aria, Chendra, Cord, Del, Duncan, Ed, Entex, Espa, Faykan, Faye, Finn, Fox, Gaius, Garm, Garrus, Genera, Greeg, Gurney, Han, Hirak, Hondo, Ignor, Jaana, Jango, Jerrec, Jet, Jung, Kai, Kalo, Kahlee, Kasumi, Kirk, Kit, Lando, Leto, Liara, Lotus, Mevakor, Mill, Mino, Miranda, Mordin, Naimon, Needa, Oola, Orrin, Paul, Poe, Potak, Praxis, Quinton, Rey, Rocco, Saldeed, Samara, Saren, Seklor, Spike, Thane, Yast, Yola, Victor, Wyndam, Xavier, Zaeed, Zokar

FAMILY NAMES

Acon, Apple, Bartok, Black, Brell, Clovis, Crynyd, Curia, Doona, Drake, Dyson, Emari, Endua, Evazan, Farr, Feris, Gallia, Gree, Gyle, Hawking, Hex, Hill, Impera, Indigo, Intal, Ivanov, Jor, Jusik, Kasur, Kedra, Kor, Kranax, Kritus, Kromyl, Kymnal, Lana, Livia, Luo, Mahat, Marak, Natoth, Nagan, Neumann, Nur, Ortcutt, Pava, Pim, Quag, Ramus, Rudra, Ryle, Shrike, Sprek, Suzuka, Tann, Tarkin, Tel, Thorn, Tilad, Ulmak, Ursis, Valorum, Veers, Vosa, Wu, Wolffe, Wren, Yoneyama, Yueh, Yularen, Zan, Zer

ALIAS NAMES

Ace, Agony, Apex, Athena, Badger, Bingo, Black, Bolt, Brakes, Carrot, Cash, Cosmo, Dash, Devil, Dipper, Echo, Eight, Elbows, Falcon, Fireball, Flex, Game, Gargoyle, Gear, Gonzo, Guns, Hammer, Headhunter, Helo, Hex, Highball, Hyper, Intake, Iris, Iron, Juggler, Juice, Junior, Karma, Lasher, Legend, Link, Loco, Mooch, Nails, Nemesis, Nova, Owl, Phoenix, Quirk, Raider, Razor, Rash, Skulls, Snaps, Snitch, Stinger, Syndrome, Tank, Tax, Titan, Tread, Under, Vandal, Vapor, Wraith, X-Ray, Yellow, Zen, Zenith, Zipper

LOOKS

Man, Woman, Ambiguous, Xeno. Note that these looks are about presentation rather than a statement of identity.

Ornate Headdress

Long Coat

Hood and Veil

Short Cloak

Knit Cap

Fancy Makeup

Slim Jacket

Hooded Cloak

Work Boots

Mask and Robe

Suit and Vest

Collared Shirt

Suspenders

Intricate Rings

Skirt and Blouse

Wide Belt

Fitted Dress

Flight Suit

Heavy Cloak

Thick Duster

Loose Silks

Tight Pants

Bomber Jacket

Long Scarf

Leathers

Stillsuit

Hides and Furs

Worn Uniform

Space Suit

Glittering Jewelry

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

1 Choose a playbook. Your playbook represents your character's reputation in the crew, their starting and special abilities, and how they advance.

2 Choose a starting ability. All playbooks have a unique starting ability. You may choose instead to start with the Xeno ability.

3 Choose a special ability. If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

4 Choose a heritage. Detail your choice with a note about your family life. For example, Spacer: Ice miners, now mostly in Holt.

5 Choose a background. Detail your choice with your specific history. For example, Cult: Church of Stellar Flame initiate.

6 Assign four additional action ratings. No action may begin with a rating higher than 2 during character creation. (After creation, action ratings may advance up to 3.)

7 Choose a close friend and a rival. Mark one who is a close friend, ally, family member, or lover (the upward-pointing triangle). Mark one who is a rival, enemy, scorned lover, betrayed partner, etc. (the downward-pointing triangle).

8 Choose your vice. Pick your preferred vice or two and detail it with a short description.

9 Record your name, alias, and look. Choose a name, an alias (if you have one), and write a bit about your look. Examples are provided on the preceding page.

ACTIONS

When you **ATTUNE** to the Way, you open your mind to the galactic energies underlying all of existence.

*You might communicate with a non-sentient species or robot. You could safely handle Precursor artifacts or remnants that tap directly into the Way. You might sense unseen danger, or killing intent (though **STUDY** might be better).*

When you **COMMAND**, you compel obedience with your force of personality.

*You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might lead an action with NPCs. You might order people to do what you want (though **SWAY** might be better).*

When you **CONSORT**, you socialize with friends and contacts.

*You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage or background. You could try to direct your friends with social pressure (but **COMMAND** might be better).*

When you **DOCTOR**, you attend to the needs of another by lending aid and comfort, or you look scientifically at the world.

*You might treat someone's injuries. You might analyze a substance's composition to learn how it functions. You might comfort someone in distress (but **CONSORT** might be better).*

When you **HACK**, you breach the security systems of computers or override their controls.

*You might access a data console to find a captive being held somewhere on the station. You might scramble a drone's control systems to keep it from firing on you. You might override a door's controls to get it to open (though **RIG** might be better).*

When you **HELM**, you pilot a vehicle or use vehicle weapons.

*You might plot a jump through a dark hyperspace lane. You might dive through a canyon to escape a chasing ship. You might fire quad-lasers at hostile pirates. You might reroute power on the ship to weather fire (though **RIG** may be better).*

When you **RIG** mechanisms, you alter how an existing mechanism works or create a new one.

*You might disable a trap. You might repair a damaged ship system. You might crack a safe. You might overdrive an engine. You might program a bomb to detonate later. You might force a door open (though **HACK** might be better).*

When you **SCRAMBLE**, you lift, climb, jump, run, or swim, usually either away from or into danger.

*You might vault over a turnstile while escaping authorities. You might climb up the side of a cliff to approach a secret base. You might dodge blaster fire as you cross the hanger to get to your ship. You might chase after a mark you're following (though **SKULK** might be better).*

When you **SCRAP**, you engage in pitched combat with the intent to harm or neutralize your opposition.

*You might brawl or wrestle with your foe. You might use a melee weapon. You might storm a barricade or hold a position in battle. You might lay down blaster fire. If you're using a vehicle or ship weapon, you should use **HELM** instead.*

When you **SKULK**, you move stealthily or without being noticed.

*You might sneak past security or hide in the shadows. You might lift a cred-stick off a mark. You might sneak up behind someone to attack them by surprise (but **SCRAP** might be better). You could try to climb up the side of a building (but **SCRAMBLE** might be better).*

When you **STUDY**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence.

*You might gather information from documents, newspapers, and books. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings. You could deduce a person's intention to kill you (but **ATTUNE** might be better).*

When you **SWAY**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or logic.

*You might outright lie to someone's face. You might persuade a sucker to believe you. You might argue the facts with an officer. You could try to trick people into affection or obedience (but **CONSORT** or **COMMAND** might be better).*

Many actions overlap with others, which is by design. As a player, you get to choose which action you roll by saying what your character does. Can you try to **SKULK** behind someone during a fight? Sure! The GM tells you the position and effect level of your action in this circumstance. As it says, **SCRAP** might be better (less risky or more effective), depending on the situation at hand. (Sometimes it might be the other way around.)

For a complete description of each action, with examples, see pages 208-231.

STANDARD ITEMS

This is common gear that anyone aboard a ship could have access to. For example, though any character may have a blaster of their own they prefer, there are places to grab spare armaments whenever you're on board. If you're on your ship for any length of time, you can replace any standard items that broke or malfunctioned during a mission, and reset your load and equipment.

Armor: Really unsubtle, full body stuff. Stops a few bolts. Will shrug off a knife without noticing. Powered. Assists in movement.

Blaster Pistol: Shoots bolts of hot plasma. Accurate only at close range. Makes "pew pew" noises (mandatory). Comes in a variety of shapes. *How do you customize yours?*

Communicator: Has a few bands, likely even a few encrypted. Works only when within orbit.

Detonator: Extremely deadly explosive weapon. Fits in the palm of your hand and can be thrown. Takes care of those shielded doors that heavy blasters can't handle. Illegal. You shouldn't have this. No, really.

Hacking Tools: Deck, splicing pliers, plugs and ports, keypad crackers, specialized software, custom-modified chips, rainbow dictionaries, automated exploits. What every growing hacker needs.

Heavy Blaster: Can do some considerable damage to vehicles and things like unshielded doors. Has about a dozen shots. Will do serious and messy harm to people. Illegal.

Illicit Drugs: What's your poison, space cowboy? For personal use, catching a dangerous bounty, or entertainment while traveling between planets.

Medkit: Blood for a few common races, gauze, anti-radiation injector, laser scalpel, antiseptics, thread, painkillers.

Melee Weapon: Sharp. Blunt. Pointy. Stabby. Slicy. All different sizes. Some come with laser edges. Some vibrate...ooh. Batteries included.

Repair Tools: Things you need to fix ship engines, speeders, hovercars, and the like. Tools to hot-splice consoles and tweak machinery. Hammers, a welder, screwdrivers, wrenches, battery chargers, spray-painters.

Spacesuit: Some radiation protection, survival in toxic atmospheres, EVA. Half a day of oxygen (or other gas, liquid, or substance you breathe).

Spy Gear: Disguises, voice modulators, mini-cameras, thermal scanners, false thumbprints, and audio filters.

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

If you want to include advantages from specific details of your items—reach, speed, adaptability, etc.—consider a **Devil's Bargain** that relates to a detail. Usually these bargains are suggested by the GM, but any player can suggest them! If both you and the GM agree, then you can take the extra die.

*"Can I take +1d here to **COMMAND** by flashing my detonator? People will see it and go streaming out into the streets in a panic."*

"I'll empty both clips if it'll get me +1d, but then I'll be out of ammo. Hopefully there won't be anyone left standing!"

Also, consider how this item affects your position and/or effect. If you're unarmed and you wrestle a Syndicate thug who's wielding a blaster, your position is probably **desperate**. If that thug tries to rush you when you have your blaster out, your position is probably **controlled**.

Assess the details that you're interested in when considering position and effect.





MECHANIC

A gearhead and hacker

Whether it's fixing up the ship's engines or constructing a specialized safecracker to break into a Hegemonic vault, a mechanic is an invaluable asset on most jobs. You might be the mousy one who has all the fancy toys, or more hands-on, lugging your gear to the job. Or you might prefer to literally make friends and specialize in Urbotic creation. When something breaks, you're the one to call.

When you play a Mechanic, you earn xp when you address challenges with technical skill or ingenuity. Always look at the devices around you and be prepared to make them do what you want them to.

Did you make your own drone? How'd you learn your technical skills? Where'd you find your pet and what is it? Are you unassuming, fading into a crowd, or hard to miss, covered in tattoos?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **RIG**

► ► ► **STUDY**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

SHIP MECHANIC. Hack +2, Scramble +1, Sway +1. **Fixed.**

COMPUTER WHIZ. Hack +2, Skulk +1, Sway +1. **Hacker.**

BOT BUILDER. Hack +1, Scramble +1, Attune +2. **Construct Whisperer.**

SHIP OWNER. Helm +2, Scrap +1, Command +1. **Junkyard Hunter.**

COLORFUL FRIENDS

Slice, a junkyard owner. *What parts do they save for you? Or did you boost something of theirs?*

Nisa, a previous employer. *A captain or a business owner? Did it end well?*

Stev, a gambler of ill repute. *Are you long-standing friends? Did you cheat at their table?*

Len, a black market dealer. *Do they get you the parts no one else can? Did you fail to deliver something you promised?*

Kenn, a family member. *Are they also a mechanic? Were you both vying for a parent's attentions?*

STARTING ABILITY

TINKER

When you work on a clock with **RIG** or **HACK**, or when you **STUDY** a schematic, fill **+1 segment**.

You get this bonus segment regardless of whether this is a downtime action or not. This means that bypassing security on a job or doing an emergency patch while escaping a chasing ship is easier for you than others.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

BAILING WIRE AND MECH-TAPE

You get an extra **downtime activity** to **repair**, and the **repair** activity costs you 0 **CRED**.

The repair downtime activity usually takes 1 CRED to perform. With this ability, you can take the activity at no CRED cost. The free repairs can't be "saved up." You get one per downtime.

CONSTRUCT WHISPERER

Machines speak to you when you **STUDY** them. The first time you roll a **critical** while fixing or building a particular machine, you may add a simple modification to it (see **Crafting**, page 282).

How do machines whisper their secrets to you? Is it intuitive? Do you feel what they feel? You do not gain the modification if you improve the result with CRED.

JUNKYARD HUNTER

When you **acquire** parts or equipment during **downtime**, you may either gain **two assets** or one asset at **+1 quality**.

Your junkyard contacts can get what you need refurbished or on special offer. If you gain two assets, they both have the same quality as your roll.

HACKER

You may expend your special armor to resist the consequences of **HACKING**, or to **push yourself** when **HACKING** or **gathering info** electronically.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

FIXED

You may expend your **special armor** to resist a consequence from machines breaking or being damaged, or to **push yourself** when repairing or building a machine.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. Machines can include your ship, so you can use this as special armor for your ship if you are onboard dealing with the damage. If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

MECHANIC'S HEART

When you speak from your heart, your words can reach even the most hardened criminal, and you gain **potency**.

This ability works in all situations without restriction. As long as you speak genuinely and sincerely, your words will be heard.

OVERCLOCK

When you spend a **gambit** on a **RIG** roll to repair or upgrade, treat the system you worked on as **1 quality** higher for the remainder of the job.

*You may make a **RIG** roll during a job to simply to get more out of a system, but such temporary boosts are only situational and need to be backed out the next time you hit drydock. You can overclock systems that aren't ships, enhancing the system's quality.*

ANALYST

When you **HACK** a system, you may also ask a question about the owner or location of the system as though you had rolled a **6** on gather info. When you resist the consequences of **HACKING**, roll **+1d**.

*Regardless of the purpose for which you are **HACKING**, you learn something about the systems you're manipulating. If you were gathering information, you may roll to learn a second thing, or you can simply accept the **6** for what you wanted to know.*

MECHANIC ITEMS

Mechanics have tools, ship parts, and their latest inventions around or on them. Although they can dress like anyone else, many mechanics prefer looks that are tough to tear, have plenty of places to stash a tool or two, and are easy to crawl through a ship duct in.

- ▶ **Fine hacking rig.** Visualization goggles, unpublished exploits, overclocked non-market chips, optical vampire taps. Hacking is as much about hardware as it is about software. *Who maintains your gear? Do you write your own programs or does someone hook you up with the latest? Any decorations on your kit?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine ship repair tools.** Power-assisted wrenches, a sonic drill, testing probes, power calibrators, a rivet gun. *Is this a set of items, or did you pick them up piecemeal?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Small drone.** Small, remote-controlled drone with cameras. May be able to carry something light. *Did you make this or buy it? Does it fly, slither, or crawl? What nickname did you give it? Do you have several drones on the ship, or just a bunch of chassis and repair bits you use to repair one drone?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Vision-enhancing goggles.** Eyewear with settings for thermal and ultraviolet, and magnification levels in the thousands. Even tints when required. *What do they look like?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Spare parts.** Usually for ship repairs and electronics. Often forgotten in a pocket or tool belt. Although it's usually nothing overly expensive, you end up carrying parts you're working on and pieces for fixing ships. If you ever need a wire, solder, or a piece of tape, you have it on hand. Anything rare or more complex might take a lifestyle roll (see page 49) to have on you. [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Genius pet.** Incapable of speaking, but can understand language and assist with basic tasks. Likes you. Really cute. Anticipates your actions. *Is it something familiar (like a dog or a cat) or a small alien creature? What is its name? Who did you get it from (legally or illegally)?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A MECHANIC

Playing a Mechanic is foremost about your relationship with the ship. No one else will have the same ability to keep it flying, and when something breaks, all eyes will be on you. Look for opportunities to bring up what you've personally modified on the ship. Where do you get parts when the ship needs something repaired?

How did you become a mechanic? Were you mentored by one of your friends? Were you once a Guild trainee? Why did you leave and join the crew? Do you approach fixing the ship as a stop-gap solution, where you're simply trying to find a patch until the next thing breaks, or is it a matter of pride that something never fails twice?

Familiarize yourself with the crafting system. The ability for you to make new devices is very powerful, and the starting Tinker ability gives you an advantage that no one else will be able to match. Ask the rest of the crew what devices you might be able to create and get them to chip in for their development, either in extra downtimes to speed up design or with extra **CRED** to pay for assembly.

Action-wise, you may want to pick up **SKULK** if you tend to lurk in the background, or **ATTUNE** if you expect to be working on Ur machines or Urbots. If you also serve as the crew's foremost computer and system expert, you'll want to stack some **HACK**.

Veteran ability-wise, the Speaker's Old Friends ability can play up your connections among crafters and hackers. If you want to go full mad scientist, look at the Stitch's Dr. Strange ability.

XENO MECHANICS

Every species has Mechanics, so when playing a xeno, consider how that xenotype relates to machines. Some xenos have an unusual relationship with technology (particularly Ur-based technology), such as the Sah'iir, while others use unusual materials, like the Mem.

Does your species have an unusual adaptation for working on machines? Are they small and fit into ventilation ducts easily? Also consider how your xeno adaptations might reflect sides of you that aren't directly relating to machines.

How does your xeno heritage fit into the story? Have the Guilds excluded your character from certain opportunities because you aren't human? Or have your people been embraced, perhaps because of an adaptation that the Hegemony could utilize?



MUSCLE

A dangerous and intimidating fighter

Most crews have one. The Procyon sector isn't a safe place, and when negotiations and slick words fail, it's time for blasters, ship cannons, and close, swift violence. You are the crew's ability to apply force. Your presence dissuades drawn weapons and your strength ends violent conversations. You can be a protector, enforcer, boarder, or quiet threat on the back burner. But you cannot be ignored.

When you play a Muscle, you earn xp when you address challenges with force or threats. Make sure everyone knows that violence and intimidation are always options, and you stand ready to deliver. When things fall apart, show them how it's done.

Do you have a personal code that you follow? Times you won't apply violence no matter the cost? What caused you to throw your lot in with the crew and not seek employment as a soldier?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **SCRAP**

► ► ► **COMMAND**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

GLADIATOR. Scramble +1, Skulk +1, Command +1. **Wrecking Crew.**

PROTECTOR. Doctor +1, Study +2, Scramble +1. **Bodyguard.**

MYSTIC HUNTER. Attune +2, Helm +1, Scramble +1. **Battleborn.**

ACTION HERO. Rig +1, Helm +1, Scramble +2. **Flesh Wound.**

DEADLY FRIENDS

Krieger, a blaster pistol. *Is this your favorite sidearm? Or is a rival carrying it to use on you?*

Shod, a weapons dealer. *A mentor or former partner who cashed out? Someone you owe?*

Chon-zek, a bounty hunter. *Former partner? Or a competitor from the same background?*

Yazu, a crooked cop. *Family to cover up your tracks, or someone who still hunts you for getting them in trouble?*

Aya, an assassin. *An old lover still fond of you? A heart spurned? Or are you the target that got away?*

STARTING ABILITY

UNSTOPPABLE

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: *perform a feat of physical force that verges on the superhuman—engage a small gang on equal footing in close combat.*

*When you **push yourself** to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability.*

A superhuman feat is one a regular person could not do unassisted, such as tearing apart metal handcuffs. If you engage a small gang on equal footing, you have equal scale.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

WRECKING CREW

Your strength and ferocity are infamous. When striking in melee, you gain **+1d**. Whenever you spend a **gambit** in combat, you also gain **+1 effect** on that action.

Whether you are a master of a martial arts, or raised by mystics to fight with antique weapons, your martial prowess in close combat is legendary (and may attract those that wish to learn from or challenge you).

If you spend a gambit in combat, take +1 effect on that action. This can hit a single opponent harder or offset penalties from scale or quality. This also stacks with the +1d from the gambit and the +1d from the core Wrecking Crew ability.

BACKUP

An ally's **push** costs **1 stress** (not 2) on any action you **set up** or **assist**.

*The **set up** and **assist** actions (see page 158) still grant their bonus dice or effect as usual.*

BATTLEBORN

You may expend your **special armor** to reduce **harm** from an attack in combat, or to **push yourself** during a fight.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your sheet. "Reducing harm" means reducing the harm one level. If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

BODYGUARD

When you **protect** a crewmate, **resist** with **+1d**. When you take **harm**, clear **1 stress**.

*The **protect** teamwork maneuver (see page 158) lets you face a consequence for a teammate.*

FLESH WOUND

If you're wounded at the beginning of downtime, mark **+3 segments** on your healing clock. When you **push yourself** to ignore wound penalties, it takes only **1 stress** (not 2).

*Whether naturally tough or augmented in some way, wounds don't keep you down. See **Recover** on page 187 for more information.*

PREDATOR

Take **+1d** to rolls against weakened or vulnerable targets. Whenever you **gather information** on a weakness or vulnerability, the worst you can get is a **4/5** result.

You know how to leverage fear, pain, and vulnerability to get your way. When trying to suss out such things in a person, you usually come up with something, even if the information isn't immediately useful or is incomplete. Someone in a vulnerable state might be drugged, trusting, badly wounded, or frightened.

READY FOR ANYTHING

When being ambushed, you gain **potency** to all actions during a flashback, and your first flashback costs **0 stress**.

*You always expect ambushes and prepare for them. Flash back to such preparation when an ambush happens. If your preparation requires **action rolls**, you gain **potency** on them.*

SCARY

You have an air of menace and danger obvious to even the most unobservant. You gain **potency** when trying to intimidate someone. If done immediately after a show of force, also take **+1d**.

You instill fear in those around you, particularly when you get violent. How they react depends on them. Some will flee from you, some will be impressed, some will get violent in return. The GM judges the response of a given NPC.

*Intimidation is usually handled with a **COMMAND** roll, and your efforts to do so are more successful if you show you mean business.*

MUSCLE ITEMS

Muscles are particular about their weapons. If you have more than one Muscle in the crew, feel free to fill in your own weapon names. Here are a few suggestions:

Blink, Checkmate, Echo, Ender, Equalizer, Ghost, Itchy, Malice, Mercy, Pride, Thorn, Thunder, Tickle, Twitch, Whisper, Wynona.

- ▶ **Krieger, a fine blaster pistol.** As a friend or ally, this signature pistol can be used during downtime to threaten or intimidate. As an enemy, someone else owns it and it's carrying a bullet for you. *You know this gun intimately—from where or why?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Vera, a fine sniper rifle.** A full-bore auto-lock with customized trigger, double cartridge, thorough gauge. It can fire mystic ammunition. *Did you customize this yourself, special order it, take it off a body, or is it a gift from someone?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Zmei, a fine flamethrower.** For those times when you really need to heat things up. Settings for regular and extra crispy. Not easy to hide. Attacks cover the area of a small room (and leave distinct scorch marks that may result in additional **HEAT**). Complications when getting shot may include the fuel tanks rupturing. *What sweet decals or marks does it have?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Sunder, a fine vibro-blade.** Cuts through almost any material. Decorated. Knife or dueling blade. *What design is etched on the blade? Did you claim it, or rightfully earn it?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Zarathustra, a detonator launcher.** Fires detonators at high velocity. Detonators are illegal, so this generates **HEAT** when fired. Can be used to target/damage vehicles and structures. Not subtle. Batteries included, but detonators marked separately. [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine martial arts style.** Your own custom blend of combat techniques, unique as a fingerprint. *Where and with whom did you first train? What is your style called? Have you had any pupils?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Mystic ammunition.** A large-caliber shell, designed to be fired from a specialized gun that releases mystic energies when it hits. Grants **potency** against mystic targets. *Who makes your mystic bullets? Why are they potent against Way energies?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A MUSCLE

Your command of violence is both a blessing and a curse. Your relationship with conflict puts you in harm's way more often than your crewmates; it's not uncommon for a Muscle to be nursing an injury even at the start of a job. This is, of course, offset by your general physical dominance.

Think about your style of fighting. Are you a brute with rippling muscles and a fearsome reputation? Or perhaps part of a monastic order that trains with the Way? Do you train for zero-G combat? Are you just an unyielding wall, protecting your crew from all comers? These tell a story about who you are and how you came to be known for your ability to fight, and can be reflected in Muscle ability choices.

Whatever the reason, you're part of the crew, there's no doubt that you're going to be their go-to for when a fight breaks out. Play that up. Consider if you're also the person training the crew for the day when you might not be there to bail them out. Equally important is how you feel about the violence you wreak. You might be excited for each opportunity to cut loose or you might dread each fight for what you might have to do.

For actions, you may want to pick up **HELM**, if you want to shoot ship weapons, or **STUDY**, if you're looking to read your opponents before engaging. You can sense killing intent with **ATTUNE**, or deal with Precursor or Way elements threatening your crew.

For Veteran abilities, take the Mystic's Psy-Blade or Kinetics if you're looking to be a mystical fighter. For a leadership role, look at the Pilot's Commander. And if you are looking to stand strong against all threats, keep an eye on the Scoundrel's Tenacious ability.

XENO MUSCLES

From Worf to D'Argo to Chewbacca, aliens mighty in a fight have been a staple of the space opera genre. The Muscle's starting ability is significant, but many xenos have strength far beyond that of a normal human. Some may have more limbs, or adaptations for harsh environments. Consider how your xeno heritage might make you a more useful Muscle, and talk with your table about how you want to use your Xeno ability.

Equally interesting are the limitations that your xeno lineage has. These limitations can be ways for you to help your crew generate gambits, or even just add flavor to the story. Does your species hate hot environments, including the forest world of Aketi? What does the Hegemony think of your people?



MYSTIC

A galactic wanderer in touch with the Way

While your powers make you a force to be reckoned with in Procyon, far more important is your ability to understand and deal with the Way and all things tied to it. From handling Ur artifacts to calming strange creatures in the dead of space, a Mystic makes life on the rim substantially safer.

When you play a Mystic, you earn xp when you address challenges with wisdom or the Way. This will naturally push you towards the unknown and inexplicable. When things get weird, that's your moment to find answers.

How did you come by your understanding of the Way? Does your path have any special creed or curious practices? How long have you been traveling?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **ATTUNE**

► ► ► **SCRAMBLE**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

WANDERING WARRIOR. Study +1, Scrap +2, Command +1. **Psy-Blade.**

MYSTIC HEALER. Doctor +2, Study +1, Consort +1. **Visions.**

WAY GHOST. Scramble +1, Skulk +2, Sway +1. **Kinetics.**

MENTALIST. Skulk +1, Consort +1, Sway +2. **Psy-Dancing.**

WEIRD FRIENDS

Horux, a former teacher. *Do you go to them for advice even now? Or do they feel you've misused their teachings?*

Hicks, a mystic goods supplier. *A reliable supplier of Vosian crystals, or a callous opportunist preying on your faith?*

Laxx, a xeno. *Unusual friend or a dangerous foe? Way sensitive, or your "normal" friend?*

Rye, an unrequited love. *Was it your training and customs that got between you?*

Blish, a fellow mystic. *Walking the same path or with wildly different beliefs about the Way?*

STARTING ABILITY

THE WAY

You can spend a **gambit** instead of paying any **stress** cost.

Any time you need to spend stress, you may spend a gambit instead. This includes resistances and push costs. For abilities that have a variable cost, such as Sundering, those additional costs are all part of the same activation, so the push and all additional features together only costs one gambit.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

KINETICS

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: use the Way to throw a table-sized object with dangerous force—propel yourself briefly with superhuman speed.

Dangerous force means fast enough to severely injure a normal person. Superhuman speed means fast enough that you're barely more than a blur. Your reach is about the size of a large room. Yes, people can count as objects.

PSY-BLADE

You can focus Way energy into your melee weapon. While charged, the weapon can cut through non-shielded materials with ease, and you gain **potency** on your melee attacks.

Heavy metal plates are non-shielded, so you can cut through most doors without trouble. Shielded constructs are rare, but they offer enough protection that this attack would lose its potency. You cannot infuse your fists with Way energy (or gloves, brass knuckles, etc.).

CENTER

You gain Meditation as a **vice**. When you indulge this vice, clear **+1 stress** and add Dark Visions as a possible **overindulgence**.

Contemplation of the universe is not without its perils. When you choose Dark Visions as an overindulgence, the Way shows you a loved one, contact, or friend in great danger.

WAY SHIELD

You can block blaster bolts with the Way (resist with **RESOLVE**). If you resist a blaster attack, you may spend **1 stress** to redirect fire and make an attack of your own with it.

Resisting blasters in this way usually reduces the harm to zero.

WARDED

You may expend your **special armor** to resist the consequences of a Way attack or artifact use, or **push yourself** when using mystic powers.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

PSY-DANCING

You may **push yourself** to cloud a target's mind and **SWAY** them in the face of contradictory evidence. "You must do as I say. I am the ambassador." Spend **1 stress** for each additional feature: they have only vague memories of the event—it works on a small group.

Such confusions do not persist indefinitely, though those with vague memories will often fill in the missing details with assumptions. "I must've checked her badge. I always do."

VISIONS

Spend **1 stress** to remotely view a distant place or person tied to you in some intimate way. Spend **1 stress** for each extra feature: it lasts for a minute rather than a moment—your target can also see and hear you—you may see something only familiar to you, not intimate.

*Spending a gambit with your **starting ability** ("the Way") covers all costs. When your target can also see and hear you, you are both within the same "area," for the purposes of other abilities.*

SUNDERING

You may **push yourself** to **ATTUNE** to the Way and twist it, causing psychic harm to anyone in the area vulnerable to your assault. You may spend **1 stress** for each additional feature: it damages instead of stuns—you and anyone you choose get +2d to resist the effects.

You warp the Way within you, and by extension warp the Way in others—a risky proposition at best. Sundering cannot harm inanimate objects. When causing harm, the symptoms can include short-term seizures and ruptured blood vessels. Those specially trained to resist psychic attacks or are somehow shielded may reduce your effect.

MYSTIC ITEMS

Mystics often have complex rituals and customs concerning the Way, and hence tend to carry more gear tied more to their practices. Many of their belongings are tied to their training or the price they pay for their dedication to it.

- ▶ **Fine melee weapon.** Antiquated weapon that acts as an extension of your body. In the age of blasters, swords and polearms are quaint remnants of culture and custom for the most part. But Way powers seem to interact stubbornly with advanced technology. Each mystic order keeps anachronistic items, and uses them in different ways. *Do you have such a weapon? If so, what training have you had with it, and how do you use it?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Offerings.** A candle, oil lamp, flowers, food, water, incense, pebbles from your journey. *Were they gifts, left at a shrine for any mystic to take as they wander, or given in return for a job?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Trappings of religion.** Scrolls, texts, icons, cups and bowls, bells. *What sacred objects does your particular order of mystics bear? How easily recognizable would this be?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Outdated religious outfit.** Robes, worn cloaks, sandals, etc. Participants and practitioners of popular and sanctioned Hegemonic Cults often bear well-known insignia of modern manufacture. *Was yours passed down? Never replaced? Hand crafted?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Memento of your travels.** A small statue, outdated currency, a lock of hair, a picture. *Who gave this to you, and why do you cherish it? Is it a reminder of a good or bad memory?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Precursor artifact.** A small object made of ancient materials. Precursor tech. *Was this given to you by the mystics that trained you, found as a child, or something you've picked up on your travels? What does it do? Discuss its powers, costs, and side effects with your table (for more on Precursor artifacts, see page 268).* [1 LOAD]

PLAYING A MYSTIC

Many kinds of Mystics wander the sector. Since there are numerous conflicting theories about the Way, mystic orders spring up around strong opinions about how the universe works. Think about how you access and perceive the Way and the forces you control. Do you connect to Way lines that crisscross the galaxy? Or use a focus of ancient symbols and embedded Ur artifacts?

How did you learn the techniques and secrets that have unlocked your access to the Way? Some Mystics are changed by exposure to Ur artifacts or Way creatures. Others train for years in secluded monasteries, or in Hegemony-sponsored Cults.

Your crew will rely on you to be their interpreter of the Way. When your crew comes across strange disturbances, filter your explanations through your theories about the Way. Look for experiences that challenge your beliefs of how the Way acts, and grapple with your new understandings. These obstacles bring life to the unusual. Remember that while there might be wild and fantastical things in Precursor ruins, the Hegemony also uses Ur artifacts in some everyday things (like Urbots and jump drives).

For actions, if you intend to be a Mystic fighter, you'll want to pick up **SCRAP**, or **SWAY** and **CONSORT** for those looking to go the more mental route.

Good Veteran abilities to consider might be The Pilot's Traveler ability for wandering Mystics, or Muscle abilities for Psy-Blade-wielding Mystic warriors.

XENO MYSTICS

The sector is rife with species that are uniquely attuned to the Way. Some claim ancestry to the Ur, while others claim evolution on a Way-ridden planet. Regardless, as a xeno Mystic, you're giving up a key starting ability, and should consider how it influences your development as a Mystic. Work with your GM and table to define special abilities and permissions for the specific mystic tradition of your people. For example, look at the Memish mystical abilities on page 350.

Because the Way is carefully controlled, the Hegemony is leery of species with a greater than normal command of the Way. Entire xeno populations have been eradicated for Way manipulation the Cults deemed heretical. Are you a last remnant of one of these species? Is your very existence a crime?



PILOT

A ship-handling wizard and danger addict

You are the crew's speed demon and "get out of trouble" card. When the chips are down and the Legion is on your tail, there's nobody else they'd rather turn to. There's no vehicle you can't overdrive, no canyon on an alien planet you can't navigate through. You might be a hot-rodding show-off or calm and cool behind the helm. You might take desperate risks or thrive when the chips are down. But you're always ahead of the pack.

When you play a Pilot, you earn xp when you address challenges with speed or flair. If it drives, punch the gas. If it flies, see if you can do a barrel roll. It's your show.

How'd you get so good with ships? What's the most risky stunt you've pulled off—and who knows about it? How did you get an Urbot? Are you fearless, or just very, very good?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **HELM**

► ► ► **RIG**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

GLORY HOUND. Scramble +2, Scrap +1, Sway +1. **Exceed Specs.**

THRILLSEEKER. Scramble +2, Command +1, Sway +1. **Punch it!**

CAPTAIN. Scrap +1, Command +2, Consort +1. **Commander.**

GUNSLINGER. Study +1, Scrap +2, Command +1. **Keen Eye.**

FAST FRIENDS

Yattu, a gang boss. *Did you use to fly for them? Did you leave them in the lurch on a job?*

Triv, a ship mechanic. *Have they always helped you with your ship? Did you "forget" to pay them for a big upgrade?*

Choss, a professional racer. *Do you have hot tips for each other? Or are you always striving to outdo each other?*

Meris, a scoundrel. *Have you been on jobs together? Have they double-crossed you before?*

Mav, a former mentor. *What tricks did they teach you? Are they now jealous of your skill?*

STARTING ABILITY

ACE PILOT

You have **potency** on all speed-related rolls. When you roll to **resist** the consequences of piloting, gain **+1d**.

Your potency might be balanced out by their better quality (if their ship engines are better than yours, for instance). Remember that the consequences of piloting are not always ship damage but can often be resisted just the same.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

KEEN EYE

You have sharp eyes and notice small details many might overlook. Gain **+1d** when firing ship guns or making trick shots.

*This can be used as a basis for **resistance rolls** to act first. "No, I want to act before him—I would've seen him reaching for the gun." Also, trick shots can be performed with almost any kind of ranged weapon, not just ship weapons.*

SIDE JOB

You may spend a downtime activity in port doing odd jobs. Gain **1 CRED**. If there are rumors floating about, the GM will tell you of them.

*There may not be any rumors floating about, but the GM should treat this as a gather information roll, where you roll a **6** to learn about whatever is in the news and gossip at that port.*

EXCEED SPECS

While onboard a ship, you may damage a ship system you have access to in order to gain **+1d** or **+1 effect** to a roll.

Overload a system for a short-term boost. The system's quality is still the same for the one roll you're boosting. After the roll, the system fries out and the quality is reduced.

LEAF ON THE WIND

When you **push yourself**, you may spend **+1 stress** (3 stress total) to gain both **+1 effect** and **+1d** instead of one or the other.

Normally it takes two separate pushes (4 stress total) to achieve the same effect. This can be used on any roll.

HEDONIST

When you indulge your **vice**, you may adjust the dice outcome by +/-2. An ally who joins you may do the same.

Any ally must join you in whatever vice you're indulging (or you can indulge via a crew ability, such as the Stardancer's Home Cooking). You can adjust the outcome by less than 2, or not adjust it at all. You can also recover more than 6 stress on a vice roll this way.

COMMANDER

Whenever you lead a group action, gain **+1 scale** (for example, a small group counts as a medium group). If you **lead a group** action in combat, you may count multiple **6s** from different rolls as a **critical**.

*A group action is one where multiple PCs perform the same action and roll their respective pools for those actions (see **Lead a Group Action**, page 158). If you already have scale on your opponent, you gain an additional scale (and therefore level of effect). If two or more players roll a **6**, then the result of the roll for everyone is a **crit**. You must still suffer stress costs from any participant whose result is a **1-3**.*

TRAVELER

You're comfortable around unusual cultures and xenos. You gain **potency** when attempting to **CONSORT** with or **SWAY** them.

While any character can have had some experience with specific xeno cultures, this ability represents a wide swath of experience and understanding. Whether you come across as deeply respectful or you just know what buttons to push, you are more effective than would be expected.

PUNCH IT!

When you spend a **gambit** on a **desperate** roll, it counts as **risky** instead.

Because you spent a gambit on the roll, even though it counts as risky, the roll may not itself generate a gambit (unless you have another ability that says it can). You still gain the +1d to the roll for the gambit, but the position of the roll should be adjusted, as should the consequences. Bear in mind that this can be used on any roll (not just piloting ones).

PILOT ITEMS

Things every pilot needs when flying, having adventures when not flying, and when celebrating success for all of the above.

- ▶ **Fine customized spacesuit.** Sweet decals, emergency beacon, some thrust. Will keep you alive in space or when your cockpit gets shot. Lets you move about a bit and maybe even extends jumps in atmosphere. *What patches or custom artwork do you have on yours, and what does it mean?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine small Urbot.** A small Urbot that supports piloting and can carry a few items. Seems eerily sentient. *Urbots are supposed to be wiped about once a year. How long has it been since you've taken yours in to the Guild of Engineers for such a procedure? What is its designation and what personality quirks does it have? What does its chassis look like, and how does it help you pilot?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine mechanics kit.** Hand-held scanners, hull patch kit, assortment of hand tools. Everything you need to patch a vehicle and get it flying again. *What tool did you just pick up? Which one did you customize?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Grappling hook.** Small, but mechanized. Can pull you up. Fits in your belt. Makes you look dashing when you swing to the rescue. *When did it last break?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Guild license.** Legit pilot certification (though it may not be yours). Will allow you passage through a jumpgate. *How did you get yours?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Victory cigars.** Enough to share with a few choice people. What's the point of pulling off amazing stunts if you can't celebrate? No guarantee the rest of your crew will appreciate the smell, or won't turn up the air filters. *Where do you get these, and how many do you have left? How rare are they?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A PILOT

Those who spend their lives driving ships across the vast expanses of space, running from pirates and Hegemony forces alike, have a need for speed. You have a unique ability to push into and past danger, relying on your skill and your ship to come through in the end. Whereas the Mechanic may be what keeps the ship in shape, you're what gives the ship purpose. More than a few Hegemony holo-vids have been about a hotshot pilot and their ship.

As the Pilot, you'll be of central focus when the ship needs to be maneuvered on the job. But **HELM** is not confined to ships alone. A dirt bike, hovercar, even an alien beast being ridden can be **HELMED** just as well. Whatever your getaway vehicle, **HELM** has you covered.

Where did you pick up your piloting skills? Did you fight for the Legion but ran into trouble with the law? Have you grown up amongst racers and always loved the spotlight? Perhaps you quit a respectable job hauling ice for a bit more excitement. Remember to bring those influences into your descriptions of piloting. Talk about the crisp military maneuvers you use to shake a pirate or the way you vent storage in order to correct a hard burn.

While **HELM** handles most piloting actions, consider how you might move fast in other ways. Perhaps **SCRAMBLE** when you're on foot, and **SWAY** for fast-talking.

For Veteran abilities, consider picking up the Mechanic's Fixed ability to keep your ship safe in fights. For total speed-demons, look at the Scoundrel's Daredevil ability.

XENO PILOTS

Xeno Pilots are usually associated with xeno ships. If you pursue the option, ask your GM about modifications that you might be able to make to your ship, or unusual upgrades your people might have access to. When developing your people, think of ways their piloting might be affected by having uncommon senses (perhaps they can see gravity or other spectrums), or unique ways of interfacing (such as direct neural connections).

Also think about how those adaptations may make it difficult for you in other contexts. If you have electrical impulses that manifest when you manipulate a device, perhaps you're not one to have around sensitive computer arrays. At the GM's discretion, such limitations may grant you the gambits you'll need for your inevitable daring escapes (see **Xenos in Play**, page 296).



SCOUNDREL

A scrappy and lucky survivor

Neither the most reputable nor the one to choose the safe route, you're a smooth-talking criminal and luck is just one of your many skills. You might be a charming rogue out for themselves. You might be the convict on the run who always has a trick up their sleeve. But while it's true that anyone in Procyon can get into trouble, you always get into the very best kind.

When you play a Scoundrel, you earn xp when you address challenges with charm or audacity. Ramp up the daring and be quick on the draw with a catchy one-liner. You shine brightest when the situation is just about to get ugly.

Who was the last person you cheated out of their due? Are you loyal to this crew, or are they just a means to an end? How many times have you been left for dead?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **SWAY**

► ► ► **SKULK**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

CAPTAIN. Helm +2, Scramble +2.
Never Tell Me the Odds.

RELIC HUNTER. Doctor +1, Study +1,
Attune +2. **Daredevil.**

EX-DETECTIVE. Doctor +1, Study +1,
Consort +2. **Ask Questions Later.**

VETERAN OF CORE WARS. Helm +1,
Scramble +1 Scrap +2. **Tenacious.**

"FRIENDS"

Nyx, a moneylender. *Are you a favorite client? Or a deadbeat with a debt?*

Ora, an info broker. *Always coming to you with juicy tip?*

Jal, a ship mechanic. *Have they always helped you with your ship? Or is the ship theirs, and they want their due?*

Rhin, a smuggler. *A trustworthy source that passes on tips? A rogue that came up in the ranks with you? Or a rival in your line of work?*

Battro, a bounty hunter. *Have they let you go before? Are they looking for you now?*

STARTING ABILITY

SERENDIPITOUS

Your crew starts with **+1 gambit** when the pool resets.

This increases the crew's starting gambits on a job. You're just plain luckier than other people.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS

You generate **gambits** on desperate rolls. You may also generate gambits even if you spent a gambit.

Normally you only generate gambits on risky rolls for which you have not spent a gambit. Your ability to "stretch" gambits, regenerating them on rolls you have already spent them on, gives you the ability to put yourself in situations others might not even want to consider.

I KNOW A GUY

When you first dock at a port after being away, pick one and ask the GM about a job: *it's not deadly—it pays well enough—it's not a rush job—it comes from a faction you trust—it targets an enemy you have.* You may spend **1 CRED** per additional feature.

Though you keep an ear to the ground, sufficient time has to pass for new jobs to crop up at a port (usually a downtime or two). The GM will tell you how you hear about the work; it might be a publicly available bounty or something a contact reaches out about.

TENACIOUS

Penalties from **harm** are one level less severe (though level 4 harm is still fatal).

*When harm penalties are applied to **action rolls**, treat them as one level less than you'd expect, so level 1 harm is ignored, and level 3 harm is -1d. Level 4 harm, also called lethal harm, is still lethal unless you can use armor or a **resistance roll** to reduce it first.*

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

You gain a second use of **special armor** between each **downtime**.

This allows you to use a second special armor OR use the same special armor twice.

DEVIL'S OWN LUCK

You may expend your **special armor** to resist the consequences of blaster fire, or to **push yourself** when talking your way out of (or running from) trouble.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. Blaster fire can extend to pistols and being shot in any way, and running from trouble can be via spaceship as much as your feet. If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

DAREDEVIL

When you make a desperate roll, you may take **+1d**. If you do so, do not mark **xp** in that action's attribute.

You need to make the decision before your roll. You may only take this extra die if the final position of the roll is desperate, so if you use a setup to change the position to risky, for example, you may not take the extra die.

SHOOT FIRST

When you attack from hiding or spring a trap, take **+1d**. When there's a question about who acts first, the answer is you (two characters with Shoot First act simultaneously).

To attack from hiding, your target must be unaware of you. If you're springing a trap, your target must be unaware of the trap.

ASK QUESTIONS LATER

When you **CONSORT** to gather info, you gain **+1 effect** and can in addition ask: *Who might this benefit?*

When you ask your own question, you learn the answer to that, as well as to the question "who might this benefit?" Since you gain potency, the worst a normal gather information roll can produce would be standard results.

SCOUNDREL ITEMS

Always gotta look good, and be ready for action. Scoundrels come with things to get them in trouble, and get them out—while looking good doing it.

- ▶ **Fine blaster pistol (or matching pair).** Customized or strange. Can fire mystic ammunition. *What do they fire? Where in your travels did you get them? Did you name them?* [1 OR 2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine coat.** A heavy but well-made and well-kept coat. Distinctive and with a history. *Where did you get this coat? Was it a gift, an impulse purchase, or something you won in a bet? Is it decorated with any insignia or logos? Make sure it's got a memorable look or color.* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Loaded dice or trick holo-cards.** Gambling accoutrements subtly altered to favor particular outcomes. Luck is one of your many skills. Sometimes it just needs a little help though. *When's the last time these got you into trouble?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Forged documents.** Reasonably well-made facsimiles of documents that would never actually be given to someone like you. *Who made these for you? Do you still owe someone for them? Or did you steal them from someone?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Mystic ammunition.** A large-caliber shell, designed to be fired from a specialized gun, which releases mystic energies when it hits. Grants **potency** against mystic targets. *Who makes your mystic bullets? Why are they potent against Way energies?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Personal memento.** A keepsake you cherish. A locket, small holo, music from your homeworld. *For someone so tied to the spaceways, what about this memento makes it so important? Who does it remind you of? Why do you still hold onto it?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A SCOUNDREL

Scoundrels are one of the most versatile playbooks in **Scum and Villainy**—your innate luck and daring can give you a chance to shine in many situations. Learn when to push your luck and when to let things ride. Be a risk-taker, but consider the kinds of risks you'll take and why. Are you always willing to put it on the line for a larger payout? Do you carry a grudge over slights long past?

Strong characterization goes a long way for the Scoundrel. Describe your character's attitude, their look, and how they walk into a room. Make them big and bold and let everyone have to deal with them. Do you have something to prove? Is your sense of importance earned or bravado? Are you smooth and friendly or brash and rough?

Desperate actions earn xp and play into many of your abilities. Don't shy away from them! Rely on armors (special and gear), resistance rolls, and your crew to mitigate the worst of it. A broad ability base helps with resistances and getting away with bad decisions.

For actions, focus on active skills—**RIG**, **SCRAP**, even **COMMAND**. **SKULK** will let you play a familiar pickpocket and card shark. The ship captain stereotype leans on **HELM**. A good scoundrel is always in the thick of it acting with a hare-brained plan, rather than reacting.

Veteran abilities flesh out a concept. The Mystic's Psy-Blades and most Muscle's abilities make for tough rogues. Smooth-talking Scoundrels might look at the Speaker's Disarming ability. Rogues with hearts of gold should look at the Stitch's Moral Compass or the Mechanic's Heart. And captains and crew leaders should look at the Pilot's Commander and the Muscle's Backup ability.

XENO SCOUNDRELS

Scoundrels are often audience-inserts, representing an "ordinary person." A xeno Scoundrel is an exercise in humanizing the Other and making the unusual characters of Procyon approachable. Think about your culture and people when making your xeno. Do your stodgy people accept your disregard for the rules? Are they welcomed in Hegemonic society or are they on the fringe of acceptability themselves? Are they from Procyon or elsewhere in the galaxy?

As for your abilities, almost every species has Scoundrels. Think about what sorts of things might be fun or dramatic that you want your character to do. Think about ways you can get in trouble, and ask your GM to work with you to create a xeno that has abilities that put you in those sorts of situations. Make your xeno abilities flashy and memorable.



SPEAKER

A respectable person on the take

Leave the blatant crimes to the rest of the crew. Your forte is the sophistication of polite society and the connections you leverage to get ahead of your next job before you even start. You open doors that might stay closed to the crew, and know just how to talk to powerful people. When things go south, you have a plan or a friend who might help. And afterwards, you know who can smooth things out and keep things under wraps.

When you play a Speaker, you earn xp when you address challenges with deception or influence. You're at your best talking and setting up your teammates. Use the teamwork maneuvers and flashbacks to highlight your connections, foresight, and planning.

Why did you turn to a life of crime? What walk of life did you come from? How much do you still keep in touch with it?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **CONSORT**

► ► ► **COMMAND**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

SMOOTH TALKER. Study +1, Command +1, Sway +2. **Subterfuge.**

SHIP OWNER. Helm +2, Skulk +1, Sway +1. **Favors Owed.**

SPY. Hack +1, Skulk +2, Sway +1. **Infiltrator.**

COUNSELOR. Doctor +2, Study +1, Scramble +1. **Heart to Heart.**

INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS

Arryn, a Noble. *An old friend or relative? Or someone you overstepped your bounds with?*

Manda, a Guild member. *Do you get the inside scoop? Or did you steal Guild secrets?*

Kerry, a doctor. *Do they always treat you? Or did you break their heart?*

Je-zee, a diplomat. *Were you from allied factions, or of opposing goals?*

_____. *Write in someone from your past when so inspired. If you gain the ability Old Friends, extend this list whenever you land in a new place.*

STARTING ABILITY

AIR OF RESPECTABILITY

You get an extra **downtime** activity to **acquire assets** or **lay low**.

Your connections give you a continuous stream of material and people that you can use to smooth things over after your escapades.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

FAVORS OWED

During downtime, you get **+1d** when you **acquire assets** or **lay low**. Any time you **gather info**, take **+1d**.

Using your authority, connections, or inside information, you get better information and access to better resources.

PLAYER

You always know when someone is lying to you.

This ability works in all situations without restriction. It is very powerful, but also a bit of a curse. You see through every lie, even the kind ones.

INFILTRATOR

You are not affected by **quality** or **Tier** when you bypass security measures.

*This ability lets you contend with higher-Tier enemies on equal footing. When you're **HACKING** an electronic security system, picking a lock, or sneaking past elite guards, your effect level is never reduced due to superior Tier or quality level of your opposition.*

SUBTERFUGE

You may expend your **special armor** to resist a consequence of persuasion or suspicion. When you **resist** with **INSIGHT**, gain **+1d**.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. Folks doubting your lies, stories, cover, etc., all count for the purpose of suspicion or persuasion. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.

HEART TO HEART

When you provide meaningful insight or heartfelt advice that a crewmate follows, you both clear **1 stress**.

Meaningful advice taken can mean changing someone's usual course of action, having them take a difficult action that costs them, or causing them to reconsider their choices. If there's a question about what constitutes meaningful or heartfelt, discuss it as a group and decide together.

OLD FRIENDS

Whenever you land in a new location, write down a friend you know there (under Influential Friends on your playbook sheet).

As with your starting Influential Friends, you may extend your list of friends the first time you land in a new location.

DISARMING

Whenever you use a **gambit** while speaking, hostilities and danger also pause while you speak.

*You still gain +1d for whatever roll you need to make to explain yourself, likely **CONSORT**, **SWAY**, or **COMMAND**.*

PURPOSE

You may expend your **special armor** to **push yourself** when outclassed by your opposition, or when under the effects of wounds. When you **resist** with **RESOLVE**, gain **+1d**.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. Being outclassed may be through quality, power, or scale. Being under the effect of wounds means acting with a harm penalty, though you may use this push to ignore the harm penalty (as per pushing yourself). If you use this ability to **push yourself**, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.*

SPEAKER ITEMS

Speakers always have a bit of the good stuff stashed away in their room. Sometimes they're gifts from someone—or for someone. Others may be remnants of their past life. Speakers have a wide array of items they can bring to bear for the job. And if they're a little classy, all the better.

- ▶ **Fine clothes.** Silk sarongs, suits, fine blue capes. You stand out and are always dressed for the occasion. Nobody will mistake these for a disguise. *Which outfit is your favorite?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Legitimate ID.** A properly encoded Hegemonic ID indicating your legitimate station in the Hegemony. *Who will notice when you use this?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Luxury item.** Fine brandies, small but thoughtful gifts, spices and perfumes, fine instruments, popular games, etc. These can come in varied sizes. Each time you bring one of these on the job, explain what it is and why it's luxurious. [0, 1, OR 2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Memento of a past encounter.** A distinctive piece of jewelry, a fine blade with a House crest, a signet ring, a small statue. *Who are these from, and why do you hold onto them?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A SPEAKER

A good Speaker relies on timing, context, and connections. It's not just what you can do, but who you know. You're best in social situations because you have wider access to society and influencers. It can also be fun to keep your past a mystery from the other PCs and reveal it through the people you meet and how you interact with them.

A Speaker's friends are defined more by who they are than what they do—Guild members, diplomats, etc. This leaves the question of how you know them and the relationship you have with them very open. Collectively, they can get you almost anything you need. Hold off before you define your fifth friend until an opportune moment in the story. Even better if that friend is an established NPC, like the Pirate Queen or Governor Malklaith himself!

The Speaker has the widest variety of items in terms of gear. Their luxury items are often more form than function, but out in Procyon they can mean a lot to those you share them with. Defining these items on a job is not a flashback, provided they fit into the category of luxury item, so look for opportunities to work them into the story.

For actions, take **STUDY** if you want to read the people you're meeting, or **SKULK** and **HACK** if you like leveraging connections to get on the inside and influence the job from the shadows.

For Veteran abilities, consider the Stitch's Book Learning to reflect a high society upbringing. The Mechanic's Hacker ability will help those infiltrators that like going into well-guarded places. And the Mystic's Psy-Dancing can help those Speakers looking for a little extra push when words alone don't work.

XENO SPEAKERS

Aside from diplomants, xeno Speakers are somewhat unusual in the Hegemony. Amongst the Syndicates, xenos are far more accepted, and in some, even preferred.

Space adventure has plenty of examples of natural empaths, species with advanced cognitive functions, or even protocol robots that serve as Speakers for their crew. When considering your xeno heritage, think about how your species communicates and work with your GM to figure out how those styles of communication might manifest in play. Talk to your table about what they expect the limits of these abilities might be—one table may be completely comfortable with telepathy, while that may be too magical for another.



STITCH

A spacefaring healer or scientist

Respected across the sector, the ability to heal is one of the most valuable out on the edge of Hegemonic space. Properly trained physicians are, if not welcomed, at least treated well. For crews that tend to take a few injuries, a Stitch capable of knitting bones and patching blaster burns is always a welcome addition.

When you play a Stitch, you earn xp when you address challenges with insight or compassion. Make sure you see the whole picture and help keep your crew safe and sound. When things get out of hand, they'll need you. When they lose their way, guide them. Remember that not all wounds are physical.

What research interests you? What do you charge for your services? How did you learn your trade?

STARTING ACTIONS

► ► ► **DOCTOR**

► ► ► **STUDY**

STARTING BUILDS

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

WANDERING HEALER. Consort +2, Sway +2. **Welcome Anywhere.**

MAD SCIENTIST. Scramble +1, Attune +2, Sway +1. **Dr. Strange.**

ACTION MEDIC. Scramble +1, Scrap +2, Sway +1. **Combat Medic.**

RESEARCHER. Study +1, Skulk +1, Sway +2. **Book Learning.**

OLD FRIENDS

Jackev, a drug dealer. *Legitimate hookup or feeding a vice? Or did you cut into their profits?*

Alben, a former patient. *What did you treat them for? How can they help you now?*

Ditha, a family member. *Are they supportive of your work? Or are they trying to get you to come home?*

Juda, a doctor. *Do they still help you? Or was this an old rival who wants you punished for unlawful practice of medicine?*

Lynie, a hospital admin. *An old boss? Did they get in trouble for something you did?*

STARTING ABILITY

I'M A DOCTOR, NOT A...

You can **push yourself** to roll your **DOCTOR** rating while performing a different action. Say which patient, research, or posting taught you this trick.

Each time you use this ability we learn a little bit more about your past. Consider introducing your contacts in these discoveries, if appropriate.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

PHYSICKER

You may **STUDY** a malady, wounds, or corpse, and **gather info** from a crime scene. Also, your crew gets **+1d** to **recovery** rolls.

This ability often represents formal training, giving you a way to forensically understand a corpse or scientifically deconstruct a malady. The bonus to recovery for your crew only applies if you help treat wounds or injuries at any point during the recovery.

PATCH

You may **DOCTOR** someone during a job to allow them to ignore the effects of a **harm** penalty.

A successful roll lasts for the job. While your patient may ignore the effects of the harm penalty, it does not remove the penalty; there are still fewer boxes for additional wounds.

WELCOME ANYWHERE

While wearing your medic garb, you are welcome even in dangerous places. Gain **+1d** to **CONSORT** and **SWAY** when offering to tend to anyone in need.

When you choose to be, you're recognizable as a medic, and of value to those living the hard life of Procyon.

UNDER PRESSURE

Add a **gambit** to the pool whenever you or a crew member suffers level 2 or greater harm.

In order to gain the gambit, the resulting applied consequence must be level 2 or greater—if it is resisted or reduced below that level, you do not gain the gambit.

COMBAT MEDIC

You may expend your **special armor** to resist any consequence while tending to a patient. When you **DOCTOR** someone in combat, clear **1 stress**.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. When you resist consequences, they can be for yourself, as a result of one of your rolls, or to protect the patient. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a job.

MORAL COMPASS

When you do the right thing at cost to yourself, mark **xp** (any category).

The cost to yourself must be real, though it need not be devastating. Losing a meaningful opportunity, experiencing a setback with a project, or getting into a heated argument with a friend could all count.

DR. STRANGE

Your research and fields of study are fringe, esoteric, and focus on the mystical. You may always handle Precursor artifacts safely. When you **STUDY** an artifact or **DOCTOR** a strange substance, you may ask one: *what could this do?—why could this be dangerous?*

*Normally it takes an **ATTUNE** roll to handle a Precursor artifact safely. When you ask your questions, this may be in addition to whatever else you were doing with the artifact or substance. Treat this like a gather information roll where you rolled a **6**.*

BOOK LEARNING

You speak a multitude of languages and are broadly educated. Gain **+1d** when using **STUDY** during a **downtime** activity.

Communication is almost never an issue for you. Additionally, you have a background in almost every academic subject that might come up, and can use gather information checks to find out what you might have learned in those studies.

STITCH ITEMS

A Stitch's items are less about the garb and more about the things you bring with you to any given situation.

- ▶ **Fine medkit.** Better stocked than the standard. Skin staples, diagnostic hand scanners, synthflesh, bone stabilizers, spray hypos, antivenom (for dangerous alien beasts), and a wider selection of drugs. *Are there any distinctive markings on your medkit?* [2 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine bedside manner.** Charm that sets patients at ease. Some Stitches never bother to bring this. *Do you know how to relate to many people? Do you share a lot of anecdotes? Do you project a demeanor of confident skill?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Fine clothing.** A suit or outfit for fancy dinner parties and high society. *Is this an artifact of your past, or something you've picked up for when you need to secure funding for your doctoring work?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Recognizable medic garb.** The common red medic outfit bearing the official white medic seal of the Hegemony. Recognizable from a distance. *What are the rules about how medics should be treated in combat? Do medical personnel have legal obligations while so-dressed?* [0 LOAD]
- ▶ **Candies and treats.** For those extra brave customers. *Do you indulge in them as well? Have you ever disguised a sedative as one to subdue someone?* [1 LOAD]
- ▶ **Syringes and applicators.** Syringes, injectors, patch applicators. Many can be palmed easily. Sometimes having drugs on hand also means having to subtly administer them. *Are any of these not for medical purposes?* [0 LOAD]

PLAYING A STITCH

When making a Stitch, think about what drives you to tend to this particular crew. Do you care deeply for this crew of scoundrels, or is this a way to keep one step ahead of the law? Equally important is what kind of person you are—are your patients always safe in your care? Would you refuse to help someone you think is a bad person?

Stitches can have varied backgrounds. Some are former university-trained field medics who may have fallen on hard times. Others are folks that learned through necessity. Some might be scientists whose line of research is not condoned by the Hegemony.

Your starting ability deserves some attention. With it, you can do two things at the same time. You can substitute your **DOCTOR** rating for any other ability for a push, but more importantly, you get to have a cool moment where you talk about a former patient, posting, or research project that lends you the knowledge you need.

For actions, consider **SWAY** and **CONSORT**, if you're a friendly sort or still have connections in high society. If you used to be a combat medic, **PROWESS** actions are good.

For Veteran abilities, look at the Speaker's Heart-to-Heart if you're a caretaker, while the Muscle's Bodyguard ability allows you to keep the people in your care alive even in the worst of conditions.

Although Stitches are usually on board to tend to wounds, some are pure scientists. Consider starting with Dr. Strange or Book Learning in that case. Many Mechanic abilities might also fit. Also **RIG** and **HACK** might be useful to these types, as well as the crafting rules on page 282 for your gadgets and newfangled inventions.

XENO STITCHES

There are numerous species with a knack for medical science and enhanced senses that render a medical scanner unnecessary. Think about how you might approach healing differently than a human doctor. Perhaps you're unused to species with a single heart. Or find it annoying that others can't just regenerate limbs like your people can. Embrace and celebrate the differences.

Regardless of the species, most physicians are at least superficially well treated in Procyon; you're less likely to have problems than other xenos. That said, if you really want to build bridges between species, consider picking up the Welcome Anywhere ability. It will allow you to have a real conversation about society and change in Procyon.



CHAPTER 3

SHIPS & CREWS

THE STAR OF THE SHOW

One common trope of the sci-fi space adventure genre is that the ship is as much a character as any of the crew. This is the same case in **Scum and Villainy**. What binds your crew together is the ship they travel on. It's the place they rest, fight, and escape from villains and society. In fact, it's completely possible to play through enough successive personnel changes so that only the ship remains the same.

There are a lot of questions to answer when you set up your ship, but the most important questions have to do with what kind of story you want to tell. The choices you make during this phase will go the furthest towards determining what themes and conflicts you'll see in your game.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the various ships in the game and how to create a crew that you're excited to tell stories about.

CREW CREATION

CHOOSE A SHIP

Your ship type determines the jobs that you'll focus on, as well as a selection of special abilities and upgrades that support that kind of action. The ship type isn't meant to be restrictive—the Stardancer might sometimes engage in bounty hunting (like the Cerberus) or antagonize the Hegemony (like the Firedrake)—but the core activity of the ship type is the most frequent way your crew earns **CRED** and xp for advancement.

There are three different ships to choose from:

STARDANCER

Smugglers and blockade runners. Looking to do odd jobs, small thefts, and find lost items.

CERBERUS

Extraction specialists. Looking to find missing people or items and claim bounties.

FIRE Drake

Rebels and criminals. Looking to protect the downtrodden and fight the Hegemony.

Like a character playbook, your ship type is also how you're known in the underworld of Procyon. The criminal factions and the Hegemony think of you as "smugglers," "bounty hunters," or "filthy rebels," and will treat you accordingly.

Choosing a ship type is a very important decision! It's a way for the group to say, "These are the sorts of jobs we want to do." It organizes gameplay from "doing crimes" to "smuggling illegal Urbot parts" or "helping free the Mem"—which helps the GM focus on the parts of the setting that matter most to your game, rather than having to juggle every possibility at once.

The group should choose a ship type that everyone is excited about. As a player, be vocal about your preferences. You're about to invest many hours in this game, so if you're feeling lukewarm about one of the options, speak up.

Once you've chosen, grab the appropriate ship sheet for that crew type and record the following choices in ship creation as you go.

Your ship begins with 2 **CRED** in its hold (those represent the remains of the crew's savings from adventures and the acquisition of the ship beforehand). You will likely use them up during crew creation.

CHOOSE A REPUTATION

Your crew has just formed and acquired a ship. Given this group of characters and their previous escapades, what initial reputation would you have among the factions of the sector? Choose one from the list on the right (or create your own).

You earn xp when you bolster your ship's reputation, so think of this as another cue to indicate what sorts of action you want in the game. Will you be recklessly ambitious, targeting higher Tiers? Will you take on daring jobs that others deem too risky? Are you interested in the strange weirdness of the black? Or are you professional in all dealings?

AMBITIOUS
BRUTAL
DARING
HONORABLE
PROFESSIONAL
SAVVY
STRANGE
SUBTLE

CUSTOMIZE YOUR SHIP

Each ship starts with several preselected ship systems that reflect its focus. For example, the Stardancer starts with a bigger hull to help carry cargo (legal and illegal).

You choose two additional ship systems to improve. Your choices are between **engines**, **hull**, **comms**, and **weapons**.

You may instead choose to improve **crew quality**, but it'll cost your crew 2 **CRED** and you will owe the folks that helped you improve it. A higher crew quality refers to the quality of gear and equipment of the crew. You're able to take on more powerful factions on equal footing, and can therefore handle harder jobs more easily. Not to mention, your crew will just have nicer stuff!

After you decide what you want to improve, the GM will tell you about a faction that helped you get those improvements. They did you a favor. How did your crew respond?

- ▶ **Pay them off.** Give them 1 **CRED** in exchange for a job well done. No strings attached, nothing owed.
- ▶ **Owe them one.** Promise them you'll return the favor down the line when they ask and gain **+1 status** with them. If you chose **crew quality**, you must take this option.
- ▶ **Stiff them.** No need to pay a faction that doesn't demand payment up front! Take **-1 status** with that faction.

CHOOSE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Choose one of the **special abilities** listed on your ship. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. It's important to pick a special ability that everyone is excited about. You can get more special abilities in the future by earning crew xp.

Just like picking your ship type, origin, and systems, choosing a special ability is another chance to focus the game. Instead of playing a generic ship crewed by scoundrels, you end up with the Stardancer and her crew of ambitious smugglers, who salvaged the ship after her previous crew went missing. They stiffed the Dyrinek Gang when they upgraded the hull and weapons of the ship and are known for their Getaway ability—showcasing a knack for running from their problems. That's a lot to work with, and it helps get the game going in a strong direction from the very beginning!

ASSIGN UPGRADES

In addition to the **upgrades** each ship comes with, you as a group get to add two additional upgrades. For example, you might pick the Cerberus's Stun Weapons upgrade, and also the Auxiliary Armory module. That's a crew that loves their weapons!

An upgrade is a valuable asset or **system module** that helps the crew in some way, such as an Afterburner module or a Shuttle. Each ship starts with preselected upgrades that are well suited for that crew, such as the Galley for the Stardancer or the Brig for the Cerberus.

After you assign your two upgrades, the GM will tell you about two factions impacted by your choices:

- ▶ One faction helped you get an upgrade. You're on good terms. Did they broker a deal? Did you run a job for them? Did you bail them out of trouble? They like you, and you get **+1 status** with them. At your option, spend **1 CRED** to repay their kindness, and take **+2 status** with them instead.
- ▶ The other faction was screwed over when you got an upgrade. Did you steal the part from them? Was it a specific individual's ship? Was it illegal, and the Hegemony now hunts them? They don't like you, and you get **-2 status** with them. At your option, the crew can spend **1 CRED** to mollify them, and take **-1 status** with them instead—tell us how you smoothed things over.

You'll be able to get more upgrades in the future by earning xp or spending **CRED**.

Here are some example upgrades you can get for your ship:

- ▶ **TRAINING UPGRADE.** Your crew could start with Training: Prowess in the form of a gym on your ship.
- ▶ **CREW GEAR.** You could start with some ground vehicles, like hoverbikes, for all your crew.
- ▶ **SHIP UPGRADES.** You could start with a med bay to patch you up after your first job.
- ▶ **SHIP MODULE.** If the system has room for one. For example on the Cerberus you could start with a targeting computer.
- ▶ **CREW/SHIP SPECIFIC UPGRADES.** The Firedrake's crew could start with a secret base.

CHOOSE A FAVORITE CONTACT

Take a look at your list of potential contacts on the ship sheet. Although all the contacts are your friends and allies, one is closer to the crew than the others.

Choose one contact who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in crime. The GM will tell you about two factions that are impacted by your choice:

- ▶ One faction is also friendly with this contact, and you get **+1 status** with them. Perhaps they are an informant, retired member of the faction, or just have friends among them.
- ▶ One faction is unfriendly with this contact, and you get **-1 status** with them. There might be old slights, current grievances, or even materials held against the contact that they are keen to reclaim.

UPDATE YOUR SHIP INFO

A ship has to pay **upkeep** fees every **downtime** or risk damage as parts wear out. To calculate your upkeep costs, add your crew quality to all system quality ratings and divide by four, rounding down. Most ships will have an upkeep of 2 to start.

Your ship creation is done—you're ready to fly!

CREW CREATION SUMMARY

- 1 Choose your ship.** Your ship represents the types of jobs the crew is looking for, and general crew capabilities. All crews start with **2 CRED** (which may be spent during crew creation).
- 2 Choose a reputation.** What reputation has this crew garnered with the different factions of the sector?
- 3 Customize your ship.** Add two systems to the ship, or improve crew quality. Pick how you dealt with the faction that helped you do so.
- 4 Choose a special ability.** Pick a special ability that your crew has as a whole. If you can't decide which one you like the best, pick the first one.
- 5 Assign upgrades.** Add two upgrades to your ship. These can be crew or ship upgrades (see below and right or the individual ship sections) or ship modules if you have the prerequisite systems (see the next few pages). Adjust factions.
- 6 Choose a favorite contact.** You're friends with all the contacts on your ship, but you've worked with one more closely than others. They come with strings—allies and enemies tied to their past, who attach those feelings now to the crew.
- 7 Update your ship info.** Update some basic ship information (gambits that refresh every job, and calculate upkeep).

CREW UPGRADES

CREW TRAINING

If you have a Training upgrade, you earn 2 xp (instead of 1) when you **train** a given xp track during downtime (**INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, **RESOLVE**, or Playbook xp). This upgrade essentially helps you advance more quickly. See **Advancement**, page 50.

*If you have Insight Training, when you train **INSIGHT** during downtime, you mark 2 xp on the **INSIGHT** track (instead of just 1). If you have Playbook Training, you mark 2 xp on your playbook xp track when you train.*

SHIP UPGRADES

Holo-Emitters: Used for holo-conferences and flashy displays. The images don't usually hold up to close scrutiny but they can be convincing for a short while. Includes sweet games and vids.

Intruder Alarm: A full suite of sensors about the ship, including motion sensors, door codes, and panic buttons that can trigger a klaxon and flashing red lights if something is out of place.

Land Rover: An armored all-terrain vehicle for carrying heavy cargo and folks overland. High-powered winch and decorative stickers come standard.

Power Reserves: Batteries and energy supplies that can power the ship independently of the engine. Sufficient for a few hours of operation at minimal usage or a few minutes of full power. Acts as **armor** against power-related mishaps on the ship.

Shuttle: A small spacecraft capable of carrying a few people from planet to orbit. Limited systems capacity—treat any system as quality zero vs. actual ships. Can attach to airlocks, but best stored in a landing bay if you don't want stray asteroids or particle cannon fire hitting it.

Stasis Pods: State-of-the-art pods provide room for one severely injured, deathly ill, or unconscious guest each. Does not prevent dreams.

Vault: Very useful for securing valuables during space travel. Programmable lock allows for personalized security codes, one-time use codes, and access logs. Uses **hull** rating when contested.

CREW GEAR

Alien Pet: Lovable rascalion or loyal guardian, these critters are usually more trouble than they're worth. *Where did you get it?*

Land Transport: Enough land transportation for the entire crew. Tires or close-to-ground hover. These may be motorized bikes, land-skimmers, boats, or very small cars.

Recon Drone: A small drone for surveillance, mapping, and intelligence gathering in space and in atmo. Can be given simple instructions. *"Search the mine for heat signatures."* Uses **comms** quality when contested.

Survival Gear: Camping gear, rebreathers, climbing equipment, scuba gear. Everything an enterprising crew needs to survive on an inhospitable, but not uninhabitable, rock. Stillsuits included.

Workshop: Plasma cutters, a nano-assembler, a stock of metal and electrical components, a forge—anything required to build, modify, or disassemble complex machines, weapons, and tools. Adds **+1 quality** to **craft** rolls.

SHIP MODULES

A new module can be purchased when the crew advances. Doing so, though, requires time in drydock. At creation you may select modules as part of your crew upgrades.

If this process is too slow for your crew, run a job to acquire a module, or purchase one (cost in **CRED** is three times that current **system quality**, or 6 **CRED** per box for an auxiliary module or crew/ship gear). Illegal modules require answers about how you're acquiring them first before installing them aboard your ship.

You cannot have more modules in a ship system than you have quality in that system (although you can have fewer than the system quality). Auxiliary systems are exempt from this (you can have all the auxiliary modules on your ship).

AUXILIARY MODULES

Complex systems with specialized purpose. Not strictly required on any ship, but provide functions the crew considers important. Many of these are included on larger ships.

AI Module: Software connected to an Ur AI core, with fiber-optic filaments running throughout the ship. Can automate tasks or otherwise run the ship on behalf of the crew. Snarky personality module available for free.

Armory: A secure room holding the crew weapons and armor. All crew weapons and armor are considered to be **fine** if not already so.

Brig: Space jail. Not meant for long-term incarceration. Will prevent most attempts to escape.

Galley: A combined kitchen and serving area for meals. Greatly facilitates longer trips. Includes fresh food storage.

Medical Bay: A clean room with medical equipment. Not a real hospital, but sufficient to patch most injuries. Storage for drugs and medical scanners. Add **+1d** to all crew **recovery** rolls.

Science Bay: Laboratory that can be used to analyze anomalies and Precursor artifacts. Secure storage for things that may react oddly with the rest of the ship (or physics).

Shields: Particle sinks and EM deflectors. Can be overwhelmed with focused fire. Counts as **armor** against ship weapons and energy discharge. Completely absorbs blaster fire. Costs two upgrades instead of just one.

HULL MODULES

Hull governs how tough a ship is. Hull modules are passive systems laid out throughout the ship and often are necessary to even allow certain actions. **Note:** Personal and freighter-sized ships can land on planets, otherwise you need shuttles.

Cargo Hold: Enough space on a ship to carry a moderate (**CRED**-earning) shipment. A cargo hold is evident when the ship is boarded, and no special precautions are taken to hide its contents.

Crew Quarters: You can sleep anywhere, but crew quarters are actually meant for it. Crew quarters afford privacy and comfort in a domain where such things are luxuries. Also you don't have to share, and you know the first mate snores.

Landing Bay: Airlocks, bay-doors, and takeoff ramps to accommodate shuttles and single-pilot small fighter craft for both land and space takeoff.

Smuggling Compartments: Like a cargo hold (can carry a small shipment), but it won't show up on routine scans or visual inspections of the ship. At **3+ hull** rating, it has life support for smuggling people too.

ENGINE MODULES

Engine systems are those that not only make you go, but let you maneuver, power your ship, and travel space in a few different ways. Power storage and backups generally fall under engines. Ships at **zero engine rating** have minimal thrust.

Afterburners: Dumps raw fuel into the engines for a short burst of speed. May treat engines as one higher **rating** for a roll, but it may damage them.

Cloaking Device: Doesn't necessarily render the ship invisible to the eye, but masks the heat and electrical signature of the ship, making it very hard to detect or identify. Super illegal.

Gravitic Field Generator: Creates a large gravitic field extending ship to ship. Can be used to grapple or tow. Temperamental and dangerous. Guild prototype only. Not legal.

Jump Drive: A special engine that can activate the Ur gates that connect systems and translate ships into hyperspace lanes.

COMMS MODULES

Communication arrays, sensors, and scanners. These systems govern signal detection, transmission, and the quality of a ship's computers. No comms means the crew will mostly get news and jobs when they dock at stations and on planets.

Fake Transponder: Broadcasts a different ship's signal or plays a powerful recording of sensor echoes (or acts as a beacon). Usable remotely.

Long-Range Scanner: Provides a variety of EM spectrum and gravimetric readings, giving the crew advance warning up to a dozen light-minutes away.

Nexus Link: A connection to the Hegemonic System Network. Allows for news updates, real-time intra-system messages, and tapping into system-wide sensor grids. Insecure.

Quantum Encryptor: Encrypts comms and data storage. Grants **armor** against interception of digital communications. Data on the ship is stored in a secure state until unlocked.

Targeting Computer: Handles calculations and targeting for weapon systems without an actual crew member doing so. Roll **comms** rating when firing.

WEAPON MODULES

Self explanatory. Note that most non-military ships in the Hegemony are not armed. Obvious weapons can land you in trouble, though powered down and hidden armaments may be regularly overlooked.

Coherence Cannon: A capital weapon. One shot only until repaired or recharged on ships smaller than dreadnoughts. May fry systems. Incredibly deadly. Super not legal.

Grappling Hooks: Officially for latching onto asteroids and netting cargo, it's an array of nets, grappling lines, and arms that can tie together two vessels for towing or boarding. Legal.

Mining Drill: Vicious, close-range, high-power energy drill. Vaporizes rock. Easily modified to bore through hulls. Legal.

Missiles: Projectile with mounted drive. Not legal.

Particle Cannons: Pew! Pew! Usually fixed in one direction on personal vessels. Often cross linked. Not legal without a license.

GAMBITS

Gambits are a resource that represents the accumulation of good luck, weird circumstances, and fate that befalls heroes of the genre, and the opportunities that can be seized when a crew takes chances. It is a crew resource, usable by any member, much like crew **CRED**.

Any crew member can spend a gambit during an action roll to add **+1d**, and only one gambit may be spent this way.

You gain new gambits in two ways. At the beginning of every job, you reset the number of gambits the crew has to the starting gambits value. For the Stardancer or Firedrake, this is 2. For the Cerberus, this is 1—though this can be increased with crew upgrades. This ensures that every job the crew attempts comes with a certain amount of fortune following the crew.

In addition, every time you roll a **6** or **critical** result on a **risky** action that you have not spent a gambit on, your crew gains another gambit.

With gambits, a crew can attempt even the most dangerous stunts and have good odds of success; eventually, however, their luck runs out, and they have to rely on their wits and skill for hard-won victories.



STARDANCER

Illicit merchants, smugglers, and blockade runners

This freighter has seen some miles, but with a loving engineer and some illegal modifications, it's become a fast little ship that's equipped to get places it's not supposed to and carry things it shouldn't. False ship papers or a fake transponder will make transit much easier, and converting some cargo space back into crew quarters will make the ship much more comfortable on long hauls.

When you play the crew of the Stardancer, you earn xp when you execute a successful transport or smuggling operation. Keep your eyes peeled for odd jobs, small thefts, and recovering lost items.

What kind of contraband do you usually carry, and what will you not transport?

SHIP QUALITIES

STARTING SYSTEMS

- ▶ **CREW QUALITY (0/3).**
- ▶ **ENGINES (1/4).** **Installed:** Jump Drive. **Available:** Afterburners.
- ▶ **HULL (2/4).** **Installed:** Cargo Hold, Smuggling Compartments.
- ▶ **COMMS (0/3).** **Installed:** None. **Available:** Fake Transponder, Quantum Encryptor.
- ▶ **WEAPONS (0/2).** **Installed:** None.

STARTING UPGRADES

- ▶ **Auxiliary:** Galley.
- ▶ **Training:** Insight.

CREW CONTACTS

T'kala, a dockmaster. *Did he help you get your ship?*

Alor, a keen-eared barkeep. *A good source of jobs, and a good source of drinks. What do you bring him from your travels?*

Heani, a tugboat captain. *How often do you pass each other in the black? When did they bring you back to safety?*

Rakka, a diplomat. *Which faction do they represent? How did you befriend someone so influential?*

Citani, a reclusive info broker. *Who's their boss when they're not with the crew? What type of info do they commonly broker?*

STARTING SHIP QUALITIES

CF-350 Series Scarab-class Freighter

SIZE: Freighter (Medium, can land on planets)

STARTING GAMBITS: 2

STARDANCER CREW/SHIP UPGRADES

False Ship Papers: Every smuggler needs a few well-forged documents, giving the crew and ship identities that are less wanted in any given system. These papers often simplify gate travel if the transponder and ship match. You have a couple different sets you can swap between, even if you do have to practice responding to a new name at every checkpoint. May make following and tracking you more difficult by enemy factions.

Dark Hyperspace Lane Maps: These are routes through systems that aren't officially maintained. Sometimes they are faster. They are always less patrolled. Often they are full of Way creatures, pirates, and other scoundrels. The ride is never as smooth as it is along the Starsmith-maintained routes. You don't want to think too hard about the poor fools that died or got lost forever mapping these routes.

Smuggler's Rigging: Webbing or fake skin used to hold small items close to the body, and a great way to sneak them past security. Adds some hands-free carry room while working on the outside of the ship, and lets you smuggle a blaster into a well-guarded meeting while keeping the stylish cut of your coat. You can only carry/hide one item of a max of **1 load** this way.

Lucky Charm: Whether an Ur artifact or a few mementos prominently displayed on the bridge, sometimes luck is just about believing in something. The crew starts with **+1 gambit** every job. It costs two upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

Thrillseekers: Each PC gets +1 stress box (increase stress max to 10). It costs three upgrades to unlock, not just one.

STARDANCER SPECIAL ABILITIES

THE GETAWAY

You gain **potency** when you **SCRAMBLE** or **HELM** to avoid capture or run a blockade. When doing a delivery job, take **+1d** to the **engagement** roll.

Sometimes escape is the better part of valor. This ability works for anyone on the crew whether they're on the ship or not. A delivery can include any job where taking cargo (legal, illegal, or a person) between two locations is the primary goal.

CARGO EYE

Your crew earns **+1 CRED** for smuggling or delivery jobs. Whenever you **gather info** you can always ask, "What is most valuable here?"

The extra CRED is gained during payoff beyond what the job pays. You can ask the question whenever it's applicable.

FIELD REPAIRS

You gain **potency** when repairing your ship while in space. If you spend a **gambit** on a **RIG** roll, you gain **+2d** (instead of **+1d**).

The potency may fictionally let you do repairs others can't—for example, temporarily fixing a ship injury that usually requires drydock. The extra dice from the gambit apply to any RIG roll, not just repairs.

LEVERAGE

Your crew knows how to pull strings and cash in favors. When you **lay low**, instead of rolling you can take **-1 status** with a faction at Helpful (+1) or better to reduce your **WANTED LEVEL** by 1, and set your **HEAT** to 0 in a system.

You can cash in faction changes you gained from the current job. You don't have to clear the system you did the job in—the faction will help cover your tracks regardless.

JUST PASSING THROUGH

During **payoff**, take **-1 HEAT** from the job. When your **HEAT** is 4 or less, you get **+1d** to deceive people when you pass yourselves off as ordinary citizens, and you still have two **downtime** activities even if you're at War (-3) with any faction, as they have trouble locating you.

Use the HEAT of the system you're in at the start of downtime to determine the number of activities each crew member gets. If, during downtime, the crew passes through a system in which they have high HEAT, enemy factions might find them anyway.

HOME COOKING

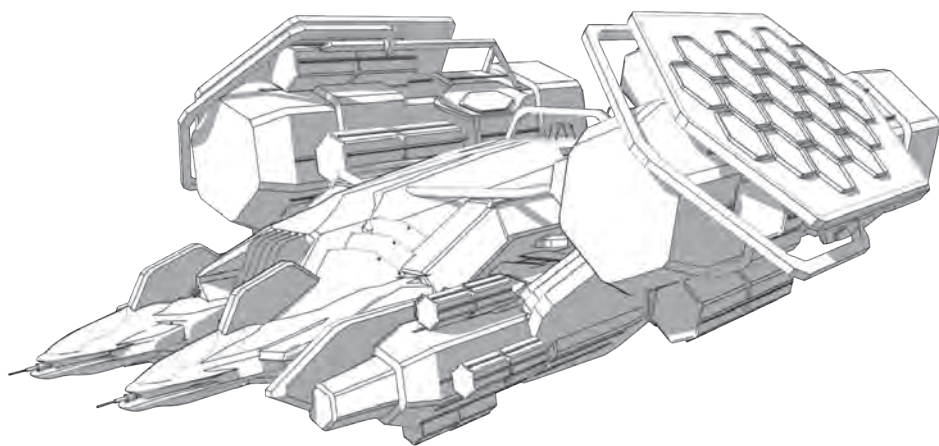
Your whole crew gains Home Cooking as a **vice**. Right after a job, you may spend 1 **CRED** and a **downtime** activity to cook for everyone, allowing the whole crew present to make a **vice** roll. If anyone **overindulges**, a fight erupts, and everyone gains 1 **stress** after the vice roll. Requires a **galley** module.

*The crew can split who spends the activity and who pays the **CRED**. The stress at the end is applied after all results (this includes tinkering with maximum stress gain or loss via the Pilot's Hedonist ability). You each gain 1 stress total (not 1 per overindulgence).*

PROBLEM SOLVERS

Each PC may add 1 action rating to **HELM**, **RIG**, or **SCRAMBLE** (up to a max of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.



SHIP: STARDANCER

STARDANCER JOBS

The Stardancer takes what jobs it can, both legal and illegal. You can find and carry lost goods, and—if your hull is good enough—smuggle people the Hegemony is looking for. Unfortunately, people keep blaming you for the actions and value of your cargo. The nerve!

GMs: Look for opportunities with a twist. Offer easy jobs with moral dilemmas, or hard jobs that help people, or cargo that multiple people want. Remember that this ship isn't a bruiser. Violent factions like the Scarlet Wolves are more likely to hire the crew to extract a member than they are to kill someone (they have people for that).

Focus on escapades, tight flying, and standard space opera hijinks. Always look for an opportunity for a run, chase, or high-energy adventure.

For any job opportunity, consider how the job may bypass blockades and inspections, or smuggle goods and people. Think about travel time too. To add a twist, discover what factions might be involved, or to add additional elements, roll on the job generator tables (see **Jobs**, page 338).

SAMPLE JOBS

- ▶ The Banshee (the Pirate Queen leader of the Maelstrom) is looking for someone to steal a Nightspeaker mask and will pay you handsomely to get it done quietly. *Who has the mask currently? How and why is it vulnerable? Who else wants it? What's the crew plan for this job?* Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ A scientist wishes to hire a crew to get them off Warren, past the Guild patrols looking for them and to the next system over where they'll be safe. *What research does the Guild not want them to reveal? Which faction will hide them once they're off-world? What's the crew's plan to steal this person away from Guild scrutiny?* Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ A plague has broken out among the workers on Indri. A Mendicant priest on Amerath wants to tend to them, but the Church of Stellar flame is looking for them, and has hired the Legion to assist. *Which other faction hired bounty hunters to attack this priest? How have their religious practices changed them? What's the crew's plan to get them past the Legion checkpoints?* Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.

STARDANCER: LUCRATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 A faction war needs a delivery of weapons and supplies past the enemy line.
- 2 A fugitive will pay to be smuggled into the next system.
- 3 A Cult wants you to move their Chosen One past a Church/Legion checkpoint.
- 4 Living cargo needs to be transported, but is hard to contain and pin down once loose.
- 5 A client wants you to move a package for two weeks straight. No stopping. No peeking.
- 6 Transporting the goods is easy, but can you convince a socialite to give you the job?
- 1 Someone wants you to accept a job for a faction, but give them the goods instead.
- 2 An ace pilot wants you to smuggle their custom, illegally modified racing ship to the start line past Guild inspections.
- 3 A simple job, except the cargo isn't what they said it was, and it gets dangerous mid-trip.
- 4 Smuggle a Way creature to a planetside mystic. Just one problem—it has to be carried inside one of the crew.
- 5 Smuggle an artifact out of an archaeological dig.
- 6 Run a Guild trade embargo to get a key scientist off the planet.
- 1 Transport of cargo requires a path through a pirate's booby-trapped and patrolled turf.
- 2 An exiled ex-pirate stashed a treasure on Baftoma and will split it with whoever can get them there past pirates and back.
- 3 A mystic needs a crew to explore a newly formed Way line. Way beasts guaranteed.
- 4 A Sah'iir wishes to adopt xeno children as servants. They must be moved before they are registered with the Hegemony.
- 5 Priority shipment from Indri to Amerath can only make it in time if you cut through the Belt of Fire.
- 6 A criminal gang needs to smuggle a message to a lifer in Isotropa Max Secure.

STARTING POSITION

THE SITUATION

Your crew of smugglers was hired by Citani (your crew's reclusive info broker friend) to deliver a small, well-sealed box to the moon of Warren for a very particular client who didn't want to reveal their identity. The job sounded easy enough...

The delivery should have been easy **CRED**, except that your contact is dead, you might take the rap for it, and several powerful factions are more likely to kill than negotiate for the object you're holding.

The crew is holding the Aleph Key (the artifact inside the box). Can they stay alive and keep it long enough to make a profit? Who will end up with it? And can you get that landlock lifted from your ship? We play to find out.

MAKING IT YOURS

Customize the starting position below to suit your own crew. What does the Aleph Key do? It should be something big (perhaps a key component to making or opening jumpgates, or a powerful program that can **HACK** Guild systems). Think about what you want your story to be about, and how gaining such a thing might impact the sector.

During crew creation, you chose some factions the crew rubbed the wrong way. See if any of them could be interested in the Key. Perhaps a crew member's rival might be involved. Making the story personal adds immediacy and ties the players' choices directly into the narrative.

THE FIRST SCENE

Tell the table this:

The drop-off is a bar near the ground of Warren, meaning the air outside is thick with smog, and the patrons are of the rougher sort. Your contact is in the private booth in the back. Just one problem...

As you sit down to conclude the deal, you see that your contact is dead, and covered in fresh blood. Adding to your woes, there are House Malklaith guards drinking at the bar, and some well-gearred folks eyeing the booth. This is not the best place to pick a fight, and you'll be cornered in just a few moments.

How do you escape? Will you try to talk your way out of this? Slip out the back? Perhaps steal a few getaway vehicles from some tough-looking hoverbike riders parked outside?

Create a 10-segment getaway clock. As the Stardancer crew makes progress towards escaping, advance this clock. If NPC factions close in on them, cut them off, or slow them down, you can remove ticks accordingly. The job ends when the crew gets away or is caught.

Make Warren busy, grimy, and exciting. Give the players plenty of things in the scene to jump over, have breakneck chases around, and blow up. Several factions are after the box, and any crimes will alert the House Malklaith guards (the local gendarmes). Very likely a faction of any power will have locked down the crew's ship in port too.

THE NEXT SCENES

Downtime should be when the players decide what to do with the Key. Ask them what their priorities are as players and the crew. Perhaps they want to **gather information** on possible buyers, or investigate the artifact itself. They may also just keep the artifact and run, focusing on liberating their ship and getting far away from Warren first.

The next job will likely be convincing a faction to not simply kill the crew and take what they want, but instead to actually cough up the creds and buy the artifact. Whoever the crew sells it to will likely have enemies that may then need some space scoundrels to help them even the score.

THE CAMPAIGN

You can easily play out the consequences of the starting situation over several sessions. Who do the PCs sell the artifact to? What does the client use it for? Who holds a grudge because of it? Does someone want the crew to steal it back? Can they stay on-planet long enough to avoid powerful angry factions and the law in order to do more jobs?

Write down pressing questions to help keep the action focused:

Why does House Malklaith want the Aleph Key?

Your contact was hired by the original client: How close are they to tracking down the crew and the key?

How does the Church of Stellar Flame deal with the sale of high-value artifacts?

These questions may result in a clock or two to track the status of developing circumstances. When a question is answered, remove the clock and add a new one as needed. Clocks don't have to last forever.

CERBERUS

Bounty hunters and extraction specialists

The Cerberus was once a well-armed patrol craft, but while it's been repurposed in its new life, it still has the sleek lines, limited crew, and cargo space of a predator. Good comms are important for finding your targets and following them (hopefully at range) before moving in for a grapple and boarding. A nexus link is crucial for fast messages and getting a jump on bounties.

When you play the crew of the Cerberus, you earn xp when you execute a successful extraction or capture of a bounty. Bounties can be official—posted or sanctioned by the Hegemony—but many Syndicates hire your ilk on the side.

*Do you pride yourself on always bringing your quarry back alive?
Who was the bounty that got away?*

SHIP QUALITIES

STARTING SYSTEMS

- **CREW QUALITY (0/3).**
- **COMMS (2/4). Installed:** Long-Range Scanner. **Available:** Nexus Link.
- **ENGINES (1/4). Installed:** Jump Drive.
- **HULL (0/2). Installed:** None.
- **WEAPONS (1/3). Installed:** Grapppler Arm. **Available:** Particle Cannons.

STARTING UPGRADES

- **Auxiliary:** Brig.
- **Training:** Prowess.

CREW CONTACTS

Stacey Weathers, ace reporter. *Has all sorts of hot leads, but what does she ask for in return?*

Arlox, an Ashen Knives Pasha. Once an assassin, now Syndicate leader. *Do you also hunt illegal bounties for them?*

Ishi, a weapons dealer. Bounties come armed, and Ishi evens the field. *Do they tune your ship?*

Lix, a xeno tracker. *Is he a xeno with a trait for tracking people, or someone that hunts xenos?*

Jezri, a fixer. Whatever you need, Jezri has. Info, gear, jobs, friends, and enemies. *Did Jezri help you get your ship or license?*

STARTING SHIP QUALITIES

R-29 Firebrand-type Patrol Craft

SIZE: Freighter (Medium, can land on planets)

STARTING GAMBITS: 1 (You use might more than luck)

CERBERUS CREW/SHIP UPGRADES

Tracers: A wide array of ways to track your targets. Includes tiny bugs that can be hidden on clothes with a suave pat on the back, beacons that can attach to hulls, and even transmission cloners for comms. Legality varies (often by the importance of the target), but a license makes it all legal.

Stun Weapons: A wide variety of weapons for capturing and securing prisoners without (serious) harm. Includes, but is not limited to:

- ▶ Restraints. **[0 LOAD]**
- ▶ Stun batons. **[1 LOAD]**
- ▶ Stun settings on blasters. *Not the heavy kind.* **[1 LOAD]**
- ▶ Stun grenades. *Replaces detonator on the sheet.* **[1 LOAD]**
- ▶ Knockout drugs. *May not work on some xenos.* **[0 LOAD]**

Not required to bring on jobs, but useful if you want to claim bounties. Generally legal.

Personal Vehicles: Your crew has a few (perhaps one per crew member) sleek single-seater craft that can fold up tight enough to fit into a reasonable parking space. Limited fuel, but can break atmo. Can carry basic weapons, though they can't seriously damage anything freighter-sized or larger. You may want a landing bay on your ship. It costs two upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

Hard Knocks: Sometimes luck is just hard-earned experience. Your crew starts each job with **+1 gambit**. It costs two upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

Smooth Criminals: Sometimes legality is only a question of who has the gun. Each crew member gains **+1 stress** box (total 10). It costs three upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

CERBERUS SPECIAL ABILITIES

LICENSED

Take **-2 HEAT** on any legitimate bounty hunting job. Your ship can carry particle weapons, and your crew can carry and legally use heavy blasters in the pursuit of a target.

This also means that you carry bounty hunting licenses. Sometimes this can be leveraged to explain being places you generally shouldn't be, and carry weapons when others may be stripped of them. Law cooperation varies from planet to planet.

ON THE TRAIL

Your crew gains one extra **downtime** activity to work on **long-term projects**, or **acquire assets** to track bounties.

Sometimes you know the bounty, but not where they're hiding. Depending on your contacts and leverage, more than a simple gather info check might be required. Anyone in the crew may use up this downtime action and make the appropriate roll.

LIGHT TOUCH

You gain **potency** when tailing a target, or when **gathering info** at a target's previous location.

Previous locations can include places they've stayed, crime scenes, favorite bars, and the like. It can also be used for tracking if you're hot on the trail.

SNATCH'N'GRAB

When you use a **deception**, **infiltration**, or **social** plan to execute a kidnapping or extraction, add **+1d** to the **engagement roll**.

Your crew's focus is on getting a priority target out safely, and doing so without raising alarms. Any mission where you have to remove a target under watch by their guards applies to this ability.

LOADED FOR BEAR

Your crew can carry **+1 load**. They have distinctive and high-quality armor. When you wear armor, it counts as **heavy armor** (two uses).

Each crew member's load maximums are increased (so light load becomes 1-4, medium 5-6, and heavy 7-9). Who crafted such distinctive armor (and who might recognize its make)? Heavy armor allows you to also tick the second (heavy) armor box on your sheet to reduce appropriate damage.

PLAY BOTH SIDES

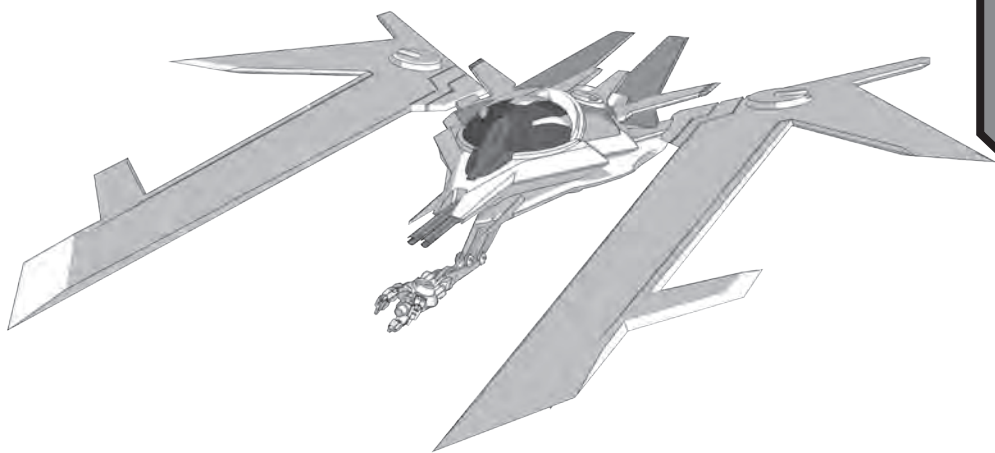
When you release a bounty target, make them a crew contact.

While you may not receive payout from the factions hiring you, many bounties have a few creds saved up they're willing to trade for freedom. More lucrative though are the jobs or hot tips they might have. Add the target as a crew contact, though bear in mind they may someday get captured by other bounty hunters (and may pay for a rescue by your crew). Not every bounty hunter captures their targets, so the GM will (or won't) adjust faction status as fictionally required at the end of such a job.

DEADLY

Each PC may add 1 action rating to **COMMAND**, **SCRAP**, or **SKULK** (up to a max of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.



SHIP: CERBERUS

CERBERUS JOBS

The Cerberus is a mercenary ship willing to make **CRED** bringing in those who others place a bounty on—but always remember that targets are people too. Bounties aren't always placed for wrongdoing so much as for inconveniencing the wrong faction.

GMs: Always ask why someone was willing to get a price on their head, and showcase what their purpose and goals are even when they're in the ship's brig. Ask the crew if they're willing to turn them in at the end of the day.

Bounties are hard to track. The GM can tell you if you need to **CONSORT** with the right people to **gather info**, find a clue to their location (**acquire asset**), or finish a **long-term project** to discover where they've gone to ground.

For any job opportunity, consider who applied the bounty, who else may want it, and who the target wants to get away from. To add a twist, discover what factions might be involved, or add additional elements, roll on the job generator tables (see **Jobs**, page 338).

SAMPLE JOBS

- ▶ A thief has stolen a well-guarded piece of jewelry from Glimmer. The Guild wants it found—and kept hush-hush. *Who is protecting this thief from the usual Guild channels? What other things have they stolen?* Make a clock for finding the thief and tick it whenever the crew finds a clue or makes a roll that directly leads them to the thief. What's the crew's **plan** for catching this ghost? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ Nightspeaker Doraam's protégé Rax left before completing training. Doraam wants you to find and deliver them to a Nightspeaker ship in the black. *Who would a scared apprentice run to on Warren and why would they abandon their training?* What is the crew's **plan** to capture the poor soul? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ Members of the Church of Stellar Flame have identified Commander Tallon's psychic, and want you to capture her and deliver her to the Way of Light (a battle cruiser). She's scheduled to transport to the surface of Aleph to interrogate someone in a lonely prison in the toxic atmosphere of the planet. What's the crew's **plan** to intercept and capture the psychic? Do they know she's psychic? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.

CERBERUS: TARGETED OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 A Syndicate courier ran with his package. Nab him before he sells it to another Syndicate.
 - 2 A Noble's servant (with secrets) is running. Fight any others who want to claim the bounty.
 - 3 Someone stole the Starsmith's prototype vessel. Hunt them down.
 - 4 A Legionnaire defector has been missing for years, but a rumor of their location surfaces.
 - 5 The child of a diplomat was kidnapped in transit. Spring them from pirates.
 - 6 A bounty is placed on a dangerous Way creature on Aketi.
-
- 1 A large prison breakout happens on Isotropa Max Secure. Gotta catch them all.
 - 2 A Scarlet Wolf assassin just inexplicably killed a large number of people. Get them.
 - 3 A large bounty is out for someone who just blew up a chunk of a jumpgate. The person blamed claims they didn't do it.
 - 4 Find a lost researcher for the Guild (whether they want to come back or not).
 - 5 Mendicants are hiding a former pirate. Fetch them for the Vignerons.
 - 6 Extract a Guild member from the local Guild headquarters. Good luck.
-
- 1 Catch a Noble's escaped pet and deal with it on the transport back.
 - 2 A Syndicate leader wants to make an example of a gambler not making good on some large debts. No disintegrations.
 - 3 A fugitive has gone to ground on an inhospitable planet or region of space.
 - 4 A Cobalt Syndicate rabble-rouser is being hidden by his people.
 - 5 Retrieve an item from a vessel captured by pirates. (Crew rescue optional.)
 - 6 A hacker has taken over some satellites. Disable their hacking and capture them.

STARTING POSITION

THE SITUATION

Your crew of bounty hunters was hired by Arlox (your crew's Ashen Knives Pasha friend) to capture Cho-Tyrek, a badass Syndicate muscle who apparently left a job unfinished. And the Ashen Knives don't like leaving jobs unfinished.

Tracking a Syndicate muscle who doesn't want to be found is no easy feat, but you know where he's laying low. In the process you've found out that the Ashen Knives aren't the only people who are looking for Cho. Several other factions are offering bounties for him and what he holds.

Will the crew catch Cho? Can they keep others from getting him first? What will they do with the childlike Urbot he has with him? Will Arlox be understanding if they let him go? We play to find out.

MAKING IT YOURS

Customize the starting position below to suit your own crew. Cho-Tyrek has an extremely unusual Urbot with him. Why is she special? What can she do, or what does she imply about Urbots that the Guild (or others) may not want disseminated? Does the Conclave want to free her as an individual with free will?

During crew creation, you chose some factions the crew rubbed the wrong way. See if any of them could be interested in the Urbot. Perhaps a crew member's rival is racing the crew to the prize? Making the story personal adds immediacy and ties the players' choices directly into the narrative.

THE FIRST SCENE

Tell the group this:

*You're in the hallway of the second floor of a run-down hotel that the neon sign out front proclaims as "Paradise." It's cost some **CRED**—and a few twisted arms in two systems—to get Cho's location, but you've tracked him to Warren, and that sweet prize money is about to be yours. As you prepare to kick the door to Cho's room down, you hear the roar of a hoverbike engine starting up in an alley behind the hotel.*

Heavy blaster fire begins ripping through the hallway, shredding the plaster and moving quickly towards where you're standing. It's Cho-Tyrek on a souped-up hoverbike, a tiny figure clutched to his back. What do you do?

This might be a good place to introduce resistance rolls (to avoid the heavy blaster fire) or flashbacks (to showcase how parts of the crew may be someplace else).

Create an 10-segment chase clock and put two ticks on it to represent the crew's actions in finding Cho's hideout. Actions bringing the crew closer to Cho-Tyrek increase the chase clock and delays decrease it. If the clock fully empties, Cho escapes. Make the streets of Warren busy, neon-lit, and full of things to dodge, weave, and even crash into. Tyrek will absolutely shoot to kill if it looks like he can't get away, but once the clock fills, he'll surrender—providing the crew agrees to take care of his charge. The crew can decide what to do with him at that point.

THE NEXT SCENES

The players should decide what to do with Tyrek during downtime. He's on the run with a small Urbot named Ara-ini, housed in a frame reminiscent of a small child. Cho's assassin's code will not let him harm children—he's become convinced Ara-ini counts.

The next job will likely be either turning Cho over to the Ashen Knives on Indri, or trying to smuggle Ara-ini to a representative of Conclave 01, who was to meet Cho on Baftoma. There are other factions who want one or the other—the Guild is a prominent possibility—and who will likely send someone to crash the party. Ask the crew their plan and make an **engagement roll**.

The crew may decide to let Cho-Tyrek go after they hear his story. Add him as a crew contact and offer the crew some of his **CRED** and potential jobs (roll on the jobs table, page 338).

THE CAMPAIGN

You can easily play out the consequences of the starting situation over several sessions. What do the PCs do with Ara-ini? Who is upset with them for their choices? Does someone want the crew to steal the Urbot back?

Write down pressing questions to help keep the action focused:

What can Ara-ini do that other Urbots cannot?

How are Ara-ini's original owners planning to deal with the crew?

These questions may result in a clock or two to track the status of developing circumstances. When a question is answered, remove the clock and add a new one as needed. Clocks don't have to last forever.

FIRE Drake

Rebels and Hegemonic criminals

The Firedrake is a corvette, and thus a larger ship that isn't meant to land on planets. It usually uses a shuttle to ferry the crew planetside and back. It's a bruiser with enough firepower to make most people think twice about taking it on. You may want to acquire a Fake Transponder as soon as possible (particularly once your **WANTED LEVEL** rises, or when you're at War with Hegemonic factions), or you may find passing between systems a hassle.

When you play the crew of the Firedrake, you earn xp when you execute a successful job that opposes Hegemonic dominance. Helping rebels, oppressed peoples, or just making the Hegemony look like fools all fit the bill here.

How will you get the word out about your cause? Where is your usual berth? Who are your allies and who do you consider "real" criminals?

SHIP QUALITIES

STARTING SYSTEMS

- ▶ **CREW QUALITY (0/3).**
- ▶ **COMMS (0/4).** **Installed:** None. **Available:** Targeting Computer, Fake Transponder.
- ▶ **ENGINES (1/3).** **Installed:** Jump Drive.
- ▶ **HULL (1/2).** **Installed:** Crew Quarters. **Available:** Landing Bay.
- ▶ **WEAPONS (1/3).** **Installed:** Particle Cannons. **Available:** Coherence Cannon.

STARTING UPGRADES

- ▶ **Auxiliary:** Shields.
- ▶ **Ship Gear:** Shuttle.

CREW CONTACTS

Garin, a Guild weapons engineer. *Does his conscience not let him do all the Guild demands? Did he help you acquire your ship?*

Tyura, a legendary assassin. *How did you earn her loyalty? What is her beef with the Hegemony?*

Ada Black, a famous performer. Darling of the sector. *Perhaps her tours can be good covers to sneak into blockaded areas?*

Tiko Lux, a hotshot pilot. The best, but kicked out of the Legion. *A getaway driver for you?*

Ibo-one, an ancient Cult mystic. *Perhaps a guide into dangerous Ur ruins where you could hide?*

STARTING SHIP QUALITIES

Converted Khanjigar-class Corvette

SIZE: Corvette (Large, can't land on planets)

STARTING GAMBITS: 2

FIREDRAKE CREW/SHIP UPGRADES

Black Market Contacts: Able to get you all the modules (even illegal ones) your ship needs, even when you're **WANTED**. Resourceful. Mobile. Illegal modules (as usual) may require you to run a job to acquire them. Your contact may know where to find them, and give you a leg up, but it's up to you to get things that just aren't available at any price (prototypes, rare devices, and incredibly illegal things like coherence cannons).

Secret Base: Could be inside ancient Ur ruins on a planet. Maybe buildings inside a massive asteroid. Possibly an old and forgotten station, long abandoned but now repurposed. You have found and commissioned a hiding spot away from the baleful gaze of the Hegemony where you and your allies can meet, hide, lick your wounds, and plan your jobs, all without the Hegemony finding out. It's secret...for now.

Popular Support: It takes work to win hearts and minds, but your cause has supporters among the common folk. When you approach a planet or a station, ask the GM who there might be a sympathizer. This may make escapes—and simply walking around while **WANTED**—much easier. It costs three upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

Way Blessed: Some people are just plain lucky. The common folk think this is some sort of sign. Don't look too much into it. You start with **+1 gambit** at the start of every job. It costs two upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

Driven: Each PC gets **+1 trauma** box. *This can bring a PC with 4 trauma back into play if you wish.* It costs three upgrades to unlock this instead of the usual one.

FIREDRAKE SPECIAL ABILITIES

OLD HANDS

When you're at War (-3) with a Hegemony faction, all crew members get **+1d** to **vice** rolls and still get two **downtime activities** instead of just one.

You may choose not to roll the extra die for vice, if you wish.

FORGED IN FIRE

Your crew has been toughened by cruel experience. You each get **+1d** to all **resistance rolls**.

This ability applies to all the PCs in the crew.

SYMPATHIZERS

Your ideology is especially appealing. When you deal with a crew or faction, the GM will tell you who among them believes in your cause (one, a few, many, or all).

If the GM is unsure of the answer, they can make a fortune roll using the crew's quality, perhaps modified by their standing with a faction. Factions are not monolithic and while the faction as a whole (and certain individuals within it) may despise the PCs, some of their members may still have rebellious leanings. Note that the answer to the question of believers is always at least one.

NATURAL ENEMIES

When you run a job against Hegemony factions, take **+1d** to the **engagement roll**.

This applies to any job where your primary target is one of the factions in the Hegemony column (see page 316) such as the Guilds, Cults, or House Malklaith. If the job inconveniences a faction but doesn't involve their members, the bonus does not apply.

SPARK OF REBELLION

If you leave a calling card or a highly visible symbol of resistance on your job, gain **+2 HEAT**. Your crew gains **+1d** to **vice** during the next **downtime**, and cannot overindulge.

When you take this ability, discuss what the symbol of your rebellion is. When you leave behind your calling card, it should be prominent or sure to be found (preferably by more than just the Hegemony).

JUST CAUSE

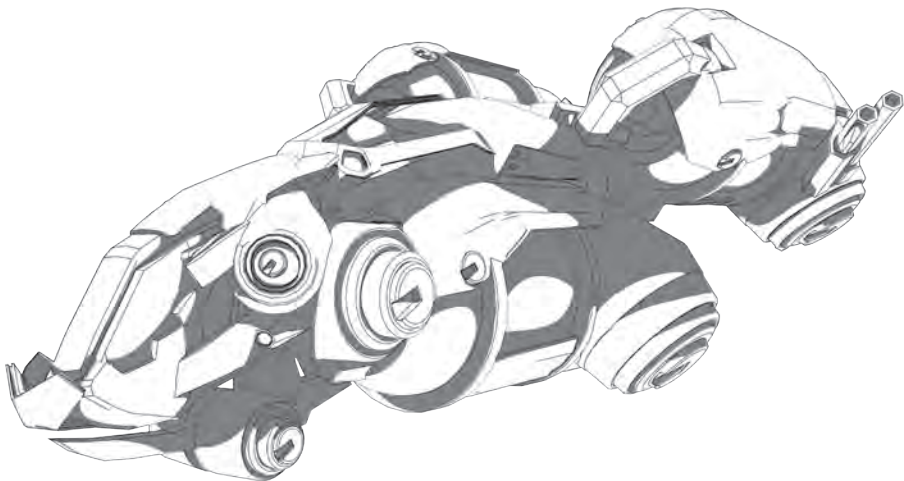
When your crew does the right thing at cost to themselves, you may mark a **crew xp**.

The cost to your crew must be real, though it need not be devastating. Losing an meaningful opportunity, experiencing a setback with a project, or angering a powerful faction could all count.

HEARTS & MINDS

Each crew member may add 1 action rating to **COMMAND**, **CONSORT**, or **SWAY** (up to a max of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.



FIREDRAKE JOBS

The Firedrake has a long and complex path ahead of it. The Hegemony seems omnipresent, and its grasp on the sector is choking.

GMs: Whenever you make a job, ask who is being oppressed, overlooked, or belittled. Give the crew a chance to even the odds or help the underdog.

Failing that, resources and opportunities are rare for people dead set against the law, and friends are uncommon. Threaten their supply lines, showcase a lack of resources, and offer difficult opportunities to rectify the problem. Friends may ask them to even the odds if they fall into trouble for being affiliated with the crew.

Always showcase how the missions affect public perception. The view the Hegemonic News Network presents may also be different from the whispers and rumors among the populace.

For any job opportunity, consider how the job may oppose Hegemonic dominance, acquire allies, or gain recognition and standing in the eyes of the citizens. To add a twist, discover what factions might be involved, or add additional elements, roll on the job generator tables (see **Jobs**, page 338).

SAMPLE JOBS

- ▶ The Cobalt Syndicate is looking for a crew to acquire a prototype Starsmiths Guild ship. This is no ordinary vessel, as it's being built on a hunk of rock away from the usual hyperspace lanes. *What is so special about this ship that makes the Cobalt Syndicate want it? Who is guarding this site? How do you plan to get away?* What is the crew's **plan** for getting aboard the site? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ Victor Kromyl, Governor of Mem, treats the native population somewhat poorly. The Vigilance has judged him harshly and is looking for someone with the muscle to help him pay. *What punishment would satisfy their desire for vengeance?* What's the crew's **plan** to get into the Governor's palace? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.
- ▶ The Banshee will pay top **CRED** for someone to capture a Guild engineer who doesn't go off-world very often. The xeno is said to be one of the Hegemony's foremost experts on jumpgates, and he's taking a much-needed vacation aboard a luxury vessel on a tour of the Indri system. What's the crew's **plan** to intercept and capture the engineer? Make an **engagement roll** and cut to the action.

FIREDRAKE: REBELLIOUS OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 The Legion is holding an ally in a facility surrounded by toxic waters on Aleph.
 - 2 The Hegemony has troops in place to keep local xenos in line. Run a blockade to get them supplies.
 - 3 A local faction found your staging base and is using it, but you need it for an upcoming job.
 - 4 A Hegemonic bureaucrat with incriminating info wants to defect, but needs help getting out.
 - 5 Recruit a hotshot pilot who knows a secret route for your next job.
 - 6 Important sympathizers have clandestine information to hand off at a fancy party.
-
- 1 A Hegemonic defector is on the run with blueprints and plans.
 - 2 You hear of an Ur artifact that might help your fight. Just one problem—it's got weird effects and Way creatures guarding it.
 - 3 Capture the plans for a new prototype Guild weapon from a secure data depot.
 - 4 Raid a Guild convoy for much-needed supplies.
 - 5 Disable some ground support for a strike against the Legion.
 - 6 A Cult needs you to fend off the Church of Stellar Flame so their Chosen One can escape to safety.
-
- 1 A key Noble or dignitary is visiting the sector. Assassinate or kidnap them.
 - 2 The Memish are rebelling. Can you shut off the gate so the Hegemony doesn't send battleships to pacify them?
 - 3 A bounty hunter has a rebel leader. Stop them and get the leader back.
 - 4 Help a terraforming settlement the Hegemony has abandoned.
 - 5 A rebel leader has been released from prison. He may have key information from the inside, but it's almost certainly a trap.
 - 6 A rebel ship is damaged and hiding. They need you to escort them to safety.

STARTING POSITION

THE SITUATION

Your crew was framed and caught for crimes that—for once—you have not committed. They've sent you all to the nastiest prison in the sector—Isotropa Max Secure. Whether you knew each other already, or made friends in the scant few days here, you've forged an alliance, and a plan.

One of you has a ship held in impound—called the Firedrake—until the Starsmiths can pick it up. The Hegemony techs have secured it, but you have hidden security overrides and ignition codes if you can get onboard. It's just the chance you need to get out before the Hegemony factions figure out which crimes you actually committed.

Tonight is the night you spring your plan into action. It's simple: get free, get your stuff, get the ship, get out of dodge. Mayhem, profit, and rebellion are optional.

Can you recruit any other prisoners? Will you get out quietly or are you going to make the Hegemonic News Network? And how will you get the ship out of impound? We play to find out.

MAKING IT YOURS

Customize the starting position below to suit your own crew.

Is there an allied faction with someone in lockup you can bring along? Are there enemies that might use the chaos to strike at your crew? Is a crew member's ally or friend in the secure wing? Making the story personal adds immediacy and ties the players' choices directly into the narrative.

THE FIRST SCENE

Tell the table this:

You're in the mess on a normal day, eating food, stretching your legs, getting into fights while the guards watch... But you know that today's the day. There's a blare of alarms followed by silence. Darkness falls, and it will be a few minutes before anything but emergency lights turn on. In the commotion, a few cell doors spring open. Your gear is in a safe, past a grate and down the hall.

The guards are confused, trying to find their way without lights. The drones that back them up are the real problem. How do you get past them both and deal with the door leading to your stuff?

The Hegemony is clean and efficient, but they're understaffed tonight and unprepared for a breakout. Direct engagement with blasters is completely possible, but so is **SCRAMBLING** through darkened corridors, **RIGGING** secure doors, and **HACKING** terminals for drone control and valuable information. Freeing all the prisoners in the compound will also make a scene, which could be useful. Certainly some powerful Syndicate members are imprisoned here, and willing to pay to get out.

Agree to any makeshift gear the crew comes up with, and ask them to choose their load once they get to their stuff. Then suggest they get to the ship and get out. Feel free to flash back to how the crew gathered whatever tools and allies they have on hand.

The job ends when the crew is free of the prison.

THE NEXT SCENES

Downtime should be when the players decide what to do with their ship. Ask what their priorities are as players and as a crew. They may have fallout to deal with over how they escaped from the facility, or they may want to look into who flagged their names in the first place.

Perhaps prisoners that escaped in the chaos feel like they owe the crew a favor and offer them a job. Or a faction that saw how the crew stuck it to the man wants to be allies, in the hopes that the crew will rebel again on their behalf.

THE CAMPAIGN

You can easily play out the consequences of the starting situation over several sessions. Who is blamed for your escape, and how long will they hunt you to make it right? Will the Hegemony ever realize exactly who they held in their hands and lost? What bounty hunter is hired to chase you down?

Write down pressing questions to help keep the action focused:

Who is blamed for the escape and how will they seek to even the score?

How does the Hegemony deal with sparks of rebellion?

Do your previous allies still trust you, knowing that you were locked up and almost miraculously got away?

These questions may result in a clock or two to track the status of developing circumstances. When a question is answered, remove the clock and add a new one as needed. Clocks don't have to last forever.



CHAPTER 4

THE JOB

Smuggling contraband, exploring ancient ruins, making illicit deals, piracy in open space—these are the staples of those living on the fringes of the Hegemony, and looking after themselves.

In **Scum and Villainy**, we play to find out if a fledgling crew of characters can prosper in the Procyon sector—and that prosperity depends upon their endeavors, which we call jobs.

A job is a single operation with a particular goal: steal from a Noble's private vault, kidnap a ship designer, smuggle a strange artifact into a city, etc. Usually, a job will fall into one of two categories:

- ▶ A **criminal activity**, determined by your ship type. A bounty hunting job, a smuggling gig, etc.
- ▶ A **special mission** or goal determined by the players (like getting a rare component to upgrade your ship, or finding a Way artifact your Mystic is looking for, or forging an alliance with a faction).

A job can be long and involved or short and sweet. There might be lots of rolls and trouble, or just a few actions to resolve it. Play to find out what happens! A job doesn't need to fill one session of play every time. Let it be however long it needs to be.

The PCs can set up a new job by choosing a target (for example, by picking one from the faction list or planetary descriptions), by approaching a potential client and asking for work, or by being contacted by an NPC who needs to hire a crew for a job.

A job consists of a few key elements, detailed in this chapter: **planning and engagement**, **flashbacks**, and **teamwork**.

PLANNING & ENGAGEMENT

Your crew spends time planning each job. They stand in the ship's galley and review flickering holo-displays of terrain, look at stolen schematics, whisper plots and schemes while pointing to makeshift figurines placed on haphazardly sketched notes, bicker about the best approach, lament the dangers ahead, and lust after the **CRED** they know is waiting at the end of the job.

But you, the players, don't have to do the nitty-gritty planning.

The characters take care of that, offscreen. All you have to do is choose what type of plan the characters have already made. There's no need to sweat all the little details and try to cover every eventuality ahead of time, because the **engagement roll** (detailed on page 150) ultimately determines how much trouble you're in when the plan is put in motion. No plan is ever perfect. You can't account for everything. This system assumes that there's always some unknown factors and trouble—major or minor—in every operation. Why play out an operation if everything goes smoothly? You just have to make the best of it.

There are six different plans, each with a missing detail you need to provide (see the list below). To plan a job, simply choose the plan and supply the detail. Then the GM will cut to the action as the early moments of the operation unfold.

ASSAULT

Do violence to a target.
Detail: The point of attack.

DECEPTION

Lure, trick, or manipulate.
Detail: The method of deception.

INFILTRATION

Trespass unseen.
Detail: The point of infiltration.

MYSTIC

Engage mystic, Way, or Ur power.
Detail: Arcane power.

SOCIAL

Negotiate, bargain, or persuade.
Detail: The social connection.

TRANSPORT

Carry cargo or people through danger.
Detail: The route and means.

THE DETAIL

When you choose a plan, provide the key detail, like the point of attack, social connection, etc. If you don't know the detail, you can gather information and ask questions in order to discover it.

The main reason for this is to give the GM a jumping-off point for your plan. If you want to infiltrate the Governor's mansion, that's fine, but tell the GM the point of entry, so that they know how to set that first scene. If you're planning on deceiving someone, tell the GM what the deception is.

The detail is also an opportunity to bring in your contacts. Could your friend the dockmaster give you a good route for smuggling these Yaru clones? Perhaps your friend the assassin can give you a hint on a good point of attack for your assault? If necessary, roll a gather information check to establish what you know and move on to the job.

ITEM LOADOUTS

After the plan and detail are in place, each player chooses their character's load. This indicates how much stuff they're carrying on the operation. They don't have to select individual items—just the maximum amount they'll have access to during the action. Armor is also refreshed—uncheck any armor boxes that are marked.

GAMBITS

Each ship comes with a starting gambit total (modified by upgrades and special abilities). This is the time you reset the gambits to their maximum value. We usually represent this with a distinct set of dice of a different color placed on the ship sheet or somewhere everyone can reach easily (but you can just as easily use marks on the ship sheet).



ENGAGEMENT ROLL

Once the players choose a plan and provide its detail, the GM cuts to the action—describing the scene as the crew engages their first obstacle. How is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation impacts how complicated the operation turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM to simply “get it right” each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is the **engagement roll**.

The engagement roll is a **fortune roll**, starting with **1d** for sheer luck. Modify the dice pool for major advantages or disadvantages.

MAJOR ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

- ▶ Is this operation particularly bold or daring? Take +1d. Is this operation overly complex or contingent on many factors? Take -1d.
- ▶ Does the plan's detail expose a vulnerability of the target or hit them where they're weakest? Take +1d. Is the target strongest against this approach, or do they have particular defenses or special preparations? Take -1d.
- ▶ Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insight for this operation? Take +1d. Are any enemies or rivals interfering in the operation? Take -1d.
- ▶ Are there any other elements that you want to consider? Maybe a lower-Tier target will give you +1d. Maybe a higher-Tier target will give you -1d. Maybe there's a situation in the system that makes the operation more or less tricky.

The **engagement roll** assumes the PCs are approaching the target as intelligently as they can, given the plan and detail they provided. We don't need to play out probing maneuvers, special precautions, or other ponderous non-action. The engagement roll covers it all. The PCs are already in action, facing the first obstacle—on top of the spaceship, cutting the hull, busting into the bounty's hotel room, etc.

Don't make the engagement roll and then describe the PCs approaching the target. The engagement roll resolves the approach. Cut to the action resulting from that initial approach—to the first serious obstacle in their path.

The first obstacle of the ship is getting in. The engagement roll puts the crew outside an airlock as the PCs carefully cut into the ship they're infiltrating.

The PCs have kicked down the door and swarmed into the front room of the former hit man's hotel room, weapons flashing, with the target diving out the back window.

ENGAGEMENT ROLL

► 1d for sheer luck

+ 1d per **MAJOR ADVANTAGE**

- 1d per **MAJOR DISADVANTAGE**

CRITICAL: Exceptional result. *You've already overcome the first obstacle and you're in a controlled position for what's next.*

6: Good result. *You're in a controlled position when the action starts.*

4/5: Mixed result. *You're in a risky position when the action starts.*

1-3: Bad result. *You're in a desperate position when the action starts.*

If the players want a special preparation or clever setup, they can use flashbacks during the job. This takes some getting used to. Players may balk, worried that you're skipping over important things they want to do. But jumping straight to the action is much more effective once you get used to it. When they see the situation they're in, their "planning" in flashbacks will be focused and useful, rather than speculations on circumstances that might not even happen.

OUTCOMES

The outcome of the **engagement roll** determines the position for the PCs' initial actions when we cut to the job in progress. A **1-3** means a desperate position. A **4/5** is a risky position. A **6** is a controlled position. A **critical** carries the action past the initial obstacle, deeper into the action of the job.

No matter how outmatched you are, a desperate position is the worst that can result from the plan + detail + engagement process. Planning matters, but doesn't call for lots of nitpicking. If you're reckless and take your chances, you can't get too badly burned. Plus, you might want those desperate rolls to generate more xp for the PCs, to help bootstrap starting characters into advancement.

After the roll, use the details of the target to paint a picture of the PCs' position. How might the Banshee's ruthless pirates present a desperate position for thieves? How might a dangerous ex-hitman present a risky threat to assaulting thugs? Use this to show how the PCs' enemies are dangerous and capable—don't characterize a bad roll as a failure by the PCs, or they won't trust the technique in the future. Sure, things start out desperate against the pirates, but you're just the type of characters who are daring enough to take them on. Let's get to it.

HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

The **engagement roll** determines the starting position for the PCs' actions. How long does that hold? Does the situation stay desperate? No. Once the initial actions have been resolved, you follow the normal process for establishing position for the rest of the rolls during the job. The engagement roll is a quick shorthand to kick things off and get the action started—it doesn't have any impact after that.

ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES

BREAKING INTO THE BANSHEE'S FLAGSHIP

The crew of the Stardancer has a plan and detail that doesn't give any modifiers in this case. (The Banshee isn't particularly weak or strong against an infiltration.) The crew does have help from T'kala, a dockmaster who can give them the tip-off about the camouflaged ship when it comes into port. This gives them 2d to roll and they get a 3. It's a desperate position to start. Oh my!

The GM considers how to pose a desperate threat to the would-be thieves, and goes for something straightforward: the airlock door the crew is attempting to cut through is rigged with explosives against wayward boarding parties. The pirates didn't bother disarming it since they weren't expecting to use external airlocks at a calm port like this.

*"So, who's **RIGGING** this door? This is desperate, so the consequence will obviously be detonating the explosives. And that's sure to get someone's attention. Maybe this should be a group action..."*

In this example, the GM skips past the approach of getting on the hull. She already knew that the PCs were sneaking out in spacesuits via a maintenance shaft (that was the detail for their plan) so she cut to the first actual obstacle: the rigged door.

This skips over finding the best airlock, probing for holes in the security of the base and the ship, finding the spot to try cutting and jumps straight to the action. The players can't "back out" and try a different airlock—the engagement roll has placed them here. If they want to have prepared something against a bomb, it's just a flashback away.

Capturing the Former Assassin

The crew of the *Cerberus* has been looking for a former hit woman hiding from her previous employers. They want to get right to the action, so they choose an assault plan, which is definitely something the assassin is prepared for. The Speaker decides to grease the wheels by **CONSORTING** with the manager of the hotel and finding out when the target goes to sleep. The point of attack is the front door, but timing when she goes to bed is a vulnerability, so the crew rolls 1d (1d base, -1d for the enemy's strength against this plan, +1d for the vulnerability). They roll and get a **5**—a risky position to start.

What does that situation look like? Again, the GM goes with the obvious—a risky position means a head-to-head contest, and what's more iconic than a straight-up blaster fight. The door crashes off its hinges, the assassin moves with years of experience, pulls a gun from under a pillow, and lays down a bunch of fire while diving out a window.

The GM makes clocks to track the assassin's escape, plus another one for the eventual local law response to the fight, and jumps to the crew making risky **SCRAP** rolls to close with the target while being fired upon.

Negotiating with Governor Malklaith

The crew of the *Firedrake* is looking to offload a troublesome Ur artifact. They know the Governor collects them, and will overlook the crew's questionable record for such a prize. The crew's decided on a social plan, by casually meeting the Governor at a diplomatic party held for a visiting Noble House.

They start with 1d, for sheer luck. The detail of their plan is good, exposing a vulnerability (his penchant for artifacts), for +1d. Also, the crew happens to be friends with Je-zee, a diplomat invited to this shindig—this gives them another +1d. They roll a **crit**.

The GM thinks about how the PCs might slip past the first potential obstacle and end up in a controlled position against Governor Malklaith. There's an easy choice: Malklaith has many vying for his attention, but the PCs time their approach just as the Governor has been trapped by his least favorite dignitary. Making excuses that he simply must greet the PCs, Malklaith extricates himself from the unwelcome fellow, and hopes the crew has more interesting reasons for being here.

LINKED PLANS

Sometimes an operation seems to call for a couple of plans linked together. A common scenario is a team that wants a two-pronged approach. "You create a diversion at the bar, and when they send thugs over there, we'll break into their warehouse." There are two ways to handle this:

1. The diversion is a setup action that a team member performs as part of the plan. A successful setup action can improve position for teammates (possibly offsetting a bad engagement roll) or give increased effect. An unsuccessful setup might cause trouble for the second part of the plan—an easy consequence is to give the engagement roll -1d. If it makes sense, the team member who performed the setup can drift back into the main operation and join the team later so they don't have to sit out and wait.
2. The diversion is its own plan, engagement, and operation, whose outcome creates the opportunity for a future plan. Use this option when the first part of the plan is required for the next part to happen at all. For example, you might execute a stealth plan to steal vault codes from a Legion 51 base, then later use those codes in an infiltration plan to steal a prototype weapon. In this case, you go into downtime (and payoff, **HEAT**, etc.) after the first part of the plan, as normal.

Either approach is fine. It's usually a question of interest. Is the linked plan interesting enough on its own to play out moment by moment? Is it required for the second plan to make sense? If so, make it a separate operation. If not, just use a setup action.



FLASHBACKS

The rules don't distinguish between actions performed in the present and those performed in the past. When a job is underway, you can invoke a flashback to take an action in the past that impacts your current situation.

The GM sets a stress cost when you activate a flashback action.

- ▶ **0 STRESS:** An ordinary action for which you had easy opportunity. The Muscle **CONSORTED** with her friend to agree to arrive at the dice game ahead of time and suddenly spring out as a surprise ally.
- ▶ **1 STRESS:** A complex action or unlikely opportunity. The Scoundrel **SKULKED** his pistols into a hiding spot under the card table to be on hand after the pat down at the front door.
- ▶ **2 (OR MORE) STRESS:** An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies. The Speaker has already met the former owner of the property and learned who its architect was—an architect that can be compelled to reveal the location of the hidden vault.

After the stress cost is paid, a flashback action is handled like any other action. Sometimes it entails an **action roll**, because there's danger or trouble involved. Sometimes a flashback entails a fortune roll, because we need to find out how well it went (or much, or long, etc.). Sometimes a flashback won't require a roll at all.

If a flashback involves a downtime activity, pay 1 **CRED** for it instead of stress (see page 184 for details about downtime).

One of the best uses for a flashback is when the engagement roll goes badly. After the GM describes the trouble you're in, call for a flashback to a special preparation you made, "just in case" something went wrong. This way, your "flashback planning" will be focused on the problems that *do* happen, not the problems that *might* happen.

LIMITS OF FLASHBACKS

A flashback isn't time travel. It can't "undo" something that just occurred. For instance, if a Legionnaire confronts you about recent contraband smuggled into port when you're at the Governor's party, you can't call for a flashback to assassinate her the night before. She's here now, questioning you—that's established in the fiction. But you could call for a flashback to show you intentionally tipped her off so she would confront you at the party—and use that opportunity to impress the Governor with your aplomb and fearlessness.

FLASHBACK EXAMPLES

"I want to have a flashback to earlier that night, where I snuck into the garage and planted a smoke grenade to trigger the fire alarm, creating a distraction for us to sneak out the painting."

"Ha! Nice. Okay, that's seems a bit tricky, planting an explosive and timing it to go off. 1 stress."

*"Should I roll **SKULK** to sneak in and plant it?"*

"Yeah, there are alarms on the garage, so depending on your roll, it may cost a little more. This is a risky position."

*"And... I rolled a **4**."*

*"Well, you snuck in and planted the grenade. But they'll get a partial print off the device when this is all over. We'll increase the **HEAT** you get for this job by one."*

—

*"The engagement roll is a **3**. A desperate position! Okay, you've snuck into the Governor's mansion, when the lights flicker on and you hear talk in the corridor. There's a late-night meeting between the Governor and Shim, the judge in Malklaith's pocket. They and their bodyguards are down the hall and about to enter the room you're hiding in. What do you do?"*

"Hang on, I want to have a flashback... but I'm drawing a blank. Does anyone have ideas?"

*"What if you **CONSORTED** with your diplomat friend yesterday and they let slip that this meeting was going to happen, so we arranged to have a delivery brought to cover our entrance."*

"That's pretty involved though, I'd guess 2 stress for that?"

*"Sounds good. But let's do the **CONSORT** roll and see if your diplomat is going to ask any favors of you. And we'll need a fortune roll to see how much time it buys you."*

"Hopefully he likes crateloads of fish from Mem!"

GIVING UP ON A JOB

When you give up on a job, you go into **downtime**. Follow the phases for downtime presented in the next chapter. You'll usually have zero **payoff**, since you didn't accomplish anything (though if your employer could be **SWAYED** or you managed to grab something to sell of appropriate value, the story may be different). You'll still face **HEAT** and **entanglements** as usual.

TEAMWORK

CREW TEAMWORK ACTIONS

When the crew of PCs works together, the characters have access to four special teamwork maneuvers. They're listed at the bottom of the character playbook sheets to help remind the players of them.

The four maneuvers are:

- ▶ **Assist** another PC who is rolling an action.
- ▶ Lead a **group action**.
- ▶ **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.
- ▶ **Protect** a teammate.

ASSIST

When you **assist** another player who's rolling, describe what your character does to help. Take **1 stress** and give them **+1d** to their roll. You might also suffer any **consequences** that occur because of the roll, depending on the circumstances. Only one character may assist a given roll. *If you really want to help and someone else is already assisting, consider performing a **setup** action instead.*

A character may assist a group action, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly. You decide which character in the group action gets the bonus die.

LEAD A GROUP ACTION

When you lead a **group action**, you coordinate multiple members of the team to tackle a problem together. Describe how your character leads the team in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide charismatic inspiration?

Each PC who's involved makes an **action roll** (using the same action) and the team counts **the single best result** as the overall effort for everyone who rolled. However, the character leading the group action takes **1 stress** for each PC that rolled **1-3** as their best result.

*This is how you do the "We all sneak into the building" scene. Everyone who wants to sneak in rolls their **SKULK** action, and the best result counts for the whole team. The leader suffers stress for everyone who does poorly. It's tough covering for the stragglers.*

The group action result covers everyone who rolled. If you don't roll, your character doesn't get the effects of the action.

Your character doesn't have to be especially skilled at the action at hand in order to lead a group action. This maneuver is about leadership, not necessarily about ability.

You can also lead a group of NPCs (if you have say a squad of pirates at your command, or need to corral some passengers). Roll **COMMAND** if you direct their efforts, or roll the appropriate action rating if you participate alongside them. The cohort rolls its quality level. Unless there's a specific named character, a group of contractors or passengers should all be handled with one quality roll (you don't need to roll for each individually).

Since only the top result counts, a risky group action (where no one spent a gambit) that counts a **6** for everyone and generates **one gambit** regardless of how many **6s** were rolled. If you have a Scoundrel with the Never Tell Me The Odds ability, the ability applies only if they're leading the group action.

SETUP

When you perform a **setup** action, you have an indirect effect on an obstacle. If your action has its intended result, any member of the team who follows through on your maneuver gets **+1 effect** level or **improved position** for their roll. You choose the benefit, based on the nature of your setup action.

*This is how you do the "I'll create a distraction" scene. You roll **SWAY** to distract a guard with your charms, then any teammate who follows through with a **SKULK** action to sneak past him can get improved position. It's less risky since you're drawing the guard's attention away.*

This is a good way to contribute to an operation when you don't have a good rating in the action at hand. A clever setup action lets you help the team indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions may take advantage of your setup (including someone leading a group action) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

Since a setup action can increase the effect of follow-up actions, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in **quality**, **scale**, and/or **potency**. Even if the PCs are reduced to zero effect due to disadvantages in a situation, the setup action provides a bonus that allows for limited effect.

*The PCs are helpless against a heavily armored Guild vehicle immune to blasters. Aleera uses **SCRAP** as a **setup** action to jam a detonator between armor plates and blow one off, giving follow-up actions +1 effect—going from zero to limited effect.*

PROTECT

You step in to face a consequence that one of your teammates would otherwise face. **You suffer it instead of them. You may roll to resist it as normal.** Describe how you intervene.

This is how you do the "I'll dive in front of the bullet" move. You cover for a teammate, suffering any harm or consequences that still linger after you've rolled to resist. It hurts, costs stress, and may leave you in a bad spot. But hey, you're a hero.

*Sha-sihara the Speaker isn't having much success talking the crew's way out of the handcuffs the House Malklaith guard put them in. She tries a risky **SWAY** roll to add a bit of seduction to her tone, and it goes poorly. Rogan, the group's Mystic, sees the angry, gauntleted backhand coming from a mile away and steps in, looking to take the blow. Dwayne (Rogan's player) rolls **PROWESS** to resist, suffering 2 stress.*

The GM rules that the sudden motion and catching the blow on his shoulder rather than in the temple is enough for Rogan to not take any harm. Rogan takes the blow to his shoulder with a heavy grunt, and holds the guardsman's eye. Sha-sihara is unscathed.

DO WE HAVE TO USE TEAMWORK?

Teamwork maneuvers are options, not requirements. Each character can still perform solo actions as normal during an operation. If your character can't communicate or somehow coordinate with the rest of the team, you can't use or benefit from any teamwork maneuvers.

USING SHIPS & SYSTEMS

What's a space adventure without a trusty ship to pull you through when things get bad? Leveraging ship systems is a key part of jobs and dealing with problems an individual couldn't handle. They help with everything from scanning a jungle for a bounty you're tracking, fighting your way past a blockade, to shaking off pursuers.

POSITION AND EFFECT

As with any other roll, the GM should establish the position before the roll.

Leto is piloting the ship to get away from a Legion corvette by hurtling through an asteroid field. The Legion has quality on the Stardancer, putting the crew in a tough situation.

Leto is pulling off a **desperate** maneuver—even minor errors could lead to heavy ship damage. (He's likely relying on his Ace Pilot ability to pull him through.) If Leto weren't intentionally diving into an asteroid field, the position might be only **risky**.

When you fight with another ship, consider which ship systems are relevant to the action. If you're trying to outrun a 51st Legion patrol craft, **engine quality** is the most relevant. Compare your engine's quality to the enemy ship's Tier. If their Tier is higher, then they have **quality**; if yours is higher, **quality** (extra effect) goes to you.

Also consider whether the ships differ in size. Sometimes an action will favor the smaller ship, though often the side with the larger ship has **scale** on their opponent. *Size is a flaw in the above scenario, so Leto's crew has scale advantage—a smaller ship can navigate around the asteroids more easily.*

Finally, consider if any modules might come into play for the roll. Some modules can negate the need for a roll altogether, while others might provide a perfect answer to a tough situation. In the cases where the system directly addresses a major problem, the person rolling should also have **potency** for their action.

*Leto's ship has **scale** because they are smaller. In addition, they've bought Sensor Jammers, which make the little freighter difficult to track among heavy metal asteroids. The Legion can only use their eyes. The GM rules that this grants potency to Leto and his crew. Leto has the ability Ace Pilot, which grants **potency** to all speed-related rolls, but potency doesn't stack, so he's still at "greater effect." This means that even on a 4/5, the crew is getting away.*

DAMAGE

When the ship takes damage, it works similarly to how a character would take harm. On the ship sheet, each system has two trackers. The top one tracks the system's quality, and you mark the bottom to indicate damage. Since quality itself doesn't reduce, you may want to fill it in with pen to make it easier to erase damage when repaired.

Leto rolls a 4 on his piloting roll. His crew gets away, but Leto has to dive between two asteroids to do it, and ends up colliding with one. His ship takes severe damage (three levels). Leto declares that it's going to the hull. Those crew quarters may not be airtight tonight.

Each level of harm damages one quality in a system. Lesser harm is one damage, regular harm is two damage, and severe harm is three damage. Harm to the ship can be resisted. Shields and special armor may apply as appropriate.

Leto resists the damage, firing afterburners to squeeze through faster, so it's not as bad as it looks. He rolls (with +1d, from his Ace Pilot ability) and gets a 6, taking 0 stress! The damage to the ship is reduced by one level, to two levels of damage.

Leto marks the shields they installed from the last job as well, and skates by with only some minor hull breaches.



When your ship is damaged, that damage can also render a module inoperable as an additional consequence. So a hit engine might set the jump drive inoperable (or on fire). Players can **RIG A SOLUTION** temporarily. These modules are fully repaired when the corresponding damage to the system is repaired.

USING SYSTEM'S QUALITY

When you use a module outside of a ship-to-ship context, consider if there should be a roll. If the crew has long-range scanners and they're surveying a pirate encampment, it's unlikely to be a contest. For something like this, use the appropriate quality as a **gather information** roll. You can also use a system's quality in **fortune rolls**. Does the fake transponder fool the jumpgate officials? Roll **comms quality** to find out! How long does the hull hold against the pirates that are cutting through it? Roll **hull quality** to find out! These rolls are best when the system itself is doing the work, rather than a player. If you're firing on another ship, roll **HELM**, not weapons quality. If you're hacking into their targeting computers, roll **HACK**, not comms quality.



EXAMPLE JOB

For the purposes of this example, here's the crew and players we'll be following on the job:

► **Captain Ray Aman:** Scoundrel. Good at **HELM**, **SWAY**, and **SCRAP**. Owner of the good ship Faraday. **Notable ability:** Never Tell Me the Odds. **Player:** Juan

► **First Mate Aleera Suhn:** Muscle. Green-skinned and hair made of fire, she's a calm-under-pressure badass that gets the crew out of scraps the Scoundrel lands them in. **Notable ability:** Veteran Pilot: Keen Eye. **Player:** Rachel

► **Hayley Griffen:** Mechanic. White haired, with bold tattoos on her face and upper body, Hayley is the reason the ship still runs, although the captain doesn't pay upkeeps enough for her taste. **Notable ability:** Fixed. **Player:** Alice

► **Rogan So'Hayan:** Swarthy human Mystic with a predilection for strong drink and solving problems with his Psy-Blade. Good at **SCRAP**, **ATTUNE**, and **SCRAMBLE**. **Notable Abilities:** Psy-Blade, In Balance. **Player:** Dwayne

And of course no crew would be complete without their ship:

► **The Faraday:** Crew 1, Engines 2, Hull 2, Weapons 1. **Gambits:** 3 (Ship 2+1 Scoundrel: Serendipitous)

Ray and his crew of smugglers have heard from Citani, their info broker, that the Ashen Knives have a large amount of Memish psychedelics to be shipped past Hegemonic patrols and system gates to a warehouse on Warren.

The crew takes stock of the situation. The Ashen Knives are at +1 (Friendly) with a job under their belt. Pulling this one off means making an ally. Moreover, they really dislike the Legion, and are at -2 status with them already. Everyone agrees this is a job they want to pursue.

THE PLAN

Natalie, the GM, asks the question that kicks off every job in **Scum and Villainy**: "Okay, so what's the plan?"

The players look at the list of plans on their character sheets and quickly choose one. "I vote for **deception**," says Rachel.

"Yeah," says Juan, "Seems like the way to get through those gates without raising any suspicion." The other players agree.

The GM asks for the **detail** for the plan: "So, what's the method you're using to deceive them?"

"Well," says Alice, "Hayley has forged ship manifests before. We'll alter our records before we take off. If no one physically comes aboard, we should be fine." Everyone agrees.

"Cool," Natalie says, "That's the plan you came up with over drinks with Citani. Now you're coming up on the Legion checkpoint before you enter the jumpgate between Holt and Rin."

"Is it busy here?" Juan asks. "If we need to hightail it, it'd be helpful to have some other ships in the area to fly around."

Natalie is unsure, so she makes a fortune roll. She thinks about how to assemble the pool. Most of the ships between the systems are probably carrying trade goods, people, and cargo. She decides to use the average wealth rating of the Holt system planets for her fortune pool. She rolls two dice, and gets a **4/5**. "There's only a few bigger ships here, but a decent amount of freighters. Not exactly enough to fully hide behind all the way to the gate."

"They looked bigger on radar," Juan quips.

ENGAGEMENT ROLL

"Time for the engagement roll!" Natalie says with enthusiasm.

"Let's see how bad things are when we zoom in on the action."

"I have that page open in the book," Alice says. "We start with 1d for sheer luck."

"Well it's better than nothing," says Dwayne.

"Hah! We'll probably need it," Alice says.

"Yes, 1d to start," Natalie says, "Then you get advantage or disadvantage dice. What's the first one?"

"Is this operation particularly bold or daring?" Alice reads aloud. "Hmmm. Smugglers smuggling stuff through a jumpgate is pretty standard. I don't think it's especially bold."

"Yeah," Juan says, "That's what I was thinking. You shouldn't get a die for that."

"Okay, then the next question is 'Does the plan's detail expose a vulnerability of the target or hit them where they're weakest?'" Alice says.

"Uh... I'm starting to wonder about this plan," Rachel says.

"It's definitely not where they're weakest," Natalie says. "In fact, they have all sorts of scanners near the jumpgate. So you get a disadvantage for that. -1d."

"Ah ha," says Alice. "What about this, though? 'Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insight for this operation?' We already know that one! Citani scoped out this job in the first place."

"Oh that's true," Dwayne says. "Can we say that Citani gave us some information we could use? Maybe like the frequency of the scans so we can do something to fake them?"

"Yeah, totally," says Natalie. "Take +1d for Citani's information."

"Okay," says Alice, "Are there any other elements we want to consider? Our crew quality is lower than their Tier. Would that be a disadvantage?"

"Yeah, so -1d for that," Rachel says. "I think that's zero dice."

"Actually," Natalie says, "There's something going on that makes things a bit easier for you. You wouldn't know about it, but it definitely counts. Take another +1d."

"Ominous, but I'll take it," Dwayne says.

"Heh. Alright, so we have 1d to roll then," Alice says. "I'll go ahead and do it." *Alice rolls and gets a 4.*

THE CHECKPOINT

"A 4... Okay, so that's a risky position to start with. Well, that's pretty easy to describe. I know what's risky about getting through a Legion checkpoint," Natalie says, grinning. "So you've been in queue for a few minutes, when your comms light up. A Legion vehicle, tiny by comparison to your ship, pulls up beside you and asks for your identification. You send your documents over, among them your ship manifest, and they scan your ship. Juan, is Ray at the helm?"

"Yeah," says Juan. "I'm definitely at the helm of the ship, ready to punch it as soon as anything goes south."

"I assume you're being friendly and everything though, yeah? Trying to set the guy at ease while he goes through his routine?"

"Yes. The less he's looking at readouts and the more he's talking to me, the better."

"Great. You're slowly moving up, but the Legionnaire, Lieutenant Rath, complains about your shields interfering with his scans. He asks you to drop them so he can get a better sweep of the ship. How do you want to handle that?" Natalie says.

"Can I convince him it's not worth the time? I'll talk about how these routine searches never turn up anything and I'm sorry he has to waste his time with it, and maybe make an excuse about how the shield generator's been acting up. I think that'd be **CONSORT**?" Juan asks.

"**CONSORT** or **SWAY**, your choice. Before you roll, I'm going to start two clocks. One will be for you getting clearance (a 6-clock) and another will be for you raising the suspicion of Legion," Natalie says. "It's risky in either case. And I think it's limited effect, to be honest. The Legion aren't known for breaking protocol because they like you."

"Well, I have 2 **CONSORT**. Is there a **Devil's Bargain** here?" Juan asks.

"The Legionnaire probably logs the report. I can tick the suspicion clock?" Natalie offers.

"Sounds good. That should be enough," Juan says, rolling the dice. "Looks like I rolled a **5**."

"Well, you get one tick on the 'Clearance' clock—standard effect would've been two—but this is limited. And one of your complications will be raised suspicion. The Legionnaire gives you some witty banter and says that his boss is a real hardcase. He suggests that he just come aboard and do a visual inspection if you can't drop your shields. The 'Suspicion' clock's now at two." Natalie says. "Do you tell him to come aboard?"

"Sure. Whatever gets him off our back. He can dock his shuttle at the cargo bay, and we'll meet him down there." Juan says. "Aleera should be there, in case things go south. Maybe Rogan as well."

"Rogan might be drinking. Can I be in the hold, but like, clearly intoxicated?" Dwayne asks.

"Oh nice," Juan says. "We can have a whole scene where the captain has words with you after the job."

"Yeah, that's fine. If you want to take level 1 harm 'Intoxicated,' you can take vice xp at the end." Natalie says.

"No problem," Dwayne says, writing down the harm.

"Aleera just gives Rogan this look of disdain as she takes a strategic position, Krieger (her blaster) on her hip." Rachel says.

BORDER PATROL

"The Legionnaire and his partner dock at the cargo hold. Are the 'goods' in your secret compartments?" Natalie asks.

"Yeah, do we need to roll **SKULK** or something to hide the cargo?" Rachel asks.

"Yup," Natalie says, "But I think we'll roll your **hull quality** instead. This feels like it's less about your ability to hide them, and more about if their scanners can pick them up."

"Okay. Is this an **action roll**?" Rachel asks.

"Nah, it's just a **fortune roll**. Two dice, right? Looks like a **1** and a **2**."

"Ouch," Dwayne says, "Should've remembered to close the door to that compartment."

"I think it's a scanner they have. You're professional smugglers, so you wouldn't exactly leave things like that. After quick introductions, the Legionnaires pull out hand-held devices that look Guild-made. Black, sleek, neon lights. Where's Hayley when all this is going on?"

"In the engine room, of course." Alice says. "Can I resist this in some way? Maybe I can ramp up the shield generator to create some interference?"

"Sure. That sounds like an **INSIGHT** resist to me. Foresight, right? Consequences from understanding. Does that sound right to you?" Natalie asks.

"Sure, and I have three dice in that. Let's see. **6!** It costs no stress!" Alice says.

"Great. The Legionnaire glares at the device. 'I really need you to turn that shield off, Captain.' he says to Ray. What do you do?"

"Hold up," Rachel says. "Are they distracted? Can Aleera get the drop on them?"

"Here we go," Juan says grinning.

"Sure. You want to knock out two Legionnaires? It's going to be difficult." Natalie says.

"Well, my starting ability is Unstoppable, so if I **push myself** I can engage a small gang on equal footing. If I do that, what would my position and effect be?" Rachel asks.

"To **SCRAP** with them? Let's see. They're well trained, and armed, but you'd have **scale** on them. I'd say even footing, but it could be **desperate**, since I think you want to knock them out before they can radio in to their commander."

"Okay. I'm marking 2 stress for that. I still get the bonus die from pushing, right? And I'm going to spend a gambit to gain an extra die, so I should have four dice."

"Five. Ray is distracting them. I'm going to mark a stress for the **assist**," says Juan.

"And I'm just going to go ahead and mark xp in **PROWESS** for Aleera, since this is a desperate roll after all."

*Let's look at three possible outcomes of this roll: **1-3**, **4/5**, and a **critical**.*

THE 1-3 RESULT

"Argh, I got a **3!** On five dice! I feel betrayed." Rachel says.

Natalie grins evilly. "So, you grab the one Legionnaire but before you can really grapple with him, he hits a button on his armor and the whole thing lights up with electricity. It burns into your hands and your whole body is wracked with convulsions. Take level 3 harm 'Electric Burns' and I'm going to tick three ticks on the suspicion clock. The other guard starts calling for help on his communicator. Ray, what do you do?"

THE 4/5 RESULT

"A **5** is good, right?" Rachel asks hesitantly.

"Mostly," says Natalie. "You completely surprise the first Legionnaire, slamming his head into the ground with a crack. The partner draws his gun, and you tackle him and knock him out, but not before he plants two blaster bolts into your chest. Take level 3 harm 'Blasted.'"

"So I knocked out both?" Rachel asks.

"Yep. On a desperate action, you do it, but also suffer the consequences—in this case harm. You got both of them out of commission before they radio in."

THE CRITICAL RESULT

"HA! Take that, Legionnaires! Double **6s**!" Rachel crows. The rest of the table claps, grinning.

"Nice!" Natalie says. "You come down hard on the one Legionnaire, sending him to the floor, and leap up on the other, who's gawking as it all happens. Apparently, training slips a little when you're on a cushy gate job. You avoid consequences and get an additional benefit. Let's see... I think you get their security ID. With that, you can try to open the airlock on their ship or send clearance orders to the gate."

"Perfect!" Rachel and Juan say at the same time.

"Did I miss the show?" Dwayne slurs for his character.

*For the purpose of this example, let's imagine that the **critical success** result happened and carry on from there.*

CHEAP SHOTS

Discarding the two clocks she had as no longer necessary, Natalie looks at Juan and says, "Okay, so, a little later, Ray and Aleera are at their stations right? Aleera, you notice as you're moving forward in the jumpgate queue that there's some odd traffic behind you. One specific ship is trying to keep things low profile, but they're skipping queue positions and closing the distance between themselves and you. What do you do?"

"I toggle ship comms," Rachel says, "and say, 'Look alive, everybody, we might have company,' and bring up our tail on the screens and show it to the Captain."

"Hmm. Can I get Aleera to get on the guns?" Juan says. "I don't want to show our hand just yet. I'm going to try and 'fly casual' and lose them, but it just might come to that." Rachel nods, and Juan asks Natalie, "Can I just outrun them?"

Natalie looks at her prep. "By the markings, this ship is one of Draxler's Raiders, looking for a quick snatch and grab. They've been intercepting transmissions about suspicious ships and have figured out you're carrying something they can sell."

"Oh, was that what the bonus engagement die was for?" Alice asks.

"Yep," Natalie responds. "They've been creating a bunch of distractions elsewhere in the Legion's computer systems. Since they're Tier III, and your engine's **system quality** is 2, their ship definitely has the advantage. But it'll come down to rolls, I think."

"Okay," Juan says, "Let's see if they can keep up. I'm going to call down to the engine room, and tell Hayley to give me everything she's got. When she signals, I'm going to punch it hard, and bolt for the gate."

"Going into the gate out of order can be a big deal," says Natalie. She makes a 6-clock for a getaway to track the crew's escape.

Juan laughs and shrugs. "Guess we'll get some **HEAT**. Better than being boarded. I'm going to push our engines hard and make for the gate! What's my position?"

"How are you going about this. Are you just making a straight run?"

"Nah," says Juan, "I think I key up the maneuvering thrusters, and dive between two passing cargo freighters, and soon as I'm covered by the bulk of one, I punch heavy burn."

"Sounds a little **desperate** to me," says Natalie. "You're ducking and weaving through traffic, and at high speeds to boot."

"I'm spending a stress to **assist**!" yells Alice. "I'll bypass the engine limiters to give us a little extra kick."

"Okay. I have **HELM** 2, and I think I'm going to use this last **gambit**. Is there a Devil's Bargain to be had?" Juan asks.

"The Legion can get a good scan of you as you go tearing by. Extra **HEAT**?" Natalie offers.

"Nah. I don't want to get too much **HEAT** in the Holt system. We need to come back this way soon. I'll just push myself. That's 2 stress, and five dice total. Ugh, my best die is a 5."

Natalie marks down two ticks on the "Getaway" clock. "You punch the engines, but they do too. You dance along the skin of a corvette and hide between ships, but they have a higher top speed. When you hit a space between ships for a few hundred yards, they cut loose with particle cannons. Their matter streams shred into your ship, and start tearing it to pieces, cutting a wide hole through your hull and venting your cargo into space."

"Holy crap! Those jerks!" Alice says.

"Wait up," Juan says. "First, we have shields. They can't take the full barrage, but that should reduce the damage. And when the red alarms go off, I'm going to spin the ship to present a thinner profile and avoid the worst of their fire."

"Alright. Mark your shields as being used. That'll bring the damage to two levels. I take it you're **resisting** to bring it to one? That would be a **PROWESS** resistance."

"Sounds good. I have two dice, so let's see how it works out." Juan says. "Another 5. That'll be one more stress. But at least they're only hitting one ship system."

The crew talk for a minute about where to assign the harm. "Put it in the engines," Alice says. "I'm right there and can **RIG** something if I have to." Everyone nods in agreement.

"Okay," says Natalie. "It looks you just might get away with it, when the particle cannons shred your number three engine. And as you were running hot, the feedback flushes right into the engine room." She looks at their ship sheet at the engine modules. "Your jump drive shuts down hard, and a fire breaks out in the engine room."

"I got this!" says Alice. "**Flash back** to about a week ago when I was working on the engines while we had some time off planetside—I added a bypass lever so that I can reboot the drives quickly if I need to. The jump drive may be off-line right now, but I think I can get it back up before we hit the gate and actually need it."

Natalie smiles. "Sounds like a **1 stress** flashback. What are you doing about that giant fire in your engine room? The safety doors are closing to keep it from roaring through the rest of the ship. Are you getting out?"

"Nope," says Alice confidently. "I'm going to open the ports in the engine compartment and vent the oxygen into space. That should kill the fire. Hopefully I don't get sucked out with it."

"Well that's a bold plan! Give me a **resistance roll** to hang onto something, and to keep enough of your breath in. You'll take harm afterwards though if you don't fix the whole 'can't breathe

in a vacuum' situation."

"This is physical so...**PROWESS?**" asks Alice. Natalie nods. "Another **6!** Zero stress. I'm resisting like a champ today. Okay, before I fiddle with the jump drive, I snag the gas mask I wear when cleaning the engine exhaust, and an oxygen tank for the welding torch. I **RIG** something to help me breathe for at least a few minutes till I can get the drive back online."

"Sounds **risky**," says Natalie. "If you take too long, you might pass out."

"I'll take that chance, and push myself," says Alice. "I have a **RIG** of 3, so with the push that's four dice. **1, 1, 2...** and another **6!** I do it! Also, since that was **risky**, I generate a **gambit** for the crew."

THE GETAWAY

"Nice job!" Natalie says. "Ray, Aleera, what are you folks doing while this life and death struggle is going on in the engine room? Your dashboard still says the jump drive is off-line."

"I'm going to look for the biggest ship I can," says Juan, "and try to run along it, as close to the surface as I dare. When we crest the tip, Aleera, give them everything you have with the guns, and I'll do some fancy flying."

"So the two of you are working together? Is this a **group action HELM?**"

"No," says Rachel. "I think I'm just trying to make sure we can get away more easily. I'm not trying to disable their ship, just blast enough plasma in their faces so that they're blinded. Then we can run while they're distracted. I'm going to **set up** Ray with my shots for increased effect."

"I see. That works too." Natalie says. "So what action are you using for that?"

"I'm rolling **HELM**. I only have one die, but I'm going to push for a second die, and I have the Keen Eye ability so I get another die when firing ship guns. And I'll grab that gambit Hayley earned us. So four dice total. Not bad. What's my position?" Rachel asks.

"**Controlled**. It's pretty easy to keep them from closing too quickly when you have particle cannons to fire at them." says Natalie.

Rachel rolls. "I got a **6**!"

"Your ship surges past the frigate that Ray's flying on top of. Your guns fire a barrage the moment they come into the crosshairs, plasma lighting up their shields a bright blue as they divert and take evasive actions."

Juan stands up out of his chair. "Yes! Okay! I'm straight-lining directly for that jumpgate. I have **+1 effect** from Aleera. This should do it. Everything we got! Here we go crew! Let's finish this chase off!"

"Covering that much distance when your engines aren't at 100 percent is probably **desperate**. You cool with that?" Natalie asks.

"'Desperate' is my middle name," Juan says, wiggling his eyebrows. "I'm going to push again, and grab a **gambit** we have... double **6s**! I generate a **gambit** even though I spent one, because I have Never Tell Me The Odds as a Scoundrel special ability."

The **crit** plus the setup means Natalie marks the remaining ticks on the getaway clock. It's full!

"The blinded Draxler's Raiders fire a few shots but miss badly. They hit some nearby vessels, and the Legionnaires turn on their lights and come onto the scene. That's not going to end well for them." She turns back to Alice. "So. How's the jump drive as we hit the gate?"

Alice picks up her **RIG** dice again. "What's my position?"

"Desperate. You're trying to restart a jump drive using an untested bypass while sucking air through a makeshift mask."

"Another **6**! The jump drive is online right as we hit the gate."

"By the skin of your teeth!" Natalie says. "Nice!"

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ How would a different engagement roll result change the job? On a **1-3**, the crew would start in a desperate position. Would you start with a scan gone wrong, or skip straight to the Legionnaires boarding the ship? What if they had gotten a **6** or a **critical**? How would you handle it?
- ▶ When Aleera jumped the Legionnaires, on the **1-3** and **4/5** results, how would things have gone if the PCs had resisted the consequences? Do you think those consequences were appropriate, given that the Legion obviously had Guild hardware? How would you increase or decrease the severity of consequences if the opponent was different?
- ▶ The **critical result** on the **SCRAP** roll really made things a lot simpler, didn't it? The crew could have been fighting it out with the Legion, but instead they just slipped on through to the second problem of Draxler's Raiders. What do you think of skipping past obstacles like this?
- ▶ What did you think of the positions in the last few rolls of the job? Would you have made it easier for Hayley to **RIG** the drives back online, or did you like the grittier feeling of things being on a knife's edge? Did you think that 1 stress was enough for her flashback for the bypass or would you have had it cost 2?



CHAPTER 5

DOWNTIME

After finishing a job (succeed or fail), the crew regroups, recovers, and prepares for the next job. This phase of the game is called **downtime**.

Downtime fulfills two purposes in **Scum and Villainy**:

- ▶ It's a break for the players. During the job, the PCs are always under threat, dealing with obstacles in a high-energy sequence. Downtime offers a reprieve—a chance to focus on quieter parts of the story as well as explore personal aspects of their characters.
- ▶ The new phase of the game signals a shift in mechanics. In downtime, we grab a different toolbox and resolve downtime on its own terms, then shift back the more action-focused phases of the game afterwards.

Downtime is divided into four parts, which are resolved in order:

- 1. PAYOFF AND UPKEEP.** The crew receives their rewards from a successful job and does routine maintenance on their ship.
- 2. HEAT.** The crew attracts suspicion and attention from the law and the powers that be in the system as a result of their last job. **Note:** **HEAT** is tracked separately for each system.
- 3. ENTANGLEMENTS.** The crew faces trouble from the rival factions, the law, and the forces in the system.
- 4. DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES.** The PCs indulge their vices to remove stress, work on long-term projects, recover from injuries, etc.

After the **downtime activities** are resolved, the game returns to free play, and the group can move toward their next job.

PAYOFF & UPKEEP

PAYOFF

After a job, the PCs take stock of their income from the operation. A successful job generates **CRED**.

The crew earns **CRED** based on the nature of the operation and/or any valuables they seized:

- ▶ **2 CRED**: A minor job; enough to make it to next week.
- ▶ **4 CRED**: A small job; enough to buy a hoverbike.
- ▶ **6 CRED**: A standard job; enough for a small vehicle or a ship module.
- ▶ **8 CRED**: A major job; enough to buy important ship parts.
- ▶ **10+ CRED**: A treasure trove; enough to buy a small ship of your own.

Record the **CRED** on the crew sheet, or divvy it up among the crew members as you see fit.

You can set the scene and play out a meeting with a client or patron who's paying the crew if there's something interesting to explore there. If not, just gloss over it and move onto **HEAT**.

GM, definitely don't screw around with the players when it comes to the payoff. Don't say that the client lied and there's no reward. Or that the meeting for the payment is actually a trap. These types of things are staples of crime fiction, but the PCs have enough problems coming at them from every direction already. When it comes to getting paid, just give them what they earned.

The job they pulled also affects the crew's relationship with other factions (see page 264).

UPKEEP

Ship parts wear out, there are fuel and repair costs, and minor patch jobs to handle scrapes and dents from flying through space. Each downtime right after payoff, decide if you pay for ship upkeep. Upkeep for a ship is calculated as follows (rounded down):

$$\text{upkeep} = (\text{system quality} + \text{crew quality}) / 4$$

*The crew of the Faraday just finished a lucrative job. After being paid 8 **CRED**, they upkeep their ship. The Faraday has 5 in system quality (engines 2, hull 2, and weapons 1) and a crew quality of 1. Their upkeep is therefore 1 (6 divided by 4, rounded down). The captain pays for the upkeep and divides the rest of the **CRED**, giving 1 to each crew member (four of them) and leaves 3 **CRED** in the ship treasury (marked on the ship's sheet).*

SKIPPED UPKEEP ROLL

► **1d** for each consecutive time you've skipped paying upkeep.

6+: A system is badly damaged. You can **repair** it with a downtime activity next time you're in port.

4/5: A system malfunctions but it's minor. You can **RIG** a solution in the field.

1-3: No worries. The wear and tear is minor and won't affect performance on the next job.

Sometimes you don't have the funds (or just don't want to spend the funds) to upkeep your ship. In that case roll dice equal to the number of upkeeps you've skipped (if this is your first, you're at 1d).

OUTCOMES

The roll doesn't guarantee your ship falls apart. If you roll a **1-3** result, the wear and tear is minor and can be paid for during the next upkeep. If you roll a **4/5** result, a system blows but an engineer can put together a stopgap solution with just a **RIG** roll (maybe you have a replacement part on hand). If you roll a **6** or a **crit**, there will be a significant hit to your ship (as if your ship took a point of damage) as a piece goes critical and affects a whole system.

The outcome of the upkeep roll is known, but doesn't occur immediately. So if you roll a **6+** you may not realize that a critical part has worn through (otherwise you probably would have repaired and replaced it as part of your upkeep). The problems that occur during these rolls tend to appear when you need a part the most. If you're trying to run a Legion blockade with some illegal goods next job, your jump drive might fail. Perhaps a part might fail when you're floating alone in space long after a job. Whatever the trouble, it's not immediately apparent, but the GM should make sure that it crops up during the next job that utilizes the ship.

Having been chased off their last job by well-armed Guild guards, the crew of the Faraday gets 0 CRED for not completing the job and is a little tight on capital. Ray decides to not pay upkeep and the crew rolls a die. They roll a 4/5. Natalie, their GM, makes a note that their shields have a problem with power, and the next time they're shot they might find out. The crew looks at her, grinning with trepidation, but moves on to HEAT.

If you need some **CRED** fast, you may consider going into **debt** (see page 192).

HEAT

Procyon is full of prying eyes and informants. Anything you do might be witnessed, and there's always evidence left behind. To reflect this, your crew acquires **HEAT** as they commit crimes. This represents the amount of pressure the local system police and law authorities can bring down on your character.

After a job or conflict with an opponent, your crew takes **HEAT** according to how the job played out:

► **0 HEAT:** Completely quiet; others are blamed.

► **1 HEAT:** Smooth and quiet; low exposure.

► **2 HEAT:** Contained; standard exposure.

► **4 HEAT:** Loud and chaotic; high exposure.

► **6 HEAT:** Wild; devastating exposure.

There are also actions that garner additional **HEAT** and attention from the law. Add the following:

► **+1 HEAT:** High-profile or well-connected target. Public use of artifacts.

► **+2 HEAT:** Killing of Hegemonic citizens (whether the crew did the killing or not—bodies draw attention). Massive property damage. Illegal weapons use.

► **+3 HEAT:** Damaging a hyperspace lane or system gate.

You mark **HEAT** on the system sheet the job was performed in. Each system tracks **HEAT** separately.

If a job spans multiple systems, place the **HEAT** on the system in which the majority of the illegal activity happened. If it was loud and chaotic across multiple systems, discuss the situation with your table. You may have picked up illegal cargo in Rin but fought a freighter in Iota. In that case, maybe you put the **HEAT** in Iota, as that's where the most "noise" of the job happened, or divide the **HEAT** between both sectors.

GMs: Whenever possible, don't duplicate **HEAT** (if you moved illegal goods from Rin through Iota to Brekk, all three systems should not get **HEAT**) unless major public events happened on each leg of the job.



*Marking 2 **HEAT** on the **HEAT** tracker. When the tracker is full, mark a **WANTED LEVEL** and clear all the **HEAT**.*

WANTED LEVEL

When your **HEAT** level reaches 8 in a system, you gain a **WANTED LEVEL** and clear your **HEAT** (any excess **HEAT** “rolls over,” so if your **HEAT** was 7 and you took 4 **HEAT**, you’d reset with 3 **HEAT** marked).

The higher your **WANTED LEVEL**, the more serious the response when law enforcement takes action against you (they’ll send a force of higher quality and scale).

Also, your **WANTED LEVEL** contributes to the severity of the **entanglements** that your crew faces after a job. See page 180 for details.

CLEARING HEAT & WANTED LEVELS

Running on the bad side of the law eventually catches up with you. To clear **HEAT** and **WANTED LEVELS**, your crew can **lay low** in a different system. See page 186 for more details.



ENTANGLEMENTS

Your characters and crew didn't just spring into existence tonight. You have a complex history of favors, commitments, debts, and promises that got you where you are today. To reflect this, after each job, you roll dice to find out which **entanglement** comes calling. An entanglement might be a rival crew looking to throw their weight around (and demand some **CRED**), a system police officer making a case against your crew (but ready for a bribe), or even the attention of a strange Way creature.

After payoff and **HEAT** are determined, the GM generates an entanglement for the crew using the lists below. Find the column that matches the crew's current **WANTED LEVEL**. Then roll a die to select which sort of entanglement manifests.

WANTED 0	WANTED 1
1 Ship Trouble	1 Ship Trouble
2 Unquiet Black	2 Unquiet Black
3 New "Friends"	3 Interrogation
4/5 Cooperation	4/5 Reprisals
6 Roll on Wanted 1	6 Roll on Wanted 2

Use the column for the **WANTED LEVEL** of the system the ship is in at the end of the job. If you roll a 6, roll on the next chart (sometimes blowback is harsh).

Some groups like to roll "in the open" so everyone knows what's about to hit them. Others let the GM roll "in secret" so it's a surprise. Either way is fine.

WANTED 2	WANTED 3
1 Collectors	1 Ur Field
2 Impounded	2 Pirates!
3 Bounty Hunter	3 Out of Gas
4/5 Interrogation	4/5 Arrest
6 Roll on Wanted 3	6 Wanted Level 4

Entanglements manifest fully before the PCs have a chance to avoid them. When an entanglement comes into play, describe the situation after the entanglement has manifested. The PCs deal with it from that point—they can't intercept it and defuse it before it happens. The purpose of the mechanic is to abstract the complex stuff happening in the sector and the background of the crew's lives. As the GM, keep an eye out to bring in friends, rivals, old enemies, and the plots of the sector in general via entanglements.

Entanglements are the cost of doing business in the underworld—a good crew learns to roll with the punches and pick their battles.

The entanglements are detailed on the following pages. Each has a list of potential ways for the PCs to resolve them. If you want the entanglement to be a momentary problem for the crew, stick to the suggested methods to resolve it, and move on to the next part of downtime. If you want to dive in and explore the entanglement in detail, set the scene and play out the event in full, following the actions and consequences where they lead.

ARREST

A detective presents a case file of evidence to a judge, to begin prosecution of your crew. The system police send a detail to arrest you (a gang at least equal in **scale** to your **WANTED LEVEL** or a ship of that Tier). Pay them off with **CRED** equal to your **WANTED LEVEL** +3, hand someone over for arrest (this clears your **HEAT** and **WANTED LEVEL** in the system), or try to evade capture.

A hail comes over the comms as a police cruiser translates out of a hyperlane. "This is Captain Lineal of the Indri System Police. Shut down your engines and prepare to be boarded." At the same time, a second encrypted channel is opened. "This doesn't have to get ugly. Here's the routing number to my private account." There's a palpable tension in the air as the cruiser seems to wait for your decision.

BOUNTY HUNTER

An enemy faction hires a bounty hunter. Fight, evade, or pay them off. If you have no faction with negative status, you avoid entanglements right now.

*Bounty hunters are strong fighters, with armor, drones, and weapons that grant them **potency** in combat. Base their Tier on the hiring faction and how angry they are. Pay them off with 3 **CRED**.*

COLLECTORS

A collection agency claims part of your ship. Pay them 2 **CRED**, give them the components (remove a ship module), or make them leave another way.

COOPERATION

A faction you have +2 or +3 status with asks you for a "favor." Agree to it or lose a status with them. If you don't have a +2 or +3 faction status, you avoid entanglements right now.

The GM should look at the faction's goals for job prompts.

IMPOUNDED

Dock authorities impound your craft. Bribe dockworkers to lift the lockdown with 2 **CRED**, or steal your ship back. If you are not on a planet or station, you avoid entanglements right now.

INTERROGATION

System officers round up one of the PCs to question them about the crew's crimes. *How did they manage to capture you?* Either pay them off with 2 **CRED**, or they sweat it out of you (level 2 harm) AND you tell them what they want to know (+2 **HEAT**). You can resist each of those consequences separately.

Some players really hate it when their character gets captured! Just tell them that this is completely normal for a criminal in Procyon. You spend time in and out of jail, getting questioned and harassed by the law. It's not the end of the world. But now that you're here in the interrogation room, what kind of person are you? Do you talk? Do you stand up to them? Do you make a deal? Playing out an escape can also be fun!

NEW "FRIENDS"

A neutral faction asks you to do a job that is either extra dangerous, pays little, or gathers more **HEAT** than usual (GM's choice). Accept or lose a status with them.

The GM should look at their faction goals for job prompts.

OUT OF GAS

A piece of your ship fails catastrophically, damaging the system and rendering it inoperable until repaired. If you didn't use your ship at all on the last job, you avoid entanglements right now.

This entanglement can happen while in flight between planets or systems, or on the way to or from a job. This failure means the whole system (for example, engines) can't be used. Who do you call for help and what will it cost you?

PIRATES!

Pirates attempt to take over your ship by force. Outrun, fight, or cut a deal. If you didn't use your ship at all on the last job, you avoid entanglements right now.

This entanglement can happen while in flight between planets or systems, or on the way to or from a job.

REPRISALS

An enemy faction moves against you or yours. Pay them 1 **CRED** per Tier, allow them to mess with you, or fight back. If you have no faction with negative status, you avoid entanglements right now.

SHIP TROUBLE

A ship system acts up. Damage a system (the GM will tell you which).

You may repair the system as normal, though you have to deal with the consequences of the damage at the time it occurs. This entanglement can happen while in flight between planets or systems, or on the way to or from a job.

UNQUIET BLACK

An alien or Way creature finds its way on board. Acquire the services of a mystic or exterminator to destroy or banish it, or deal with it yourself.

*Treat the magnitude (see page 278) of the Way creature as equal to the crew's **WANTED LEVEL** in the system. Parasites, cargo you weren't told was alive, strange creatures hiding in unmapped lanes, and bizarre physics effects from using your jump drives way past capacity can all apply here.*

UR FIELD

The closest jumpgate calls to each of you in a language you cannot understand. Resist with **RESOLVE** or take **level 1 harm** from the visions you cannot escape.

What you choose to do with the visions is up to you. They end after you leave the system or the next downtime—whichever comes first.

WANTED LEVEL 4: WARSHIP

The Governor sends a Legion or Malklaith warship to capture your ship. When you hit **WANTED LEVEL 4** in a system, the Governor's personal guard is sent out to bring you to justice, and you will have to find a way to get away. You cannot bribe them, and fighting them would be foolhardy. In any case, if you survive the encounter, your **WANTED LEVEL** drops by 1—resources for your pursuit aren't infinite.

Generally the ship will be a well-armed frigate with a few personal fighters. You may want to consider repainting or modifying your ship, or getting fake papers and transponders to help shake similar experiences off your tail.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Between jobs, your crew spends time at their liberty, attending to personal needs and side projects. These are called **downtime activities**. During a **downtime** phase, each PC has time for **two downtime activities**. When you're at War with a faction, each PC has time for only one.

You may choose to do the same activity more than once, and the crew may do these in any order. You can only attempt actions that you're in a position to accomplish. If an activity hinges on another action, resolve that action first.

ACQUIRE ASSET
CRAFT
INDULGE VICE
LAY LOW
LONG-TERM PROJECT
RECOVER
REPAIR
TRAIN

A PC can make time for more than two activities, at a cost. **Each additional activity costs 1 CRED**. This reflects the time and resource drain while you're "off the clock" and not earning from a job. When you complete a new job, you reset and get two "free" activities again.

Activities on the downtime list are limited; normal actions are not. During downtime, you can still go places, do things, make action rolls, gather information, talk with other characters, etc. In other words, only activities that are *on the list* are limited.

For any downtime activity, you may spend **CRED** after the roll to improve the result level. **Increase the result level by one for each CRED spent**. So, a **1-3** result becomes a **4/5**, a **4/5** result becomes a **6**, and a **6** becomes a **critical**. If the action requires a roll and you can involve a contact on your sheet or the ship sheet, take **+1d**.

Frequently players will want to decide on what job they're about to do next, so they can prepare for it by **acquiring assets**, and gathering information. Didn't think of the right thing to bring on a job? You can **flash back** to a **downtime activity** by paying a **CRED** as normal.

GM: If a player can't decide which downtime activity to pick, offer them a **long-term project** idea. You know what the player is interested in and what they like. Suggest a project that will head in a fun direction for them. Suggest they look into what their rivals or factions they're interested in are up to.

"Remember that strange song you heard when you opened the drive core before you passed out? Yeah, do you want to get to the bottom of that? Okay, start a long-term project—six segments—called 'Songs in the Way.' What action do you use to work on that?"

ACQUIRE ASSETS

Gain temporary use of an **asset**:

- ▶ A **contractor** (an expert or gang). They show up with reasonable gear equivalent to their Tier.
- ▶ A ground **vehicle** or legal **ship module**.
- ▶ One **special item**, or a set of **common items** for the whole crew.
- ▶ A **service**. Transport from a smuggler or driver, use of a warehouse for temporary storage, legal representation, etc.

"Temporary use" is one significant period of usage that makes sense for the asset—typically the duration of one job. An asset may also be acquired for "standby" use in the future. You might hire a gang to guard your ship, for example, and they'll stick around until after the first serious battle, or until a week goes by and they lose interest.

To acquire the asset, roll **crew quality**. The result indicates the quality of the asset you get, using the crew's quality as the base. **1-3:** Quality -1, **4/5:** Equal, **6:** Quality +1, **critical:** Quality +2.

The GM may set a minimum quality level to acquire a particular asset. For example, if you want to get 51st Legion uniforms and badges, you'd need to acquire a Tier III asset. A lower result won't do.

If you acquire the same asset again in the future, you get **+1d** to your roll.

If you want to acquire an asset permanently, you can either gain it as a crew upgrade (using the rules for crew advancement, page 51) or work on it as a **long-term project** to set up a permanent acquisition.

*Rogan So'Hayan keeps running into the worst the Way has to offer, and decides to **acquire** some Mystic Ammunition from a pirate bullet maker. When he acquires Mystic Ammunition again, he does so at **+1d**. The bullet maker knows a good customer and saves the good stuff when he can.*

*After it proves invaluable, Rogan decides to add it to his gear permanently. After talking with the GM, his player starts an **8-segment long-term project**: "Gather Ur-metal Stash to Craft Bullets From." He can work on it by **CONSORTING** or **SWAYING** his mystic goods supplier or rolling his **lifestyle level** to represent small bits of Ur-metal picked up on the black market.*

CRAFTING

Build an item you've studied the schematics for. For more details, see **Crafting**, page 282.

INDULGE VICE

You engage in your vice and clear stress. For more details, see **Vice**, page 190.

LAY LOW

If you want to reduce your crew's **HEAT** and **WANTED LEVEL** in a system, start by hiding in another system. Say what your character does to reduce crew **HEAT** while hiding and roll an appropriate **action**. Maybe you **CONSORT** with your friend the diplomat and she arranges for a few incriminating Legion reports to vanish. Or you **COMMAND** some criminal allies to rough up sector cops on the trail.

Reduce **HEAT** in the system by 2. If you are **WANTED**, add segments to the **WANTED** reduction clock (on the appropriate system sheet) according to your roll: **1-3**: one, **4/5**: two, **6**: three, **critical**: five. If the **WANTED** reduction clock fills, reduce your **WANTED LEVEL** in that system by one and clear the clock.

LONG-TERM PROJECT

When working on a long-term project (either brand new, or already existing), describe what your character does to advance the project clock and roll an action. Mark segments on the clock according to your result: **1-3**: one segment, **4/5**: two, **6**: three, **critical**: five.

A long-term project can cover a wide variety of activities, like doing research into an Ur artifact, investigating a crime, establishing someone's trust, courting a new friend or contact, changing your character's vice, and so on. You can even do them in sequence. Sometimes you have to finish one project to enable another.

Based on the goal of the project, the GM will tell you the clock(s) to create and suggest a method by which you might make progress.

*On the last job, Aman opened the airlock on a Nightspeaker ship and blew Oin-rai into space. But now Oin has been sighted causing havoc on Indri, shouting for Aman's head. How is this possible? This is beyond the scope of a simple gather information roll, so Aman starts a long-term project to investigate this mystery. The GM says it will be an 8-segment clock. Aman spends a downtime activity **CONSORTING** with mystics on the matter. The player rolls Aman's **CONSORT** action and gets a **4**: two segments on the project clock.*

In order to work on a project, you might first have to achieve the means to pursue it—which can be a project in itself. For example, you might want to make friends with a member of the Sah'iir, but you have no connection to them. You could first work on a project to **CONSORT** in their circles so you have the opportunity to meet one of them. Once that's accomplished, you could start a new project to form a friendly relationship.

RECOVER

When you recover, you seek treatment and heal your harm. You might visit a doctor who can stitch your wounds. Roll (**crew quality**-1) to see how available and effective the doctor you can hire is.

A crew member can roll their **DOCTOR** action instead, if they tend to your wounds (the healer doesn't take the **recover** action—healing is mostly rest). You can treat yourself but it will cost **1 stress** to do so.

When you've received treatment from the recover action, **clear all level 1 harm**. If you have harm remaining, advance your **healing clock** (on your character sheet, just below your harm tracker) according to your recovery roll (crew quality or **DOCTOR** action): **1-3**: one, **4/5**: two, **6**: three, **critical**: five segments. Even with the best roll, healing wounds takes time. Remember to add +1d to your roll if you enlist a crew contact to help.

healing clock >



When your healing clock is filled, remove all harm. If you suffer further harm before you finish healing, reset your healing clock.

*On the last job, Captain Xandra Starblaze took some cuts (level 1 harm), a blaster burn (level 2 harm), and a broken hand (level 2 harm). She gets treatment (**recover** downtime activity) from Doctor X'thul. She rolls **crew quality-1** to recover (a single die), and gets a **4**. She removes the cut (level 1 harm) and advances her healing clock two segments. She has the special ability *Flesh Wound*, so she marks three more segments, putting her at five. Xandra's player may spend one more **CRED** to improve the outcome and clear all wounds, or she can take another downtime activity to recover again and finish off the clock.*

The Stitch has a special ability called Patch—they can **DOCTOR** someone to temporarily relieve the effects of harm. With a successful action, the treated PC ignores their current harm penalties for the day.

If your character becomes lost when overindulging their **vice**, they leave play for a while (a few weeks of in-game time, or more). When they return, they have healed any **harm** they had. You may voluntarily choose for your character to become lost—maybe you want to play a different PC while this one recovers, or you'll miss a few sessions, so it's a good time for your character to disappear for a while.

REPAIR

When you repair, you take the time to buy the appropriate parts and oversee major fixes to the ship. If you want to repair a crossed wire or a sparking oscillator, you just need a **RIG** roll. These kinds of repairs fix battle damage and bring back systems from the brink.

When you take the repair action, **spend 1 CRED and clear one damage on a ship system**. The Mechanic's Bailing Wire and Twine ability allows you to do some of the work yourself, and use junk found on the cheap to fix up your ship, removing the need for the **CRED** to be spent and making repairs faster and cheaper.

TRAIN

When you spend time in training, mark **1 xp** on the xp track for an **attribute** or **playbook advancement**. Take a moment to tell everyone what this training looks like, or what you're doing to sharpen these specific skills.

If you have the appropriate crew Training upgrade unlocked, mark **+1 xp** (so 2 xp total). See **Crew Upgrades**, page 116. **You can train a given xp track only once per downtime.**



VICE

STRESS RELIEF

Your characters are a special lot. They defy the powers that be and wrestle with factions who frequently have significant resources. They push themselves further than ordinary people are willing to go—but this comes at a cost. Their life is one of constant stress. To blow off steam, they inevitably turn to their **vices**—which can be self-care but often end up affecting the crew's lives when they get out of hand.

A character's **vice** is a deep part of who they are and pursuing it usually makes trouble for them. But with this indulgence comes a needed stress relief and ability to again face the overwhelming odds in their daring life.

INDULGING YOUR VICE

When you indulge your vice, you clear some stress from your character's stress track. Explain how your character indulges their vice. This indulgence takes time, so it can only be done when the crew has **downtime**. Alternately, you may choose to have your character voluntarily "lost in their vice" during a game session, allowing them to indulge off-camera while you play a different PC. A gang member, friend, someone on board the ship at the time, or a contact of the crew might be a good alternate character to play, thus fleshing out the landscape of PCs.

You roll to find out how much stress relief your character receives. A **vice roll** is like a **resistance roll** in reverse—rather than gaining stress, you clear it. The effectiveness of your indulgence depends upon your character's worst **attribute** rating. It's their weakest quality (**INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, or **RESOLVE**) that is most in thrall to vice.

Make an **attribute roll** using your character's lowest attribute rating (if there's a tie, that's fine—simply use that rating). Clear stress equal to the highest die result.

*Captain Xandra Starblaze keeps getting into trouble, and her stress is at 8. Her vices are stupor and gambling and she knows just the casino to drink and dice her troubles away. Her player describes going to the casino, ordering some booze, and playing a complex xeno gambling game. She rolls her lowest attribute (**INSIGHT** at 2 dice) and gets a **3** and a **5**. She clears 5 stress, leaving her with 3 at the start of the next job.*

VICE ROLL

- 1d per **LOWEST ATTRIBUTE RATING**

Clear stress equal to your highest die result. If you clear more stress levels than you had marked, you **overindulge**. *If you do not or cannot indulge your vice during downtime, you take stress equal to your trauma.*

OVERINDULGENCE

If your **vice roll** clears more stress than you had marked, you **overindulge**. A vice is not a reliable, controllable habit. It's a risk—and one that can drive your character to act against their own best interests.

When you **overindulge**, you make a bad call because of your vice—in acquiring it or while under its influence. To bring the effect of this bad decision into the game, select an overindulgence from the list:

- **Rash Action.** Reduce your **STASH** by 4 or if you can't (or won't), the crew takes **2** debt.
- **Big Talk.** Brag about your exploits. The crew gains **+2 HEAT** in the current system.
- **Lost.** Your character vanishes for a few weeks. Play a different character until this one returns from their bender. When your character returns, they've also healed any harm they had.

IGNORING YOUR VICE

If you do not or cannot indulge your vice during a downtime phase, you take **stress** equal to your **trauma**. If you don't have any trauma, you're free to ignore your vice. It doesn't have a hold over you (yet).

ROLEPLAYING & XP

Your character's vice tells us what kind of person they are. This obsession impacts motivations, goals, and behavior. When your vice causes troubles, or when you overindulge, you earn **xp** at the end of the session. The cost to yourself must be real, though it doesn't have to be devastating. Losing a meaningful opportunity, experiencing a setback with a project, or getting into a heated argument with a friend could all count.

Talk to your GM about problems your vice may cause you. Remember that you can roleplay as much or as little of your vice as you choose and it need not be a constant presence in the game for you.

DEBT

Down on your luck? Blown regulator and no **CRED** to fix it? Need a little extra scratch to buy that fancy new module? Loans from the Counters Guild are great financial tools that allow upstanding citizens to bridge the gap in their cash flow.

You are not an upstanding citizen. Welcome to the world of loan sharks, pawnbrokers, and back-alley moneymongers.

GETTING JUICED

Gaining **CRED** beyond what's in your hold requires finding a lender. This is an **acquire asset** action where the result of the roll determines the max amount you can scrounge up:

- ▶ **Poor (1-3):** Up to **2 CRED**.
- ▶ **Standard (4/5):** Up to **4 CRED**.
- ▶ **Fine (6):** Up to **6 CRED**.
- ▶ **Exceptional (crit):** Up to **8 CRED**.

You can take out fewer than max **CRED**. All modifiers for **acquire asset** and **downtime activities** apply, so you can get extra dice for involving a fixer or moneylender friend, using special abilities that affect downtime activities, or spending **CRED** to improve your result.

*Dax Thrungi, the Pilot of the Tryphon, hasn't paid upkeep and needs to get out of the system before the cops hunt her down over some unpleasantness during the last job. Not having enough **CRED**, she goes looking for someone to borrow the needed money from.*

*Dax needs to make sure that the loan is good enough to float her until her next job, so she taps Choss—her friend, the professional racer. She knows Choss has come up with cutting-edge parts when he was down on his luck so he might put her in touch with the right kind of people. After talking to him, and impressing upon him her need and urgency, her player makes an **acquire asset** roll.*

*She assembles her dice pool. The Tryphon has a crew rating of 1, and Dax gets an extra die for leveraging a friend or contact during downtime, for a total of two dice. She rolls a **5**—a standard result—which means she can borrow up to **4 CRED**. Choss puts Dax in touch with some Ashen Knives moneylenders. They seem nice enough for now, but she knows they'll be waiting in Iota for her to repay her debts.*

Dax chooses to borrow 2 CRED, and marks 2 debt on the Tryphon's sheet. She spends the first to pay her upkeep, and the second for another acquire asset action to pick up some fake papers. She needs to get through the gate even if the cops are looking for a ship like hers. She'll take care of repainting the hull on the way.

The GM should ask questions and use the answers to invent a character that holds this debt. Create a clock to represent the urgency of how soon the debt will need to be repaid, with an 8-clock being standard. Every downtime, form a fortune pool from the debt amount on the ship and roll to advance this clock. When the clock is full, the lender makes trouble for the crew, such as hiring local muscle to collect what money they can. This may not square the debt, but it will reset the repayment clock.

Debt is paid off at the rate of **2 CRED** to **1** debt. Loan sharks are not known for their generosity and fair rates. No crew can carry more than **8** debt at a time. When you're in that deep, word gets around and nobody will touch you.

CLEVER TRICKS

During a job, a **Devil's Bargain** might increase your debt clock. It's very possible that blowback or **HEAT** from your current job might make your creditor more anxious about getting paid before the cops put you outside their reach.

Similarly, you may be able to reduce the clock by working on a **long-term project** to help alleviate fears and make partial payments that build goodwill with your creditor.

Your crew might be able to negotiate with your creditor to do a job in lieu of some (or all) of your loan being paid off. Discuss the exact details with your table.

Overindulging in your vice can affect your debt rating. If you don't have a loan and you select the Lost overindulgence, the GM should let you know who financed your ill-timed binge. If you already hold debt, you just get in deeper. Either way, trouble comes knocking sooner rather than later.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES IN PLAY

The crew of the *Faraday* had a rough job that's left their ship in tatters and the law itching to have them pass back through the Indri system (**WANTED 1**).

Alice (who plays Hayley, a Mechanic) elects to fix the ship. Rachel (who plays first mate Aleera) decides to do what she can to calm the problem with the system cops.

Alice spends the free repair downtime activity she gets from Hayley's *Bailing Wire* and *Twine* ability to repair the engines, and takes 3 **CRED** from the ship to fix the remaining damage. The ability also makes the repair action not cost **CRED**, or this would be a lot more expensive, and the crew would need to do jobs on-world if they wanted to keep repairing the ship over time. She uses a free downtime action to indulge in her pleasure vice, buying a giant feast in the most expensive restaurant on *Nightfall* to celebrate a repair job well done. She rolls her lowest attribute—**PROWESS**—at 1 die, and clears the result—4 stress. She has one free downtime activity left to do. It may be time to start on a new schematic!

Aleera spends some time at the local pilots bars to **CONSORT** with smuggler captains and crews. She gets them to report her ship being seen in the Rin system and elsewhere, throwing the Indri cops off their trail. She rolls her **CONSORT** and gets a **6**! She marks three segments on the "Indri Wanted" clock, and lowers the **HEAT** in the system by 2. She still has one activity left to do.

—

Rogan wants to discover how the pieces of the Raiment of Night all relate to each other. He talks to his GM and they agree that this is a 10-clock long-term project called "Learn Nightspeaker Secrets." The next downtime he has to spare, he works on it by **ATTUNING** to the piece he currently possesses. He rolls a **6** and marks three segments on the project clock.

—

Hayley is working on replacing her Small Drone, which she jammed in a door so she could squeeze through while on the run. She already has the schematic so she just crafts another one, rolling her **RIG**. She unfortunately rolls a **1**. In order to replace her aerial companion, she will need to spend 1 **CRED** to bump up the result to equal her crew quality.

NPC & FACTION DOWNTIME

NPCs and factions do things when the PCs have downtime. The GM advances their faction clocks and chooses a downtime action or two for each faction that they're interested in at the moment.

If you want to do it immediately, you might want to call for a short break in the game, otherwise it's okay to do it between games—as long as you take the time to do so for each downtime the PCs have.

It's important to do this because it makes the sector feel more alive and real. Remember as PCs move about their downtimes to incorporate some of these actions into news reports they might see, rumors they might gather from friends and folks they indulge their vice with, and jobs they may be offered.

The details on how to do this are in **Faction Clocks**, page 260.





CHAPTER 6

HOW TO PLAY

FICTION-FIRST GAMING

Unlike a board game, there's no procedure that tells you what to do in a roleplaying game like **Scum and Villainy**. There isn't an order of turns and a clear subset of steps to choose from (such as placing tiles or paying for workers) with a win condition to prompt an optimal path.

You choose what you want to see in the story and attempt to make it happen, describing the fiction of the scene and what your character does and engaging with rules as you go to determine outcomes. The term for this style of play is **fiction-first gaming**.

In a military board game, if you decide to produce troops, you engage with the mechanics. Story comes as an afterthought—a creative process that enriches the mechanical choices of the game. “The Territories of the East will never be denied our rightful place in the Four Nations!” you might proclaim loudly while picking up the dice for your move. But the decision about what to do was rightfully *mechanics first*. Story may emerge through play, or you may flavor your action, or you may forgo it completely. The fiction is a byproduct.

Not so in fiction-first gaming. You say what your character does in the scene you and your group at the table are collectively weaving. You engage with the fiction first, describe the narrative, and then apply rules (like **action rolls**) if they're called for and appropriate. Your choices are only constrained by the fictional context in which you make those choices. Often you're not even sure what mechanics to engage with until you examine the fictional context you're in.

For example, here are several mechanics in **Scum and Villainy** that could be used if you try to open a lockbox. To understand which mechanic to use, we have to first establish the fiction.

If you're in **downtime**, there's no real risk to take your time, so you can just open the lockbox. If the goods inside would be destroyed by some failsafe mechanism, maybe you have to spend a few weeks cracking it slowly and safely. This uses the **long-term project** mechanic. Or if you don't want to wait, instead you **acquire an asset** of a master safecracker. It might cost a few **CRED** to get someone good enough, but it'll be quick and safe.

On the other hand, if you're on a job and the Governor's guards are about to burst into the office with their high-powered Guild weapons and stun grenades, and you have seconds to get the goods out of the safe, this is a different story. You might have to quickly **HACK** the lock mechanism. Perhaps you **STUDY** the room and try to deduce a passcode the Governor might have, or—if you're got him tied up in the room—just **COMMAND** him to tell you.

There are countless approaches one could take, constrained only by the circumstances of the story. Once you establish what's going on in the fiction, determining which mechanic to engage with is usually straightforward. If you attempt to reverse that process, play can become confused or flat. Likewise, if play gets confusing, it often helps to re-examine what was going on in the fiction.

Don't try to force any particular rule on the fiction. Sticking with a fiction-first approach ensures that everything happening in the fiction stems from something in the narrative, and makes players more invested in the story.

Scum and Villainy has a lot of tools. Without a fictional context, however, these tools are inert. Use the tools that suit what you're trying to do as established by the fiction. This process of matching the tool to the job requires judgment and opinions about what pieces of the toolkit are provided by the game.

As your group gains familiarity with the rules, you'll have opinions about which tools are best for which circumstances. This is a really good thing! The process of determining which tools to use and why can be thoroughly creative and satisfying. It's up to you and your group to learn the tools the game provides and decide how to best take advantage of them. As you do so, you'll establish a set of precedents and a style of gameplay that is uniquely your own.

TRIGGERING THE ACTION ROLL

Play at the table looks a lot like a group conversation—you narrate actions, speak for your character, make wisecracks, speculate about what is going on, but that's all just talking.

At some point, the conversation switches. It's still a conversation, but now it's about the rules themselves and engaging with them correctly. This shift in topic is the GM's responsibility to manage, but anyone can call attention to it. For actions, you should call for a roll when any of these happen:

- ▶ **A player character attempts a challenging action** that might be dangerous, opposed, or troublesome.
- ▶ **A player character leads or gives orders to an NPC or NPC group** that faces something dangerous or troublesome.
- ▶ **Someone grabs the dice and gets excited about making a roll.**

The GM should interrogate the player's approach, which determines which **action rating** they'll use. It's also important to clarify the **position** the player is in, and the **effect level** they'll have.

"I need to get into that warehouse to recover our stolen shipment."

"Okay, how are you doing that?"

*"I'm going to **SKULK** in, past the night patrol."*

*"Alright. That sounds **risky**. The night patrol is there to specifically catch people like you. It's at **limited effect**—there's perimeter security and locks on the warehouse doors. You'll only get to outside the warehouse with that effect. Unless you want to flash back to getting the door codes in advance?"*

Anyone at the table can contribute—clarifying, suggesting alternative positions and effect levels, or even new approaches that might be more or less dangerous. Once everyone is satisfied, you shift into the mechanical resolution, picking up dice and rolling them.

Don't just roll without going through the process of setting a meaningful position and effect.

If a player wants to take someone out with a single blaster shot (pew pew!), how easy or dangerous is that? Is the position controlled? Risky? Desperate? **What is the player rolling risking?** Taking a moment to get everything contextualized makes outcomes feel natural, and the fiction make sense. Clarity before the roll helps avoid asking "now what?" at the consequences.

Baked into the action roll is the assumption that things are never completely safe. Situations can change, some things can't be foreseen. There's always a risk of things like harm, consequences, **HEAT**, or making an enemy. Players still get stuff done. The **4/5** result is often enough to accomplish a goal, but there's a cost.

Is the enemy returning fire? Are both combatants going for a single lethal blow? Then the position is probably desperate. On a **4/5**, the player does it, yeah, but with serious consequences! They inflict a mortal wound, and receive one in return.

For some, receiving a deadly wound doesn't feel like "success." But in **Scum and Villainy**, an action roll covers the whole exchange. It resolves both the PC's action and that of the enemy. That enemy is trying to do something too, and a "partial success" means they managed to do about as much.

If less immediate consequences are appropriate, the GM can use a clock. Instead of being seen on a **4/5 SKULK** roll, start an "Alert" clock. This technique allows you to maintain the tension longer. Explain the fictional consequences when you adjust these clocks. Does the guard say "Something's fishy. Stay alert!" over the comms after spotting a moving shadow but not finding the character immediately?

Scum and Villainy involves struggles—nothing comes for free. Crews have to carve out their victories amidst scary factions not keen on sharing. The PCs have resources (such as **stress** or **armor**) to mitigate consequences. The players have to make hard choices about what's worth resisting with limited stress pools, and when to take a hit for a crewmate, accept a tough Devil's Bargain, and so on.

Teamwork is a great tool for stretching out resources and can change **position**, improve **effect**, improve your odds, or spread **harm** around.

When it comes to **positions**, ask what the PC is risking and figure out what position that implies. If they're about to take lethal harm, the position is probably desperate. Describe the NPCs mid-action, about to do something to the PC before the roll, to highlight risks.

"You dive from the balcony, knife in hand, and your bounty target brings up his blaster, firing as you drop onto him. Desperate position, great effect."

Experiment with these dials—position, effect, consequences. As a GM, avoid unilateral decisions—ask the group what they think. Is this desperate? Should it be limited effect or a one-and-done deal? By reaching out to the group, you develop buy-in to how the game goes and establish what works for your group.

WHY WE DO THIS

We could just talk everything out instead of involving dice, but as people, we tend to build consensus. This is a good thing! It helps establish rapport, set expectations, and create a shared narrative. But we don't want to know what's going to happen before characters go into danger; we want to be surprised, driven to bigger risks, or inspired into new approaches by unexpected setbacks.

The roll introduces the unexpected. It tells us the costs of our choices. It interjects new problems and difficulties, and asks us to rise to the new challenges together. We play using dice because we welcome this opportunity to be surprised, betrayed, and challenged by them.

When the action mechanic is triggered, we become authors just for a moment while we set position, define the threats, and determine the possible outcomes. Then author mode switches off and everyone gets to be the audience, holding their breath, waiting to see exactly how it all works out as the dice fall.



HOW TO CHOOSE AN ACTION

An **action roll** is typically called for when the character is in motion, facing an uncertain outcome due to difficulty or obstacle.

Whatever they do within the fiction will determine the **action rating** they roll. A player is free to revise their character's action in order to use a different rating, as long as the character performs that new action in the fiction.

*Hayley Griffen needs to land a shuttle that's been shot up by pirates and is rapidly falling towards the ground. The GM asks her how she does that and Hayley's player says she'll jump on the console and take the controls. She's describing a **HELM** action, so that's what she'll roll.*

Hayley's player may change her mind and say, "Oh, I'm not any good at **HELM**! I want to land the ship with **RIG** instead. What if I'm pulling on wires to control the ship?" Nope. What you do in the fiction (piloting) determines what you roll (**HELM**). Hayley can attempt to **RIG** something—perhaps she can fix the failed engines before she crashes, making the piloting trivial—but helming a vehicle is, well, **HELM**.

Sometimes, several different **actions** can apply to a given situation. This is fine! The player can choose the action they want to perform and the GM will set the position of the roll accordingly.

*Captain Xandra knows her old friend Rhin, a smuggler, is covering something up. What action should she roll to get information out of him? She can perhaps **SWAY** him, reminding him of their long friendship and why he owes her better than lies. Or she can **COMMAND** him to answer by reminding him of what she does to those that betray her. The GM says that a **SWAY** roll here is **controlled** but **limited effect**. Rhin is hiding facts for a reason, and it might take more than a few fond memories to win him over, but there isn't much risk. The **COMMAND** roll is **risky** and **standard effect**. It'll get the answers Xandra needs, but it's likely to make that friendship complicated and messy.*

What Xandra chooses to say in the end can change what action is rolled, and even the position and effect. Xandra's player ultimately makes the choice about how she will approach the situation at hand.

You can find details on each action, how to use them, and how some positions may play out for them, starting on page 208.

THE PURPOSE OF DANGER & STRESS

It can, at first, seem like the players are bulletproof—there are so many ways to reduce or avoid consequences, it may feel like the NPCs or threats do nothing. This is okay! The PCs have the odds stacked against them. **Resistance** and the **stress** system give them a special ability to survive when they otherwise shouldn't. This gives players hope of achieving their long-term goals.

The purpose of threatening harm is not always to inflict it, but to describe it. It shows us what could happen in the fiction. Those threats shape the story as much as any character's actions, even if they're avoided.

"The malevolent AI takes over the ship's computers!"

"You hear ribs break as his pneumatic fist slams into your side."

"You can almost see her heart break as she realizes you're lying."

Giving voice to these horrible possibilities makes the world feel dangerous, visceral, and real. Then the player gets to roll **resistance** and say, "No way. It's not that bad. I'll take whatever the stress cost is instead." It's empowering. It's the moment a character stands in defiance against an unfair world and says, "Not today."

You should describe harmful outcomes with gusto, but not be hung up on actually inflicting them. Instead of saying "You take **level 3 harm**," you describe how the blaster bolt blisters the armor of a character and sears through their body, cauterizing a hole through their lung. The harm becomes manifest in that description. Once revealed, the player actually cares about resisting it. "Oh, heck no. I'll mark armor instead." But the only way they know whether to risk the stress cost or spend a limited resource is if you describe the outcome. Each cycle of threat and resistance requires a new fictional outcome, leading to new, interesting places in the story.

NPC THREAT LEVELS

The severity of the consequences for an action is relative to the threat level of the opposition. Weaker opponents have weaker levels of consequences on a standard outcome.

For instance, if the players are facing an NPC you've described as a xeno bouncer for the local dive bar, the consequence of getting into a tussle with him might be getting punched in the face, or being wrestled to the ground. Perhaps you get shocked by a hidden taser he keeps for the extra rowdy clients.

The same situation is different if you're facing Nox, one of the fiercest Ashen Knives assassins. The expected consequence for getting in a tussle with them is an ebon blade stabbed with clinical precision into the PC's heart.

Because there are no stats or action ratings for NPCs, it is through the severity of their consequences, combined with the position and effect of the PC's action roll, that their difference in threat and Tier is made real.

A dangerous NPC can take the initiative. Describe what the NPC is about to accomplish, then ask the character what they do.

"The moneylender's bodyguard is just outside his doors. He hears you coming, and turns, and you see him snap up two blasters, aimed straight at you. What do you do?"

The PC's actions—and resulting action roll—will tell us how effective the NPC was. An action roll serves double duty, resolving both PC and NPC actions at the same time.

If the NPC is a true master of that moment, tell the players what the NPC has already done, then ask if they want to resist it.

"You kick open the door, and you see the moneylender cringing by the fireplace. Next to him however is a man with a wolf eating a star tattooed on his neck, who you recognize as Theron Red—one of the fiercest bounty hunters the Scarlet Wolves have to offer. He's standing up and kicking a sofa between you to block your sight, and heavy blaster fire comes tearing through it and the doorway as he wastes no time. Would you like to resist the damage?"

This applies to **resistance rolls** as well. The stun from the taser on the bouncer can be completely ignored by resisting the harm or using applicable armor to avoid it. The blasts from Theron Red might not kill you, but they'll leave marks even if your armor takes the brunt of the hit.

Your aptitude with this will evolve and grow over time as you play. Talk to the group about it as you go. Does your table want a more deadly kind of game? Then the PCs and NPCs should threaten lethal harm frequently. Do you want a more action-adventure feel? Describe less dire consequences, and let resistances reduce more.

You don't have to decide this all at once. Be flexible and allow your group to grow into whatever they're most excited about. As you play, you'll establish examples and precedents that will establish your tone and genre expectations.

THERE'S ALWAYS A CONSEQUENCE

No matter the outcome, every roll changes the situation and fiction. There's no such thing as a "nothing happens" result from a roll. How does this work?

"Failure" results for action rolls (1-3) are not simply "misses." The character's attempt has a tangible outcome. Something happens that changes the situation. On a controlled failure, the character spots a flaw in the approach, and can decide to withdraw or push their luck with a risky action. On a risky failure, the character suffers a consequence that presents some kind of trouble. Things get worse. On a desperate failure, the threat dominates and makes the situation much worse.

The characters are affected, the consequences linger, and the fiction is in a new place at the end of every roll. When you reach for the dice, something interesting should happen (good or bad).

INTRODUCING RULES AS NEEDED

If you only use the core of action rolls and forget all the extra details or special cases, the system will continue to function just fine. The game is better when you use all the tools, but it won't come crashing down if you don't.

If you want to ease into the mechanics, make everything **risky action rolls** with **standard effect**. Don't worry with effect factors right away. Explain resistance rolls when something bad happens to a PC they want to resist. When the group starts asking about teamwork and helping each other, bring in the teamwork maneuvers. When they go up against tougher opponents who are meant to be very dangerous, bring in effect factors. You don't have to explain everything up front.

The game is meant to be flexible, allowing players to revise their approaches, inject flashbacks, and to get the whole table to discuss things as they come up. The same goes for the story. Don't feel like you have to get everything perfect every time. If you say something and then realize later that it was wrong, just revise it. No big deal.

"I told you that Oya was seen at the spaceport, but that was all wrong. It was supposed to be Iraam."

"Oh! Well that changes things. Okay, got it."

If you're not sure what to do, keep it simple. Go with the obvious thing. Add mechanics when you're comfortable. Forgive each other's mistakes. Fly casual.

SETTING PRECEDENTS

The PCs and NPCs are in the same world—what's true for one is true for the other. If you establish that a PC's detonators can be detected with a special hand-held device, that fact becomes true for an NPC's detonators as well. If a skilled NPC can instantly kill an unsuspecting victim, then the PCs can too.

Judgment calls or new details about the game world become available to everyone as a new tool in play. Precedents don't have to be permanent—feel free to revise them as you go along. But when you revise them, it still cuts both ways—for PCs and NPCs alike.

ABSTRACTION VS. DETAILS

Scum and Villainy usually relies on specific fictional details in order to work. For example, it becomes important to understand exactly how a jump drive is constructed if a character decides to overload one and blow up an enemy ship. It's a small detail, but the description of the drive's operation and assembly contributes directly to understanding which **position** to roll for the action, the factors that go into **effect**, and the **consequences** of failure. Fleshing out the details of the world makes the story flow easily and the game system function better.

At other times, abstraction is preferred or necessary. For example, the players wonder how the Cobalt Syndicate have fared during a recent plague in Rin. Are they weak and vulnerable now? The GM could create or try to remember all the minute details about the Cobalt Syndicate that might affect their situation during the outbreak, or she could simply use the abstraction of the faction's Tier rating to make a quick **fortune roll** and see how it went for them. If no specific details have been established in play to indicate the Syndicate's resistance to plague, then abstraction is a useful tool.

If details are already present in the fiction or the game prep, using an abstraction may be unreasonable. For example, we may know for a fact that the Syndicate was one of the groups who created the plague, and they took special precautions against it (including moving important assets and leadership out of the area). In this case, the catch-all of "Tier rating" might not be as useful. Maybe with that kind of prep it's obvious that the Syndicate has fared very well, so the GM just says so because of the already established facts. Or perhaps there's still some risk, so the GM makes a **6d fortune roll** for "plague preparedness" (they're really rather well prepared) rather than just their Tier.

The same goes for the quality of items, assets, and defensive measures. Since House Malklaith is Tier III, does that mean that every single lock on every single door in every part of Malklaith's holdings is a "Tier III lock"? No. The Tier rating is an abstraction indicating the quality of stuff House Malklaith is likely to have "on average." A lock on a janitorial closet is probably just a cheap lock. The lock to the artifact storage vault is probably fine or even exceptional (making it even higher quality than Tier III). When we think about the overall quality of the House, it's "Tier III."

Tier rating can be used for lots of things. But when there are specific details in play, those details establish what's actually true. You don't have to perfectly conform to the abstraction in every case. The abstractions—Tier, **CRED**, **STASH**, quality, engagement rolls—are abstract so that gameplay can focus on what's most important: the choices, actions, and consequences of the player characters. **Action rolls** are where the core of the system lies. Don't feel beholden to abstractions when you have specific fictional details to work with.

ACTIONS IN PLAY

On the following pages, the 12 actions are detailed and fleshed out with examples of positions and consequences.



ATTUNE

When you **ATTUNE** to the Way, you open your mind to the galactic energies flowing throughout existence. You might communicate with a non-sentient species or robot. You could safely handle Precursor artifacts or remnants that tap directly into the Way. You might sense unseen danger, or killing intent (though **STUDY** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you open your mind to the Way? What does that look like?
- ▶ What energy are you **ATTUNING** to? What do you hope the energy will do?
- ▶ Does anything about you change when you **ATTUNE**?

The Way is a force that all manner of people theorize about. While everyday people are familiar with the idea of the Way, most believe it either to be a natural force trumped up by the Cults or a residual effect of the Ur Precursors and their physics-defying machines. Only those who are exposed to the Way tend to develop a connection.

That doesn't keep anyone from being attacked by creatures that can partially phase through matter or from suffering the strange and difficult to treat symptoms that come from mishandling Ur artifacts. Being in touch with the Way gives one options where such things are concerned. Over time, that connection can be honed.

Any PC can **ATTUNE**. It's not a rare supernatural gift, or tied to specific bloodlines. The Way is always there for those with the willingness to push their awareness. Mystics can (and sometimes must) **ATTUNE** as the action for many of their strange powers, such as Sundering or Kinetics. Without access to the Way, these powers can't manifest.

The Cults regulate artifacts and mystic power use, declaring anything that changes people both dangerous and forbidden. Be aware that manifesting such powers may put you under a spotlight. Some people will see you as blessed and ask for aid, while others will turn you in to Hegemonic Cults and the System Police for being a threat or menace.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I ATTUNE to the Way to sense what is influencing me to speak only the truth with this Ashen Knives Pasha.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You sense the influence of an Ur artifact, somewhere on the Pasha's person, but you can't identify exactly what it is. Is it that ornate necklace with the strange gem, or the mechanical looking ring?

4/5 RISKY POSITION: Recognizing that her ring is exerting its effect on you, the Pasha turns to you and says, "Now then. We were discussing whether you had anything to do with the robbery last night." You can see the her bodyguard's hands resting on the ebon knives sheathed at his hips. What do you do?

RISKY

I ATTUNE to the Ur mechanism that is locking the door to the ruins, to allow us to proceed inward.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You feel something there and trigger it. There's a grinding and a crunch as the doors begin to shudder open, but halt. Your command went through, but there's something broken in the opening mechanism that's stopping them from opening further. But you might be able to pry them open.

4/5 HARM: The doors slam open as some power source in the Ur ruins activates. The sudden power surge burns through your mind and body as you sink to your knees. Take level 2 harm "Way-burned."

DESPERATE

As these Kyraxxian razor hounds are about to bear down on me, I'll ATTUNE to them so they can understand me before I COMMAND them to stop.

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: You reach their minds through the Way. The hounds will understand you and you have a few moments before they're on top of you, but lights come on in the nearby guardhouse and the alarm starts to blare. What do you do?

1-3 SEVERE HARM: The lead hound leaps as you speak at it and tears at your throat. Through the Way you sense its loyalty to its master, and its rage at you as an invader. You're knocked down and pinned by the hounds, and also suffer level 3 harm "Crushed Throat." You can resist either or both of these.

COMMAND

When you **COMMAND**, you compel obedience with your force of personality. You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You may lead an action with NPCs. You might order people to do what you want (though **SWAY** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who do you **COMMAND**? How do you do it—what's your leverage here?
- ▶ What do you hope they'll do?
- ▶ How far are you willing to push it?

When you **COMMAND** someone, you don't care about what they want. You tell them what to do and expect them to do it—out of fear, respect, or some other motivating factor (this is your leverage over them). If you're trying to get along with someone and work together, **CONSORT** can be better. When you **COMMAND** a friend or contact, they may feel angry and disrespected, so your position will probably be worse. Common consequences of **COMMAND** can include clocks started for disobedience or reprisals, and breaking apart friendships and alliances.

You can lead a group of people by giving orders with **COMMAND**, or sending a group of NPCs to do something according to your instructions. Handle it as a “group action” teamwork maneuver with you rolling **COMMAND** and the group of NPCs rolling their quality.

You might be able to **COMMAND** another PC. Ask the player if their character has reason to follow your orders—fear, trust, respect, etc. If they do, then your action can force them to comply. If they don't, then your action can only disrupt them somehow. You might frighten them with intimidation (inflicting **harm**), cause them to hesitate at a crucial moment, make them look weak in front of others, etc. Remember, **COMMAND** isn't mind control, but it is an intense interaction. The other player will judge if their character can be ordered around or not.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

As the doorman tries to stop me, I give him an icy glare and straighten my coat with my ship insignia on it so he remembers exactly who I am.

4/5 RISKY POSITION: The bodyguard takes one look at you and flexes his enormously and obviously well-kept body. "I don't care who you are. Get in line." Are you going to get into it with him or back off?

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: The doorman holds up a hand and says respectfully. "I'm sorry sir. But if I let you go in without scanning for weapons, it's my job on the line." If you go in, you'll be doing it without a blaster. That okay?

RISKY

I shout at the officer firing at us that we're licensed bounty hunters and that we need to go after our target!

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: The cops stop firing for a moment but keep their guns trained on you. "Nobody move! Give us your registration number and we'll call it in!" This may take a moment. Do you wait for them to run your ID?

4/5 HARM: A blaster bolt clips you as you stand up and shout at the officers. They immediately stop shooting when you identify yourselves, but you take level 2 harm "Shot" in the process. Do you want to resist that?

DESPERATE

*I hold up a switch, and tell Oin-rai it's not his day. I **COMMAND** him to take his fanatics and go or I'll blow this whole ship to pieces.*

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: Oin-rai holds up a hand and his Nightspeakers freeze. "This isn't over," he pronounces, as they back off. Let's make a clock, called "Oin-rai Exacts Revenge" with four segments, and start with three of those filled in. Crossing a mystic of this power should not be done lightly.

1-3 SEVERE HARM: The marks on Oin-Rai's mask glow violet for a split second, and he's suddenly next to you. His Psy-Blade is just a blur as he severs the arm holding the detonator at the elbow. Take level 4 harm "Disarmed" (Oin-rai is **potent**) and you lose the detonator. Do you want to resist either of these?

CONSORT

When you **CONSORT**, you socialize with friends and contacts. You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage or background. You could try to direct your friends with social pressure (but **COMMAND** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who do you **CONSORT** with? Where do you meet? What do you talk about?
- ▶ What do you hope to achieve?
- ▶ Why might they do this for you?

When you **CONSORT** with someone, you care about what the other person thinks and feels and in turn they care about what you want (at least a tiny bit). You're being a charming, open, socially adroit person. You can **CONSORT** with people you already know, or try to "fit in" in a new situation so you make a good impression.

To **CONSORT**, you need an environment that isn't totally hostile. You might **CONSORT** with the Legionnaires doing a routine sweep of ships in the area (a desperate situation, to be sure), but it's usually hopeless to **CONSORT** with the assassin sent to murder you. When you **CONSORT** with people related to your background or heritage, you can expect a better position and/or increased effect.

You might be forced to **CONSORT** in an unfamiliar situation in order to create an opportunity for another action. For instance, if you want to talk to Governor Malklaith at a party, you'll have to at least try to **CONSORT** with the other guests to make your way his table. **COMMANDING** or **SWAYING** are options, sure, but expect a rather sudden escalation of trouble if things go badly.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

Alor bartends for the underground pit fights and has definitely overheard a few choice comments. Does she know of any jobs we could pull?

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: She's been keeping her eye on the fights here and thinks she has an angle about how to rob the safe when the fight's in progress. Just one problem: another fight isn't scheduled for a week. You'll have to set one up.

1-3 RISKY POSITION: You notice the guards near the door whispering agitatedly. Alor leans in, "The owner here's worse than the Governor, and I have a new gig lined up on Indri. I've managed to stash a chunk of the betting money. You get me out safe, and I'll cut you in for half. Did you bring your blasters?"

RISKY

I walk into the Cobalt Syndicate bar, and try to convince all the boys that I'm just a tough dockhand like them, worthy of being shown to the boss and not a scummy bounty hunter worth spacing.

4/5 HARM: You do it, but in order to prove you're one of the 'hands you get roped into a drinking contest. Take level 2 harm "Trashed." Which is when they decide it'd be a grand idea to introduce you to your target—the local Cobalt Syndicate organizer.

1-3 DESPERATE POSITION: You're drinking till closing, and things are going well, when one of the dockhands knocks over their glass. As you reach to pick it up one of them recognizes the tattoo on your arm. "Wait a minute, you're not a dockhand! You're that bounty hunter!" Now there are six very angry, very large Cobalt Syndicate thugs reaching for any weapon at hand. What do you do?

DESPERATE

I know they're an illegal Cult, but can I talk to some of the people here and figure out which are Nightspeakers?

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: You blend in long enough to spot some subtle hand gestures being used by some of the guests, including a few important dignitaries. You politely engage a few in conversation, when you realize that all the "normal" guests are gone, and the party has quietly become a Nightspeaker only meeting. They all take out their ritual masks. What do you do?

DOCTOR

When you **DOCTOR**, you attend to the needs of another by lending aid and comfort, or you look scientifically at the world. You might treat someone's injuries. You might analyze a substance's composition to learn how it functions. You might comfort someone in distress (but **CONSORT** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you attend to the patient in your care? What tools might be required to do so?
- ▶ What do you want their treatment to do?
- ▶ What information are you hoping to discover? What tools can you apply to the problem?

When you **DOCTOR** someone, you can tend to both physical and emotional wounds. You take responsibility for your patient's well-being, and seeing to their physical and psychological needs.

You can **DOCTOR** someone to connect with them and ease their fears. It can be more appropriate to **CONSORT** when the relationship is equal, or **SWAY** if you're trying to manipulate them or lie to them, but **DOCTORING** is appropriate for giving advice and easing concerns.

To **DOCTOR**, you need to establish some level of control over your subject. You can **DOCTOR** a patient in a med bay, or analyze a compound with a chemical analyzer. You can try to **DOCTOR** someone to help them shake off the effects of Way influences (though **COMMAND** or **ATTUNE** may be more appropriate). When you **DOCTOR** with the perfect tools, you can expect a better position and/or increased effect.

You can **DOCTOR** someone to forcibly administer drugs or handle a hostile patient. In these situations, the subject must be vulnerable in some way. For instance, you may need to **SKULK** up to a pirate before injecting them with a knock-out drug, or pin a hallucinating patient with **SCRAP** before giving them an antidote. Be mindful: **DOCTORING** an unwilling patient can ruin relationships permanently.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I want to figure out where our bounty has gone. You mentioned there were boot prints in the hall. Can I get a soil sample?

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: The dirt sample is common, though you do find traces of minerals found in a sizable cave system north of the city. You'll have to search the area to find which specific cave it is though.

4/5 LESSER HARM: As you're gathering the soil, your skin begins to blister. Take level 1 harm "Chemical Burns." On the plus side, there's only one place near town that has soil that burns like that. Your target has been hiding in the old factory dumping ground!

RISKY

*We'll never make it to the ship with Suhn clutching her leg like that. I'm going to **DOCTOR** her up with some combat meds that'll let her ignore the break and snap a field splint on her leg.*

4/5 HARM: The leg feels great but Suhn is barely aware of your presence as you put the splint on. She takes level 2 harm "Drugged." You might have to **COMMAND** her to get her to move.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You go to your medkit, but find out that your painkillers would have a bad reaction with her particular xenotype. You splint her leg up, but if you want to make it back to your ship in any sort of reasonable time, you'll need to haul her out of here with a **SCRAMBLE** roll, or she can make a **RESOLVE** resist to just suck up the pain while she hobbles.

DESPERATE

Two trained guards against a Stitch? I guess it's lucky we're in my lab. I smash a few vials of chemicals against the wall to create a cloud that'll incapacitate them.

4/5 SEVERE HARM: You throw two vials up, and a purple fog billows out. The guard fires and misses you. But you forgot this mixture was very volatile. There's a sizable explosion. The guards are out cold, but you're thrown into the opposing wall, shattering your ribs. Care to resist?

4/5 SEVERE COMPLICATION: You throw two vials up, and a purple fog billows out. It fills the room. You hear the guards slump to the floor. Clutching a wet rag to your nose you run to the door, but the room quickly gets fuzzy. You're knocked out too! Do you want to resist?

HACK

When you **HACK**, you breach the security systems of computers or override their controls. You might access a data console to find a captive being held somewhere on the station. You might scramble a drone's control systems to keep it from firing on you. You might override a door's controls to get it to open (though **RIG** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you gain access to the software?
- ▶ What do you want the system to do now?
- ▶ What tools are you using?

When you **HACK** something, you access software and override the decision-making components of an electronic system. This means you need a vector—a way to deliver your malicious code. You can't **HACK** a blade, Precursor temple door, or blaster because there's no code present to plug into. It also means you'll have to have a way to access the systems ports and interfaces. With all these limitations you'd think **HACK** would be the least preferred action for solving problems, but most electronic systems in the Hegemony are designed to be updated and are susceptible. If not, you should be using **RIG** instead.

The higher the Tech rating of a planet (see **The Procyon Sector**, page 291) the more likely things that can be **HACKED** are common or available. A safe on a Tech 1 planet might be a heavy steel affair, with mechanical locking components, while those on a Tech 3 planet probably have scanners and biometric readers. Car doors, locks and lockers, security systems and such all become more automated and thus prone to **HACKING**, including wirelessly.

To **HACK**, you need a hacking rig to write the code and some way to deploy that code. Security is always being updated, so you can assume that an exploit that works in one place does not work everywhere. However, you can buy exploits—using an **acquire asset** downtime activity to pick up a custom hack will grant **potency**.

Consequences from **HACKING** tend to be complications rather than physical harm. Systems may raise alerts. Attempts could take extra time. Unexpected parts of the system might be affected. Additional **HEAT** is frequent, as code signatures are of particular interest to the Hegemony. Urbots (despite their drone-like appearance) are not designed to be **HACKED**. They require a combination of **RIG** and **ATTUNE** to affect.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

*I want to **HACK** into Malklaith's personal journal from his desk and see if I can get the data I need.*

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You gain access to the system, but there's a biometric component that can't be bypassed via software. You'll need Malklaith's fingerprint, or some way to **RIG** the circuit closed.

4/5 RISKY POSITION: You get in and the data starts copying painstakingly slowly. How much does the Governor write in his journal? As it's wrapping up you hear a knock on the door. "Uh, sir?" asks a guard voice. "Our system is acting up and showing you in two places, I just wanted to check and see if everything is okay." What do you do?

1-3 WITHDRAW OR PRESS ON, SEIZING A RISKY OPPORTUNITY: This has tough security, and to crack it you'll have to use some crude but effective methods. If you fry the safeguards on the terminal, you'll get the file but it will cause power fluctuations and alarms throughout the mansion. Want to chance it?

RISKY

I access the brig's cell controls and plug in my hacking rig. "I'll have you out in a second!" I say.

4/5 COMPLICATION: The lock is simple but its security robust. Your software cracks it open, but as the force field lowers, the lights turn red and klaxons sound. You hear the sound of shouting and booted feet from down the hall. What do you do?

4/5 DESPERATE POSITION: You spring the rest of the crew, but the comms squawks to life. "Hey who's there? I don't show a prisoner transfer record for today. Name and rank, soldier." Do you talk to him, or let the chips fall where they may?

DESPERATE

*We've gotta shut down that turret firing on us. Can I plug into the wall and **HACK** it from here?*

4/5 SEVERE HARM: No time to finesse, you reboot the turret system. You're almost at your ship when the turret's lights cycle and it spins up. Fast reboot on that new software update! A bolt only clips you, but it's a huge turret. You make it to the ship with your side smoldering. Take level 3 harm "Blasted." Want to resist?

HELM

When you **HELM**, you pilot a vehicle or use vehicle weapons. You might plot a jump through a dark hyperspace lane. You might dive through a canyon to escape a chasing ship. You might fire quad-lasers at hostile pirates. You might reroute power on the ship to weather fire (though **RIG** may be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you control your vehicle? How do you know how it'll respond?
- ▶ Where do you want to end up?
- ▶ How often have you used one of these?

When you **HELM** a ship or vehicle, your guidance determines where the craft goes. In open space, there's not a lot of meaningful choice. But in dense aircar traffic on a planet, dodging asteroids while escaping pursuing Hegemony forces, or riding solar winds in a race across the system, the ability to **HELM** is critical.

You can **HELM** any sort of vehicle (like boats!), including animals trained for riding. Rolling **ATTUNE** or **SWAY** may work better for those though.

You can also use **HELM** to fire vehicle weapons, such as those commonly found on starships. Most of these weapons are at least computer assisted, and require familiarity with the weapon system more than quick reflexes or keen eyes. For weapons that are simply mounted on top of a vehicle, you might consider **SCRAP** instead.

Spaceships are designed to enter and exit hyperspace lanes; in general, ordinary piloting does not require a roll. One does not need to chart jumps along well-established gates and Starsmith-maintained lanes.

An enterprising pilot might want to enter or exit a hyperspace lane in the middle, without the benefit of the Guild's buoys. Charting an unassisted and unexpected jump into and out of these lanes is usually a desperate position.

Equally unruly are the so-called dark hyperspace lanes—lanes which are uncharted and have no Guild buoys for route auto-correction. Travel along them offers plenty of opportunities for **HELM** rolls when encountering pirates, Way creatures, and the simple dangers of unexpected gravity waves and lane shifts.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I want to make a few quick turns and dodge around bigger vehicles in traffic to shake off our tail.

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: You manage to shake them, but a few of the red lights you narrowly cut have some traffic cameras. Your crew's **WANTED**, right? Add one **HEAT**.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You put a number of vehicles in between you and the tail but they seem to be following you at that distance. You spot an aerial drone following above, keeping you in sight. What do you do?

RISKY

When the pirates shift power to the matter-cannons to fire, I'm gonna go to hard burn and loop up and over to land behind them. I want to make sure they don't have an angle to fire on us anymore.

4/5 HARM AND COMPLICATION: You hit hard burn and begin your flip. Matter-streams pepper your ship's back half before you out-angle the pirates. The damage mixed with the heavy burn is too much. Your ship takes two damage, and an engine fire breaks out. Want to resist either of these?

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: They stop firing almost immediately, diverting power to their engines to keep up with you. You zag when they zig, but they're circling to catch up. You don't have a safe position, but you're ahead of them for now. What do you do?

DESPERATE

Okay, so both we and the Legion cruiser jumped at the same time, and I don't want to deal with an armed ship on our tail when we come back out. So let's do something stupid. I'm going to breach the lane wall, and dump out into realspace wherever we are along the route.

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: You kill your jump drive and manage to navigate your return to realpace. As you hit reverse thrust and bleed the colors of hyperspace off your hull, you realize you're hurtling directly into giant piles of space rock and debris, and you have no idea where you are. Let's give you a 6-o'clock of "Lost in Space." Now what exactly are you planning to do about those rocks?

RIG

When you **RIG** mechanisms, you alter how an existing mechanism works or create a new one. You might disable a trap. You might repair a damaged ship system. You might crack a safe. You might overdrive an engine. You might program a bomb to detonate later. You might force a door open (though **HACK** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ What do you **RIG** with? What tools are usually required?
- ▶ What are you trying to make it do?
- ▶ What do you hope to accomplish?

When you **RIG**, you take apart a device, wire up new connections, add hydraulics, and replace parts. It covers the mechanical and physical parts of a device. You **RIG** to rewire electrical systems, but you **HACK** to alter software. When a device is damaged, you usually use **RIG** to work around the problem, or repair it.

Use **RIG** to physically make a device do what it's supposed to, but outside of expected parameters. You can hot-wire systems and force them to run when they should be shut down, or shut down when they're supposed to be running. You might overdrive an engine, or push all the power in your blaster out in one big burst.

You can also use **RIG** to disable or destroy a device, causing it to malfunction or simply make it impossible to fix. Planting explosives is done with **RIG**, though tossing them as weapons in combat might be **SCRAP**. You can also **RIG** a bomb or other planted explosive to be detonated remotely. Almost all traps are **RIGGED** into place.

In order to **RIG**, you need physical access to something, and at least a plausible facsimile of the tools required. You might be able to short a circuit with a hairpin instead of a wire, but you can't cut through a wall without a saw, beam weapon, or explosives of some sort.

Consequences of **RIG** vary, from additional parts frying, fires and shocks causing harm, or complications from security systems and additional time or tools required.

Often long-term projects in downtime use **RIG**. If you can get access to the right materials and put in the effort, **RIG** can be used to make almost any physical device you might want, though you may need to **STUDY** a schematic first (see **Crafting**, page 282). Just as common is using **RIG** to fix gear that gets broken while on a job.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

We have to catch up to them. I'm going to hot-wire this hovercar so we can make it across town in time.

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: You manage to get in, but the steering wheel is locked in place. You have to do some unkind things to the steering column to free it up. It's going to be rough to steer, and it'll be pretty obvious to anyone looking up close that the vehicle is stolen.

1-3 WITHDRAW OR PRESS ON, SEIZING A RISKY OPPORTUNITY: You pry up the control panel of the hovercar and pull out the ignition wires, when you realize this car has a security system. You can try to bypass it, but if you don't, the security system may disable the car—or it might alert the local authorities.

RISKY

I override the clamps securing our ship from leaving. I cut into the side of it and start cutting through the wires till it pops free.

4/5 COMPLICATION: The first clamp is a real beast to figure out. You have to cut power and wrench it apart manually. You run from clamp to clamp. As you finish wrenching the last, the hangar doors open and you see some guards spill in. What do you do?

4/5 DESPERATE POSITION: As you force the dock clamps open, you trip the dock venting procedure. The ship is free, but all the air is being sucked out into space! You duck as a crate goes flying by. How do you get back to the ship?

DESPERATE

So rather than run, I'll disarm the booby trap detonators before the time runs out. It's nice that you trap your treasure, space pirates, but that sweet plunder will be mine!

4/5 SERIOUS HARM: There are multiple bombs here. You get one. You get the second. Third. You're down to the last one when time ticks down. 4... 3... 2... You throw the explosive... KABOOM! The explosion throws you and the treasure around. The trap is disarmed, and you're half-covered in pirate treasure, and all it cost you was one level 3 harm "Broken Ribs."

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: You did it! The last detonator deactivates. There's no earth-shattering kaboom! The failsafe however goes off. The several-ton rock door behind you grinds shut. What do you do?

SCRAMBLE

When you **SCRAMBLE**, you lift, climb, jump, run, or swim, usually either away from or into danger. You might vault over a turnstile while escaping authorities. You might climb up the side of a cliff to approach a secret base. You might dodge blaster fire as you cross the hanger to get to your ship. You might chase after a mark you're following (though **SKULK** may be better).

You can also use **SCRAMBLE** to move across difficult terrain. Perhaps you want to push through the jungle of Aketi with decent speed or without being attacked by some sort of beast, trek through the desert on Shimaya without suffering dehydration or alerting sandworms, or bounce from asteroid to asteroid in your spacesuit to reach the Precursor ruin hidden inside one of them.

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How fast are you trying to move?
- ▶ Where do you want to end up?
- ▶ How are you avoiding missteps or pitfalls?

When you **SCRAMBLE**, you're trading finesse for efficiency. You chase or evade, usually at a decent speed. If you're attempting to do so without making a scene, you may need to **SKULK** instead. If you are doing so on a vehicle, that's **HELM**.

You can use **SCRAMBLE** as a group action, when the entire group is running away from the problems they've just caused. When you consider the scene, imagine what that action scene looks like. Perhaps there's blaster fire raining down on them from across the courtyard. Perhaps all of them are scaling down a tower to the drydock below. All **SCRAMBLING** has an element of action or danger to it.

When a **SCRAMBLE** roll goes badly, it's almost never because the action fails outright. There may be unexpected complications, or trouble you didn't see due to your speed. Let the action progress before demonstrating how it gets derailed. Push to the last possible moment to inject failure into the scene and **SCRAMBLING** will feel punchy and tense.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I want to climb up side of the building, so I can drop in and listen in on their meeting from the rafters.

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: You make it up and through the skylights, but you realize the rafters don't provide much cover. The door to the room is opening. Do you want to hide someplace else?

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You get the roof with time to spare, only to find the skylight's locked. Perhaps you can **RIG** the latch from out here?

RISKY

Time to get out of here. I'm going to run across the hanger and onto our ship while they're firing at us, dashing from crate to crate to block their shots.

4/5 HARM: You make a mad dash for the ship. A few of the crates you hide behind get shot through. A concrete wall lets you catch your breath for a moment. You're almost to the ship, and you dive for a box before you look up and see the "Warning: Contents May Be Explosive" sign on it. The explosion knocks both you and your opponents down. Take level 2 harm "Deaf and Concussed" as you manage to find your feet and make it to the ship.

4/5 COMPLICATIONS: You make it to the ship! They don't stop shooting as you board. The shots bounce off your hull and hit a fuel tank. There's an ominous whistling coming out of it. There's enough fuel in there to do some serious damage to you and the ship. Who's at the helm?

DESPERATE

I jump out of the hovercar as it explodes, looking to land on the rooftop below.

4/5 SEVERE HARM: You make it out and are halfway to the roof when the hovercar explodes. Take level 3 harm "Battered and Broken" as you bounce across the roof. Do you want to resist or use armor?

1-3 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: The explosion of the car throws off your landing, and you find yourself falling down several stories, with the hoverbike gang that shot up your car circling above. Want to resist and maybe grab a window or a passing car at a lower level before you plummet to your demise?

SCRAP

When you **SCRAP**, you engage in pitched combat with the intent to harm or neutralize your opposition. You might brawl or wrestle with your foe. You might use a melee weapon. You might storm a barricade or hold a position in battle. You might lay down blaster fire. If you're using a vehicle or ship weapon, you should use **HELM** instead.

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you **SCRAP**? What weapons are you using?
- ▶ How lethal are you trying to be?
- ▶ What do you hope to achieve?

When you **SCRAP** with someone, it's a fight. You're attacking and defending, whether you're using fists, martial arts, blades, or blasters. You can **SCRAP** to start a fight, to survive a fight, and to end a fight—but it's always a fight. Regardless of whether you get the drop on your target or get into a shoot-out with a whole crew of people, you turn to **SCRAP**, though the position may differ.

If you use fighting as a feint to distract, you might choose to **SWAY** instead. If you're sneaking up on someone and want to take them out before the fight starts, you should use **SKULK** instead. If you're placing explosives to bring a building down, you should look to **RIG**.

Generally, the consequences you suffer when you **SCRAP** come from the enemy. The more dangerous they are, the worse your position—and the more dire those consequences will be. More often than not, when you **SCRAP** you're risking harm as your consequence.

If you find yourself in a fight and you want to do something besides **SCRAP**, you might face a consequence first—which you can accept or resist (or maybe have a teammate to face for you). Just because you really want to **SWAY** someone doesn't mean they stop punching you so you can talk to them. If you've got vibro-blades locked with someone, you may have to **SCRAP** to get free before you can **SCRAMBLE** away (or take a wound as you bolt, and maybe use armor or resist it).

If you fight alongside your cohorts in battle, you **SCRAP**. If you direct them but you're not engaged yourself, you **COMMAND** them.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

Now that I have him pinned, I want to shift my hold so it's around his neck and choke him out. I want to get some answers from this jerk later.

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: Yep. You choke him out. As you're picking him up to drag him back to your ship, you feel something hard on a chain under his shirt. Opening it, you see a System officer's badge. Whoops. Corrupt or not, this guy wasn't the crook you thought he was. So what do you want to do with the unconscious cop?

1-3 WITHDRAW OR PRESS ON, SEIZING A RISKY OPPORTUNITY: GM: "As you wrestle with him, he gets his knife free and starts swinging behind himself wildly. Want to keep going with a risky action?"

PLAYER: "No, I'll withdraw and try a different way. I want to knee him in the back as he starts to stab, and stand over him and blast him with my stun gun. That's still controlled, yeah?"

GM: "Well, that seems like you're still **SCRAPPING** though. If you want to keep it up, it'll be risky."

PLAYER: "Ah, okay, gotcha. Okay then, that's fine. Let's go risky."

RISKY

When the guard reaches for me, I want to put him in a wrist lock and push him up against the wall.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You grab his wrist, but he twirls with your twist, going for a kick. You have his hand but he's not pinned. What do you do?

DESPERATE

He might be some badass bounty hunter that caught me drinking, but I'm not gonna just roll over. I'm gonna pick up this chair, smash it, and grab two legs for impromptu weapons. COME AT ME, BOUNTY HUNTER!

4/5 SEVERE HARM: You smash the chair and grab the legs. He pulls out a long blade, and as you clash, you catch a nasty cut along your arm. You ring his skull pretty hard and dent his helmet. Let me start a 6-o'clock for this guy and tick two. He's pretty tough! You take level 2 harm "Sliced-up Arm." Also did I mention his poison? It's what he uses to incapacitate his bounties. How do you want to resist or deal with that?

SKULK

When you **SKULK**, you move stealthily or without being noticed. You might sneak past security or hide in the shadows. You might lift a cred-stick off a mark. You might sneak up behind someone to attack them by surprise (but **SCRAP** might be better). You could try to climb up the side of a building (but **SCRAMBLE** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do you **SKULK**? How do you conceal your actions?
- ▶ Whose notice are you trying to avoid?
- ▶ Where do you want to end up?

When you **SKULK**, you conceal your movements and intentions. The environment can play a large effect on your position. More secluded, shadowy environments can be much more controlled to move in. But **SKULKING** is more than just “sneaking around”—it’s also sleight of hand or other misdirections. For general athletic ability (running, climbing, jumping, swimming, etc.), you should use **SCRAMBLE**.

You might use this movement to ambush an enemy. If an enemy can be taken out with a single clear blow, then **SKULK** can be used in place of **SCRAP**. For powerful or well-armored targets, you might **SKULK** to set up an attack (improved position). You can also use **SKULK** to create an opportunity that wouldn’t otherwise be possible. For example the Pasha’s guards wouldn’t talk openly around a stranger, but a successful **SKULK** roll may let you **STUDY** them and overhear their gossip to gather info about the faction and locale.

When a **SKULK** roll goes awry, it doesn’t always end catastrophically. Instead of a character immediately being discovered as a consequence, you can start a clock like “Discovered” or “Alert” and tick a segment or two. Guards might investigate something they think they saw, but they don’t sound the klaxons and lock everything down at the first sign of a flitting shadow. Unless the opposition is ready and alert, the clever scoundrel has a bit of leeway before they’re out in the open, fighting for their lives.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I sneak up behind the guard and put him into a choke hold, real quiet-like.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: His knees buckle, but he pulls hard on your arm, creating space to breathe. He kicks against the wall and tries to wrestle out of your hold. He hasn't had a chance to yell, but you don't have him under control. What do you do?

4/5 RISKY POSITION: You pull off the choke hold and drag your target into the shadows with you. That's when his radio crackles to life. "Rico, report in," an anonymous guard says on the other end of the comms. "Rico?" What do you do?

RISKY

I move through the crowd, following the bounty hunter, blending in with people going about their day.

4/5 COMPLICATION AND REDUCED EFFECT: You follow the bounty hunter down into an alley, where he's meeting with a shadowy agent. You can't tell exactly what faction is on the other side without going into the alley and possibly getting spotted. Things seem to be getting tense and you hear the hunter bellow out "I did the job, now pay up!" as he draws his blaster. What do you do?

1-3 DESPERATE POSITION: You almost catch him as he makes a fast right. You come around the alleyway and realize he's gone. That's when you hear the low whistle. You see him hanging from a grappling line above you, heavy blaster pointed at you. What do you do?

DESPERATE

Well it's not like I have a choice. As the Dyrineks are moving towards me I'll try to creep along the wall, sticking to the shadows until I can turn the corner.

4/5 SEVERE HARM: You make it most of the way there, when one of them spots you right as you turn. "Oy!" she yells, and heavy blaster fire tears through the wall. One gets lucky, slamming into your back. Take level 3 harm "Blastered." But you get away at least.

1-3 SEVERE HARM: No dice. They spot you before you're even halfway there. The whole gang saturates the area where you're standing with fire. Take level 4 harm as you're shot to pieces under the blistering barrage. I assume you want to resist?

STUDY

When you **STUDY**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence. You might gather information from documents, newsfeeds, and books. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You could try to examine events to understand a pressing situation. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings (but **CONSORT** might be better). You could deduce a person's intention to kill you (but **ATTUNE** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ What details do you scrutinize? What kinds of things are you looking for?
- ▶ What do you hope to understand?

When you **STUDY**, you concentrate on small details—expressions, tone of voice, innuendo, tiny clues—to find what's hidden, determine facts, corroborate evidence, and guide your decisions.

You can use **STUDY** to “read a person”—this is a gather information roll to judge whether or not they're lying, what they really want, what their intentions are, etc. (See the list of questions you might ask on the bottom of your character sheet.) When you **STUDY** someone in this way, you can ask the GM questions while you interact with them if you want, so you might wait until they say something fishy, and then ask the GM, “Are they telling the truth?” If you want to know if someone plans to attack, you might instead want to **ATTUNE** to sense killing intent.

You can also **STUDY** a situation or a place. Finding clues, finding out who's in charge, figuring out why the gang you've worked with before is acting fishy might all fall under a **STUDY** roll, assuming the information is there to find.

When you have all the data available to you, but you need to make sense of it, **STUDY** is the appropriate action. Occasionally, it may be questionable if you have all the right data. For instance, you may need to **ATTUNE** to sense the weird Way energies at a house before you can **STUDY** their pattern, or you may need to **HACK** into the mansion's security system before you can **STUDY** the guards' patrol schedule.

Research of all kinds (often a long-term project) uses **STUDY**. Want to find out who has an interesting Ur artifact collection and inadequate security? Want to know where the Memish rebellion hangs out? Virtually any fact can be discovered through **STUDY**.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

I'm going to size up this beat cop. Is she really going to shoot me if I just bolt? Is there an opening here for me to escape?

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: Her hands shake as she holds up the gun, and you get the sense that she's never shot anyone before. In fact, the safety is still on. But she radios in for backup. What do you do?

1-3 WITHDRAW OR PRESS ON, SEIZING A RISKY OPPORTUNITY: Your eyes lock and she frowns, fingering her gun. If you want to keep **STUDYING** her, it's going to be risky. Want to try it?

RISKY

I'm going to watch the guard patrols on camera and try to time our safe drilling for when they're far enough away that they can't hear.

4/5 COMPLICATION: There's a perfect time when one of the guards brings in cake for his birthday and many of the guards stop in to grab a treat. It takes a bit of time before you get the opening, so I'm going to add two segments to this "Building Locks Down" clock.

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: You find the best time to drill, but it's not much of a window. You'll have to crack the safe in the five minutes between shifts. How do you get through a foot of metal that quickly?

DESPERATE

*That suit of power armor has to have some sort of weakness somewhere. I keep my head down against the crates and try to pull up a schematic to **STUDY** if there's anything I can do before he shreds me to pieces.*

4/5 SEVERE HARM AND SERIOUS COMPLICATION: The pirate laughs and charges in, knocking those crates on top of you. They're seriously heavy. Take level 3 harm "Crushed." You hear his laugh through the suit's mic as he reaches down and picks you up, the mechanical hand easily encircling your torso. That's when you spot it—the exposed power cables running to the hands...

1-3 SEVERE HARM: It takes you less than 10 seconds to bring up the schematic, but before you can do much else, the armored suit charges, smashing apart the crates. The pirate quickly lifts one armored arm and uses the flamethrower. Take level 3 harm "Extra Crispy." Do you want to resist?

SWAY

When you **SWAY**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or logic. You might outright lie to someone's face. You might persuade a sucker to believe you. You might argue the facts with an officer. You could try to trick people into affection or obedience (but **CONSORT** or **COMMAND** might be better).

GM QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who do you **SWAY**? What kind of leverage do you have here?
- ▶ What do you hope they'll do?
- ▶ Are you lying?

When you **SWAY** someone, you aren't invested in their thoughts or feelings. You're manipulating them—either with charm, lies, or arguments that can't be easily dismissed. You're trying to get them to do what you want, whether or not they want or need it. You can **SWAY** a friend or contact—they're probably vulnerable to you—but the risks are higher if they figure out what you're doing to them; it might be a desperate thing to try.

Additionally, **SWAYING** someone isn't mind control. You need some reason for the target to listen to you. That could just be because you're charming or desirable, or it might be good evidence and solid reasoning that backs up your story. Which approach works best depends on the target and circumstance. What works on one person might not on another. If you don't have any leverage, you can try fear or intimidation with **COMMAND**, or genuine connection with **CONSORT** or **DOCTOR**.

It's not possible to use **SWAY** when the target won't listen to you. No amount of fast talk will convince the pirates whose ship you boarded that you fell in through an airlock by accident. If you need to convince someone that you're someone you're not for a moment, look at the Mystic's Psy-Dancing ability.

You might be able to **SWAY** another character. Ask the player if they have some reason they could be **SWAYED** by you—perhaps you're the captain and it's your ship, or they owe you a favor. If you don't have anything, you won't be able to convince them.

EXAMPLES

CONTROLLED

"Look, we helped you out on that last gig for almost no profit. I'm just saying you need to look the other way on this one. You owe us."

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: "Okay fine. But you know they'll grill both of us about what happened after this, and our stories better match. The Knives don't mess around. Give me your word."

4/5 MINOR COMPLICATION: "Tsk. That's not an even trade. I know the Ashen Knives have a job that needs to be done now. You do it next, like right away, and we'll both come out ahead. Deal?"

1-3 RISKY POSITION: "You want us to look the other way? Fine. But you're making trouble for us and that costs. Get back in there and scrub any signs that can lead back to you. Otherwise this might end differently." He puts a hand on his blaster.

RISKY

Of course I'm scheduled for this delivery. Didn't you get the updated manifest? Look, the boss will have both our heads if I don't get this package inside.

4/5 COMPLICATION: "No problem. Go right to bay 3 and get the cargo unloaded. Jax and his crew are in there already waiting for the refit."

4/5 REDUCED EFFECT: "Okay friend, I totally get bosses like that. I just need to open up the van and check what's inside, then you can go." How do you hide your companions in the back?

1-3 COMPLICATION: The guard looks at the paperwork, confused, and flustered. He calls it in. Let's make a 4-clock, "Alarms Raised," and tick it twice. He looks up and says, "They're saying there's no delivery scheduled." What do you do?

DESPERATE

Look, we're just regular spice merchants, trading to the sector planets. There's no need to go through all this trouble.

4/5 SERIOUS COMPLICATION: "Yeah, we heard. Prepare to be boarded. The lieutenant is coming over to discuss our... 'import fees.'"

1-3 SEVERE COMPLICATION: "And I'm a Sah'iir cousin. Spice merchants don't read particle cannons and afterburners on our scanners, and don't even try to tell us it's just for pirates. Now power down and prepare to be boarded."



PLAYERS: BEST PRACTICES

EMBRACE LIFE ON THE RIM

Out here on the edge of the galaxy, life is harder. The sector is unloved by the Hegemony, pawned onto a House outcast. The criminal factions control large portions of commerce. And no matter how far or fast you run, your past will always catch up to you in the form of **HEAT**, entanglements, or "friends" calling in favors.

This is a very different world than the one you're used to walking in, and we follow the story of characters scratching out an existence against all odds. We experience that story vicariously, but at a distance. We advocate for our characters and we look forward to their triumphs, but just the same, we look forward to their challenges and setbacks. We're not here to keep these characters safe, or to have the best possible outcome for each of them all the time. Instead, we're here to see what life on the rim does to them and to watch them fight for their place in the sector.

Don't struggle to keep your character safe or static. Let them chase their dreams, even to ruin. We get to see them risk everything to get what they want. And if we're lucky, we get to watch them succeed.

CHASE DANGER AND ACTION

You're not playing a regular citizen of the Hegemony. Most people are happy with a mediocre existence—a stooge to a Guild or House or a factory worker, living just within their means, despite the obviously rigged system that benefits those at the top. Not you. You're a dashing, ambitious, and daring criminal looking to take a chance on a life of adventure.

Push yourself into danger! That's where the action is, and the risk is always worth it. Nothing in the game will happen without some sort of risk, so just accept that this is the life you've chosen and don't pull your punches looking for false safety. There are plenty of mechanics to bail you out when things inevitably go wrong, from resistances, to armor, to teammates pulling you out of the fire.

Aim towards things that would make a cool story, and don't worry about how to plan around every contingency. It takes a certain kind of inner calm to let go of control, but when you do, you'll get to experience surprises and thrilling escapades. They are opportunities to showcase why these characters are awesome.

Rolling a **4/5** on an action means you get consequences, yes, but it also means you succeed, at least in part, in doing what you were trying to do. Most actions end up with at least one consequence, but with just two dice you can have a 75% chance of succeeding at what you're doing. So go for it!

Don't shy away from a roll simply because you might get consequences! Dealing with consequences as they come up is a big chunk of the fun of the game, so welcome the opportunity to shine through the adversity.

DESCRIBE THE ACTION FAITHFULLY

When you choose an action to roll, you have a lot of latitude. With the permission to choose comes a responsibility to choose the action that matches what your character does and not the rating you'd simply like to roll.

For example, when you roll **SCRAMBLE**, it's because you're scrambling to or away from something. When you **HELM**, it's because you're piloting a ship. If your Muscle is showing off a sweet blaster to impress a fellow bounty hunter, they use **CONSORT**, not **SCRAP** to impress them. The things you do have to match the action you roll.

Of course, you can do a setup with **STUDY** to learn what kinds of guns the bounty hunter would be impressed by (thereby increasing your effect or position). But when you get to the part where you're showing off your blaster, roll your **CONSORT** action.

Again, don't be afraid of rolling small die pools. Even a single die gives you a 50% chance of having a positive effect. When you really need the extra dice, there are gambits, assists, and Devil's Bargains to help you out.

ADVOCATE FOR THE STORY YOU WANT

You get to inject the themes and style into the game that you'd like to see. It's not just on the GM to determine them for you. The game is about collaboration and discussion. Advocate for the elements you'd like to see. You'll spend a number of hours playing the game, and what you want to see should be part of it.

Maybe you want to showcase how dangerous blaster fire can be, so you accept harm when it happens to your character. Or you want to highlight the Hegemony's treatment of the lower class, so you choose a vice that puts you into contact with their hard lives. Flag these choices so your table knows what you're interested in.

USE YOUR STRESS

Stress is a feature unique to PCs. Stress represents the ability of your characters to push through circumstances that would be untenable to most people. Don't be afraid to spend stress.

Maybe you have zero dice for an action, but you **push yourself** for 2 stress, and a teammate **assists** you for 1 stress, and suddenly you have 75% odds of success. Or maybe a nasty complication comes down and you **resist** it, spending stress in the process. Stress is how you fight a rigged system that wants to keep you down. And how you get away with stupid ideas by mitigating the consequences.

IT'S OKAY TO GO WITH THE FUN IDEA

When you're choosing your plan, pick the one that sounds fun to you, even if a boring approach has mechanical advantages. You're playing this game to have a good time, so push for plans that are interesting and exciting, even if they aren't the wisest option. This extends past just plans. If something fits with the story and promises a fun time, go with it, even if it's a risky idea. The worst thing to be is disinterested. As previously mentioned, **armor**, **stress**, and teamwork can bail you out of most tight jams.

START FRESH, ADD DETAIL IN PLAY

Your character begins as a few sketchy ideas about their past. You come from a spacer or colonial family. You used to be an academic, or maybe part of a Cult. You're from Warren. You use lies and damn lies to **SWAY** people to your causes, and when that doesn't work, you know how to **SKULK** around to get what you want. At the beginning, that's about all we know.

But every session is a chance to learn more about who your character is—to learn their beliefs and drives, to learn what forces in their background pushed them into the life, to learn how their heritage shapes who they are today. We fill in these details through play. Are you the kind of person to double-cross your employer? Are you going to scrap the job to save the kid?

And it's explicitly expected that you wait to make those decisions until you're in the moment. Start with the vague idea of your character and create the details on-screen. You may have a notion about where your character comes from, but maybe you discover in play that you were once a serious contender for a major position in the Church of Stellar Flame. You're never beholden to an earlier idea, just to the things that are actually said at the table.

PLAN ON THE FLY

When's the last time you saw a movie where a bunch of scientists sat down and just talked about their plan to go to the moon for most of the film? It's not something that plays well in any medium. The reason is that planning usually means preparing for a lot of little details that frequently never come up. You may consider half a dozen approaches and spend hours of time at the table trying to protect yourselves from things that will never become problems, only to encounter issues you never expected to see.

Instead, cut to the action and use **flashbacks** or **downtime activities** to "plan" for the contingencies you need. Your engagement roll goes south and suddenly there's a brand new top-of-the-line security system in between you and the prisoner you're busting out. If only you'd done more planning! Don't panic, and just call for a flashback.

*"I want to flash back to the prior evening where Hayley is carousing with some local gearheads, one of whom is the engineer who installed the new defense system. I'd like to use a setup action with **CONSORT** to get us improved effect. Maybe there's something he mentioned about the way they installed it that lets us break in easier than we'd expect."*

Instead of planning for every contingency and using a ton of time to scout ahead and take all the surprise out of the scene, we address the problems as they come up. You wait to see what you should have planned for, and then flash back to the way in which you'd prepared for this specific problem. Stress lets you buy your way out of the drudgery of examining all the possible ways things go wrong, and into the awesome way you get around the problem.

Now, your flashback can't undo the roll itself. There's still a new security system, and you're still in a worse position. But it can give you the tools you need to overcome that situation—recontextualizing that problem and showcasing your skills. All it takes is a little bit of stress and a good idea and you can mitigate the worst of a bad roll.

Sometimes you can get away with nebulous "planning" as a downtime project. Maybe you want to hit a Counters Guild vault, but you know that they're a tough target—you're unlikely to get many engagement dice. You ask to work on a downtime project to make them vulnerable to a particular approach. If you don't know what that approach is, gather some information, talk to some contacts, and maybe do a project to figure out what they're vulnerable to first. There are many ways to get what you want.

Sometimes different members of the crew can work on the same clock. If you've ever seen heist movies where the entire gang does a montage setting up a job, this is a really close parallel. Each member of the crew can work on some part of the preparations and you don't have to debate the merits and flaws of each approach. Or it can be the big score your character has been working on for a while now.



CHAPTER 7

RUNNING

THE GAME

If you've run other roleplaying games before, you might find that running this game is a bit different—mainly in the distribution of authority in the game. Particularly, players have a lot of say over how the rules are applied.

This chapter breaks the GM job down into several key areas to help demystify it a bit. First, we'll cover **Goals**, then **Actions**, **Principles**, **Best Practices**, and **Bad Habits** to avoid.

GM GOALS

When you run the game, try to accomplish these goals:

- ▶ **Play to find out what happens.** Don't steer the game toward certain outcomes or events. Be curious!
- ▶ **Convey the fictional world honestly.** When it's time to say what happens, or what's in the world around the PCs, "look around" the vision of Procyon in your head and say what you see. Don't play favorites. Make the world seem real, not contrived.
- ▶ **Bring Procyon to life.** Give each location a specific feeling (crowded, cold, wet, dim, etc.). Give each NPC a name, detail, and a preferred method of problem solving (threats, bargaining, violence, charm, etc.). Give each action context—the shoot-out is on a neon-lit street with hovercars as the only cover, the Pasha's lair is a high-end club with elegant harp music playing, the Cobalt Syndicate's representative smells of cheap cigarettes and mining fumes.

To achieve your goals, use **GM Actions** guided by your **GM Principles** (detailed on the following pages).

GM ACTIONS

In the same way that player characters have actions they can use to get things done in the game, so do you have a set of GM actions. When you need to contribute to the story and you are unsure of what to do, look at this list of actions and pick one.

ASK QUESTIONS

Always **ask questions**. The majority of your work as a GM is to ask questions and build on the answers. Sometimes the answers come from the dice, sometimes they come from a player, but in any case, simply asking the question primes the pump for interesting play.

Ask Questions

Provide Opportunities & Follow Their Lead

Cut to the Action

Telegraph Trouble Before it Strikes

Follow Through

Initiate an Action with an NPC

Tell Them the Consequences & Ask

Tick a Clock

Offer a Devil's Bargain

Think Offscreen

- ▶ **Ask establishing questions** to paint the details for the scene and action. *Who's kicking down the door? Where is Hayley when the Legionnaires board? Do you direct that question to the interpreter or to the Sah'iir or to the xeno themselves? Is everyone sneaking into the warehouse together, or are you taking different routes?*
- ▶ **Ask evocative questions** to provide an opportunity for players to express their characters. *Are you actually lying here, or do you believe what you're saying? Can you really bring yourself to turn in someone just like you? How do you react to seeing yourself on the news? How do you feel about having to give the prize up?*
- ▶ **Ask leading questions** to highlight what you're thinking about. *Do you think you can con the sector's biggest con man? Does anyone want to **ATTUNE** to see if this group of people approaching has killing intent? If you override the regulators, the engine might burn out if you burn too hot, right?*
- ▶ **Ask trivial questions** to fill the Procyon Sector with color. *Have you ever ridden a Lithian pony-dog? Do you miss your home? Did your family use an Urbot around the house or work?*
- ▶ **Ask the players for help when you're uncertain or stuck.** *What's a good Devil's Bargain here? That seems like lethal harm, would you all agree? This could be desperate or just risky—what do you think?*

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES & FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

As a GM, you need to **provide opportunities** but still follow the **player's lead**.

Providing opportunities is easy: Procyon is a setting specifically designed with the daring space adventurer in mind. Step in and describe an opportunity when the PCs look for one, rolling or picking from the jobs tables (see **Jobs**, page 338) as you please, adding your unique ideas about the sector and its factions, guided by your goals and principles.

Not all opportunities are equal. Sometimes you get the choice job—an ideal match for your crew and skills, with good pay. Other times it's slim pickings—a tough target or meager profit. There's always some sort of opportunity to be found. Most of the time, this comes directly out of the story itself. Look at which factions or NPCs have come up in the fiction. Who's at risk? Who needs something done?

During **downtime** between jobs, PCs can **gather information** to set things up. If the players don't have an idea for a job, that's a perfect time to come up with a new opportunity. Ask them questions about how they look for new work, and have them make a few action rolls to see what comes up.

Each opportunity you present to the players should have a minimum set of components for the players to understand how they might work the job. It might not be a good opportunity, but it should be actionable. The PCs should learn that *"The Cobalt Syndicate is looking to steal a large freighter from the Turner Society,"* not *"The Cobalt Syndicate is looking for help."* Depending on how the crew learns of the opportunity, you can provide more detail or develop the details. *"The Turner Society is moving Vosian crystals from a secret port. Maybe you can hook up a buyer for the crystals on top of getting paid for the ship, or your Mystic could find a use for them."*

An opportunity consists of:

- ▶ **A target.** *The Turner Society.*
- ▶ **A location.** *A hidden port on the Outpost SB-176 lower decks.*
- ▶ **A situation.** *The Turner Society has a large shipment of raw crystals from Vos coming into the station this week, where they get used in illegal tech or mystic rituals.*
- ▶ **One obvious vector for a plan.** *Cobalt Syndicate members are able to set you up with worker clearances to get you into the Outpost's lower decks. You'll have to sneak past the mercenaries yourself.*

Better information from contacts or gathered information (or other means) may include:

- ▶ **Connected factions** and what they need or want. *Those Vosian crystals were stolen, and the Guild has a nasty bounty hunter looking for them.*
- ▶ A not-so-obvious vector for a **plan**. *It would be possible to pose as high-end buyers, which would get you into the secure facility instead of starting action on Guild turf.*
- ▶ Interesting **secrets**, a link to an alternate opportunity. *Vosian crystals in that quantity resonate strongly with the Way. The Guild of Engineers would take it as a personal favor if you return them, and shut down the port that's operating right under their noses.*

See the **Ships & Crews** chapter (page 111) for tables of targeted opportunities for each type of ship. Or you can roll on the jobs tables (see **Jobs**, page 338) for something less specific and flavor it for your crew and factions.

Offering opportunities allows you to give the players a chance to act. Your players have showed up for an evening of skulduggery and space adventures, and the system of jobs and opportunities gives you the base material you need to tell that story. The players will always look to the GM to hear “the word on the street.” Yes, it flows from the narrative you’ve woven together so far, and leverages the events that have already occurred, but at its core, job generation is a gameplay mechanic.

This allows you to keep the pump primed with interesting adventures and jobs, while letting the players drive the action. If the PCs have the inclination and resources to really dig into an opportunity, they can get a ton of extra information and set themselves up for smooth sailing. At the least, they can get a better engagement roll. If they don’t have those resources to spend, or they have too many other things to focus on, that’s okay too. They still have the minimum requirements for a fun evening.

Instead of providing an opportunity you’ve rolled up or gathered from the faction’s downtime, you can follow the crew’s lead. Similar to providing your own job, listen to what the players have spotted and ask questions until you’ve properly developed the idea. They may have a target in mind, or have seen a situation they want to capitalize on and simply need a few more details. Ask questions until those details are clear, then ask if they want to investigate further (at their own risk) or jump straight to the engagement. Revenge, rumored treasure, and grudges are all great hooks from players.

CUT TO THE ACTION

When they say, *"We should break into the Nightspeaker's ship,"* that's your cue. Say, *"That sounds like an Infiltration plan, yeah? What's your point of entry?"* Then, when they give you the detail, you say, *"Alright, so you're in spacesuits on the hull outside the airlock. The pinpoints of starlight seem faint. You begin to cut through the hull. Let's make the engagement roll."* And suddenly, you're in the job.

This might be too quick for some groups, so you don't always have to jump this quickly into the action, but try to aim towards this point. But there are ample tools for dealing with problems traditionally dealt with via planning; **flashbacks** can cover a lot of ground, as can **resistance rolls**. That planning time is better spent having fun space adventures.

In the same way, whenever you cut to another scene, cut to the meat of that scene, where the action happens. If you're describing a meeting, cut straight to the moment in the meeting where the characters get to business, instead of deciding on how the characters get to the warehouse. Momentum is key. You can always address questions that come up as they need to be answered.

TELEGRAPH TROUBLE BEFORE IT STRIKES

When you describe action, show the threat that's present, then ask them what they do. Strong characterization and clear description will make it easy to deliver consequences that players care about.

Your scanner readouts show their portside guns warming up as she pulls in above your ship. The comms crackle to life: "License and registration, Cerberus." How do you respond?

The Nightspeaker's hand whips back and draws her blade, its edge igniting with Way energy. The lights above you flicker and buzz, and that sword whips down, cutting the bar cleanly in two. As you stumble backwards, she comes up for another swing, looking to take off an arm. What do you do?

Your target makes you across the room. His eyes wide, he tips over a table—bottles and patrons scattering everywhere—as he darts for the kitchen. What do you do?

The system's countermeasures blare red on your hacking rig as you override the data locks. A computerized voice chimes, "This system is property of the Guild of Engineers"—is that an AI? How do you proceed?

Contrast those with these vague versions:

You have to deal with a Legion patrol boat before you go through the gate. How do you do that?

He's really scared of you. What do you do?

*You want to break into their system? You can roll **HACK** for that.*

Without telegraphing the trouble and obstacles and giving context to the action, the outcomes can feel undefined. You might feel like you're creating something out of the blue when they roll a **1-3** or a **4/5**. If you strongly imply the consequences before the action roll though, it becomes obvious what the consequences should be (they board your ship, she shoots you, he escapes, you trigger an alarm)—because they follow directly from the fiction described.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Once you've telegraphed your threat, follow through with that threat when it hits. There are several tools for players to use to soften the blow for themselves. They might make an **action roll** to react in time. They might make a **resistance roll** to mitigate the damage. Give your fiction teeth.

*She doesn't have enough proof to arrest you right this second, but the Legionnaire flags your credentials as suspicious before sending you through the gate. Take +2 **HEAT**.*

The psy-blade cuts upward, deep into your arm, that hum of killing Way energy shattering the bone. Your whole left side goes numb with pain. Take level 3 harm.

He makes it through the kitchen out into the alley crowded with people waiting to get into the nightclub. "Hey, watch out!" you hear from somewhere deep in the crowd.

Your console starts smoking as you squash the alarms and countermeasures, and you hear the AI speak to itself. "That's not supposed to happen. Filing incident report..." I'm ticking the "Alert" clock.

This same idea applies to whole factions. If they're able to do something without anything getting in their way, they can just do it. Go ahead and say, "Governor Malklaith knows you're behind the thefts. He puts out a warrant for your arrest in every system. Add one **WANTED LEVEL** to each system sheet. You find out while you're carousing at Lock Luna and it comes on over the news holo-projected on the ceiling. Two system cops in uniform are drinking at the bar, and start eyeing the crowd. What do you do?"

INITIATE ACTION WITH AN NPC

This is similar to the previous GM action, just more specific. Your NPCs can initiate action on their own, instead of having to wait for the PCs to act first. More dangerous NPCs will act first more often.

"With her gun trained on you, she's taking no chances. As she backs away, she pulls the trigger. You take a blaster bolt to the thigh—enough to prevent you from following."

"Tsk. I can't just let her get away. Can't I dodge or something?"

*"Sure. You can resist with **PROWESS** if you want to. If you do, you'll dodge the bolt completely."*

This is a very effective technique, but it can be overused. Save it for NPCs who are real masters at something, or for particularly dire situations when the NPCs have a serious advantage.

TELL THEM THE CONSEQUENCES & ASK

This Pasha needs the data, but if you push for more pay, you'll definitely ruffle feathers. Want to roll and see what happens, or do you want to accept the deal offered?

The room is ablaze with fire. You can run in and grab the artifact, but you're definitely going to get burnt. Still willing to do it?

TICK A CLOCK

Keep a piece of paper or stack of index cards handy to draw new clocks on. Ticking a clock allows you to draw out an extended sequence, such as with infiltrations, as well as tracking long-term attitudes, such as with sudden but inevitable betrayals.

OFFER A DEVIL'S BARGAIN

Consider what complications or dubious choices characters can make that you want to see on-screen and offer them dice for making those things happen. If you can't think of one, you can always rely on extra **HEAT**—forensic science is really amazing in space.

THINK OFFSCREEN

Consider what might be happening elsewhere and whether it has an impact to what's going on right now. Is there a pesky investigator who could turn up at the worst time? Have you angered a bounty hunter faction by taking the good jobs? Whatever it is, bringing in offscreen problems can make the world feel more organic and rich.

GM PRINCIPLES

When you pursue your goals and choose actions, use your principles to guide your decision making.

- ▶ **Be a fan of the PCs.** Present the world honestly—things really are stacked against them—but don't make yourself the enemy of the PCs. They have enemies enough. Be interested in the characters and excited about their victories.
- ▶ **Always follow the fiction.** The game's starting situation will put things in motion. Ask how the characters react and see what happens next. NPCs react according to their goals and methods. Events snowball. You don't need to "manage" the game. Action, reaction, and consequences will drive everything.
- ▶ **Make the world wondrous.** Procyon is full of colors, aliens, planets, and things no one has seen before. Make it awesome.
- ▶ **Make space mysterious.** The sector has undiscovered planets, dark hyperspace lanes, and strange Way creatures never before encountered. Not everything is neatly known. Weave mysteries in.
- ▶ **Cover it in big, clunky tech.** Hegemonic tech is obvious and ubiquitous. It's less flawless white walls and more heavy breakers.
- ▶ **Address the characters.** Ask, "Aman, where do you go to find a lead on the Syndicate?" not "Juan, where does Aman go?" This puts Aman front and center—his preferences, desires, and style. Aman comes to life as a character.
- ▶ **Address the players.** "Juan, how do you want to handle this? Should we do a whole scene or just make a roll real quick?" This puts Juan front and center—his preferences, desires, and style. He can consider what he wants, rather than what the character wants.
- ▶ **Consider the risk.** Think about the dangers inherent in what the crew does. A risky roll is the default. When they're building on successes, they might make controlled rolls. When they have to improvise or are clearly outmatched, they're probably making desperate rolls. Go with your gut. Call the positions as you see them, but be open to revision.
- ▶ **Hold on lightly.** Rewind, revise, and reconsider events as needed. This is not a "no-take-backs" kind of game. You can always say, "Actually, no, on second thought, they really don't have good security at the back, so let's do away with the clock." This can be a hard principle to internalize but being flexible enough to revisit the situation with a new perspective can really improve the game.



GM BEST PRACTICES

Play to find out and encourage others to do the same. Instead of making something specific happen, ask questions about what might happen. *Will the players stand up for Urbots? Can Hayley keep engines on fire running? Can the crew get back on Malklaith's good side?* Don't make up your mind about these questions—let the players surprise you.

Uphold the integrity of the game. It's on you to portray the world as it is, not to contrive events or set up particular outcomes. The players should trust that when you tell them things they don't know about the world, there's no secret agenda behind your words.

Get everyone's input. This game is a structured conversation, and you should always be pushing to include everyone in that conversation. Ask questions and prompt ideas. Discuss your thoughts with the players and keep unilateral decisions to a minimum.

Find your own interest in the game. Your game is a chance to watch the sci-fi show you always wanted. Be that show's biggest fan! When you want to know something about the characters, ask the players. *"Are you really going to leave him on that rock with nothing but his spacesuit? Or are you bluffing?"* These questions will give you insight into what the characters want, how they're trying to get it, and when and what to roll to make that happen.

Be a fan of the characters and help the players pursue their characters' goals. Ask them what they want and point out opportunities they might have to pursue those goals. Work with them to create opportunities. Help them with the system to get the most out of the risks they're taking.

Bring up character feelings and thoughts. Talking about a scene and living that scene are two different experiences, and only focusing on the tiny fraction of concrete events will make the game feel flat. Share with the characters things they might suspect or think. Ask them if they want to gather information and dig deeper.

Portray the NPCs fully. Even if they aren't the main characters, the NPCs have interests, capabilities, or opinions of their own. Don't let them get pushed around! When the PCs want to go head-to-head with an NPC, remind them of the NPC's capabilities. "Tallon's a dyed-in-the-wool military man. I don't know if you can really just **COMMAND** him to drop it. What's your leverage?" When the PCs have NPC allies, make sure those allies take actions to help their friends out, and come to the PCs with info and troubles.

Ask the players what they want. Find out what the crew is trying to accomplish in general. Who do they think are their friends, and who do they hold a grudge against? Ask players in the moment: What do they want out of this action? If you know their goals, you can have a conversation about opportunities, actions, and effects. Sometimes, clarifying what the player wants is enough to highlight the correct approach, or make it clear what sorts of opportunities they're looking for. It can also make clear what actions they might perform and what consequences might come from those actions. Get the players to do the heavy lifting of determining where to go next.

Cut to the action. Once you get the players to tell you what they want and how they're going to get it, cut to the action and use dice rolls to move things along. It's okay to try big things! If they want to kill Governor Malklaith, and then they go and somehow do it, despite the poor odds and considerable dangers? Good for them! It's done. He doesn't mysteriously escape. Keep the action and the story moving.

Separate possible ideas from facts. Everything in your head that hasn't entered the story is in a nebulous state of potential. Those ideas may be true, or they might never come to pass, depending on how the story evolves from the players' actions. For example, when the PCs raid a bounty hunter dive, you may have ideas of what might happen:

- ▶ Front of the Bar (Barflies? Folks smoking? Neon sign?)
- ▶ Back Alley (Hoverbikes, maybe a small personal flyer?)
- ▶ Attached Warehouse (Back entrance? Stairs? Guards?)
- ▶ Bounty Hunters (How well armed and armored?)
- ▶ Gun Room (Do you have to check weapons?)
- ▶ Make-Shift Prison (Dingy? A few bounties glaring, or pleading?)
- ▶ Security (Alarms? Nearby cops? Reinforcements?)

When they decide they're kicking down the front door, you can think about the possible ideas in your head and add more details when you need them, like deciding if the bar is empty or not.

As the characters proceed with their plan, reach for these possible ideas and make them fact by describing them in the scene. Once you do, the players have something to wrestle with, obstacles to overcome, and opportunities to leverage. Until you put them in the story, you should think of them as just possible ideas, not facts waiting to be discovered. Take them or leave them as the fiction needs. It's also okay to weave in player expectations and descriptions.

The feel of the game should be jumping from one cool cinematic beat to another—a sequence of events edited for awesome. Let the dice dictate where trouble comes up. When it does, draw from your pool of ideas to carry you forward into the fiction. Use clocks to track progress and introduce an appropriate number of the ideas you have, when you need them. You may have a thought about what the layout or details of the complex are like in your head, but treat it like a menu to order off of, rather than a to-do list.

Gloss over or dig into details to focus on the interesting parts. Each roll occupies the same amount of screen time on a show but might cover more than that in terms of actual time in the story. For instance, a climactic battle between your crew and a mystic that you've been chasing might take many rolls because we want to experience the payout of that work. We want to see more of the characters rising to the challenge and kicking butt. On the other hand, the search could take one or two rolls, even though it takes weeks to put together where the mystic has been hiding out.

Effect levels and progress clocks are another version of this idea. If an obstacle really deserves multiple actions to overcome or is especially tough, make a clock and tick it using the effect system. Each roll will change the story in some way. Since each roll has possible consequences and risks, the bigger an effect they can make on their target, the fewer consequences they'll suffer.

But not every action deserves a clock. You can resolve an entire day of **STUDYING** base plans for a weakness into a single roll, to match how much screen time we really want to spend on it. Let your interest as a table be your guide for when to dive into the nitty-gritty and when to gloss over the tedious details.

Turn it into fiction. A lot of the game requires you to apply mechanical results, either to the players as consequences, or via their actions, or because of the results of fortune rolls. Each time, remember to bring those results into the story. When they **HACK** the terminal, what does it look like? When the character botches a **SKULK** roll, what goes wrong? How does a faction's actions during downtime change the story for the players?

Write it down. Whether you use index cards, a notebook, or some more advanced system, write down important things that come up and draw attention to them. If there are a bunch of jobs on index cards, the crew can easily see what they might do next. If you need to remember a detail about a contact, what better way than to look at a list of NPCs?

When in doubt, explosions. Remember that **Scum and Villainy** is fundamentally about adventures in space and a crew of unlikely protagonists getting into trouble. If the story stalls out, push towards thrilling action and daring escapades. Make it exciting!



GM BAD HABITS

DON'T CALL FOR A SPECIFIC ACTION

If you've GMed other games, you may find yourself calling for specific rolls. You might say, "You'll need to **SWAY** him to get by," or "Cracking this lock is a **RIG** roll." Resist this impulse.

Try to instead ask the player how they accomplish their goal. "How are you going to get by this guard?" or "The door's locked. What are you going to do about that?" The player decides what **action** to use. Then you tell them the position and effect level that you see in this situation, using that action—as well as why you think that.

"I want to steal his keycard."

"Okay. But how do you do that?"

*"I...**SWAY** him?"*

"Sure, but what's your character doing? What would we actually see 'on-screen'?"

"Oh, right. Aman comes up to him dressed like another guard, asks him about the game last night, then while he's talking, grabs it out of his pocket where he can't see?"

*"Okay, I get it. I think that's risky, limited effect. If you actually use your **SKULK**, I'd think that would be standard effect."*

Maybe you would make a different decision in the scenario above (**desperate position** and **zero effect**, maybe, if you think **SWAY** is all wrong for pickpocketing). That's fine! Your game of **Scum and Villainy** is your own. And even when you say "desperate position, zero effect," the player can still figure out a way to make it work. They can **push themselves** for more **effect**, get a teammate to set them up for a better position and **assist** them, or tell you how they see the risk and possible effect. They can even change their mind and take a different action or approach.

You want to give the player a chance to describe their action—to give their roll context and give everyone a clear idea about how things might go. You may have to discuss whether what they're describing is really that action (talking to someone is not **RIGGING** something) but encouraging that description first and having the player match their skill to that description goes a long way towards avoiding arguments at a table.

DON'T MAKE PCS LOOK INCOMPETENT

When a player rolls a **1-3** on an action, things don't work out for the character, but not because the character was incompetent. Even if the character has a zero in the action they're attempting, failures should be framed as "if only this hadn't gone wrong" or "what you didn't realize."

You roll out from under the table, blaster raised, firing towards the bounty hunter, but she's already moving. She flips up a table and blocks your fire just long enough to duck into the alley.

When the character fails, talk about how things went wrong.

"Oh, maybe something in the ship's control systems gives out when you make that turn?"

"We didn't pay upkeep, so maybe something burns out?"

"Okay! There's a shudder and something under one of the panels starts to smoke."

Or you might bring up their traumas or vice in some way.

You remember when that Ur artifact got in your head and how you're haunted now? Yeah, you're about to pick up this artifact, and the resonance solidifies into a single voice telling you to stop.

DON'T OVERCOMPLICATE THINGS

If you're describing the fiction before the roll, consequences will usually be obvious, because the action has been established clearly. Sometimes you'll draw a blank though. Not every consequence has to be a pulse-pounding problem. Some can just be extra **HEAT**, or ticking a related clock. If all else fails, you can inflict **harm** like "Exhausted." Go with what's obvious and ask the players for ideas if you feel stuck.

DON'T LET PLANNING DRAG ON

Because so much can go wrong, it can be easy to get carried away planning for all contingencies. The system is designed to skip over those steps and jump straight into the action. Don't linger prepping for things that may or may not happen. Get to the **engagement roll** and start doing **actions**. Use **flashbacks** and **resistances** to backfill what you really need to talk about.

DON'T HOLD BACK ON WHAT THEY EARN

Once the players do all the work of getting into position, making a roll, and determining their effect, let them have the success they've earned. Don't pull out gotchas like "It was a clone all along!" Even if you feel like the crew got off easy this time, let them have that small respite. It won't be long before they're in over their heads again. All this goes just the same for secrets. If the players find something out, tell them straight how things are; don't let them "find out" lies.

DON'T SAY NO UNLESS YOU HAVE TO

Sometimes you have to say no. Just because a character wants to teleport from planet to planet doesn't mean they can roll their **ATTUNE** to do so. You have to convey the world as it is, honestly and without bias. But just saying no halts the conversation, and there are often better ways to answer.

*So, you want to **HACK** into the Guild's high-security mainframe? That sounds desperate, with limited effect. But I have a Devil's Bargain for you—regardless of how it goes, they're going to start a case file on you. I'll just make this "Identity Discovered" clock as a 6-clock, and tick it once.*

Instead, you might propose that the action has zero effect as a baseline.

*"I want to **SCRAP** with the guy in the power armor."*

"Okay. It's desperate and you'll have zero effect."

"I'm gonna push myself to get limited effect, then."

Same thing with fancy locks, or improbable space maneuvers. You can set zero effect as the baseline for a given action—instead of saying no—and the players can modify the effect from there by pushing themselves or using teamwork.

Or you can tell them to start the first phase of a long-term project clock.

You want to learn how to move a hyperspace route? Sounds difficult. Start an 8-clock for the first phase: "Find an Expert with the Appropriate Technical and Mystical Background."

DON'T ALLOW ONE ROLL TO NEGATE ANOTHER

When a PC makes an **action roll**, they often experience a consequence from their action, and can often roll to resist the worst of those outcomes. But you don't want to roll twice for the same thing.

*Aleera Suhn is in a desperate knife fight with a guard, atop a catwalk over a pit of Aketi octopumas (they have eight eyes and eight paws, very scary). The guard drives her towards one edge, and there's a real risk of falling to the angry maws below. Suhn's player makes a **SCRAP** roll to see how the attack goes and rolls badly. Suhn is forced over the catwalk edge!*

Suhn can roll to reduce the damage from the fall, but she can't undo being pushed off the catwalk. She could, however, flash back to having acquired Grand Phereniki pheromones (a natural predator of the octapumas).

Because the player rolled, Suhn suffers the consequence in some way. This is not about mechanical effects as much as fictional ones. The story has to change. If you inflict level 3 harm on a character, but their resistance gives a great reason that the damage would be completely prevented, feel free to adjust the harm. If Suhn throws out a grappling hook as she falls off the catwalk and that allows her to swing past the floor of the pit with no harm, then that's an exciting turn of events.

This can get a little confused when you push actively—when you describe an NPC acting first, there's no roll, and you can push really hard. "The sharpshooter plants two blaster shots directly into your chest before you can close the distance; take level 4 harm!" In this case, since there's been no roll, a resistance roll can interrupt this fiction. Perhaps the PC drops under the shots with a **PROWESS** resist, and doesn't get clipped at all. That's fine. Just don't allow a roll to prevent the result of a previous roll.

DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN MINUTIA

Skip over the drudgery of the characters' lives. When the players say, "Let's go to the Cove and ask Banshee what she knows," you could talk about how the pirates there search them and their ship, making action rolls at each step to **SWAY**, **CONSORT**, and **SKULK**. Eventually they get their audience with the Pirate Queen. Or you can cut straight to the heart of it, describing all of that in passing. "It takes a few hours, one bar fight, and suffering through a bunch of searches, but they finally let you in to see Banshee."

If the players want to step in or inject something in that description, that's fine. "Wait, I want to **RIG** up some security measures on the ship so they don't find my stash of artifacts" is totally okay. Ask them how they want to resolve their action, then move on to the next thing.

STARTING THE GAME

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SESSION

During the first session, the group will choose a ship type, create their characters, and embark on their first job. You might be able to finish the first job in the first session, but you might not, depending on how quickly the crew and characters come together. Either way is fine.

To prepare, read over character and crew creation. You'll help everyone walk through those steps and answer their questions as you go. Make sure everyone is comfortable with the decisions that are being made in this step. It's easier to change things now than it will ever be later.

Skim through the factions of Procyon (starting on page 320) and pick three or four that catch your eye. During crew creation, the players will ask you about factions connected to their crew, so it's good to have some interesting ones in mind. Also look at the starting jobs for the ship you select, as there are three factions possibly tied to each.

It can sometimes help to get in the mood by reading or watching a touchstone of the genre (see page 4). Whether it's a favorite TV show, an action-packed movie, a book, or comic. Prime your mind with sci-fi space adventure.

Finally, print out the game sheets (available at <http://offguardgames.com/scumandvillainy>). You'll want at least two of each playbook (in case two people choose the same one) and one of each crew type. Also print the rules reference sheets, the GM sheets, and the Procyon system sheets.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

After everyone is together and you're ready to play, you'll want to kick things off with a punchy description of what's to come. This is true even if everyone is already on the same page—this just helps signal the shift into getting set up.

"You're all daring outlaws seeking your fortunes in the fringes of Hegemonic space. Let's make some characters and form a crew! Here are the playbooks. They're the different types of crew members you can play. Let me go over them briefly..."

Provide enough context to let the players understand their decisions, but don't drown them in details. If they ask questions, that's good! But you don't need to explain all the rules at once—teach them as they come up during play. Don't spend too much time on Procyon and its history. Keep everything as simple as possible.

While they're looking over playbooks and ships, talk about their role as players in the game and set expectations for what you're going to do together as a game group. Among the many things that might come up are:

- ▶ Are we going for a romp or is this a serious, gritty story?
- ▶ How mysterious is the Way? Is it vanishingly rare and scary, or is it uncommon, but well-enough known?
- ▶ How common are Ur artifacts? Are they frequently traded on black markets or are they more tightly controlled, falling mostly into private collections?
- ▶ Urbots are considered property of the Guild. What is the popular opinion on the matter?

When these questions come up, feel free to come up with answers that suit your table and their playstyle.

CREATING CHARACTERS & SHIP

Follow the procedures on [page 56](#) and [page 112](#). Ask the players some of these questions while they do it:

- ▶ Why did you become an outlaw?
- ▶ You both have the same background. Did you know each other before this crew was founded?
- ▶ Have you ever been locked up? Why? Are any of your friends still behind bars?
- ▶ When was the last time you used your blaster? Why?
- ▶ How did you join this crew? Did another member vouch for you? Were you a founding member?
- ▶ Who do you trust the most on the crew? Who do you trust the least? What's that about? Or will we find out in play?
- ▶ The two of you have the same heritage. Do you want to be relatives? Do you know each other's families?
- ▶ Has [faction] ever tried to recruit you? What happened?
- ▶ What's your vice? How do you usually satisfy it?

You don't need to know every detail about the characters before you start—play to find out most of them—but everyone should be excited about this group of characters. If someone seems frustrated or disinterested, talk about how to change things so they're more involved. Buy-in now is important.

If a player gets stuck and can't make a decision, go into more detail on a rule or aspect of the setting. Some players really want to know all the possibilities before they can make a choice. Reassure them by saying that their choices aren't set in stone; if they don't like something about the character or crew after the first couple sessions, they can change it to something else.

During ship creation, the players will ask you about a few factions—who helped them improve their ship, who helped with later upgrades, and who's connected to their contact. Use the factions from the starting situation of the ship your group picked (see **Crew Creation**, page 112) to better tie the group into the action.

INTRODUCE CHARACTERS & CREW

Go around the table and have everyone introduce their character. They should say their name or alias, their playbook, look, heritage, background, and starting and special ability. Ask them about their vice. Ask them who their best friend and rival are. Feel free to follow up with questions, like "Why is Flint your rival?" or "How did you end up being a bounty hunter?" But leave space for the answer to be "Let's find out in play."

Do the same thing with the ship. Ask the players to remind you what they picked for their special ability and upgrades.

THE STARTING SITUATION

After the characters and crew are introduced, throw the PCs into the starting situation and start the game in earnest.

A starting situation is the beginning of a job appropriate for that ship, along with some factions in tension circling the crew. Feel free to change up the factions involved to match your crew's backstories or interests. If you don't like the starting situations, you can create your own.

First, create a job that characterizes the kinds of jobs that ship will tend towards. *The Stardancer is a smuggling ship, and they need to get off-world with an artifact they've acquired without being caught.* Then add some factions to the mix that underscore the kinds of groups the crew is likely to face off against. For instance, the Firedrake's jobs are against various Hegemony factions.

The purpose of the starting situation is to start the first job with a bang. The players immediately have a goal and a direction, and they're on an exciting job right away, instead of having to meet in a bar and talk about forming a crew. This is the pilot episode. Have fun!

THE FIRST SCENE

Read the description of the starting position. This almost always starts in the middle of some action as though they had started a job and gotten a risky result on the engagement roll. Players may want to ask questions about how they got into this situation, and you should feel free to let them tell you who tipped them off about the job, or flash back to previous things that had been set up.

Play out the sequence and keep the action moving. Make this an opportunity to paint a picture of the world of **Scum and Villainy**. Ask them how they respond to each new change in the story.

THE NEXT SCENES

After you've gotten through the meat of the job, run through **payoff** and **entanglements**. For the starting positions, the payoffs can be modest—4 or 6 **CRED**. But usually they involve more choice about who to get paid by, such as with the Stardancer crew needing to decide on what to do with the artifact they end up with.

Use downtime to press the issues that come up in the starting position. Maybe the crew feels like they've made an enemy, or they see a new opportunity that came up during the starting position. It's fine if they want to pursue these options straightaway. If not, however, there are always the three jobs on the right they can move on to next. If you're making your own situation, use the ship's suggested opportunities or the job creation chart to make up a few. Keep the players looking forward, with options so the game doesn't stall out.



INTO THE BLACK

Out of the box, **Scum and Villainy** produces a cycle of play. From the **job**, to **entanglements**, to **downtime**, on to new opportunities. Whatever the initial situation may have been, characters will have their own agendas, the crew will have its own loyalties, and the pursuit of these goals will drive the story forward. The game requires very little of you between sessions, except to think about the NPCs and factions and identify what they want and how they try to get those things. Part of the fun for players is to play in a world that feels alive and real to them. Let's talk about how you breathe life into your game.

FACTION CLOCKS

TIER AND SCOPE

Each faction has a **faction clock** associated with it. Every downtime, you determine how far they progress on their clocks. Usually this involves a **fortune roll**, using the Tier of the faction as your pool. Whatever the goal, the size of the faction clock is under your control. A standard clock is eight segments, but easier or harder goals should be fewer or more segments.

The scope of the action should also match up with the Tier of the faction. A Tier I faction would never have a faction clock for: *Bring down the Legion*. This is impossible for them—it's too big a clock. A Tier V faction would never have a faction clock of: *Deal with an individual member of this small-time gang*. This would barely be on their radar.

For each goal, think about what it would take for the faction to accomplish that goal and ask: *is this something they could put into motion or do they need to do something else first?* If it's the latter, figure out how to break down the action into reasonable goals, and make the first of those goals the faction clock. This is especially true of the goal: *Increase in Tier*. Don't make this an explicit goal. Instead, think about how the faction would improve its Tier, and then set goals that bring that about fictionally (fiction first).

The Dyrinek Gang needs jump-capable ships to get off Warren and spread through the sector. Once they do this, they'll be a higher-Tier faction with more influence and members. Create a clock, "Steal Freighters from the Cobalt Syndicate." This sounds like a bigger deal than normal for the Dyrineks, who are a small-time crew on Warren, so maybe make that one a 10-segment clock.

When you make their **fortune roll**, mark segments on the faction clock according to your result: **1-3**: one segment, **4/5**: two, **6**: three, **critical**: five. Interpret the events to give fiction to the outcomes. If a faction only needed two ticks to complete their goal, but they only managed one, what went wrong for them? Was another faction interfering with their result? Is there internal strife?

When the crew completes a job that would meaningfully impact a faction, consider adjusting the faction's clock up or down. If the job was impactful, but run-of-the-mill, add or remove one tick. If the job cleared a major obstacle, maybe add or remove two ticks. If the players affect a faction, but not to the extent required to adjust the clock, consider adjusting the faction's pool up or down a die before rolling.

OLD AND NEW FACTIONS

You don't need to simulate every faction in the game each downtime. Usually, you can roll just for the ones that interest you in the sector at that time—ones the players have dealt with, or that were in the fiction recently, or that you explicitly want to introduce. If the players engage with a new faction, you can usually start fresh with that faction. If their starting goal doesn't make sense for where the story is, update it!

Sometimes, you may decide a faction isn't relevant to your game anymore. Just stop rolling for them during downtimes. You're not locked into progressing and updating faction clocks for a faction that the story hardly ever includes. If they become relevant again, you can make a few fortune rolls for them in a row, to indicate that they've been working on stuff in the background.

GIVING UP A CLOCK

Sometimes a faction clock no longer makes sense. Knowingly or unknowingly, crew actions will often get tangled with faction goals. For example, a faction wants to catch and interrogate a rival faction leader, but the PCs get into a tangle with that leader and off him during a job. In those cases, just create a new clock to replace the old one. Ask: *What's next on their docket now that this plan is scuttled?* Their priorities have shifted. There can be a natural desire to give factions credit for having completed some of the clock, but it's better to just start clean. If there's some small portion of the previous clock they could salvage for their new agenda, just represent that with a smaller clock on their new goal.

FACTION VS. NPC CLOCKS

Factions aren't monolithic and unified. The crew may influence one of the faction's NPCs, or that NPC may simply have competing interests to the larger faction goals. Remember that a faction operates on a different scale than a single person. You can create some clocks to represent those NPC interests. Two Guild primarchs might be fighting over who is really in control of the faction (represented by a tug-of-war clock) while the faction itself is trying to take over some new business interest (represented by a faction clock). You can advance these NPC clocks in the same fashion as faction clocks during downtime—assemble a pool of fortune dice, roll, interpret how the results reflect the events, and change the clocks appropriately.

If specific NPCs interfere with a faction's overall progress, you can reduce the filled segments on the faction's clock; likewise, if there's some windfall of luck or the players help out a faction, advance the clock. Let the story influence the mechanics in the same way that the mechanics influence the story.

SPECIAL CASES

When players spend **CRED** for extra downtime activities, that money goes somewhere; sometimes into the pockets of a faction. It can be good to think about how that money gets spent and if it might be relevant to the story. For instance, after a harsh but well-paying job against the Ashen Knives, the crew is flush with cash. They spend their downtimes recuperating, but spend **CRED** for an extra downtime activity to lay low in another system, and another to improve the result to a **crit**.

Those 2 **CRED** are clearly going into bribes for someone to smooth things over—maybe the Legion or House Malklaith. With this extra cash, you might add a die to those faction rolls this downtime, or if it's a lot of cash, maybe just add a bonus to the roll. If the characters are just spending money locally—to acquire an asset or work on a long-term project—look at what factions might be around to benefit, and decide how the influx of cash is going to help them.

USING YOUR PREP

The GM should take every opportunity to showcase the world and the actions of the factions (though obviously not secret information). Faction clocks create job opportunities. Use faction activities to detail and explain crew entanglements. Show news in the bar while they vice. These downtimes tie the world together. Showcase the story of the sector and let the faction actions make your world breathe.

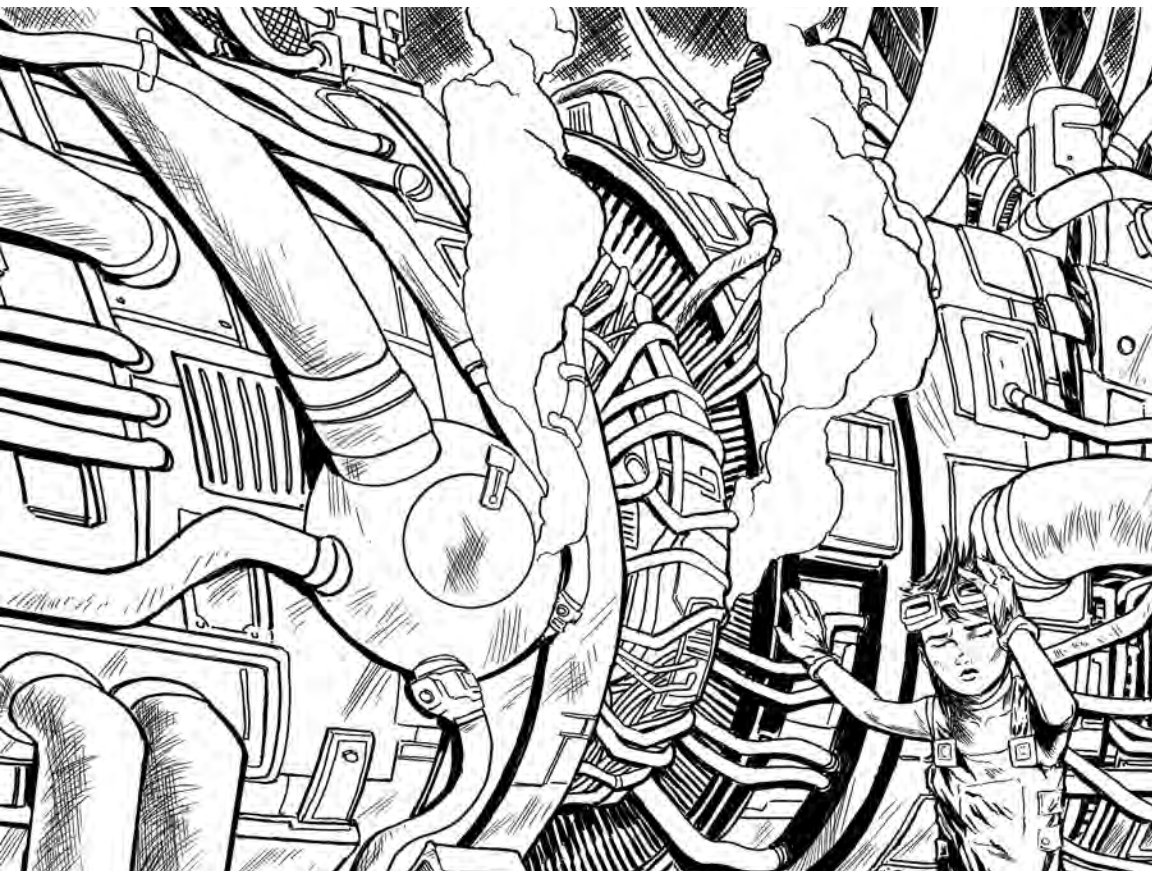
CREW CURIOSITY

Once the effects of the faction actions are felt in the world, crews will inevitably want to find out what factions are working on and what they can do about it. Getting someone to spill might be an **acquire asset** roll if they don't have an in (or just a **gather information** using **CONSORT** if they have an appropriate crew or personal contact). Well-hidden plans might require a **long-term project** to discover the agenda of a group (the clock's size determined by how secret this agenda is).

FACTION STATUS

The crew tracks its status with each faction using a faction sheet. Status moves up or down when the players complete jobs. Those benefited by the jobs usually grant improved relationships, while those that are hurt have their status adjusted downward.

The factions in Procyon are easy to anger, but slow to befriend. It takes steady work to improve faction status past 1. A crew must do as many jobs benefiting a faction as the status they want to move to, before the status improves. That is, if the crew is at status 1 with a faction and wants to go to status 2, they must do two jobs that benefit that faction first.



When a crew has a positive status with a faction, consider how that gets reflected in the story. Does the faction reach out with a job the crew might want? Does the faction deal with a problem the crew is having? Likewise, if the crew has a negative status with a faction, how do they come after the players?

WAR

After enough negative actions, eventually a faction has had enough of a crew and will focus its efforts on dealing with them. A faction has far more resources than a crew does, so this may not affect the faction's clock unless the response warranted is exceptional (often they'll send a single member or hire an investigative crew or bounty hunters). You can, in many ways, treat this like debt—create a clock for the faction's reprisal and roll every downtime. When the clock fills up, create some trouble for the players and reset the clock. Do this until the crew makes amends or the situation changes. Be mindful of crew special abilities that make them difficult to find or reduce **HEAT**. This will often reduce or completely negate the roll.

There are many ways players can solve this situation. A **long-term project** (or with the right contact, a **CONSORT**) might get you a meeting with movers and shakers, and you can play out peace negotiations as a **job**. Making things right might involve doing a couple jobs for a faction, probably at a significant discount (or for free).

The largest factions are not like single individuals—they're not all equally focused or familiar with the crew. Jobs to delete or scramble information in data banks can throw large factions off the trail.

If all else fails, helping one of their enemies or boosting their rivals can give them significantly different priorities.

FINAL CAMPAIGN MISSIONS

When a crew ingratiates itself with a faction, earning a +3 status, that faction treats the crew as trusted allies. Each faction wants to change the sector in some way—Malklaith wants to gain access to some bizarre Ur technology and force his way back into the House's good graces, while Conclave 01 want to liberate the Urbots in the sector. Whatever it is, it's a big plan that will change the face of Procyon, and one that the faction needs help with.

At this point, offer the players three jobs in sequence that build up to a climactic finish, the key mission that will determine the outcome for the sector. When you complete the key mission, the shape of Procyon is irrevocably changed, and our time with the crew is over.

EPILOGUES

Finding out where the characters end up after the events of the key mission can be deeply rewarding. Each player should play through the final epilogue of their crew member. These scenes might be a few days after the key mission, or several years later. Have them show us where the character ends up, what they end up doing with their lives, or who they end up becoming. If there are any notable plot arcs or questions the group wants to resolve, now is the time to discuss what happens with them. These characters could become notable NPCs (possibly within factions in Procyon), or possibly disappear into rumor and folklore.

If you want to keep playing, you should advance time and make new characters. If it feels right for someone to keep playing their character, consider remaking that character to suit their new place in life, as a starting character, possibly with a new playbook. Playing a single character or ship with all their advancements through multiple campaigns is beyond the scope of this game.



CHAPTER 8

SCIENCE &

THE STRANGE

It's usually easy to determine how difficult or dangerous an action will be. Is jumping across a rooftop risky or controlled? Is crossing swords a desperate action for someone that's mastered the weapon? The equation becomes a little more complex when we drift away from things we're familiar with. How dangerous is this Way creature the Pasha has as a pet? Is it complex to fix a jump drive?

Space operas (and science fiction in general) often have elements that are unfamiliar or unusual to us. Whether it's faster-than-light travel, mystic powers tied to some fundamental constant of the universe, or bizarre phenomena both scientific and mysterious, communicating and using those elements requires a few tools.

The ubiquitousness of sci-fi elements defines a setting, and your table should probably discuss the details of the genre of your game.

Scum and Villainy assumes certain defaults, but there is a lot of room to make it your own:

- ▶ **Technology.** The Hegemony keeps powerful and complex technologies (like nanotech) away from the populace, and reserved for the Guild members. *How common is advanced tech? Does it vary from planet to planet?*
- ▶ **Precursors.** *Are there ruins framed in every shot? Does every thug have an artifact arm or are artifacts carefully regulated and rare?*
- ▶ **Mystics.** Some say since the first gate jump, everyone's been able to **ATTUNE**. *How common are Way powers? Are mystic healers as common as doctors? Are mystics rare except in certain enclaves? How often do people see a Way power used in their daily lives?*

PRECURSORS

The Ur (as the Precursors are called) are an ancient civilization shrouded in mystery. Though little is known about them, their presence is felt throughout the Hegemony and modern society is built on the discoveries from this lost culture. Archaeologists are unsure what they looked like because some Ur sites are built for beings the size of giants, while others are built for those only a few feet in size. Their language has millions of unique sigils, the meanings of which are hotly debated. There are conflicting theories as to why the Ur disappeared, but the bones of their civilization fuel studies and advancements throughout the Hegemony.

LEGACY

There are many pieces of Ur relics that are used on a daily basis. The jumpgate system and the jump drives that activate it are Precursor tech. Ruins of Ur cities litter moons and planets. Studies of their remnants have inspired many exploration missions. Over time many sites have been dismantled and stored away by the Hegemony, but any new unlooted finds (a piece of a ship stuck in an asteroid or hidden in a nebula, or a temple deep inside a planet) create a flurry of interest.

Children learn about the Ur, religions focus on them, and their technology affects travel. Many xenos claim that their system or planet was one of the first or last touched by the Ur. Mystic Cults have sprung up over a single Precursor location or artifact, and many branches of science deal with insights learned from a specific remnant.

ARTIFACTS

Remnants of still-functional Ur tech are called **artifacts**. The Ur, with their superior understanding of the universe, built wonders and marvels, but these were created so long ago that most have strange and unpredictable side effects in the present day.

Some pieces of Ur tech are very common. The AI cores in Urbots can be found in many broken shells and frames in the Precursor ruins. The Starsmiths produce jump drives, but they are human-made devices that, at their core, use an artifact to open gates and allow ships to travel down hyperspace lanes. Common Ur tech is usually regulated by the Hegemonic Cults and Guilds, each holding the rights to the technology, and deciding what should be allowed into the common populace and what is too dangerous.

Most Ur tech is poorly understood, and usually has strange interactions with physics. Such objects are often extremely difficult to damage or destroy. Most artifacts tend to have few moving parts, and function for reasons nobody can explain. Artifacts can do almost anything, from producing a contained blade of solid plasma, to becoming a fixed point in space that cannot be moved for a set period of time, to frivolous things such as simply boiling all eggs nearby, or changing objects from one color to another.

Most artifacts also have strange side effects that range from the benign (freezing a person for a few minutes in time, making someone's hair grow rapidly, changing eye-color temporarily) to the severe (slowly phasing a person until they vanish, making someone incredibly unlucky, causing someone to de-evolve, creating gravitic disturbances). Scientists theorize that these side effects are breakdowns of the artifacts over the ages—that at one time the artifacts worked flawlessly, but eons have worn them down. Such side effects are called **jinxes** or **glitches**. Although it's not a hard rule, the more of an effect an artifact has on the world, the more likely it has a significant glitch.

The Hegemony requires folks to turn in any artifact they find. The Cults claim that the artifacts corrupt those that hold them, and the Guilds teach that they are physically dangerous. The Cults and the Guilds are supposed to examine each artifact, store the most pernicious, and return the benign to the finder with a seal proving right of ownership. More often than not, they keep powerful artifacts for themselves, and return few, creating a thriving black market for artifacts in most systems. Most gang bosses and unsavory characters will have one or two artifacts that give them an edge, and many Nobles and rich folk will have an artifact on display (often with a prominent Guild or Cult seal).

ARTIFACTS IN PLAY

When introducing an artifact into the game, the GM should take the time to answer the following questions:

- ▶ **What does it do?** Describe what the artifact does. *Does it produce a blade of hot plasma? Does it shift a gate's destination? Does it affect a Mystic's ATTUNEMENT to the Way?*
- ▶ **What are the requirements?** These are the conditions for activating the artifact. If you do not meet the requirement, the artifact simply won't function, regardless of ATTUNE rolls or other factors. *Does someone have to bond to it? Does it require a specific place or confluence of stars in order to activate? Does it need to be implanted inside you?*
- ▶ **What are the glitches?** Most artifacts have a side effect. These can be avoided if you ATTUNE to the artifact or resist (possibly partially, possibly fully) with RESOLVE. *Will old wounds open on your body? Will you not be able to see in color for a few hours? For the next few days, will you only be able to speak in shrieks every time the jumpgate in your system opens?*
- ▶ **How common is it?** Some Precursor artifacts are incredibly rare—often one-of-a-kind items, or part of only a handful ever discovered. Others (like AI cores or jump drives) are incredibly common and well understood. For rare or unique artifacts, specialists are required to STUDY and understand them (you could locate one as a long-term project).

Note: The Mystic playbook starts with an artifact in their possession. In that instance, the GM should ask the player to answer the first and fourth questions, but provide the associated requirements and glitches. Discuss with your table the types of uses for its power, and also its limitations.

Handling artifacts without appropriate containment or care causes their **glitches** to manifest or affect the person and the surrounding area even if the artifact doesn't activate and do what it was supposed to. You can ATTUNE to an artifact to handle it safely, or use protective gear (such as in a science lab on a ship).

Common artifacts (like Urbot cores) don't generally have glitches. When dealing with hybrid technologies (like AI cores and jump drives), you can manipulate the human components with RIG or HACK, but more complex procedures (like quickly removing a core without resetting or damaging it) often also requires an ATTUNE roll.

ARTIFACT EXAMPLES

LIGHTBLADE

Effect: Generates a four-foot blade of colored plasma.

Requires: Song-cut focusing crystal. Glimmer is a good place to find one.

Glitch: Over time the crystal will crack and must be replaced.

Look: A small metal tube.

Commonality: Some mystic groups (like the Vigilance) bear them as a mark of their order.

ANZANI KEY

Effect: Shifts a gate's exit to the Duha system, which can't be accessed otherwise.

Requires: A year to recharge.

Glitch: Activates upon nearing any gate.

Look: A small blue stone cube.

Commonality: Unique (so far).

CLOAK OF NIGHT

Effect: Walk through solid matter.

Requires: The wearer has to hold their breath while phasing. Exhaling early can kill you.

Glitch: You will fade from reality (becoming ghostly) as you use it.

Look: Rectangular black cloth that reflects no light.

Commonality: Unique (so far). Part of the Raiment of Night.

THE HEART

Effect: When a Mystic uses Sundering they are never included in the effect, and may always choose to make it do damage instead of just stunning.

Requires: Implantation in the user's chest, replacing their actual heart.

Glitch: Over time your body will warp. You may grow a third eye, horns, etc. Note the Church of Stellar Flame hunts people with marks like this.

Look: A black wireframe dodecahedron, holding an undying blue flame.

Commonality: Many are rumored to be found in the infested temples of Omega.

VOID GATE

Effect: Allows a ship to make system jumps without a gate.

Requires: Someone permanently fused to the artifact to interpret instructions and coordinates.

Glitch: Everyone not asleep during the jump goes mad.

Look: A massive (hovercar-sized) set of crystals, inset into a huge metal ring.

Commonality: Six found. The Voidbreaker, the Hegemon's personal vessel, has one.

THE WAY

"What is the Way?" is a question scientists, mystics, and historians have tackled for centuries. Some things are widely known: It exists. It interacts with gravity and energy. It often changes physics constants where it flows most strongly. Guilds often detect Way-touched places by monitoring these forces and sensing fluxes (this is how they maintain the Hyperspace lane beacons).

Everyone knows of creatures that live partially in (or emerge from) the Way—more commonly found near artifacts and Precursor sites. Mystics agree the Way flows stronger in some places and weaker in others. The biggest of these flows are called Galactic Way lines, which tend to create smaller flows or bend the direction of Way-paths and naturally occurring Way lines in a system.

The Precursors had a deep and involved understanding of the Way.

The rest is divided into countless theories, beliefs, and wild guesses.

Ask any mystic or Guild member and they'll tell you their own theories. The Way is sacred—or it's tainted and twists those that use it. It's generated by a machine at the center of the galaxy—or it flows from other dimensions. Everyone has their own theory, but nobody has hard answers.

HEGEMONIC CULTS

The Hegemony takes the stance that Precursor artifacts and Ur sites are dangerous and should be left to those who will take the burden (and responsibility) from the weary shoulders of the average citizen. The two groups that do this most widely are the Guilds and the Cults.

The Guilds generally don't deal in mysticism. Their control is related to specific artifacts and technologies derived from them. For example the Engineers control and reprogram Urbot AI cores, while the Starsmiths forge jump drives and maintain the gates.

The Hegemonic Cults are approved religious and mystical structures, spread widely through the Hegemony. It's trendy for Nobles to have a Confessor from one of the approved Cults, and representatives from several advise the Hegemon on spiritual matters. They regulate which mystics are allowed to exist. The Cults wield political power not unlike the Guilds and Nobles, and similarly squabble amongst each other. Ultimately, their power is derived from the Hegemon, who decides which Cults are approved—an authority often used for political gain. The Seekers only became a true Hegemonic Cult because one of their members is the mother of the current Hegemon.

Farther from the Core, Cult power becomes less dominant. Xenos have mystics of their own. Certain Cults may have strongholds in some systems (with many faithful) but little presence in others.

The Church of Stellar Flame claims that all people have a holy Light inside them, darkened by exposure to Ur sites and artifacts. They accuse mystics of dimming this Light and have a branch of Inquisitors dedicated to rooting out sources of such corruption. They're generally seen as zealots, and might have been removed as an official Cult long ago, except that the militant orders within the Church (with their powerful and complex battle armors) have been useful tools for past Hegemons.

Near the Core, one might find the Vault Keepers, who hollow out planets to store artifacts deemed too powerful to be used.

Farther out in the distant sector, one might come across the Mendicants, who once tended to the sick and wounded throughout the Hegemony, but were branded heretics by the Stellar Flame and purged during the last Hegemon's ascension. Or perhaps the Cult of the Seekers, who look to find new and unexplored places, open locked gates, and believe with incredible intensity that all places should be visited and explored, and to go to an unknown place is a sacred rite.

MYSTICS

"Mystic" is a catch-all for members of various groups that espouse particular philosophies about the Way. Many have sacred sites (often near Precursor ruins) and artifacts that members carry or inherit. There are hundreds of mystic groups and their requirements for membership are equally varied. Some only have a handful of adherents, whereas others are so powerful that members are only talked about in hushed tones. The farther from the Core you go, the more brazen they are about showcasing their garb and powers.

Mystics often wander, looking for sites and Ur artifacts for their group. Ones that settle or build shrines often trade wisdom, cleanse houses of Way creatures, and provide guidance to locals. Because of the prevalence of artifacts among Syndicates and the Nobility, those in power often hire a mystic to "handle" such issues their rivals might bring to bear. It's not unusual for a Syndicate or faction leader to have a mystic at their beck and call.

ATTUNE EXAMPLES

- ▶ Sha-sihara the Speaker (who trains with her ship's Mystic) has been waiting in the Governor's mansion when she notices a serving-drone carrying refreshments. She **ATTUNES** to it, stops it, and turns up the charm in response to its upset whistles and chirps, asking it to take her through the drone entrance to meet the Governor.
- ▶ Rogan's crew has smuggled a Guild scientist to some Suneaters on Indri. They're about to cash in when the Urbot by the Suneaters twitches, grabs a gun, and opens fire. "Not so fast!" says Rogan's player. "I can sense killing intent by **ATTUNING** to the Way. **Flash back** to a few seconds earlier where I frown, look around, and yell 'Look out!' before the robot fires." "Cool, sounds like a **0 stress flashback** since you folks are a bit nervous about this handoff in the first place. It's a **risky** roll, where the risk is you paint yourself as the first target for that killer Urbot when you yell."
- ▶ Negotiating with an Ashen Knives Pasha, Sha-sihara realizes she spoke words she didn't intend to. She disguises her surprise by sipping on some Shimayan sun wine, and **ATTUNES** to the Way, looking for the danger. She sees Way-warping around the Pasha's ring—he has an artifact that forces both parties to say nothing but the truth. She **STUDIES** it, **gathering info**, and realizes that it doesn't prevent omission or false implication. The negotiations just got interesting. She sets her glass down and continues the negotiations.
- ▶ The crew of the Starbreaker is on the fifth moon of Nightfall, following a map to an Ur artifact that might sell well on the black market. A giant pair of doors blocks the way, with no obvious opening mechanism. U'tu, their Mystic, **ATTUNES** to the Way, becoming one with the doors. He safely activates the Precursor mechanism in the doors and opens them for his crew.
- ▶ Sha-sihara is stealthily leading her crew onto the Governor's grounds for a job, but the Governor's prized Kyraxxian razor hounds are roaming the gardens! She steps forward, **ATTUNING** to them and smiles, putting her **COMMAND** to good use. Because they're well-trained, and naturally predatory, she uses the **ATTUNE** roll effectively as a **setup action** and **COMMANDS** at a much better position now that they can understand her.

ATTUNE EXAMPLES

- ▶ U'tu finds translucent blue beetles the crew picked up while crossing through an uncharted Way line trying to burrow into the jump drive. Oh my! He **ATTUNES** to them, hoping he can convince them of a tastier snack somewhere not on the ship.
- ▶ Captain Xandra meets with some Scarlet Wolf assassins. "Do you have it?" they ask. "It's on my ship," she says. She looks at her Mystic, U'tu. U'tu **ATTUNES** to the Way and checks the Wolves for killing intent—they're not carrying any the moment! U'tu nods at his captain. This isn't a trap—for once.
- ▶ Sha-sihara has talked her way into some box seats overlooking a local fighting ring. Somewhere in that crowd are four assassins coming for the panicked Ashen Knives bookie who hired her crew to protect him. She could **STUDY** the crowd (though it might be **desperate** to pick out hidden assassins). Instead, she **ATTUNES** to the Way, looking for people bent on murder. They stand out brightly from the rest of the crowd, and she tells her Muscle over the comms who to look for.
- ▶ The Faraday's poorly upkept engine malfunctions as the ship jumps into the Hyperspace lane and dumps them out in parts unknown. The Pilot avoids hitting any asteroids on the way out, but they end up in unmapped space, weeks from the nearest lane, and supplies are low. Rogan **ATTUNES** to the Way, looking for any Galactic Way lines. There is a rumor that exceptional pilots can ride them like Hyperspace lanes. It's a **desperate** position but it gives them a chance. Now if only Hayley can get the jump drive back online...
- ▶ Rogan is chasing Sarnak, a Nightspeaker, in the jungles of Aketi. Rogan **ATTUNES** to the jungle, communing with the trees to feel the passage of the dark mystic. He **crits**, and also asks the jungle to warn him of predators hiding amidst the foliage.
- ▶ The crew of the Starbreaker is in a bit of a pickle. The bounty hunter that has them pinned in a Shimayan desert canyon seems to have a light shield—an artifact that absorbs blaster fire—and using detonators would bring the canyon walls down. U'tu rushes out and attempts to **ATTUNE** to the already active artifact and wrestle control away from the bounty hunter. It's **desperate** and **limited effect**. The bounty hunter will likely land some deadly shots before U'tu succeeds, but his crew will be free to act!

SCIENCE

Technology around the Hegemony varies wildly. On wealthier planets, personal fliers will be parked alongside wheeled vehicles and hovercars, while on poorly terraformed planets or planets with hostile environments, folks often hitch up or ride pack animals.

Advanced science is not uncommon, but accessibility becomes much harder on planets that don't sport as much wealth, tech, or easy access to ships passing through the gates. Systems without Guild strongholds are often even more technologically impoverished.

Truly advanced stuff (complex cybernetics, nanotech, and the like) is very rare, and under stringent control by the Guilds, who often dole it out carefully as symbols of alliance, prestige, and for immense sums of wealth. Patents on entire branches of technology are what keep the Guilds in power, and they are used carefully to enforce their status in the Hegemony.

GUILDS

The Guilds (like the Cults) are granted their purviews by the Hegemon. They maintain their power by hoarding technology and keeping the secrets of its maintenance and construction. Each Guild has a series of patents or categories of technology that ensure their continued existence.

The Starsmiths are a Guild of ship engineers. Their power comes from having repeatedly been able to produce and control the supply of jump drives. Many drives found on scoundrel or pirate vessels are retrofitted from older ships or derelicts, and maintained by ex-Starsmiths or those that left the Guild for **CRED** or political reasons. Though they're best known for their ship designs, the Starsmiths also maintain the Hyperspace lane beacons, and the majority of their money and power comes from profits generated by stations between the lanes. Since they build and maintain the Legion fleet, and said fleet is responsible for patrolling and protecting the lanes, the two have been staunch allies for some time.

The Guild of Engineers' main control is over Urbots. Although many recognize them by the strange gadgets and mechanical limbs their more prominent members might sport, their core patents are for mining among asteroids and inhospitable planets—feats often accomplished through the use of drones and Urbots. Most raw resources delivered to the Core are supplied (and taxed by) the Guild of Engineers.

The Counters Guild is responsible for all legal banking in the Hegemony. Most Cults and Guilds pay in scrip that can be turned in to the Counters for cred. The downside of this is that they frequently notice large sums being moved, leading most scoundrels and lowlifes to manage large credit expenditures on the side. The Counters made their fortune by owning patents to terraforming engines, though rumor has it they can't produce any more, and simply ferry the existing ones carefully to any new systems found. Although not always friendly to scoundrels and the scum of the Procyon sector, the Counters will build large repositories to store goods (even dangerous goods), no questions asked. If you can meet their price, these repositories (often built in space or in remote locations) are some of the safest ways to hold anything from treasures to illegal goods and artifacts. Plundering such a trove has been the dream of many a pirate and scoundrel, but the few that have succeeded have witnessed the kind of assassins and bounty hunters a Guild that literally controls money can hire.

The Makers Guild is more commonly known as the Yaru. Originally the term "Yaru" was used to identify the clones that they force-grow and train, but has become common parlance for the Guild and all the people in it. The Yaru are incredibly secretive, and unlike the other Guilds, nobody can study to test or apprentice into their numbers (like they can with other Guilds), whose fixed count is set by the Hegemon. When the last Hegemon ascended, the Yaru sided with a competitor, and consequently their numbers have been severely reduced, leading to far less power and prestige. The Guild holds patents on force-growing clones (made in batches and identified by sigils encoded on their foreheads), who are used for menial labor and to fill out low-grade troop counts when needed. Sometimes special batches of designer clones are made as servants for wealthy and influential individuals. The Yaru also provide modified plants for agriculture on partially terraformed worlds.

MAGNITUDE

Way creatures, space station generators, and mystical forces have many effects and power levels. To help the GM judge these forces consistently, the **magnitude table** is provided (see **Magnitude**, page 280).

Magnitude measures the quality level of a Way creature or Ur device, or the various aspects of its abilities, such as area, scale, duration, range, or force. Whenever you need to assemble a **fortune roll** pool for something like this, use the magnitude scale as a guideline relative to the examples given on the table. If it's not obvious or certain how much **effect** something might have, it might be a good spot for a magnitude-based **fortune roll** as well.

A generator on the space station the crew is visiting blows. How much or how little effect does it have? What dire straights is the crew in?

First, interrogate the fiction. Let's say the space station has five separate reactors, so a reactor blowing is expected to probably take a fifth of the station out with it.

The GM makes a fortune roll using 4d (5d for force, equivalent to a ship with good weapons blasting away at a station section, and -1d because of bulkheads and secondary systems designed to stop exactly this).

On a 1-3, the explosion has little effect. Damage is contained, though severe near the reactor, with survivors even in damaged areas.

On a 4/5, the explosion has reduced effect. There are holes out to space, but the station maintains orbit. The section the reactor blew in is badly damaged, with few—if any—survivors.

On a 6, full effect. A fifth of the station is gone. Orbit is wildly affected. Multiple secondary systems are off-line.

On a crit, there's probably a cascade failure. Multiple other sections take heavy damage, most station crew and visitors take heavy losses, and there are only hours before critical failure reaches the remaining sections.

You can add levels of magnitude together to describe a combination of different effects, or focus on one key feature for the magnitude assessment. You also don't always need to account for all factors. Ask if there is one component that's dominant in the situation, or if you really want to model all the different aspects in the effect.

You can also reduce or increase the magnitude by 1 if something that isn't on one of these axes is relevant to the decision. Use your best judgment.

*A Mystic holds a stone ring that's a Precursor artifact. Until now, he's **ATTUNED** to it to make person-sized rifts in order to make short-range shifts and jumps at the cost of a few stress.*

*His ship is being pursued, and particle cannons are firing on them. Hoping to save the crew, he tries to **ATTUNE** to the artifact to warp the ship out of enemy fire.*

The GM first considers if this is possible at all, and then what it would cost. This is a much more significant effect, so the GM adds the magnitude levels of range 5 and area 4 to determine an appropriate cost. Such an awesome display of force will cost 9 stress! The GM offers a compromise: powering up the artifact can be done over a few minutes, and will cost one less stress, but the ship will have to weather those few minutes of fire. It's not like they have a lot of options here!

The Mystic begins to channel, while the pilot starts evasive maneuvers.

The magnitude table (page 280) is provided as a tool to help the GM make judgment calls. It's not meant to be a rigid construction or mathematical formula to replace those judgment calls. Use the levels as a guideline for setting a magnitude number that seems appropriate to you.

The table can also be used as a guide to **quality level** when a PC **acquires an asset** or **crafts** a device or drone (see **Crafting**, page 282).

The crew of the Faraday needs to get their hands on some explosives. Part of their plan involves damaging an unmanned Starsmith observation post (after they get what they need) as a diversion. This needs something bigger than detonators, so the GM consults the magnitude chart and decides that the force of a plasma cutter applied in the right spots should bring the thing down. He lets Aleera know that the explosives she needs to acquire are a quality 4 asset.

*With crew quality 1, she would only roll a single die, so she contacts her friend—the weapons dealer—for an extra +1d, and rolls a **6** (lucky!) on two dice. She needs to spend 2 **CRED** to get explosives good enough to blow the station, so she pulls that out of the ship vault. This job's payout better be as good as Captain Aman promised it would be!*

MAGNITUDE

	AREA	SIZE	DURATION
0	Closet	One or Two People	A Few Moments
1	Small Room	Small Gang (3-6)	A Few Minutes
2	Large Room	Medium Gang (12)	An Hour
3	Several Rooms	Large Gang (20)	A Few Hours
4	Small Building	Huge Gang (40)	A Day
5	Large Building	Massive Gang (80)	Several Days
6	City Block	Colossal Gang (160)	A Week

	QUALITY/TIER	RANGE	FORCE
0	Poor	Within Reach	Weak
1	Adequate	A Dozen Paces	Moderate
2	Good	Large Room	Strong
3	Excellent	Several Rooms	Serious
4	Superior	A Few Blocks	Powerful
5	Impeccable	A Few Kilometers	Overwhelming
6	Legendary	Across Town	Devastating

FORCE EXAMPLES

- ▶ **FORCE 0 EXAMPLES:** A firm shove, a candle flame, a breeze, a tiny spark, a rattling table, a pungent aroma.
- ▶ **FORCE 1 EXAMPLES:** A solid punch, a bright flashlight, a shock from an electrical outlet, a noisy room.
- ▶ **FORCE 2 EXAMPLES:** A powerful blow, a searing brand, an electrical shock from a live wire.
- ▶ **FORCE 3 EXAMPLES:** A crushing blow, a grenade, a raging fire, an electrical surge, the wake of a jet engine.
- ▶ **FORCE 4 EXAMPLES:** A plasma cutter, a bomb, a tornado, electrocution, a dangerous magnetic field.
- ▶ **FORCE 5 EXAMPLES:** A ship's guns, a massive fire, a lightning strike, an earthquake, the wake of a jump drive.
- ▶ **FORCE 6 EXAMPLES:** A capital ship weapon, molten lava, a tsunami, a cosmic maelstrom, a huge asteroid impact.

QUALITY EXAMPLES

- ▶ **QUALITY 0 EXAMPLES:** A rusty knife, worn and tattered clothing, a rickety shack on the street.
- ▶ **QUALITY 1 EXAMPLES:** A combat knife, regular clothes, cheap food or drugs, a coffin-sized room in a cheap motel.
- ▶ **QUALITY 2 EXAMPLES:** A regular sidearm, respectable clothing, an apartment, an exotic pet, a low-level bodyguard.
- ▶ **QUALITY 3 EXAMPLES:** A land vehicle, a military rifle, stylish clothing, a small house, a mercenary soldier, designer drugs.
- ▶ **QUALITY 4 EXAMPLES:** A personal racing ship, a townhouse, a common Way creature, a Suneater scientist, insider faction information.
- ▶ **QUALITY 5 EXAMPLES:** A small spaceship, a prototype Guild device, Noble clothing, Vosian crystals.
- ▶ **QUALITY 6 EXAMPLES:** A mansion, a cybernetic implant, a large spaceship, powerful Ur artifacts, a dangerous Way creature.

CRAFTING

CRAFTING

During downtime, a PC can craft if they have access to the required materials and tools. This includes making drones and building or modifying devices.

To craft something you must know its schematic. Some items (like common gear) may have schematics that are easy to find. Discuss with your GM if you know it already, can **acquire** it, or if it requires a **job** to get your hands on (dangerous goods fall into this category). Complex, new, or unique items require you to design a schematic from scratch.

ASSEMBLY

To craft a device you have a schematic for, spend **one downtime activity** to make a **RIG** (hardware) or **HACK** (software) roll to determine the **quality level** of the item you produce. The base **quality level** is equal to your **crew quality**, modified by the result of the roll.

The GM sets a minimum quality level that must be achieved to craft the item, based on the magnitude of the effect(s) it produces. Use magnitude as a guideline for setting the quality level—it may be higher or lower at the GM's discretion to better describe the nature of the project. An item may be crafted at higher quality if the player wishes to attempt it—giving it a quality boost similar to a fine item (or higher).

You may spend **CRED 1-for-1** to increase the final quality level result of your roll (this can raise quality level beyond crew quality +2 and can be spent after you see the results of your crafting roll).

CRAFTING ROLL

▶ **1d** per **RIG** action rating

📦 **+1 quality** per **CRED** spent

⬆️ **+1 quality** for ship **workshop** upgrade

CRITICAL: Quality of the crafted/modified item is equal to **crew quality +2**.

6: Quality of the crafted/modified item is equal to **crew quality +1**.

4/5: Quality of the crafted/modified item is equal to **crew quality**.

1-3: Quality of the crafted/modified item is equal to **crew quality -1**.

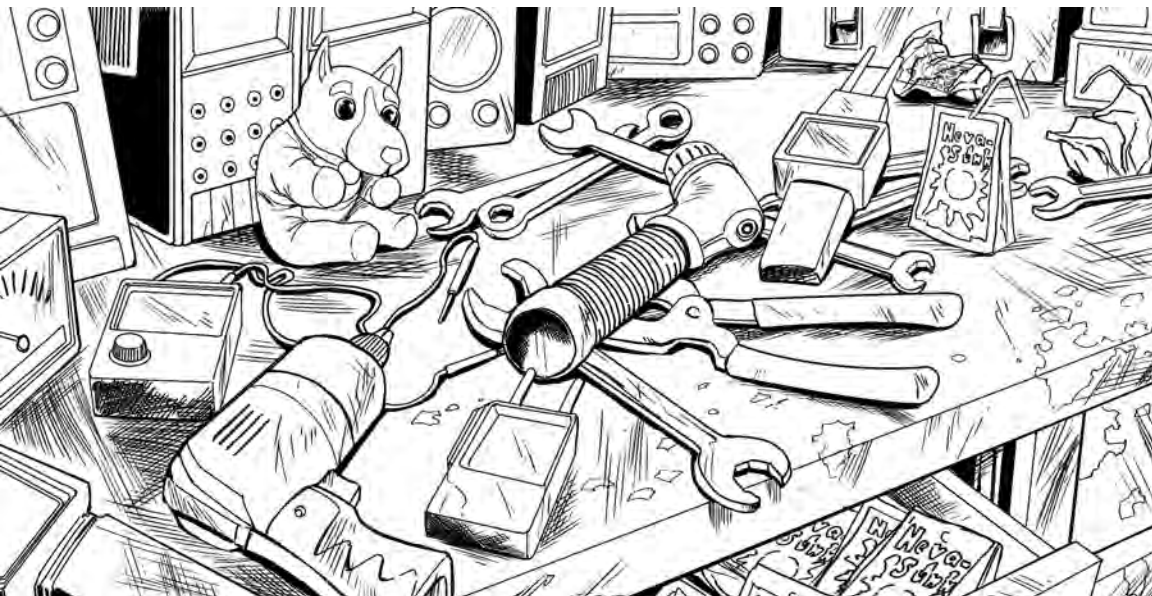
DESIGN

To design a schematic for a device, you need to **STUDY** it as a **long-term project**. Most designs will require an 8-segment progress clock to invent and learn. The player and the GM answer questions about the invention to define what it will do in play and what is required to create it (see below). The player records these answers in their notes for future reference.

CREATION QUESTIONS

1. GM asks: **What type of device is it and what does it do?** Player answers.
2. Player asks: **What's the minimum quality level of this item?** GM answers according to the magnitude of the effects the item produces.
3. GM asks: **What complexity did you have to overcome that keeps this design from being widely used?** Player answers.
4. Player asks: **What drawbacks does this item have, if any?** The GM answers by choosing one or more from the drawbacks list, or by saying there are none.

Once you've invented a formula or design, you can craft it by using a downtime activity (see **Assembly**, left). No one else can craft this invention unless they learn your design as a **long-term project**. If you acquire a formula or design invented by someone else, you may **STUDY** it as a **long-term project** (though it should be much shorter than inventing it yourself). Common devices don't require special schematics to learn. Anyone may attempt to craft them by using commonly available instructions.



MODIFYING AN ITEM

Adding a feature or additional function to a device is simpler than creating something new. You don't need to invent a special formula or plan. Make a **crafting roll** to modify an item (the baseline quality of an item that you modify is equal to your **crew quality**, as usual). The GM may take scale into account when setting the quality.

- ▶ **A simple, useful modification requires crew quality +1.** *Adding a belt winch that can rapidly pull you up from a grappling hook. Adding a noise suppressor to a blaster.*
- ▶ **A significant modification requires crew quality +2.** *Wiring in a remote-fire component to your blaster rifle. Modifying your ship's shuttle to go under the seas of Mem.*
- ▶ **A strange or Way modification requires at least crew quality +3.** *Modifying sensor goggles to detect Way creatures. Wiring an artifact into your ship systems.*

Modified items, like special devices, may have **drawbacks**.

DRAWBACKS

A device or modification may have one or more **drawbacks**, chosen by the GM. You may add drawbacks to reduce the overall required minimum quality, or to match fictional expectations (if you're making stun grenades, they're **consumable** items).

- ▶ **COMPLEX:** You'll have to create it in multiple stages; the GM will tell you how many. One **downtime activity** and **crafting roll** is needed per stage.
- ▶ **CONSPICUOUS:** This creation doesn't go unnoticed. Take +1 **HEAT** if it's used any number of times on an operation.
- ▶ **CONSUMABLE:** This creation has a limited number of uses (all grenades must have this drawback, usually one use). A single crafting may make a few consumable items at once, but they're each consumed when used.
- ▶ **RARE:** This creation requires a rare item or material when it is crafted. You have to acquire or buy it (spend **CRED**) first.
- ▶ **UNRELIABLE:** When you use the item, make a **fortune roll** (using its quality) to see how well it performs.
- ▶ **VOLATILE:** The item produces a dangerous or troublesome side effect for the user, specified by the GM. The side effect is a consequence, and may be **resisted**.

CRAFTING EXAMPLE

Hayley the Mechanic has been accompanying the crew on infiltrations, and after one too many locked doors, wants to make a device for breaking through digital door security. Hayley's player, Alice, tells her GM, Natalie, that she wants to craft a hacking device.

First, Hayley will need to invent the design. Natalie and Alice go through the creation questions.

Natalie asks, "What type of device is it and what does it do?" Alice answers, "I want an arm device with sweet holo-displays that lets me **HACK** doors without unscrewing all the plates. I need to be able to do that stuff while running for my life."

Alice next asks, "So, what's the minimum quality level of this item?" Natalie answers, "If it overrides doors in a few moments, let's call that quality 5. It will work on Tier IV or lower doors. If you want it to work on Tier V doors, that will be tougher." Alice agrees and nods.

Natalie then asks, "What complexity did you have to overcome that keeps this design from being widely used?" Alice thinks about this a moment and says, "Obviously the device needs to cross a bit of an air gap, and that sort of bypass requires special Vosian crystals tuned to precise frequencies—the holo-displays let me tune them for the specific door."

Alice asks, "What drawbacks does this item have, if any?" Natalie immediately answers, "Of course it has the rare drawback—you need to source a few highly-regulated black Vosian crystals. It's also conspicuous. Doing this **HACK** leaves a ripple effect on the surface of the digital display you're touching as the resonance alters the matter slightly. You'll take one extra **HEAT** on jobs where you use the device."

Now that the design is settled, Hayley spends a few downtime activities on an 8-segment long-term project to **STUDY** the design and learn how to build it.

Once she's mastered the design, Hayley builds the device by spending one downtime activity. Alice rolls **RIG** and gets a **6**—enough to build an item with quality equal to Hayley's crew quality +1. Hayley's crew is rating 1, so that's quality level 2—not enough for the quality level 5 hacking armband.

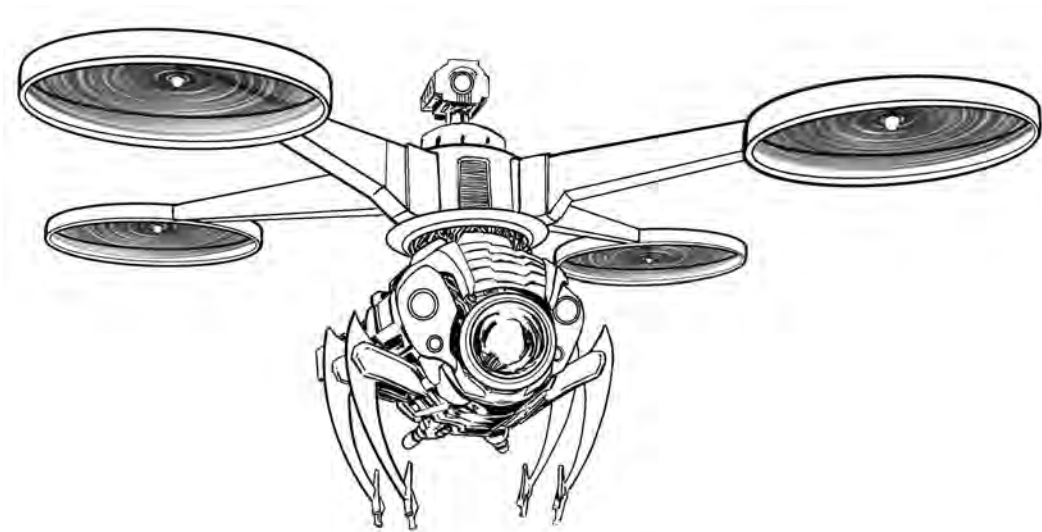
To make up the difference, Hayley spends 3 **CRED**. Pricey, but Alice thinks it's worth it for an upcoming job. She marks the **CRED** from the ship's vault and the new tool is ready to go.

DRONES

Drones are machines that take direction from an authorized user. They may be programmed or directly controlled. They don't have intelligence and cannot make decisions about their actions. Drones are common, but not ubiquitous in society, and are found more often in warehouses, factories, and spaceports. They handle repetitive, menial tasks such as delivering mail and removing trash.

Creating a drone uses the same system as any other device, but has two magnitudes that only apply to drones. Both should be consulted when creating a drone.

DRONE MAGNITUDES		
	MOBILITY	CHASSIS
0	Stationary	Exposed
1	Slow Walk	Plastic
2	Wheeled/Treaded/Hover	Metal
3	Fast and Nimble Legs	Reinforced
4	Fast Flight	Powered
5	Slow Space Worthy	Hegemonic
6	Fast Space Worthy	Guild Prototype



DRONE CREATION EXAMPLE

Hayley the Mechanic has had a decent amount of success pilfering safes recently, and with extra **CRED** burning a hole in her pocket, has decided to make a robotic sentry for patrolling corridors and watching her back on jobs. Hayley's player, Alice, tells the GM that she wants to craft a drone.

Like any device, Hayley will need to invent the design. The GM and Alice go through the creation questions.

Natalie, the GM, starts by asking, "What type of device is it and what does it do?" Alice answers, "I want to make a drone that I can station at corridors to alert me when it sees someone coming. It also needs to return to me, and it would be nice if I could use it to scout ahead. It should be lightweight and flying."

Alice asks, "What's the minimum quality level of this item?" Natalie answers, "You could probably get by with a slow flight plastic drone (2+1 for quality 3), since it has no weapons, and no real software other than motion detection. Are you sure you don't just want to modify a different drone? It doesn't sound like you're changing much." Alice shrugs, "I want to be able to replace them or make new ones even if I'm not at a planet that has drones for sale. So I'd like to know the schematic."

Natalie nods and then asks, "What complexity did you have to overcome that keeps this design from being widely used?" Alice answers, "Guild sensors are stingy with feedback, and wear out constantly. The recognition algorithm has to be retuned constantly so it's not alerting me about flies and rats."

Alice asks, "What drawbacks does this item have, if any?" Natalie answers, "Not much, aside from being a little makeshift and low budget—if it takes damage it may break entirely."

Now that the design is settled, Hayley spends a few downtime activities on an 8-segment long-term project to **STUDY** the design and learn how to build it.

Once she's learned the design, Hayley builds the drone by spending a downtime activity. Alice rolls **RIG** and gets a **4/5**, which is enough to build an item with quality equal to Hayley's crew rating. Hayley's crew rating is 1 so she'll have to spend **2 CRED** to meet the minimum requirements. Hayley spends the money from her personal funds and the drone is ready for scouting and flight. She paints it black with gold stripes and names it Nemoy.

URBOTS

Urbots are drones with sentience. Unlike drones, they can perceive the world, have a personality, and make decisions about how to act. Urbots wish to be useful to their users, often acting without instruction.

The Guild of Engineers owns the patent on Urbots. They require all Urbot owners to bring in their Urbots once a year for core maintenance. However, between the availability of Guild outposts and many Urbots being on far-traveling ships, this doesn't always happen. During the tune-up the Guild wipes the AI core, resetting most of the memories and personality and restarting the Urbot from scratch. Urbots that aren't regularly wiped develop personalities, new skills, and even start making decisions for themselves (which the Guild insists are glitches). Urbots who don't use their cores for a long time will power down and go dormant, losing many if not all of their memories, reactivating with only their base instincts and directives.

To build an Urbot you need to have a drone body to attach the Precursor AI core to. The core will then grow filaments throughout the body (which takes longer for larger bodies).

Most AI cores will require a 8-segment **RIG** clock to mount to an existing drone. Over the course of the long-term project, the player and the GM will answer questions about it. (Answer one question every time you fill two segments of the clock.) The player records these answers in their notes.

If the player wishes to preserve the memories or personality of their Urbot, they need to make an **ATTUNE** roll whenever removing or placing the AI core.

URBOT CREATION

- ▶ GM asks: **How did you attach the AI core to the drone, and what made it difficult?** Player answers.
- ▶ Player asks: **What side effects of handling the core are there? Does construction require any rare materials?** GM answers. Rare materials should be reserved for unusual cores.
- ▶ Player asks: **What unique physical characteristic does the Urbot have after assembly?** GM answers.
- ▶ GM asks: **What personality quirk did the Urbot inherit that you've been unwilling or unable to remove?** Player answers.

URBOT CREATION EXAMPLE

Hayley the Mechanic has recently found an Urbot AI core at an old Precursor ruin, and decides to give her little Nemoy drone more of a mind. Since she already has the drone, she simply needs to mount the core onto the (admittedly flimsy) frame.

The GM, Natalie, and Hayley's player, Alice, go through the creation questions.

Natalie asks, "How did you attach the AI core to the drone, and what made it difficult?" Alice thinks a moment and answers, "The Ur core was substantially more heavy than the plastic body, necessitating upgrading the flight engines to account for the extra weight."

Alice then asks, "What side effects of handling the core are there? Does construction require any rare materials?" Natalie answers, "The core itself is ice cold to the touch, and you burn yourself a few times on its unnaturally cold exterior. Take level 1 harm 'Freezer Burn.'"

Alice asks, "What unique physical characteristic does the Urbot have after assembly?" Natalie answers, "That cold seems to radiate outward from the Urbot now—the temperature of a room goes down a few degrees whenever it is present."

Natalie asks, "What personality quirk did the Urbot inherit that you've been unwilling or unable to remove?" Alice answers, "The Urbot has an almost put-upon air, as if every command given it were an imposition."

*Since Hayley didn't make an **ATTUNE** roll when she plucked the core out at the ruin, she isn't too worried about preserving the memories and personality in it (and she and her crew may have shot its previous body so it might be good it doesn't remember that).*



CHAPTER 9 THE PROCYON SECTOR

WELCOME TO PROCYON

Sectors in the Hegemony are slices of the galaxy, each controlled by a Noble House overseeing the harvesting of resources and expansion in the area on behalf of the Hegemon. Originally belonging to House Nim-Amar, the sector has changed hands a number of times, finally falling to House Malklaith after the last Hegemon ascended.

Procyon is a relatively small sector of known space, hosting gates to only four systems (although many say that if the Hantu gate were ever to be open and stable, it would create another boom era for the sector and whichever House was holding it at the time). When Malklaith was promised a sector for their help in the Ascension wars, the “gift” of Procyon was actually an insult. Already mined out, with few directions left for expansion, and too many jumps from the Core, this sector is a washed-out backwater at best. Consequently, people assigned here are sent largely as punishment, or (continuing the Hegemonic tradition) as a way to keep a promise of a posting without giving up something cherished.

The sector is a burgeoning place for Syndicates, mystics, and other folks that live on the fringes. Too far and too small to have the strong arm of the Hegemony truly clutched around its throat, Procyon is also a hotbed of corruption, peppered with strange temples and Ur remnants that haven't been picked completely clean. It provides homes for those that may be fleeing the burning light of civilization that emanates from the Core, and opportunities for folks that thrive in the black.

PROCYON SYSTEMS

RIN

A three-gate system, with the only path deeper into the Hegemony. Rin is largely prized for its natural resources, many of which (like Baftoma) have already been plundered. This is also why it contains powerful pirate and Syndicate factions that prey on the goods and money flowing towards the Core. Rin has more prominence than expected since it contains the Guild head and (for tactical reasons) the Malklaith Governor's seat on Warren. The lack of arable ground and inhabitable planets also means that it doesn't sport a massive population, which is why the cultural center is in the (even more) distant Brekk system.

HOLT

Holt is a strange place, where the least of its mysteries is the large, never-opened Hantu gate that may lead to further systems. The Rin-Holt gate had to be forced open, but only wild theories exist as to why the Precursors may have wanted it shut in the first place. It has xenos unhappy about the yoke of the Hegemony, crime and pirate strongholds, and one of the richest (and most fiercely guarded) Guild mining planets. In a sector known for its ragtag populace, Holt is the biggest hotbed of scum and villainy.

IOTA

A twin star system, Iota is a mixed bag. Though many people only pass through it on the way to Brekk, Iota is the industrial production house that transforms many of the resources of Rin and Iota into usable goods for the rest of the sector and the Hegemony. The sector Starsmith shipyards are here, meaning that Iota usually has a significant Legion presence. Amerath is a popular vacation spot for well-off folks, seeming a bit rustic and rural with "charming" ruins, while also sporting enough control and tech to support luxury.

BREKK

The cultural capitol of Procyon. If you're looking to file paperwork, strike deals, and otherwise mingle with the elite of the sector, you'll find many of them on the neon-lit streets of Nightfall. And if you're looking to do research, there's no better place to stop than Khalud Academy on Shimaya. Brekk also sports an untamed, largely unexplored jungle world that can hide those fleeing the law, and entice the rich on hunts for dangerous beasts.

LIFE IN THE HEGEMONY

TRAVEL

Most ships are designed for in-system flight. The majority of them cruise or haul goods with some form of human-built conventional engines. Ships with jump drives are not exactly uncommon, but more pricey and regulated (think cars and planes in the modern day, respectively). Jump drives are complex and regulated by the Starsmiths Guild (whose members are very tight-lipped about where they get them). Only engineers certified by the Guild are officially allowed to fix them, though Guild dropouts and even further removed students are often employed on the sly.

With conventional engines it takes several months to reach the edges of any system. Often it's far cheaper to ship goods via this slow but reliable system.

The Starsmiths Guild and some Seeker Cult members map and maintain Hyperspace lanes. Ships with jump drives can enter these lanes, usually via large rings near the endpoints, though hotshot pilots and good engineers working together can do it anywhere along the path. From the outside, a ship in a lane looks like a shooting star. These lanes aren't direct lines everywhere, so often you must catch a path heading towards your destination and exit midway. Ships then travel conventionally to the next entry point. Traveling across a system may require two dozen such stops.

Stations in these oases between lanes are common. Lane travel often cuts planet-to-planet travel down to days, and a journey to the system Gate to only a week. Often such between-lane stations have engines of their own, since lanes drift, and it behooves builders to move rest stops to compensate. They are also frequent targets of pirate raids and stops for Legion patrols.

Rumors persist of dark lanes, unmapped by the Guild, used by pirates, smugglers, and mystics. However, without clear demarcation, it's unclear where they start and end, making them dangerous to traverse.

The jumpgates are the only way to travel the vast gulfs between systems. Giant rings that are able to transmit even huge battleships, they stand fixed in space, uncaring about the rotations of the planets in the system. Folks often plan trips when their planet is closer to the gates, cutting down travel time and fees. Each jumpgate is a huge ring made of unknown material, with strange faces and forms carved throughout it.

COMMUNICATION

Most settled systems have an ansible network, which can transmit in-system communications instantly. Also, unlike conventional comms, ansibles can communicate to the other side of a gate while it's open. The Sah'iir are tight-lipped as to how exactly they managed that.

Communication between systems is slower. Often a courier ship is parked at the edge of a gate, traversing across once a day to deliver messages. Hence, live conferences between systems are rare, and news from several jumps away can take some time to disseminate.

THE LAW

Legal matters in the sector are usually handled planet by planet. In general, planets that have a higher population and wealth have their own local law enforcement agencies, which answer to the planetary Governor. System Police are called in to oversee intersystem and interplanetary crimes and criminals. These system cops usually wear the colors of the House they function under the auspices of (hence in Procyon the police wear the green and black of House Malklaith).

The Legion and their battle cruisers are military, and swear fealty to the Hegemon, but answer to the Noble House that rules the system. They can be called in to handle matters that require extra force or have proven too complex for the System Police to handle.

Large-scale action from the Core tends to be slow. Part of Malklaith's job as the steward of the sector is first to appear like everything is in order, lest another Noble House be granted control of the sector. This means that high-level response by either the House head or the Hegemony itself is often slow and uncertain.

THE HEGEMONY

The Hegemony is a distant source of law and power. The Hegemon rules from their seat amidst the black holes near the center of the galaxy. The Hegemon's greatest task is keeping power divided between factions such that they always squabble over it, and don't unify to seat a new Hegemon.

The galaxy is carved into sectors, put under the stewardship of seven Noble Houses. Technology and science are the domain of the approved Hegemonic Guilds (such as the Guild of Engineers). Mysteries and the arcane fall to the approved Hegemonic Cults (such as the Church of Stellar Flame). Each of these guard their domains jealously.

Still, for every rule there is an exception. There are a number of planets that pay a tithe to the Hegemony and self-govern without belonging to any specific House. There are a number of ship repair shops that have mechanics with expired Guild Licenses. There are plenty of mystic groups that walk freely through the streets of every world, and are popular figures of romance and mystery in the entertainment industry—even though they're not part of any official Hegemonic Cult.

THE PEOPLE

The Hegemony is predominantly made up of humans. Whomever the Precursors were, they tended to create system gates to places that host planets or moons that conform to human specifications (at least one in the Goldilocks zone, with atmosphere and temperatures that were inside earth-like specs, or that the Guilds could terraform to spec).

Consequently, humans have spread far and wide, multiplying and taking over the galaxy. While there are xenos of many shapes and colors, the ones that are most frequently found are those that can breathe human atmospheres, function in near-1G gravity, and are about the size of humans. For reasons nobody is sure of (although many blame the Ur), a number of human-appearing aliens (bilateral symmetry, twin-legged) are the most common, though many have modifications suited to their homeworlds (more eyes, extra arms, gills, different colors, etc.).

That's not to say you won't find 10-foot-tall, reptile-scaled Norsicans at the docks moving crates with their prodigious strength, or the occasional three-foot, furry Wrinlian engineer using their six limbs to perform delicate adjustments inside the wiring of a Guild starbase.

XENOS IN PLAY

If a player chooses the Xeno starting ability at creation, take the time to discuss their people and flesh out what sorts of things to expect their xeno abilities to do. Some guidelines are as follows:

- ▶ **0 STRESS:** These are either constant abilities or adaptations that don't affect the game significantly. *Breathing water. Seeing in the UV spectrum. Having a prehensile tail, multiple eyes, or four arms that work independantly. A heightened sense of smell.*
- ▶ **1 STRESS:** These are abilities that aren't constant, and require exertion or concentration to pull off. Good candidates are using 0 stress xeno abilities outside of their normal parameters, or pushing them to their limits. *A desert xeno pushing their heat immunity to dive into an engine fire without taking damage. An underwater xeno using sonar to try and sense guards down a metal corridor. An animalistic xeno running faster than their prey, or leaping through the branches of a jungle planet.*
- ▶ **2 STRESS:** These abilities tend to be things that humans couldn't even attempt. If this only enables you to take an action and a roll is still required, take **+1d** or **+1 effect** to it (player's choice). *Ripping chains apart through sheer strength. Breathing fire or generating a sleep venom under your claws. A deep-sea xeno using their incredible lung capacity to temporarily ignore the knock-out gas being pumped into the room.*

OPTIONAL RULE: Any significant weakness that can take you out of a scene or cause great trouble for you (level 2 or 3 harm equivalent) will also generate a **gambit** for your crew when it comes up in game.

This is a good way to simulate certain extreme allergies, issues with atmosphere, and severe social problems or prejudices. *Heat sickness. Calcium deprivation that causes you to hunt your crew. Not going offship or into key areas of a planet without a disguise.*

XEND EXAMPLE: MEMISH

The planet Mem is in the Holt system, and consequently the Memish are not an unfamiliar sight in the Procyon sector.

Although they're generally humanoid, the Memish have pitch-black eyes, and skin that comes in various shades of blue, purple, and green. Instead of hair they have tentacles. The Memish are able to survive at extreme depths, and navigate waters with virtually no light available.

They're known for organizing in complex, extended family groups, and practicing their religion away from the light of the Holt star. It involves ritual carving of their scaled hides and imbuing the carvings with carefully tended bioluminescent deep-sea plant life.

Here are some things you might expect a Memish to be able to do:

- ▶ **0 STRESS:** Breathe water. Hear really low sound waves. Swim incredibly quickly.
- ▶ **1 STRESS:** Sense the flow of electricity nearby (a sense developed to hunt prey in the deeps). This ability might cost **0 stress** if you and your target are both underwater. Use your deep-water muscles to lift a thug one-handed. Extend rending claws capable of filleting sharkskin.
- ▶ **2 STRESS:** Navigate flawlessly in pitch blackness. Survive in space unharmed for a short while. **ATTUNE** to the Way to sense gravitic disturbances (common on Mem) and the relative mystic ability of anyone nearby.

OPTIONAL RULE: When you are acting in significantly warm climates, take level 2 or level 3 harm (based on how hot or dry it is) called "Memish Weakness" and add a **gambit** to your crew's gambit pool.

This harm can be removed by being immersed in water for 24 hours. A **recovery** downtime activity with water available will remove this in addition to any segments filled.

PROCYON SECTOR



SYSTEM: RIN

GATES: 3. Rin—Ecliptis (a path towards the Core). Rin—Holt (unstable gate). Rin—Iota.

PLANETS: 3.

- ▶ **ALEPH:** *Greenish-blue, gas-covered toxic planet.* **Moons:** Warren, Hock, and Batter.
- ▶ **VET:** *Gas giant with rings.* **Moons:** None. **Space Station:** SB-176.
- ▶ **BAFTOMA:** *Mined-out husk. Rocks from mining form a small asteroid belt on its orbit.*

MAJOR PORTS: 3. Warren (Moon of Aleph, Governor's seat). SB-176 (Vet, Guild of Engineers controlled). The Cove (Pirate base inside the Aleph Cloud).

SYSTEM: HOLT

GATES: 2. Holt—Rin (unstable gate). Holt—Hantu (unopened).

PLANETS: 3.

- ▶ **SONHANDRA:** *Tidally locked.* **Moons:** Reigos and Diam. Both tiny and can't be landed on.
- ▶ **MEM:** *Ocean Planet.* **Moons:** Frozen moon of Yuura.
- ▶ **VOS:** *Crystalline planet called "Glimmer."* **Moons:** None. **Space Station:** IA-23. Must dock here and shuttle planetside.

MAJOR PORTS: 3. Spaceport Keyan (Artificial island chain near the government palace on Mem). IA-23 (Guild of Engineers). Ugar (Low-key spaceport near Ugar on Sonhandra).

SYSTEM: IOTA

GATES: 2. Iota—Rin. Iota—BrekK.

PLANETS: 3.

- ▶ **AMERATH:** *Guild garden planet with a Mendicant temple in the ruins.* **Moons:** Gap—shattered moon that rings the planet.
- ▶ **INDRI:** *Manufacturing planet. Thick clouds. Surface is either cities or toxic industrial wastelands.* **Moons:** None. Consumed for materials. **Space Station:** Orbital warehouses.
- ▶ **LITHIOS:** *Ice Planet. Hosts a Yaru creche.* **Moons:** None.

MAJOR PORTS: 4. Reeves (Indri). Solitude Colony (Lithios). Rost (Amerath, Guild). Station CM-5 (Starsmith Yards).

SYSTEM: BREKK

GATES: 1. Brekk—Iota.

PLANETS: 3.

- ▶ **AKETI:** *A massive, largely unexplored jungle planet that resists taming.* **Moons:** Suhk, Enro, Awk. None with atmosphere.
- ▶ **NIGHTFALL:** *Civilized planet mostly covered in cities.* **Moons:** 13. **Space Station:** Obelisk. Controlled by 51st Legion.
- ▶ **SHIMAYA:** *Desert world.* **Moons:** Hawk and Mouse. None with atmosphere.

MAJOR PORTS: 3. Ersia City (Shimaya). Yaw port (Nightfall). Base Camp One (Aketi).

SYSTEM: RIN

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The entry point to the Procyon sector, Rin was colonized a little over a hundred years ago by House Nim-Amar. It has never been an important sector, so Malklaith's never invested more than a minimum of resources in its development. Instead, it's used to train young House members, or as an assignment to punish those who fail the House. Galactic law is more present here than the rest of the sector, as this is the seat of the sector's administration and contains gates to three systems, including a path towards the rest of the Hegemony.

NOTABLE PLACES

ALEPH: Between the poisonous gases and tectonic instability, Aleph would be a planet to avoid if it weren't for its mineral stores. Most of the wealth dug from the planet is taxed heavily by the Governor, leading to frequent unrest with the miners.

ASHTARI CLOUD: An ancient damaged remnant of a massive Ur ship lies in space, generating an in-system nebula. Within it, normal propulsion is minimal and nav systems dodgy. The Maelstrom pirates figured out how to navigate the cloud, and made their base of operations within its protective shroud.

THE STRAYLIGHT: The latest fad, the Straylight is an upscale club and cocktail bar where elites can wine and dine. It usually orbits Aleph, though it can move to other planets and moons in the system. Its owner, Chance, runs a tight establishment, but things can sometimes get out of hand.

BAFTOMA "THE HUSK": Resource exploitation by the Hegemony is comprehensive, and planets incapable of sustaining life are stripped to the core. Baftoma was once such a planet—now only scaffolding of rock remains, its broken form only used by folks hiding or dodging pursuit.



WARREN

Warren is one of the moons of Aleph and the home to an ecumenopolis—a city spanning the entire surface of the moon. It's the capitol for the system, and the system Governor Ritam al'Malklaith makes his residence here. On Warren, you can find anything you need—for a price. Its high-rises are full of legitimate business dealings, and its streets far less so.

RULE: *Warren is a wretched hive of villainy, yet also the Hegemonic seat of power in the system. You can take +1d to acquire assets here, if you also accept +2 HEAT.*

SCENE: A bustling street market with neon signs promising foods of all kinds in several languages. Hovercars streaming between towering buildings. The bass beat of a basement club playing the latest mix; patrons stumbling onto the street, singing. Socialites attending a gala at the Governor's mansion.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

RITAM AL'MALKLAITH: Governor of the Rin system, in disgrace within House Malklaith. He seeks to improve his position in the House by acquiring illegal Ur artifacts. (*callous, ambitious, strange*)

LIARA URIA: Owner and operator of the Lock Luna, the most infamous bar in the undercity. (*cunning, unforgiving, popular*)

ROCCO APPLE: Ship designer extraordinaire. Only makes one of each ship designed. (*artistic, brilliant, aloof*)

PASHA QU'OLIN: Once a feared assassin among the Knives, now a Syndicate leader. Loves good food and pit fights. (*sly, corpulent, sartorial, decadent*)



SB-176

You don't need a planet in order to mine. Or at least, you don't need ground. This combination "mining" platform and space colony is responsible for extracting resources from Vet, the gas planet below. The mining rigs in the skies below—mostly manned by Urbots—send their goods to this central hub. Most of those are packaged and fired towards the Rin-Ecliptis gate.

RULE: *Engagement rolls on SB-176 itself are always at -1d due to ever-present station monitoring. Any jobs run against Guilders here are considered to be on hostile turf.*

SCENE: Cold clacking of footsteps on the brilliantly clean main concourse. Whispers of politicians taking tea at a parlor. Children running down halls, laughing. The hum of generators in the darkened side passages leading to the lower levels. Dingy workers shouting in the cramped quarters of the mining rigs.

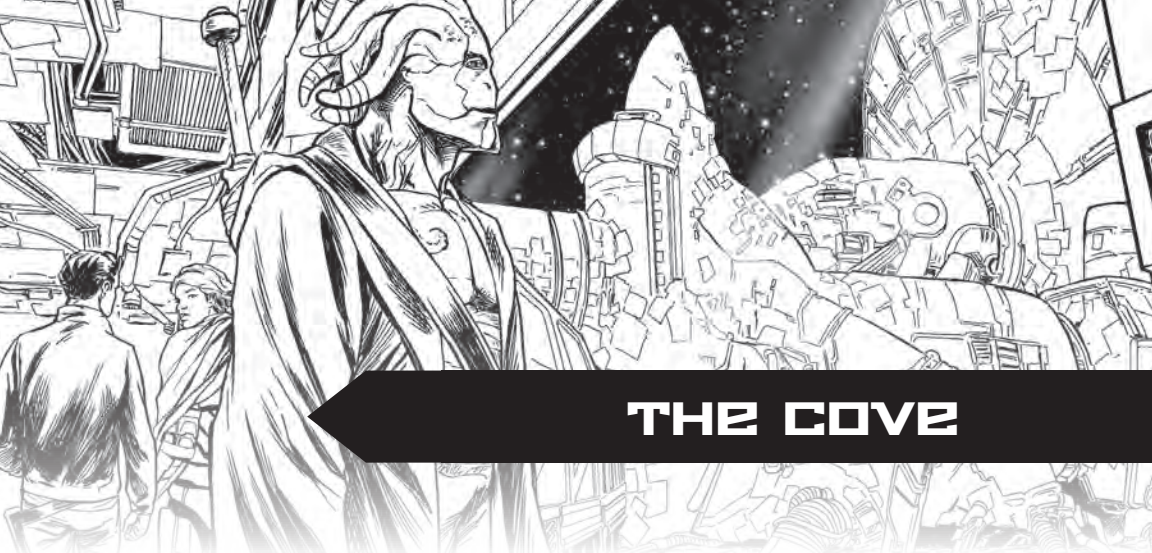
WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

YAST JOR: Guildler head of the outpost. Jor is known for getting things done, even if it means bending the rules. A thrill-seeker, he keeps a Guild-enhanced racing ship for rare days off. (*commanding, shrewd, bold*)

KASUMI ORTCUTT: A mystic who claims to hear the voice of Vet, the gas giant the platform is mining. Trades information, including esoterica on the Ur. (*passionate, strange, religious*)

ESPA "BOLT" WU: Labor organizer for the Guild miners. Rabble-rouser beloved by the workers. Has been incarcerated numerous times for crimes both real and fabricated. (*popular, dissident, ambitious*)



THE COVE

The Maelstrom pirates have made a station out of derelict freighters, cargo containers, and stolen scrap metal. They call this home “the Cove.” Enterprising individuals can discover where it is located if they have the tenacity or contacts—though it moves about within the Ashtari Cloud. Only the best friends of pirates might be granted storm drives to better navigate with.

RULE: *Conflicts at the Cove are rampant, but by Banshee's decree no murder is allowed. Those needing to settle blood feuds resort to kidnapping and killing folks outside the Cloud.*

SCENE: Quick bets taken on an open brawl between two captains over slights. Blue-white sparks of maintenance workers welding on a new ship. Fresh water misting over rows of hydroponics. A station-wide broadcast of the Banshee's latest conquest, followed by cheers throughout the halls.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

PIRATE QUEEN ALANDA “THE BANSHEE”

RYLE: A larger-than-life figure with a hatred for the Hegemony. Tough and violent, she enforces a pirate code on those who would follow her. Once stranded her first lieutenant on a barren world for mutiny. (*proud, demanding, honorable*)

PRAXIS IVANOV: Merchant always willing to make a deal. His tentacles are tattooed with the story of his several-hundred-year life. (*xeno, experienced, shrewd, loves to barter*)

KAI QUAG: Mid-level Cobalt boss. Arranges protection for Cobalt smuggling runs and meets with potential clients at the Cove. (*cautious, charming, confident*)

SYSTEM: HOLT

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Holt was the second Procyon system to be colonized, though the Rin-Holt gate was troublesome to stabilize. Hegemonic scientists eventually found a series of Ur keys in the system that forced the gate to consistently lead to Holt. The gate remains temperamental, however, and has been known to open on its own. No ships have come through during these spontaneous openings—so far. The Holt system star burns white, though it is far older than stars of this type should be, which Hegemonic scientists attribute to ancient Ur manipulation.

NOTABLE PLACES

JEREC'S JUNKYARD: A free-floating mass of ships and parts, connected via magnetism and cabling. If you're looking for equipment on the cheap, the Junkyard is your place, though it will likely be missing a piece or unreliable. Jerec also buys, but is a canny haggler.

HANTU GATE: The Hegemony has never been able to activate this jumpgate. Compared to other jumpgates it seems to be missing a few small but key pieces. It has been speculated that the Ur locked the gate and hid the keys somewhere, though it's anyone's guess as to why.

TRADE PLATFORM AUTO #4: The Guild set up an automated platform for selling fuel, covered in defensive systems to deter theft. Because of this, some parties conduct negotiations here to discourage escalation. Nobody knows what happened to the first three platforms.

PLANET OMEGA: Three survey crews and one military expedition vanished before the Legion quarantined this planet. It's overrun by a deadly life form that nests within Ur ruins and can resist nukes from orbit. The Hegemony considers it hostile, but insignificant to its plans.



MEM

This ocean planet was colonized by the Hegemony for almost a hundred years before aquatic xenos made themselves (and their planetary claims) known. Hegemonic forces broke the Memish military and incorporated them into the Hegemony. Exploration of Mem has proven difficult because of the free-standing gravity wells deep beneath the waves.

RULE: *The deeps are littered with Ur sites and strange glows. When in the deeps, using **ATTUNE** for long-term projects grants +1d. Low rolls may attract dangerous Way attention.*

SCENE: Hegemonic officials in sashes, talking with Memish labor bosses. See-through spires rising from the underwater government palace to open-air pavilions. Tourists embarking on submersibles to take in the local sea life. Scientists in exo-suits on deep-sea missions while the Memish watch from the waters.

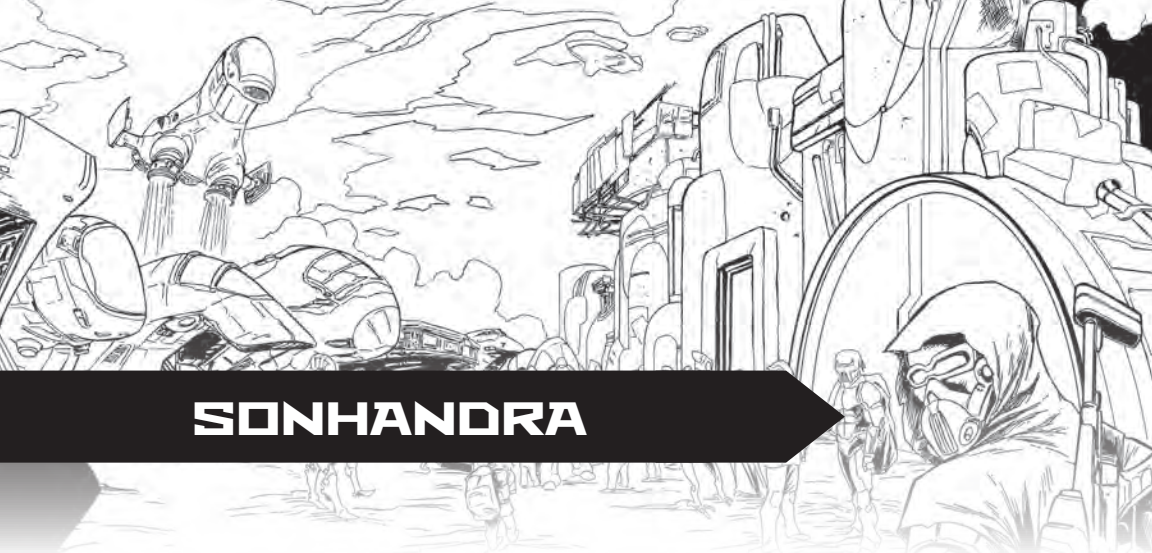
WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

VICTOR KROMYL: Planetary Governor. Seeks proof of Memish rebellion after a few subordinates vanished. Always with his Legion bodyguard. (*vigilant, meticulous, paranoid*)

ESPA NUR: Memish labor boss. His scars are packed with deep-ocean bioluminescence. Reports to Kromyl on seditious behavior, but hides his knowledge of Memish occultism. (*xeno, ambitious, cunning, treacherous*)

WYNDAM TARU ZAHN: Biology researcher seeking a connection between the Mem and other planetary life, with little success. Gathering an exploration of the ancient Mem city of Bok-Dar. (*wealthy, brilliant, passionate*)



SONHANDRA

This planet is tidally locked—the same side of the planet faces the star at all times. The day side is blistering. Oddly, all light sources extinguish about a kilometer into the night side. Most of the settlements are in the twilight border zone, including the capital of Ugar. Known for its lax policies regulating trade, it's become a choice destination for smugglers and fences alike.

RULE: *Everything is available on Sonhandra for a price. You can always take +1d to **acquire assets**, but on a 1-3 roll the asset also comes with strings (even if you boost the result with **CRED**).*

SCENE: Perpetual twilight amid paved streets and concrete buildings. Howling of frequent wind storms between the two regions. Masked and cloaked strangers congregating around a steel warehouse before an auction begins. Row after row of ships parked in the open dirt on the outskirts of Ugar.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

DEL HEX: Outlaw gunslinger. Has some obvious cybernetics from his Guild days. Wanted in several systems. Runs a vibro-weapon fighting ring deep in the day side. (*ruthless, fast, cautious*)

ABRA DRAKE: Fixer for hire and auctioneer. If she can't get it or sell it, she knows someone who can. (*connected, confident, bold*)

ZEED "TANK" MARAK: Mercenary turned Nyct farmer. Knows where and how to hide ships on the night side. (*gambler, commanding, experienced*)

OSHA: Nyct-smoking, grizzled ex-Legionnaire. Runs the Three Suns, a gambling den and the biggest local dive. (*deadly, retired, steely*)



VOS

Known throughout Procyon by its nickname “Glimmer,” the surface of this enormous planet is made of carbon compounds such as graphite and diamond. At night, the largest crystal formations glow with unearthly light—a property many of the crystals retain after being cut. One must dock at Guild station IA-23 in orbit and shuttle down to do business on the surface.

RULE: *Vosian crystals are prized by Guilds and mystics alike. Vos is full of money, but also closely monitored by the Guild. When you do a job on Vos, you earn +1 CRED and +1 HEAT.*

SCENE: Well-armed, permanent blockade in space, with ships waiting for clearance. Smooth walls of dense carbon brick, windows looking out onto the black surface. Diamond-scarred and sooty-faced miners, drinking with shaking hands by their bulky sonic cutters. Pristine shops of the visitor settlement.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

MOREK AND RA-NA: Most-feared bounty hunter in Procyon. Ra-na, his AI partner, helms his artifact ship and runs ops on his hunts via the strange armor he wears. On retainer to hunt any who loot Vos. (*ruthless, vigilant, commanding*)

IMPERA EVAZAN: High-ranking Guild logistics officer, responsible for crystal mining. Privy to much of the Guild's supply structure. (*popular, demanding, shrewd*)

YOLA SPREKK: Jeweler known for using the unique properties of Vos crystals. Her creations may be the most artful pieces in Procyon. A Sprekk piece can open doors in the most elite circles. (*artistic, charming, proud*)

SYSTEM: IOTA

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The planets in Iota orbit a pair of stars—a yellow sun (Iota-1) and a brown dwarf (Iota-2). By the time the Hegemony arrived, there were two asteroid belts, one of which still has a large portion of a shattered planet remaining in its midst. Although both the belts were clearly planets once upon a time, nobody is sure what sort of calamity shattered them. As is their wont, the Guilds didn't look a gift horse in the mouth—they set up the Iota shipyards, which service many ships in the sector using metals from the belts.

NOTABLE PLACES

SHIPYARDS: While the primary yard is run by Starsmiths, many smaller, licensed hubs work on repairs and ship refits. These stations are full of bored spacers looking for any distraction from the wait. Starsmiths sometimes hire foolhardy pilots for prototype tests.

BELT OF FIRE: The region of superheated plasma currents between the Iota binary stars. Spacers spin yarns about the Old Dragon—a vast space creature living there. While the name is whimsical, the Hegemony issued a Quarantine order for the area after several ships disappeared.

WAY LINE: The Iota gates produce a region between them where engines have more thrust, akin to "winds" of a planet. The path is hard to find and switches direction. Pilots in the know use this to gain an advantage on rush deliveries (or daring escapes).

ZX-1138: A long-period comet has recently diverged from its course, taking it much closer to Indri. Reasons for the course change are unclear, but locals have requested the Governor investigate. Mystics claim that this has shifted the system Way lines, making the Way sometimes act unpredictably.



AMERATH

With a lush biome, this planet has become well known for pharmaceuticals research and manufacturing. Many regions of the planet are well tended, and due to the comprehensive attentions of the Guild, the garden city of Rost is in perennial bloom. Warm, gentle rains come frequently. The deep forests hide some pirate lairs and Mendicant temples amid overgrown ruins.

RULE: *While it's ruined and unsanctified, the Mendicants keep their temple and their mystics tend to any and all that request aid. Take +1d when you recover in their care.*

SCENE: Massive, person-sized flowers blooming along a vine-supported path through the trees. The sweet smell of honey in the air. Scientists having lunch at treetop cafés while reviewing project schedules. Sick pilgrims praying for a cure while waiting to travel to the old Mendicant temple deep in the forests.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

YON LIRAK: High-end drug dealer. Runs a factory in Rost that never shuts down, producing synthetic narcotics for several major species. (*experienced, ruthless, unforgiving*)

ARA BLAZE: Once a star athlete, now a preeminent pit fighter in the underground fight clubs. Ara has tried every performance-enhancing drug offered to her, and it has changed her. (*ruthless, unforgiving, engineered*)

UYEN AL'VORRON: Famous Noble duelist from the religious House Vorrone. Seeking to cultivate a plant for the new vineyard he's planning to grow on a moon near the Core. (*armed, deadly, observant*)



INDRI

Over 25 percent of all goods manufactured in the Procyon Sector come from this incredibly industrialized planet. Thick, rust-colored clouds create dusk even during the day. From the warehouse-surrounded spaceport of Reves, one can view the impressive skyline of smokestacks and flames from gas burn-offs. Travel without protective gear is not advised.

RULE: *The factories have caused massive air pollution; anyone spending any amount of time outside without proper equipment or xeno abilities gains **level 2 harm** "Indri Lung."*

SCENE: Hovercar traffic reflecting adverts on buildings. Gas-masked pedestrians walking hurriedly down metal sidewalks with umbrellas treated to prevent acid rain damage. Slow-moving containers being shuttled to warehouses. Storm clouds with multi-hued lightning rolling in.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

PIRO LOCKE: Owns a number of discreet, well-guarded storage spaces in orbit, and has a strict no-questions policy. If it's illegal, it's certainly stored by Locke. (*honorable, wealthy, confident*)

ZO O YUN TA RI: Xeno weapons dealer known for prototypes and specialty armaments. Recently acquired an Ur ship weapon and plans to auction it under the cover of a storm. (*xeno, connected, cautious, meticulous*)

PASHA "THE ROC" LENSARR: Local head Ashen Knife. Known for a brutal approach to criminal organization. Wears custom-tailored suits that allow his wings to unfurl as needed. (*xeno, fierce, ruthless, demanding*)



LITHIOS

Ancient ice palaces dot the surface of this frozen planet, but the race to which they belong has long since passed. Entry to the palaces has been restricted after a string of mysterious explorer deaths. Orbital mirrors shine like artificial suns, keeping a few larger settlements warm and powering large mining rigs for extracting water and liquefied gases.

RULE: *When you explore the ice palaces of Lithios, you must make a **RESOLVE** resist if you don't want to heed the echoes urging you to wander into the frozen wastes alone.*

SCENE: A purple and green aurora shining over the freezing cold sky. Ice explorers whispering about the Yaru creche. Heated vapors escaping around Solitude Colony. Colonists in full parkas, riding large, many-eyed canids. Farmers pulling gas-eels and ice-mushroom wine crates in sail-sporting snow skimmers.

WEALTH



CRIME/SYNDICATE



TECH LEVEL



WEIRD



NOTABLES

ASHA MUNZEN: Ex-lover of the Governor, ice climber, mystic, and explorer of the ice palaces and gas caves. Only returns with visions, never artifacts. Attempting to find the "First Message." (*mystic, ambitious, fit*)

REN LARANA: Xenobiologist attempting to revive an ancient xeno found frozen but alive in the ice, despite Hegemonic law forbidding it. Currently trying to sneak the xeno off-world. (*bold, brilliant, confident*)

RAF URICH: Ice pirate, currently stranded on planet. Used his ship weapons to cut a berth in the ice. Has been hiding out, stealing parts to repair his ship. (*experienced, cautious, shrewd*)

SYSTEM: BREKK

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Considered by many to be more civilized than the rest of Procyon, this system is home to many finer aspects of the Hegemony—education, art, and culture. Wealth and culture means the Legion presence is strong in the sector. However, there are many odd, non-Starsmith-maintained hyperspace lanes that bend strangely, making long loops perpendicular to planetary orbits. Pilots map these so-called “dark lanes,” making it easy to hide and dodge patrols if one is willing to take one’s time.

NOTABLE PLACES

BLACKSTARR: The vast and largely empty Nightspeaker ship where initiates train for their first year. The ship is unlit and moves routinely to prevent discovery. It does not often receive visitors, but exceptions are made for those that have a favorable relationship to the Cult.

DENDARA: An ancient temple on Nightfall’s fifth moon, Todav. Some say it’s an Ur temple, others that it’s the remains of a forgotten mystic Cult. Its derelict corridors are tough to tour due to the moon’s lack of atmosphere and the glitching effect it has on drives and electronics.

BRIGHT WIND: A large gas cloud ejected by the star, now used as racing grounds by the Echo Wave Riders. Despite it being both lethal and illegal, racers from all over the sector compete for cred and fame. Invitations to the races are exclusive and require qualifying in equally hazardous conditions.

ISOTROPA MAX SECURE: Orbiting near the star, Isotropa is the most notorious prison in Procyon. Wardens broker audiences with prisoners and grant commutations for the powerful and wealthy. They report to Malklaith but the prison largely runs itself.



AKETI

This verdant jungle world would be more settled, were it not for the incredibly hostile natural life. Between rapidly spreading carnivorous plants, seasonally rampaging beasts, and hyper-aggressive fish, only a few distinct types visit Aketi—researchers, poachers, and criminals hiding from the law. The planet is labeled a Malklaith “nature preserve.”

RULE: *Nobody comes here who doesn't have to. The planet hates you, and jobs are hard to find. Even bounty hunters pass it by. When you **lay low** on Aketi, take +1d.*

SCENE: Heavily armed guards patrolling the tall walls of Base Camp One, nervously eyeing the jungle. Research crews packing for their next expedition across from poachers doing the same. A smuggler discussing arrangements with a client in a tent while a personal barista makes them drinks.

WEALTH



CRIME/SYNDICATE



TECH LEVEL



WEIRD



NOTABLES

RAZOR: A hunter mounting an expedition to catch the deadly Grand Phereniki for a rich client. (*callous, experienced, gambler*)

ZOKAR PAVA: Lost Legionnaire dealing in military-grade weapons. (*cautious, meticulous, dissident*)

INTAL BREL: Psy-blade-wielding Concordiat Knight. Travels with a nine-foot-tall xeno, an ex-priest, and an Urbot. Recently lost a party member and hopes to replace them. (*religious, vigilant, honorable*)

ASHA RAVANN: Base Camp One commander. Instituted a wall-mounted flamethrower measure that's kept the jungle at bay. (*tired, jaded, relentless*)



NIGHTFALL

Named for frequent eclipses caused by the planet's 13 moons. Their erratic movements make night only predictable by computer. The city of Yaw is nestled where night and day last between 2 and 12 hours each. It bustles with economic activity and is a frequent destination for tourists and traders. Known for its haute cuisine and theater.

RULE: *Nightfall is the center of culture in the system, and everything is mostly about who you know. When you **acquire assets**, roll with **CONSORT** instead of **crew quality**.*

SCENE: High-rises lighting up block by block as the city goes from day to night in the span of minutes. A rowdy night club spilling dancers clad in black, glow-accented outfits onto a sun-lit street. The blue glow of a public data kiosk projecting tomorrow's night schedule and market changes.

WEALTH	►	►	►
CRIME/SYNDICATE	►	►	►
TECH LEVEL	►	►	►
WEIRD	►	►	►

NOTABLES

SAREN GALIA: Data broker and bookie. When you can't pay your debts, you become her informant. (*paranoid, fast, connected*)

LOTUS: Fashionista and tastemaker, dressed in elaborate costumes. Secretly a high-powered fixer. Has been known to take charity cases when the cause appeals to her. (*popular, passionate, meticulous*)

JET WOLFFE: Scarlet Wolf Assassin. Can be hired at a price, but only takes off-world jobs. Travels with a large, blue-skinned alien animal of unknown origin. (*aloof, confident, unforgiving*)

SOL BRIGHTON: Best lawyer in the sector. (*cunning, connected, expensive*)



SHIMAYA

This desert planet is ravaged by electrical storms that occasionally clear colored sand off mineral deposits essential to space travel, or turn it to glass, giving a view to the ruins beneath. Teams race to capitalize on these events. There is a substantial civilian population, including the sector's preeminent educational institution, Khalud Academy.

RULE: *Although only students and professors are technically allowed to use the Khalud Academy archives, any **STUDY** rolls while using them take +1d.*

SCENE: Professors walking down the marble paths of the Academy. A market street with insistent vendors selling sandworm kebabs to hungry miners. Excavators packing furiously onto sand-skiffs, ready to take advantage of a storm-cleared deposit. The storm alert blaring citywide.

WEALTH	▶	▶	▶
CRIME/SYNDICATE	▶	▶	▶
TECH LEVEL	▶	▶	▶
WEIRD	▶	▶	▶

NOTABLES

HONDO SUZUKA: HNN reporter seeking evidence of conspiracy at Khalud Academy, where several top students have vanished. (*ambitious, vigilant, charming*)

ED URSIS: Guild Engineer that works on the orbital array and the electrostatic generators it powers to keep the storms away from the capital. Collects colored glass statues. (*dedicated, brilliant, overworked*)

MIRANDA KASUR: Minerals trader with a load of stolen goods she needs to move. In hiding after her first deal went wrong. (*scared, cunning, proud*)

SAHAR: Strange-suited mystic that lives in the desert. (*odd, blue-eyed, ancient*)

FACTIONS OF PROCYON

HEGEMONY	TIER
Guild of Engineers	V
Church of Stellar Flame	IV
Counters Guild	IV
Starless Veil	IV
51st Legion	III
House Malklaith	III
Isotropa Max Secure	III
Starsmiths Guild	III
Cult of the Seekers	II
Hegemonic News Network	II
Yaru (Makers Guild)	II
Concordiat Knights	I

NOTE: You can always add factions if needed. If your crew is interested in the plight of the Memish, add the **Memish Rebellion** as a faction. **Pick a category.** Is their uprising religious or justified anger at the Hegemony? (Weirdness or Criminal, respectively.) **How powerful are they?** Strong locally or weak on a few planets? Tier I. Strong in one system or weak in a few? Tier II. Strong in a few systems or weak throughout Procyon? Tier III. Tier IV is strong in multiple systems, and Tier V has reach and dominance beyond that in some way. **Give them a goal** now, and detail the rest as needed in play.

WEIRDNESS	TIER
Sah'iir	IV
Suneaters	IV
The Agony	III
Ashtari Cult	III
Vignerons	III
Ghosts	II
Mendicants	II
Nightspeakers	II
Acolytes of Brashkadesh	I
Conclave 01	I
Vigilance	I

CRIMINAL	TIER
Lost Legion	IV
Scarlet Wolves	IV
Vorex	IV
Ashen Knives	III
Borniko Syndicate	III
Draxler's Raiders	III
The Maelstrom	III
Echo Wave Riders	II
Janus Syndicate	II
Turner Society	II
Cobalt Syndicate	I
Dyrinek Gang	I
Wreckers	I

FACTIONS

The Factions of Procyon Sector are detailed below:

51ST LEGION: Hegemonic military that represents the law anywhere off-planet.

ACOLYTES OF BRASHKADESH: A collective that eschews individuality. Initiates adopt the same garb and the same name, in the pursuit of perfection at any cost.

THE AGONY: Cult of humans who infect themselves with Way creatures to access the universe in unsettling ways. Named after the pain most endure for their abilities.

ASHEN KNIVES: Dangerous criminal Syndicate known for their control of gambling and assassination in the sector.

ASHTARI CULT: A Cult of Precursor worshipers claiming Ur descent. They carry vials of gases from the Ashtari Cloud, which they inhale to connect to their presumed ancestors.

BORNIKO SYNDICATE: A tightly knit group of thieves who steal high-end technological supplies. Man, the Guild hates these guys.

CHURCH OF STELLAR FLAME: One of the official Hegemonic Cults. Religious zealots with only a few powerful members. Stretched thin, they're using their power and influence to seek out and eradicate dangerous artifacts and mystic activity in the sector.

COBALT SYNDICATE: Organized labor union dabbling in a little crime to fund their demands for a better life. Usually display a blue stripe somewhere on their clothes.

CONCLAVE 01: Independent, sentient Urbots led by an ancient Urbot known as the Prime. Working to control the mining sites and gain control over Precursor AI modules required to generate true sentient machines.

CONCORDIAT KNIGHTS: Often accompanied by a motley crew of adventurers, these dozen or so colorful characters have the Hegemonic Churches' blessing to pursue a quest for something called the Light of the World.

COUNTERS GUILD: Officials who maintain the galactic currency network and build shadow repositories in any system the Guild has a presence in, storing mysterious items and securing auctions and commerce.

CULT OF THE SEEKERS: Wandering mystics studying artifacts and seeking new places. Members include the Hegemon's mother. They want to open the Hantu gate.

DRAXLER'S RAIDERS: Fierce individualistic pirates who specialize in disabling ships before boarding. Mostly found in Iota and Brekk.

DYRINEK GANG: Mostly young, disenfranchised xenos who have turned to crime and found strength and solidarity with each other. Based on Warren but looking to expand wherever there are other like-minded folks.

ECHO WAVE RIDERS: Pilots. Many organize illegal races. Many take dangerous jobs for pay, and a few test dangerous new engine/flight technologies for the Guild. They wear a pin that shows how many races they've won.

GHOSTS: Scientists who, due to a mishap, live exo-suited in a half-phased state. The Church of Stellar Flame offers a significant bounty on them and their ghost ship, the Skeleton Key—dead or destroyed (but certainly not alive).

GUILD OF ENGINEERS: One of the Hegemonic High Guilds, responsible for resource acquisition, cybernetics, AI, tech advancement, and research. Often have the best toys.

HEGEMONIC NEWS NETWORK: Those who control the media control the mind. Often use this as leverage over other factions. Spies.

HOUSE MALKLAITH: A powerful Noble House of the Hegemony, ostensibly owns the sector. Represented by the Governor, who lives on Warren.

ISOTROPA MAX SECURE: The most notorious prison system in the Procyon sector, housing the worst of the worst. Brokers audiences with its population grants commutations for those with power and wealth.

JANUS SYNDICATE: Weapons dealers that specialize in ship weapons, headed up by the ruthless Viktor Bax, who insists on doing the first deal with every client in person.

LOST LEGION: Formerly the Hegemon's personal guard, they rebelled when the current Hegemon rose to power. They seek to see the Hegemon dethroned and have been guns for hire ever since the schism.

THE MAELSTROM: Rowdy space pirates living in a nebula that's difficult to navigate. Often clash with the Legion.

MENDICANTS: Originally the Church of the Emerald Heart, their organization was politically destroyed. Now they wander the stars as traveling physicians and healers.

NIGHTSPEAKERS: Mystics with dark proclivities bent on finding a set of dangerous Precursor artifacts.

SAH'IIR: Tall, ebon-skinned xenos who travel with blindfolded servants that speak for them. Gave the Hegemony their ansible network. Have creepy black-metal ships. Very rich and work as merchant families.

SCARLET WOLVES: Although they often hire themselves out as bounty hunters, the Scarlet Wolves are a renowned group of assassins. Each bears a distinctive tattoo of a wolf holding a star in its mouth.

STARLESS VEIL: Hegemonic counterintelligence and spies. Currently at odds with House Malklaith. They seek to undermine the Governor in order to make a case for change in House control.

STARSMITHS GUILD: Maintain the jumpgates and hyperspace lanes, and build ships. All ships in Hegemonic space must be certified and registered with the Starsmiths Guild—but forged papers are all too common.

SUNEATERS: Ur-archaeologists and scientists obsessed with recreating jumpgate technology. Looking to extinguish a star in pursuit of their goals.

TURNER SOCIETY: A Holt-based Syndicate running drug dens masquerading as society houses. Their drugs are cooked with rare Aketi animal parts and Vosian crystals—which they sometimes have trouble sourcing.

VIGILANCE: Warrior mystics bearing artifact blades, who seek to enforce an ancient code of justice on any they find wanting.

VIGNERONS: A small handful of immortality seekers using artifact tech implants and chemicals distilled from the living; several of them have been around for hundreds of years. Most were powerful before their transformation, though they now conceal their true identities.

VOREX: The most successful information broker to ever live. Can access any terminal in the system—though no one can explain how. Frantically seeking her sister, who the Counters Guild took hostage.

WRECKERS: Scavengers and thieves with a few brilliant hackers, who incite factions to fight so that they may pick the battlefields clean later.

YARU (MAKERS GUILD): Guild that force-grows clones for labor. Clones are short-lived, have a symbol on their foreheads, and are supposedly only barely sentient. Folks are distinctly uncomfortable around the clones.

51ST LEGION

A faction of the Hegemonic military, preparing a coup.

TURF: The Scorpio (dreadnought, HQ). Naval yards throughout the sector. Outposts at government and public installations and trade lanes.

NPCS: **Tallon "the Butcher"** (commander, *disciplined, imposing, vicious*). **Liyara** (lieutenant, *psychic, changed, eerie, loyal*). **Thrace** (ace pilot, *reckless, gambler, loyal*). **Wick** (spy, *xeno, unreadable, mysterious, loyal*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A legion of the Hegemonic Guard. The Scorpio (dreadnought). An illegal psychic.

QUIRKS: There are oddly few xenos among the Legion.

ALLIES: House Malklaith, Starsmiths Guild

ENEMIES: Ashen Knives, Church of Stellar Flame, Lost Legion, The Maelstrom

SITUATION: Tallon earned many commendations on the battlefield, but swore to cleanse the Hegemonic military of nepotism when his command was sacrificed to a Noble's daughter. He uses his secretly psychic lieutenant Liyara to vet officers and quietly place Legionnaires loyal to him in positions of power.



ACOLYTES OF BRASHKADESH

Eschewing individuality, all initiates adopt the same garb and the name "Ashkad," in the pursuit of perfection at any cost.

TURF: A large number of meditation rooms throughout Indri.

NPCS: **Ashkad** (*charismatic, passionate, idealistic*). **Ashkad** (*ambitious, underhanded, muscled*). **Ashkad** (*mystic, devout, artistic*). **Ashkad** (*technician, skilled, liar, wealthy*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: An Ur artifact that all the Acolytes have attuned to, called the Pillar of Truth.

QUIRKS: Attuning to the Pillar allows the Acolytes to communicate with each other and invoke the skills and memories of other Acolytes, who can act through them.

ALLIES: Mendicants

ENEMIES: Ashen Knives, Guild of Engineers

SITUATION: The Acolytes are ready to begin the next phase of growing their following, but the Pillar requires massive reserves of energy to keep attuning to more people. They plan to indoctrinate an entire power plant's workforce, so they can repurpose the plant to power the Pillar of Truth.



THE AGONY

Human Cultists infecting themselves with Way creatures. Named for the pain most endure for their usual abilities.

TURF: A platform orbiting Planet Omega (HQ). Secret chantries on Mem, Sonhandra, and Lithios.

NPCS: **Lexal** (mystic, addicted, power-hungry, winged). **Iritha** (mystic, many-limbed, glowing, powerful, potent). **Noro** (mystic, calculating, enrapturing, elongated).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Potent mystic powers. A menagerie of undocumented Way creatures. A laboratory for producing Way-infused drugs.

QUIRKS: Each member of the Agony is changed in some highly visible way, either with extra limbs, semi-spectral forms, or many new mouths and eyes.

ALLIES: Dyrinek Gang, The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame, House Malklaith

SITUATION: Having harvested horrors from Omega's surface, the Agony have a plan to develop the living planet. By activating sites on the surface they intend to move it within reach of Mem, feeding the oceans to Omega and starting a new era of its evolution.



MOVE
PLANET
OMEGA
TOWARDS
MEM

ASHEN KNIVES

Once lean and battle ready, the Ashen Knives are a decadent Syndicate focused on drugs, gambling, and pleasures of the flesh.

TURF: Drug dens. Gambling houses. A hidden and reinforced bunker on Warren (HQ).

NPCS: **Pasha Qo'iin** (sly, corpulent, sartorial, decadent). **Knife Lirik** (assassin, xeno, gambler, deadly, graceful). **Oya** (high ranking, greedy, well armed, natural leader).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A crew of well-trained assassins, often with a Precursor artifact or two up their sleeves. Heavy coffer. Bribed judges. Crews of thugs.

QUIRKS: To join the Syndicate, Knives must take a life. Being promoted requires doing unsavory tasks. Their regional leaders are titled "Pashas."

ALLIES: The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Cobalt Syndicate, House Malklaith

SITUATION: The Ashen Knives' power on Warren often eclipses that of House Malklaith. This hasn't become a problem yet, since the Governor is more focused on the Core. A recent alliance with the Maelstrom (fencing goods) has filled the Knives' coffers, and now their sights are set on expanding.



CONTROL
MAJOR
PLANETARY
CRIMES IN
RIN

ASHTARI CULT

Precursor worshipers claiming Ur descent. They inhale gases from the Ashtari Cloud to connect to their presumed ancestors.

TURF: An undocumented Ur ruin on Lithios. A moon base on a Nightfall moon (HQ).

NPCS: **Urmak Theon** (*compassionate, educated, well spoken*). **Urmak Lesh** (*artificer, ex-Guilder, researcher*). **Urley Fean** (*Noble, cautious, hidden, influential*). **Rokono Maex** (*captain, scavenger, coarse, nonbeliever, stoic*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A bevy of Ur artifacts. Stockpile of Ashtari gas.

QUIRKS: Each member of the Cult wears a small vial of Ashtari gas to allow them to "commune" with their "Ur past." These visions of lives eons ago have unearthed previously unknown ruins.

ALLIES: Ghosts, Mendicants

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame

SITUATION: Visions granted when inhaling Ashtari gas in sacred places about the sector indicate that Ur sites on the various moons of Nightfall can be used to control the planetoids. The visions are unclear as to what will happen when the moons are aligned, but that's not going to stop the Cult.

III



ALIGN THE
MOONS OF
NIGHTFALL

BORNICO SYNDICATE

A tightly knit group of thieves who steal high-end technological supplies.

TURF: A former Counters Guild shadow repository that the Syndicate managed to erase from the Guild ledgers.

NPCS: **Ria "Keycard"** (*wizard-class hacker, ambitious, daring*). **Nals E** (*Urboticist, gearhead, muscled*). **MaxiMillions** (*arrogant, expert infiltrator, gorgeous*). **Pip** (*mystic, xeno, small, unsettling*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: An entire vault of Guild technology.

QUIRKS: Joining the Borniko Syndicate involves pulling off a heist that impresses the leadership.

ALLIES: Conclave 01, Echo Wave Riders, Wreckers

ENEMIES: Counters Guild, Guild of Engineers, Starsmiths Guild

SITUATION: The Borniko have been working on bigger and bigger heists, making numerous enemies and allies along the way. Their jobs often have folks from other factions playing different roles. They focus on Hegemony targets and are looking to find a way into House Malklaith's private holdings for a big heist, power in the sector be damned.

III



STEAL
GOVERNOR
MALKLAITH'S
RINGS

CHURCH OF STELLAR FLAME

A religious group with Hegemonic backing, believing that many Precursor artifacts and mystic practices are dangerous.

TURF: The Way of Light, a battle cruiser orbiting incredibly close to a star (HQ).

NPCS: **Alaana** (Noble, high priestess, mystic, driven, ex-heretic). **Battle Sister Diana** (battle-scarred, exo-suited, unstoppable). **Iraam the Kind** (inquisitor, plain, quiet, cruel).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Handfuls of zealots willing to die for the cause. An imperial seal letting them do pretty much whatever they want. A powerful battle cruiser.

QUIRKS: Each member is branded with a mark of the Church. It's referred to as the Kiss of Light. Faithful pray by bathing in as much light as they can bear.

ALLIES: Dyrinek Gang, The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Guild of Engineers, Starsmiths, Yaru

SITUATION: Alaana has few but elite resources in the sector. This far out, the Church does not have widespread followers to report happenings, so Alaana has to rely on her attuned prayers and instincts to guide her. The Church is focusing on finding key targets rather than widespread action.

IV



ROOT OUT
HERETICS
AND
DANGEROUS
ELEMENTS

COBALT SYNDICATE

Once a labor union, the Cobalt Syndicate has turned to smuggling and extortion to carve out shipping lanes and have a real say.

TURF: The Pit, a mining quarry on Aleph (HQ). A major berth and associated docks on Warren.

NPCS: **Jax** (leader, cold, killer, arrogant). **Keve** (captain, augmented, defiant, enterprising). **Sephua** (Jax's sibling, thug, daring, envious, gambler).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A fleet of private ships used for smuggling. Toughs and laborers on almost every planet and station who wear the Cobalt stripe.

QUIRKS: Every member wears a solid blue stripe somewhere on their clothing. A blue stripe on the walls of docks and warehouses is a call to action.

ALLIES: Dyrinek Gang, The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Ashen Knives, Guild of Engineers, Starsmiths, Yaru

SITUATION: Jax has taken over shipping lanes between Aleph and the Core worlds. He's angered a number of powerful Guild factions and the secret wars between them are nearing a violent outburst. Jax has been stockpiling weapons and vehicles for what he sees as an inevitable and bloody fight.

I



UNIFY THE
LABOR
FORCE

CONCLAVE 01

Independent, sentient Urbots led by the Prime, seeking free will and independence for all Urbots.

TURF: Secret bases on Baftoma and the Indri Wastelands (HQ).

NPCS: **The Prime** (*ancient, powerful, mysterious, wise*). **Bar-Hazuk** (*gardener, huge, kind*). **Delta-7** (*architect, weapons platform, massive*). **Sp-d3r** (*hacker, infiltrator, cloaked, tiny*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Deep understanding of Urbots and Ur tech. A supply of dormant AI cores. **Rana-Daiyu**, a powerful spaceship controlled by three sister Urbot cores. A network of Urbot spies posing as everyday servants about the sector.

QUIRKS: All members of the Conclave are currently Urbots of varied shapes and sizes.

ALLIES: Concordiat Knights, The Maelstrom (who have an Urbot captain), Sah'iir

ENEMIES: 51st Legion, Guild of Engineers

SITUATION: The Prime wants to found an Urbot homeland, but he needs numbers to do so. Having spent years freeing cores, he must manufacture bodies for them and grow them safely. He hopes to take over abandoned factories on Iota and start doing so secretly.



TAKE
CONTROL
OF IOTA
FACTORY

CONCORDIAT KNIGHTS

Fourth and fifth children, these young Nobles have taken an oath sanctified by the Hegemon to seek the Light of the World.

TURF: None. Knights travel on private vessels. The Grail (a bar on Sonhandra) is where they leave messages for each other.

NPCS: **Nicols al'Nim-Amar** (*leader, glib, hopeful*). **Vnipe al'Vorron** (*priestess, renowned, bejeweled*). **Junrai** (*explorer, death wish, restless*). **Intal Brel** (*religious, vigilant, honorable*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A map of Procyon from before the Hegemony. Exploration ships. Significant personal power and funds.

QUIRKS: Each Knight is as distinct as they can be from each other. This tight-knit group is comprised of unique, colorful characters.

ALLIES: Mendicants, Vigilance

ENEMIES: Acolytes of Brashkadesh

SITUATION: A retrieved message about a powerful artifact that could terraform previously dead worlds ignited a fervor in a number of Hegemonic youths. Taking an oath blessed by the Hegemon to find it, they're looking all over the Galaxy. Nicols recently found a marked map of Procyon predating the Hegemony and the Knights seek to unravel its mystery.



FIND FIRST
UR SITE ON
THEIR MAP

COUNTERS GUILD

Maintains the galactic currency network and shadow repositories in each system.

TURF: Numerous shadow repositories that store mysterious items in high-tech vaults. A currency exchange on Warren built on the Hegemonic ansible network (HQ).

NPCS: **Torx Verron** (chief executive, *calculating, ruthless, expansionary*). **Rintar Ix** (operations head, *conniving, jealous, sly*). **Broq Vsigh** (repository head, *honorable, meticulous*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Shadow vaults unknown even to the Hegemon. An ansible network relay. Vast wealth.

QUIRKS: Counters Guild members sign a contract for cycles of labor at a time and are paid up-front. Any breach of that contract can be punished harshly.

ALLIES: Sah'iir, Scarlet Wolves, Starless Veil

ENEMIES: Borniko Syndicate, Guild of Engineers, Vorex

SITUATION: Torx is playing Guild politics. He hopes to show that the Guild of Engineers has too much to handle, and the Counters should handle sales of their raw materials and lab resupplies in Procyon. He's spent vast sums on this, betting he'll get it back once the Counters take over.

IV



DISRUPT
GUILD OF
ENGINEERS'
MINING
OPERATION

CULT OF THE SEEKERS

Wandering mystics studying artifacts and exploring, looking to open the Hantu gate. Members include the Hegemon's mother.

TURF: Small island with a research station on Mem (HQ), near the Hantu gate. A dig site in the desert on Shimaya.

NPCS: **Lasaya al'Nim-Amar** (Noble, mystic, *brilliant, obsessed*). **Yor Brah-Rahim** (explorer, *hot-tempered, stressed*). **Qulocct** (Memish, researcher, *sharp, obsequious*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Extensive Guild schematics of other gates. Hegemonic sanction to retrieve artifacts. A large stockpile of artifacts.

QUIRKS: Many of the Cult are young ex-Legionnaires that have been personally drafted by the Hegemon's mother and inspired by the cause.

ALLIES: Hegemonic News Network, Starsmiths Guild

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame, Ghosts

SITUATION: The Seekers believe they have a holy imperative to expand the Hegemony to the farthest reaches of space. Having found a lead on Shimaya, they've set up a dig site that promises to unearth at least some of the missing pieces of the Hantu gate.

II



FIND
MISSING
HANTU
GATE KEYS

DRAXLER'S RAIDERS

Violent pirates who disable ships before boarding, ransoming crew and cargo alike.

TURF: Abandoned mining station in an Iota asteroid belt (HQ).

NPCS: **Draxler** (leader, killer, vengeful). **Wudu "Starhawk"** (captain, loyal, vicious, wary). **Samara "She Wolf" Red** (captain, enforcer, cold, physical).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Mining ships retrofitted with grapplers. Heat shields for surviving in the Ring of Fire. Draxler's cloaking corvette, the Manta. Power armor for boarding. Prisoners for ransom. Caches of goods stolen from raided ships.

QUIRKS: Almost all members of Draxler's Raiders are wanted for crimes.

ALLIES: Janus Syndicate, Lost Legion

ENEMIES: 51st Legion, Isotropia Max Secure, The Maelstrom, Vigilance

SITUATION: Draxler has made a lot of waves since taking over the Raiders. The crew has a decidedly anarchist views. A few bad fights with the 51st have landed a number of Raiders captains in Isotropia Max Secure, and they have set their eyes on eliminating the supermax prison from Procyon altogether, killing two birds with one stone.



DYRINEK GANG

Mostly young, disenfranchised xenos who have turned to crime and found strength and solidarity with each other.

TURF: Lost Paradise, a club with an attached warehouse where the gang does its business (HQ).

NPCS: **Dyrinek** (xeno, revolutionary, proud). **Burn** (Memish mystic, xeno, fast, overconfident, untrained). **Radds** (human, hacker, smart). **Myrk** (xeno, gun enthusiast, hothead).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A collection of high-end hoverbikes used to cruise through their territory. A few minor artifacts some of the leaders have attached to themselves.

QUIRKS: When a new member joins the gang, they all go out on a drunken tear across the city, leaving a swath of wreckage in their wake.

ALLIES: Cobalt Syndicate

ENEMIES: Hegemonic News Network, House Malklaith

SITUATION: The gang has had its run-ins with System police and the HNN paints them as lowlifes with no future. Dyrinek wants to send a message that they won't be so easily dismissed, and plans to take over the airwaves to broadcast the gang's punk ideology. All they need is the opportunity.



ECHO WAVE RIDERS

Pilots that organize illegal races, take mercenary work, or test dangerous new engine/flight technologies for the Guilds.

TURF: A secluded hanger on Nightfall (HQ). A near permanent presence at Bright Wind in Brekk.

NPCS: **Garge Ztar** (*risk-taker, ambitious, charismatic*). **Elen** (*engineer, analytical, race-winner*). **Inofra** (*stunt pilot, compassionate, veteran*). **Dom** (*ex-Starsmith, mechanic, genius, family man, lives to race*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A host of ships of their own, and access to far more. Substantial mechanical facilities on Nightfall.

QUIRKS: Echo Wave Riders don't respect those who don't know how to pilot their own ship, and settle all scores with races.

ALLIES: Borniko Syndicate, Starsmiths Guild

ENEMIES: Wreckers

SITUATION: The Riders are left alone by authorities if their races are kept far enough from civilization—and claiming Bright Wind takes care of that. They plan to put on an epic race among system pilots for prestige and cash prizes, starting and ending in the plasma cloud. Buy-in will be expensive.



GHOSTS

Scientists that live exo-suited in a half-phased state. The Church of Stellar Flame offers a bounty on them and their ghost ship.

TURF: The Skeleton Key, a half-phased corvette (HQ). A secret research facility on Lithios.

NPCS: **Nils Boyer** (*physicist, brilliant, remorseful*). **Roy Stanz** (*biologist, bitter, driven*). **Eegon Mark** (*engineer, genius, suit designer*). **Pol Venker** (*engineer, self-indulgent, cavalier*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A corvette that can travel along Way lines. The ability to phase on top of people, possessing them, though the body dies a few days later.

QUIRKS: Before the mishap, the Ghosts were scientists. All are intelligent and educated. They phase out of reality if too long outside their suits (or people).

ALLIES: Ashtari Cult, Suneaters

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame, Cult of the Seekers

SITUATION: A mishap with the Holt gate phased the Ghosts. Upon their return, they possessed those that boarded. The Hegemony has been hunting them since. Recently their exo-suits have allowed them to act without harming others. They theorize that destroying the Holt gate will restore them to their original forms.



GUILD OF ENGINEERS

One of the Hegemonic High Guilds, responsible for resource acquisition, cybernetics, AI, tech advancement, and research.

TURF: SB-176 (HQ). Mining concerns in every system in Procyon. Advanced research facilities in Rin, Iota, and Brekk.

NPCS: **Avalon Riat** (chief executive, cybernetic spider legs, megalomaniac). **Thiel Kharrat** (operations head, brutal, connected, influential). **Oevers Star** (head researcher, genius, reclusive, overworked). **Yast Jor** (commanding, shrewd, bold).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Technology even the Hegemon is unaware of, stored in the Grand Archive. Secret research laboratories.

QUIRKS: Many high-ranking Guild members sport custom cybernetics.

ALLIES: 51st Legion, Isotropa Max Secure

ENEMIES: Borniko Syndicate, Cobalt Syndicate, Conclave 01, Counters Guild

SITUATION: Decadent and powerful, the Guild of Engineers are beyond the ability of the Governor to police. The Guild is exploiting this, using this remote sector to perform experiments banned by the Cults and the Hegemon. Their current project involves converting Way energy into a highly unstable but physical compound.



HEGEMONIC NEWS NETWORK

Those who control the media control the mind. Often use this as leverage over other factions.

TURF: HNN Corporate Offices on Warren (HQ). Field offices on every planet.

NPCS: **Cinszo** (owner, ambitious, greedy, untrustworthy). **Rinsama Kay** (chief editor, cynical, demanding, stickler). **Ooxoo** (xeno, press pool manager, curious). **Stacy Weathers** (ace reporter, trained spy, always grinning, nose for trouble).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Sector-wide communications. Many independent journalists feeding them news.

QUIRKS: The bulk of the HNN's workforce are contractors, selling HNN stories they find. Many reporters are also trained spies.

ALLIES: Starless Veil

ENEMIES: Dyrinek Gang, Mendicants

SITUATION: The HNN is effectively the private intelligence agency of Cinszo. The director leverages information coming into the network to blackmail and influence the powerful in the sector. Cinszo has had a taste of the high-life and is looking to find a way into a Noble House, by marriage or appointment.



HOUSE MALKLAITH

Far from the Hegemon, at the center of the Galaxy, a disgraced fifth son of the House holds a small seat on a local moon.

TURF: Malklaith owns the sector, but the Governor rarely leaves Warren. His people can be found in major positions in every system of the sector.

NPCS: **Governor Ritam al'Malklaith** (Noble, intense, obsessed, well-spoken). **Jerrem** (guard captain, tactical, scarred, loyal). **Shim** (judge, corrupt, greedy, ambitious).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Procyon sector taxes, generating vast coffers. A growing collection of Precursor artifacts.

QUIRKS: Governor Malklaith wears a number of strange rings of Precursor origin—their powers are not fully known, even to him.

ALLIES: 51st Legion, Nightspeakers, Turner Society

ENEMIES: The Agony, Ashen Knives, Lost Legion, The Maelstrom

SITUATION: Disgraced after a famous duel, Governor Malklaith is convinced the way to regain his rightful place is by gathering Precursor secrets (Nightspeaker Doraam whispers this in his ear regularly). He hopes this will give him the edge in the cloak and dagger world of imperial politics; this pursuit is highly illegal.

III



ACQUIRE
ALEPH
KEY

ISOTROPA MAX SECURE

A notorious prison in Procyon, housing the worst offenders. Brokers commutations for those with power and wealth.

TURF: Isotropa Max Secure in Brekk (HQ).

NPCS: **Bafma F'rozz** (warden, haughty, confident, wealthy). **Kreel** (guard captain, muscled, angry). **Dr. Xhu** (psychotherapist, corrupt, gambler).

NOTABLE ASSETS: The biggest supermax prison in Procyon. An organized file of dirt on anyone they do business with.

QUIRKS: The staff of Isotropa are all corrupt and will take bribes for almost anything.

ALLIES: Guild of Engineers

ENEMIES: Draxler's Raiders

SITUATION: Between the Warden's excessive spending habits, Dr. Xhu's gambling problem, and Kreel's "educating" the prisoners, Isotropa always needs more funds and bodies. The prison spends a lot of time lobbying local planetary Governors to increase sentencing or acquiring "special guests" from factions, and just as much time looking for bribes.

III



GET MORE
PRISONERS
(REPEAT)

JANUS SYNDICATE

Weapons dealers specializing in ship weapons, headed up by the ruthless Viktor Bax.

TURF: Weapons camp on Sonhandra (HQ). A sizable operation at Aketi's Base Camp One.

NPCS: **Viktor Bax** (*ambitious, charming, distrustful, ruthless*). **Baruk** (*xeno, bodyguard, huge*). **Wendel** (*nervous, technical, loyal*). **Faye Null** (*unmarked Yaru, pilot, adventurous, foolhardy*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A large stockpile of weapons, particularly ship weapons. Several small but well-armed ships. A map of the current dark hyperspace lanes.

QUIRKS: Viktor Bax insists on meeting every client the Syndicate does business with in person.

ALLIES: Draxler's Raiders

ENEMIES: Vigilance

SITUATION: Viktor wants to grow beyond the outposts the Syndicate currently runs to a sector-wide affair. As part of his plan to scale up, he's looking to poach the Legion for some capital weapons. Viktor's currently digging up dirt on Tallon and secret Legion projects in the sector.

II



ACQUIRE
SOURCE
FOR
CAPITAL
WEAPONS

LOST LEGION

Formerly the Hegemon's personal guard, but rebelled when the current Hegemon rose to power. Now they work as guns for hire.

TURF: Ascension (dreadnought, HQ). A host of berths in the Iota Shipyards staffed with loyalists.

NPCS: **Commander Eterin** (*disciplined, veteran, inspiring*). **Captain Rowan** (*tough, stoic, unhesitating*). **Lt. Yon** (*ace pilot, bitter, just*). **Her Excellency, the One True Hegemon** (*elite, royal, resplendent*). **Haya** (*royal guard, potent, unstoppable*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A dreadnought. Hegemony access codes for many things in the sector. Many highly trained soldiers.

QUIRKS: All Legionnaires have been branded as traitors. Many bear the tattoo of a phoenix (the last Hegemon's sigil, now a sign of rebirth).

ALLIES: Draxler's Raiders, Mendicants, Yaru

ENEMIES: Most Hegemony Factions

SITUATION: The 1st Legion—the Hegemon's private guard—rebelled when the current Hegemon ascended. They protect a young girl, heir to the last Hegemon, whom they hope to reinstate. They plan to capture the head of the Church of Stellar Flame and convince her to bless the girl as required.

IV



CAPTURE
ALAANA
OF THE
STELLAR
FLAME

THE MAELSTROM

A band of ferocious space pirates hiding among a mysterious nebula and around Baftoma.

TURF: The Nightbreaker (capital ship, HQ). The Cove (made of lashed-together ships). The Ashtari Cloud.

NPCS: **Alanda “the Banshee” Ryle** (Pirate Queen, *beautiful, mirthful, risk-taker*). **Yorgar “Thorn”** (captain, *quiet, calculating, deadly*). **Hunter Black** (captain, *ex-Noble, daring, space savvy*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: The Nightbreaker (a capital ship with a jumpgate inside it). Storm drives (engines capable of navigating the Ashtari Cloud). A fleet of pirate ships.

QUIRKS: The pirates lash together old or damaged ships to make the Cove. The Cove is the size of a planetoid, rotating near the center of the Ashtari Cloud.

ALLIES: Ashen Knives, Cobalt Syndicate, Nightspeakers

ENEMIES: 51st Legion, Draxler’s Raiders, The Guilds, House Malklaith

SITUATION: The Maelstrom raids shipping lanes and sells goods via the Ashen Knives. Alanda is scheming to find a way to jump systems with her entire crew by taking over a jumpgate, preferably without incurring full-scale Hegemonic retribution.

III



SEIZE
CONTROL
OF A
JUMPGATE

MENDICANTS

Originally the Church of the Emerald Heart, they were politically destroyed, and now wander the stars as traveling healers.

TURF: The Temple on Amerath (HQ).

NPCS: **Ammon** (physician, *compassionate, changed*). **Kambree** (researcher, *cheerful, organized*). **Kairi** (xeno, physician, *somber*). **Tar Hawkson** (mystic, *ancient, changed, powerful*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A small but dedicated crew of Mendicant physicians capable of healing with science and Way powers alike. An ancient and powerful Mendicant mystic.

QUIRKS: Mendicant physicians implant themselves with Ur artifacts (Emerald Hearts), which change them but also let them heal others.

ALLIES: Concordiat Knights, Lost Legion, The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame, Hegemonic News Network

SITUATION: An ancient Mendicant once healed a dying Stellar Flame abbot, who proclaimed them an abomination. In the last Hegemonic Ascension, the Church traded battle might for the right to wipe out most of the Mendicants. Many Emerald Hearts were lost; the Mendicants now seek a cache of them rumored to be hidden deep beneath the ruined ancient temples of Amerath.

II



FIND NEW
EMERALD
HEARTS

NIGHTSPEAKERS

Mystics with dark proclivities bent on seeking a set of dangerous Precursor artifacts.

TURF: Blackstarr, a dreadnought hidden in the Brekk system (HQ).

NPCS: **Doraam** (*masked, mysterious, driven*). **Oin-rai** (fighter, *physical, huge, brutal*). **Ismissa** (*robed, unarmed, mystically potent*). All count as small gangs in battle.

NOTABLE ASSETS: Mystical powers such as the Night Voice, which strips an area of the Way and creates darkness and gravitational effects. A dreadnought.

QUIRKS: Nightspeakers have pitch-black eyes and resonating voices after training in the Night Voice. Most wear masks. Some say they speak to voices from beyond the stars.

ALLIES: House Malklaith

ENEMIES: 51st Legion, Church of Stellar Flame

SITUATION: Though few, each member is a potent mystic. They hire themselves out to powerful individuals while searching for a set of Precursor artifacts called the Raiment of Night. Doraam has become the Governor's personal mystic and advisor after sensing a piece of the Raiment—the Aleph key.



II
QUIETLY
GAIN
ALEPH
KEY

SAH'IIR

Tall, fully robed xenos who travel with blindfolded servants that speak for them. Gave the Hegemony the ansible network.

TURF: The Sah'iir Embassy, purchased recently on Warren (HQ). Workstations at every ansible network point.

NPCS: **Ren 3-Meti** (matriarch, xeno, *cunning, commanding*). **Iisoo 7-Chim** (trader, explorer, xeno, *humanitarian*). **Wi 13-Meti** (Ren's clutchmate, xeno, *ambitious, underhanded, marked*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A fleet of black metal merchant ships. Private ansible networks. Extensive funds from trading.

QUIRKS: The Sah'iir communicate via special hosts they control, called Echoes. Each may have up to a dozen of such Echoes. It's said they sense who is suitable to be their Echo, regardless of distance.

ALLIES: Counters Guild

ENEMIES: Guild of Engineers, Suneaters

SITUATION: The Sah'iir have earned their place by being too important to the Hegemony to get rid of. While not technically a Guild, they guard the secrets of ansibles as if they were one. They have detected a signal from Procyon when a Precursor ansible was activated and have come to investigate.



IV
FIND THE
UR
ANSIBLE

SCARLET WOLVES

Although they often hire themselves out as bounty hunters, the Scarlet Wolves are a renowned group of assassins.

TURF: The Killroom, a high-end safe house on Warren (HQ). Holdouts on most planets.

NPCS: Rik "Old Wolf" Urus (leader, *dangerous, retired, cunning*). Hara "Mamba" M'brozz (sniper, killer, thrill-seeker). Jet "Shark" Wolffe (aloof, confident, unforgiving).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A large armory of the very best weapons. An actual huge wolf genetically engineered by the Yaru as payment. (Rik keeps it. They feed it others who don't pay.)

QUIRKS: Each member of the Wolves bears a distinctive tattoo of a wolf holding a star in its mouth.

ALLIES: None. With the Wolves it's strictly business.

ENEMIES: Starless Veil, Vignerons

SITUATION: The Scarlet Wolves are contract killers specializing in hard targets. They have a reputation for delivering, minimizing collateral, and never taking bribes. They've taken a large contract from the Counters Guild to kill a number of the Guild of Engineers' heads, but need time to set up the hit.

IV



MURDER
TOP GUILD
ENGINEERS

STARLESS VEIL

Spies and Hegemonic counterintelligence, seeking to undermine the Governor to make a case for change in House control.

TURF: The Veil holds no turf except the occasional safe house or place to reload and rearm on missions.

NPCS: Joina Starlight (leader, *analyst, tactician, charming*). Agent Phasic (infiltrator, engineer, risk-taker). Agent N'Paya Wayline (diplomat, *connected, collector*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A network of spies. High-tech gadgets. A few ships with cloaking devices.

QUIRKS: All members of the Veil have had advanced mental training to resist interrogation and Way powers.

ALLIES: Dyrinek Gang, The Maelstrom

ENEMIES: Guild of Engineers, Starsmiths, Yaru

SITUATION: The Veil serves the Hegemony itself, even above the Hegemon. When power struggles from the Core spill out into the rim, the Veil follows. Their eyes are locked on the Guilds and Malklaith's inability to control them, so they've been carefully trying to engineer his downfall without destabilizing the sector, hoping a different House will have more luck.

IV



CAUSE
CIVIL
UNREST ON
WARREN

STARSMITHS GUILD

Maintains the Hyperspace lane beacons, jump drives, and jumpgates that make possible the intragalactic Hegemony.

TURF: Iota Shipyards (HQ). All major spaceports.

NPCS: **Dorae White** (chief executive, *industrious, trustworthy workaholic*). **Kir M'rikk'lik** (technical officer, *xeno, gadgeteer, experimenter*). **Nash** (operations chief, *gruff, overworked*). **Rip Onister** (gate expert, *curious, shy, reclusive*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Jump drives for use in new ships. A shipyard. Hyperspace lane beacons and charts. Trading stations on every route.

QUIRKS: All ships in Hegemonic space, by law, must be registered, certified, and maintained by the Starsmiths Guild. False papers abound, though.

ALLIES: Cult of the Seekers, Echo Wave Riders

ENEMIES: Borniko Syndicate, Cobalt Syndicate

SITUATION: When the Rin-Holt gate was first opened, several Ur artifacts were used to stabilize the connection. The Guild has speculated the gate can go to a second system if another key could be found to retune the gate. The Guild is searching every Ur site they get access to for such a device.



III
FIND
ANOTHER
KEY FOR
TUNING
RIN-HOLT

SUNEATERS

Ur-archaeologists obsessed with recreating jumpgate technology. Currently looking to extinguish a star in pursuit of their larger goals.

TURF: An Ur ruin on Lithios (HQ). Several Nightfall-based warehouses.

NPCS: **Elil** (astrophysicist, *fanatic, brilliant*). **Ruba** (archaeologist, *mystic, seer*). **Racel** (engineer, *loyal, conflicted*). **Rygar Z'tann** (mystic, *guard, gravity bender*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A few well-armed, unmarked ships. Armed troops. Mystics painfully trained to Way-bend gravity. Parts to build a jumpgate with activated Ur beacon. Solar siphon.

QUIRKS: Suneaters spend most of their days handling Ur artifacts and have all learned how to handle them safely.

ALLIES: Ghosts

ENEMIES: Sah'iir

SITUATION: Many are ex-Guilders or mystics, who have poured decades of money and study into their cause. If successful in their mission to mine Iota-2 for energy, the Hegemon would instantly grant the Suneaters Guild status, even if everyone in Iota perishes. The Suneaters consider it worth the risk.



IV
DEVOUR
IOTA-2
AND STORE
ENERGY

TURNER SOCIETY

Syndicate-run drug dens masquerading as society houses. Their drugs are cooked with Aketi animal parts and Vosian crystals.

TURF: The Jewel, a society house on Mem (HQ). Wildside, a society house on Sonhandra. The Mirror Maze, an upscale club on Warren.

NPCS: **Madam Gourdan** (administrator, *charming, connected*).

Pytric (chemist, *callous, reclusive*). **Vallis** (minor Noble, *addicted, wealthy*). **Chorrguth** (xeno, hunter, *surly*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Vosian crystals and Aketi animals used to produce Haze. Several society houses. An intrasystem shuttle.

QUIRKS: Membership into the society is both exclusive and expensive, and considered a mark of taste amongst high society.

ALLIES: House Malklaith

ENEMIES: Vigilance

SITUATION: Focusing on the upper echelon of Procyon, the Society has traded the typical complications of running drugs for new problems. Their unique drug requires Vosian crystals and Aketi animals, and with the Vigilance harassing their production, they struggle to keep up with demand.

II



FIND NEW
HUNTING
GROUNDS
ON AKETI

VIGILANCE

Warrior mystics that seek to enforce an ancient code of justice on those they find wanting.

TURF: The First Temple on Aketi (HQ).

NPCS: **Quai-Rosh** (elder, mystic, *judgmental*). **Aayli Spacerunner** (elder, *stoic, warrior*). **Ulek Spacedancer** (apprentice, *rash, friendly*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: Hidden forest temple. Temple archives going back to the early days of the Hegemony. Mystic tools. A handful of powerful mystic warriors.

QUIRKS: Each member is trained by one elder mentor. Becoming a Vigilance member means receiving an artifact blade as a mark of your progress.

ALLIES: Concordiat Knights

ENEMIES: Draxler's Raiders, Janus Syndicate, Nightspeakers, Turner Society

SITUATION: Though the Hegemony colonized the sector a hundred years ago, Vigilance was founded thousands of years ago. The current members are all human, since the original practitioners were wiped out when Nim-Amar pacified Procyon. They have judged the gunrunners and drug makers of Aketi unworthy.

I



BURN
DOWN
BASE CAMP
ONE

VIGNERONS

Pursuers of immortality via tech implants and chemical formulas distilled from the living. Several have been around for centuries.

TURF: Anodyne, a pleasure den on Amerath (HQ). Rust, an auction house on Sonhandra.

NPCS: **Asphodel** (general, flawless, calculating, ravenous). **Nehemiah** (warrior, ancient, brutal, huge, fast). **Morwenna** (mystic, selective, enthralling).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A few sophisticated frigates. Centuries of experience. A small stockpile of life-extension fluid. Gain potency for a while after taking the substance.

QUIRKS: Because the genetic material harvested from their kills must be suitable for the recipient, Vignerons only hunt human targets.

ALLIES: The Agony

ENEMIES: Church of Stellar Flame, Vigilance

SITUATION: The Vignerons distill life essence from living victims and use it to extend their own lives. With this technology, their founders have lived for hundreds of years. Owing to its highly illegal nature, the Vignerons operate in secret, augmenting themselves and manipulating people behind the scenes. They wish to grow, converting a number of superior bodies to their cause.

III



ABDUCT
AND
CONVERT
ELITE
WARRIORS

VOREX

The most successful information broker to ever live. Can access any terminal in the sector—though no one can explain how.

TURF: An automated HNN satellite orbiting Warren (HQ).

NPCS: **Vorex** (wizard-class hacker, stressed, careful, self-modified). **A-OM** (maintenance Urbot, cheerful, non-verbal). **Tock** (security Urbot, protective, staticky, well armed).

NOTABLE ASSETS: An artifact AI core designed to interface with a living being, allowing temporary connection to computers in the same system. A massive information network. Dirt on pretty much everyone in the sector.

QUIRKS: Few have met Vorex in person; most talk to her through a random terminal or Urbot-delivered message.

ALLIES: None. Vorex is mercenary, but she will help Conclave 01 on the cheap.

ENEMIES: Counters Guild

SITUATION: Vorex has been an information broker for years. Using an Ur artifact, she's developed a massive network for buying and selling information. The Counters Guild kidnapped her sister to make Vorex access the Guild of Engineers' network. Vorex seeks to free her sister without tipping her hand.

IV



FIGURE
OUT WHO
HAS HER
SISTER

WRECKERS

Scavengers, thieves, and hackers who incite factions to fight so that they may pick the battlefields clean later.

TURF: Makeshift base inside a derelict ship near Baftoma (HQ).

NPCS: **Bobby-O** (wizard-class hacker, *arrogant, trickster*). **Meshkilarn** (mechanic, *muscled, grimy*). **Qord** (xeno, thief, *delicate, one-handed*).

NOTABLE ASSETS: A series of fake transponders, booby traps, and mock ships used to lure in unsuspecting marks. The Derelict-8, a derelict frigate they found after a battle between Draxler's Raiders and the Legion.

QUIRKS: Wreckers pick members from folks already fleeing from someone or hiding in Baftoma. They often trade air and water as a means of scoping folks out.

ALLIES: Borniko Syndicate

ENEMIES: Draxler's Raiders, Echo Wave Riders

SITUATION: The crew has hit several targets in the system by sowing confusion between the Rin factions, and cleaning up after pirates. Their goal is to salvage enough to repair their current home, the ship they call the Derelict-8. To do that, many more ships are going to need to be destroyed.



REPAIR
THE
DERELICT-8

YARU

Also known as the Makers Guild, they grow clones for menial labor that are supposedly short-lived and only barely sentient.

TURF: Sanctioned Yaru creche on Lithios (HQ). Secret research facility on Amerath.

NPCS: **Foler Atherton** (biologist, *concealed*). **Bal Yn** (geneticist, *haughty*). **Rech** (*savant, cold*). All unmarked progenitor clones.

NOTABLE ASSETS: Cloning facilities. Clones placed in several important households and facilities, which report back. Powerful capacity for genetic manipulation.

QUIRKS: The Makers Guild doesn't accept new members. The progenitors have self-perfected and are frozen; only so many are allowed to be active at once. The Yaru (as the clones are called) make many people in their presence uneasy.

ALLIES: Lost Legion

ENEMIES: Cobalt Syndicate

SITUATION: When the Hegemon ascended, the Yaru sided with a competitor, and their numbers, strictly regulated by the Hegemon, have been severely reduced. Unsatisfied, they have thrown in with the Lost Legion, and are secretly working to restore the previous Hegemon to power.



BREED
CLONE
SOLDIERS
FOR LOST
LEGION

CLIENT / TARGET		WORK	
CIVILIAN		COVERT	
1	Academic or Scholar	1	Stalking or Surveillance
2	Laborer or Professional	2	Sabotage or Arson
3	Courier or Spacer	3	Poison or "Accident"
4	Shop or Business Owner	4	Steal or Replace
5	Artist or Writer	5	Lift or Plant
6	Doctor or Mechanic	6	Impersonate or Trick
SYNDICATE		VIOLENCE	
1	Drug Dealer or Supplier	1	Assassinate
2	Mercenary or Thug	2	Liberate or Ransom
3	Fence or Gambler	3	Terrorize or Escort
4	Spy or Info Broker	4	Destroy or Deface
5	Smuggler or Thief	5	Raid or Defend
6	Pirate	6	Rob or Strong-arm
HEGEMONIC		UNDERWORLD	
1	Executive or Diplomat	1	Escort or Guard
2	Accountant or Pilot	2	Smuggle or Courier
3	Saboteur or Refugee	3	Blackmail or Discredit
4	Cop or Detective	4	Con or Espionage
5	Agent or Scientist	5	Locate or Hide
6	Judge or Governor	6	Negotiate or Threaten
ESOTERIC		OTHER	
1	Artifact or Way Line	1	Infect or Cure
2	Occult Collector	2	Broadcast or Record
3	Wormhole or Beacon	3	Capture or Tag
4	Xeno or AI	4	Explore or Move
5	Renegade Urbot	5	Turn On or Off
6	Mystic or Cultist	6	Hack or Download

Roll a handful of dice and use the results to guide your choices.

TWIST OR COMPLICATION

- 1 An element is a cover for a Hegemonic Cult.
 - 2 A mystic or visions have alerted your target ahead of time.
 - 3 Someone on the job isn't who they say they are.
 - 4 The location is guarded or watched by Hegemonic forces.
 - 5 This job furthers a mystic or xeno group's agenda.
 - 6 This job furthers a Guild's agenda.
-
- 1 The target is a front or member of a criminal group.
 - 2 The job is on a dangerous gang's turf.
 - 3 The job is a trap laid by your enemies.
 - 4 The job is a test for another job.
 - 5 The job furthers pirate goals and agendas.
 - 6 The job is being closely watched by a wealthy patron.
-
- 1 The job has a strong Precursor or Way line presence.
 - 2 The job is in the middle of actively contested turf.
 - 3 The job is not planetside, or easy to get to.
 - 4 The location moves (it's not where you expect it to be).
 - 5 The job aids a rebellious cause.
 - 6 The job directly affects the Governor.

CONNECTED TO...

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------------|
| 1 | PC | Friend |
| 2 | PC | Rival |
| 3 | PC | Heritage NPC |
| 4 | CREW | Contact |
| 5 | PLANET | Notable |
| 6 | FACTION | Notable NPC |

THE JOB IS IN...

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Rin |
| 2 | Holt |
| 3 | Iota |
| 4 | Brek |
| 5 | Same Planet |
| 6 | Several Systems Away |

...AND FACTIONS

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1-1 | 51st Legion | 4-1 | House Malklaith |
| 1-2 | Acolytes of Brashkadesh | 4-2 | Isotropa Max Secure |
| 1-3 | The Agony | 4-3 | Janus Syndicate |
| 1-4 | Ashen Knives | 4-4 | Lost Legion |
| 1-5 | Ashtari Cult | 4-5 | The Maelstrom |
| 1-6 | Borniko Syndicate | 4-6 | Mendicants |
| 2-1 | Church of Stellar Flame | 5-1 | Nightspeakers |
| 2-2 | Cobalt Syndicate | 5-2 | Sah'iir |
| 2-3 | Conclave 01 | 5-3 | Scarlet Wolves |
| 2-4 | Concordiat Knights | 5-4 | Starless Veil |
| 2-5 | Counters Guild | 5-5 | Starsmiths Guild |
| 2-6 | Cult of the Seekers | 5-6 | Suneaters |
| 3-1 | Draxler's Raiders | 6-1 | Turner Society |
| 3-2 | Dyrinek Gang | 6-2 | Vigilance |
| 3-3 | Echo Wave Riders | 6-3 | Vignerons |
| 3-4 | Ghosts | 6-4 | Vorex |
| 3-5 | Guild of Engineers | 6-5 | Wreckers |
| 3-6 | Hegemonic News Network | 6-6 | Yaru (Makers Guild) |

JOB GENERATION EXAMPLE

Natalie ran a one-shot of **Scum and Villainy** for some friends, who went on a bounty hunting adventure on the Cerberus. She's got nothing specific planned for a second session, and the players don't have any leads to follow up on, so she picks up a handful of dice and consults the job chart.

The dice come up **1, 4, 5, 4, 4, 2, 6, 3, 4** and **6** (in that order).

She first wants to know the factions involved, so she checks the first four dice. **1** and **4** is the Ashen Knives, and **5** and **4** is the Starless Veil. An odd and unexpected combination. Why would Hegemonic counterintelligence care about a backwater criminal Syndicate? She looks at the Client/Target chart next. Knowing the job is likely coming from the Knives, she discards the **3** to select "Syndicate" as the target and looks at the next die. It's a **4**—Spy or Info Broker. Things are getting interesting. She uses the next two dice for a complication. A **2** and a **6** (**1/2** being the first section of twists, the **6** being read as the result). A Guild is involved somehow. She looks at the "Job is in" chart next—**3** means Iota. So the Ashen Knives want to hire a crew of bounty hunters to handle a problem with the Starless Veil in Iota.

She glances at the crew and sees that they have an Ashen Knives Pasha as a crew contact. That's a good source for the job, so she doesn't roll for who it's connected to. She checks the Iota system information. He'll be doing a favor for the local Iota Pasha, the Roc.

Indri is an industrial planet. If the Roc is hitting or stealing Guild shipments, he might have gotten lucky and either gotten close or stolen some prototypes intended for the Hegemony. That's the sort of thing the Veil would send an agent out to handle.

So if the Roc has someone in his entourage who he suspects is leaking info (because Guild goods vanished), he'd hire outside help to handle the problem. This is the sort of thing bounty hunters would be good at—investigation, capture, and bringing someone back alive. The Roc wants to deal with the perpetrator himself, of course.

That sounds like a fun job! Natalie makes some notes about the factions involved and checks the player sheets to see if any other friends or rivals might have information on the spy. She makes a short list of gadgets this Space 007 might have and decides that the spy is posing as a serving lady at the Roc's club. She wonders how the crew will approach the job. She discards the rest of her dice and is ready for the game.



CHAPTER 10

CHANGING

THE GAME

In reading this book, you may be tempted to add to the game, or change how parts of the game work, or adapt the game to other genres. The world of **Scum and Villainy** is wide open for new content, new ideas, and even new rules. This shouldn't be a surprise—**Scum and Villainy** is a hack of an excellent game by John Harper called **Blades in the Dark**, and is very literally a result of this kind of adaptation. This chapter covers what we see as some of the critical design elements to help you add more to the game.

Of course, the most important piece of advice we can give when modifying the game is for you to experiment with your ideas. When you first start out, you won't know what you don't know. Every piece in this game was the product of multiple rounds of trial and error. Each trial led to a better understanding of what we wanted and how to make that happen. Design and play, because a game only becomes real at the table. The play will show you what you want and let you experiment.

And just as a table collaborates during play to talk through the fiction, it helps to talk your designs over with other people. Sometimes this is your gaming group. Sometimes it's one of the many communities online. The G+ group for **Blades in the Dark** has been endlessly valuable to us and thousands of others.

Likewise, the site bladesinthedark.com has links to **Blades in the Dark** materials, and also several other community sites and other "Forged in the Dark" games that may inspire or give you tools to further revise your designs.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE

Here's a breakdown of the various benefits that are granted in the core game of **Scum and Villainy**. You can repurpose these for something new.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- ▶ Permission to do something that normal people can't do (example: Speaker's Player ability). Permission to apply an action in a way that you normally couldn't (example: Mechanic's Analyst ability).
- ▶ **+1d** to a roll in a specific circumstance.
- ▶ **+1 effect** in a specific circumstance.
- ▶ **Push yourself** to activate a special talent or Way effect.
- ▶ Take variable **stress** to activate a Way talent. Take additional stress to activate optional features (example: Mystic's Psy-Dancing).
- ▶ Grant **special armor** in a specific circumstance.
- ▶ Suffer reduced **harm** or take a lesser penalty from harm.

SHIP ABILITIES

- ▶ Permission to do something special (example: Stardancer's Leverage).
- ▶ Give **+1d** to a crew member in a specific circumstance.
- ▶ Give the crew +1 starting **gambits** or each crew **+1 max stress**.
- ▶ Free **load** for certain items.
- ▶ **Potency** in specific circumstances.
- ▶ An addition to your ship or crew (example: Firedrake's Secret Base).
- ▶ Ship modules.
- ▶ Permission to do something special (example: Jump Drive).
- ▶ **Special armor** in specific circumstances (example: Quantum Encryptor).
- ▶ Regular **armor** (example: Shields).
- ▶ Enhanced **system quality** with specific caveats (example: Afterburners).
- ▶ **+1d** to an **action roll** in a specific circumstance (example: Med Bay).
- ▶ Critical facilities (example: Brig).
- ▶ Ship-generated activities (example: targeting with a Targeting Computer).

For some examples of other ways to expand the scope for PCs, see **Advanced Abilities & Permissions**, page 348.

TWEAKING WHAT'S THERE

You might modify a mechanic that's already there to tweak the game in one direction or another. For instance, maybe you want gambits to be more about teamwork than individual luck:

TEAMWORK GAMBITS

*If a teammate **assists** you, you may generate a **gambit** on **desperate** rolls. When someone **leads a group action**, if multiple **6s** are rolled, you gain two **gambits** instead of one.*

With this tweak, the players have a more reliable way to generate gambits, as long as they're willing to work together.

Or maybe you want gambits to cost something instead of being free boosts:

HALF-PUSH GAMBITS

*Whenever you spend a **gambit**, spend a **stress** as well.*

With Half-Push gambits, the PCs become much more average—they're not able to rely on their daring luck to bail them out of the problems they cause.

Speaking of more average PCs...

EARLY CAREER

*When you create your character, you have only one of your **special playbook** items, not all of them. Choose the one that you begin with. All of the other special playbook items must be unlocked by advancing your character. Each time you advance your playbook, you may choose **two special items** that you now have access to (they do not have to be from your playbook). If you want items not available on any book, discuss it with your table.*

If you want to make an even more action-adventure setting, where the crew members are less lovable space scoundrels and more classic '80s action movie heroes, consider the following:

ACTION HERO!

*When you resist **harm**, reduce it by a minimum of two levels. If you resist **consequences**, you avoid them entirely unless facing someone with potency, or who is at least three Tiers higher.*

MAKING SOMETHING NEW

You might create an original mechanic in order to add a new feature to the game or highlight something that has become a regular feature of your crew's adventures:

TRUST ISSUES

*To benefit from teamwork maneuvers, you must trust the teammate who's helping you. Name the teammates you trust after you pick your **load** for the job. You can force any character who trusts you to perform the **protect** action on your behalf (they suffer a consequence instead of you).*

Or maybe you want to push the game out into new spaces—a different setting, a different premise, or a different focus for play. Maybe you want to take a military focus on space opera, and have rank be a mechanical feature of the game:

RANKS

*Each character now has a rank rating that goes from zero (private) to 4 (captain). When **COMMANDING** a soldier in action, you gain **+1d** if your rank is above your target (or targets). If you're more than two ranks above them, you also gain **potency**.*

Expect to see rank pulled frequently, and issues of the chain of command becoming much more salient. You may also consider making a military ship for the crew and explore this mechanic further.

Also consider some fleet rules. Perhaps something like the following:

FLEET

*A fleet is a unit of ships under your command. By default they are all corvettes. When in action, their quality is equal to your **COMMAND**. Detail a commander (specify a few traits) for each fleet. Choose one of the following for the fleet: Battleships: they are frigates—Gunships: they roll **+1d** when attacking—Veteran: they have one armor for damage.*

If a fleet is harmed, it is Weakened (reduced effect), then Damaged (-1d on all rolls), then Broken (destroyed). If a member of your crew repairs the fleet at an appropriate station, the fleet removes two levels of damage.

You may want to design captains and commanders for each fleet, and even add rules for building new ones.

Maybe you want to play a game set just on the gritty streets of Warren. Or something a little more near future? Consider the following:

CYBERED

*Implanting someone with cybernetics is a **desperate DOCTOR** action. Consequences involve adaptation failure, harm that must be rehabilitated, and persistent malfunctions. When you're successfully augmented, gain the Cybernetic ability.*

CYBERNETIC

Spend stress (0-2) to perform a feat only someone with your augmentation could do. Discuss the details with your table.

So you could have something like this:

Blitz, a xeno punk on the streets of Warren, wants a new cyberarm. His player discusses it with his table and they agree on the following: For 0 stress he can crush cans, or have vibro-blades pop out of his knuckles. At 1 stress he can punch through walls. For 2 stress he can fire a beam from his palm, but it might break the arm unless he resists the consequences. Now to find someone willing to stitch it onto him...

If you want a setting that's a bit darker and less hopeful than **Scum and Villainy**, you can describe the long isolation of travel:

COSTS OF SPACE TRAVEL

Whenever you make the long journey to another planet, take level 1 harm "Alone in the Black." This may be resisted as usual. Add +1d to the resistance for each of the following: crew quarters, holo-emitters, nexus link, galley. Take -1d for each system you have to cross to get to your destination.

Or maybe you want to make Fuel an abstraction that the players can make use of:

FUEL

*Spend one fuel for each jump to hyperspace you make or each gate you pass through. If you do not have enough fuel, you cannot make the jump. Your ship may store up to twice its engine rating in fuel. When you upkeep your ship, pay one extra **CRED** to replenish your fuel.*

This opens up the opportunity for consequences to require spending extra fuel, and makes jobs that involve many jumps a bit more interesting.

ADVANCED ABILITIES & PERMISSIONS

Here are a few advanced abilities and permissions for characters to acquire through the events of play. You might create your own for your **Scum and Villainy** series, focused on the elements that are important in your game. Before you can acquire the abilities, there are fictional requirements. It will be up to your table to discuss and discover in play how to fulfill those requirements.

These abilities are a good way to flesh out and detail the world, and answer some questions. What are the Nightspeakers really like? What sets them apart from other Cults? What does it truly mean to be a Guild member?

GUILD MEMBERS

When you pass the Guild exams and pay the admission fees, you become a licensed Guild apprentice and receive permission to take on Guild contracts. You also gain the **Adept** ability of your Guild (this does not count as a Veteran **special ability**. Simply mark it down).

When you have proven your trustworthiness and technical acumen, you achieve the rank of Journeyman. You receive permission to learn the secrets of the Guild and may take the **Master** special ability of your Guild as a Veteran advance.

STARSMITHS GUILD

[Adept] Badged: As a licensed member of the Starsmiths Guild, you can dock your ship and receive routine maintenance (**upkeep**) free while parked at an official port (you do not pay upkeep at Hegemony ports). You may furthermore certify ships and ship modifications as being space-worthy and legal.

[Master] Drive Schematics: You gain access to Starsmith engine designs and materials and can upgrade your ship engines using a long-term project. This clock has six segments, plus two per current rating. You are legally allowed to open and work on any jump drive.

Hayley (the Mechanic of the Faraday) achieves the title of Master Starsmith. She attempts to redesign and tune the Faraday's engines. The Faraday has quality 2 engines, and she's trying to push them to quality 3. This becomes a 10-clock long-term project that requires time in a Starsmith drydock. At the end of the project, the Faraday will have quality 3 engines.

GUILD OF ENGINEERS

- **[ADEPT] TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES:** You gain access to the Grand Archive, an encrypted and regularly updated trove of mechanical designs and scientific papers. A well-guarded copy exists in each system in which the Guild has a strong presence. When you **STUDY** the Archive to design a new schematic, you get **+1 effect**. You also create devices at one Tier higher than usual.
- **[MASTER] PERSONAL UPGRADE:** Cybernetics are restricted to Guild Masters and select (often powerful) Hegemonic clients, licensed to have such things. You have had one or two parts of your body cyberized. Discuss with your table what enhancements this upgrade offers you. You may perform superhuman feats using your cybernetic part by spending an appropriate (0-2) stress cost.

Yun Halrath has recently achieved the rank of Master Engineer. As part of his status, he chooses to go under the knife and get a very stylish mechanical arm. Of course, as with many Guild items, it's not simply a decorative status feature, so the player, the GM, and the table discuss what the arm does. They establish a few common uses and costs for the arm. Although Yun will be able to use it to do other things, these baseline abilities will set guides for any future additional abilities.

0 stress: Rip a door off its hinges.

1 stress: Fire the hand as a grappling hook and use motors inside the arm to ascend.

2 stress: Deflect blaster bolts.

MEMISH MYSTICS

When you scar your body with the holy words of the Prophet Ruum, embed within the wounds the holy seaweed, pray at the holy site of Nur-thulama, and are accepted as a true member of the Mem, you open your mind to the Memish secrets of the Way. You gain access to the following special abilities as Veteran advances:

- **THE WAY OF SEEMING:** You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: turn invisible to eyes, ears, and the Way—create illusions that look, sound, and feel real.

*When you **push yourself** to activate this ability, you also get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.). Perhaps to **SWAY** someone that the illusion is real.*

- **THE WAY OF DEPTHS:** You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: manipulate shadows as if they were solid matter, creating weapons, tools, or terrifying shapes—step into a shadow and emerge from another nearby shadow.

*When you **push yourself** to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability. Although you may still need to make **RIG** or **SCRAP** rolls using the tools or weapons created by this ability, all shadow items count as fine items.*

NIGHTSPEAKERS

When you achieve the rank of Initiate, you receive permission to attend the secret rituals of the Cult. When you make the appropriate sacrifices to the Cult, master the secret rituals, and bond to your provided mask, you become an Adept. You learn the true purpose of the Raiment of Night and are tasked with retrieving the pieces. You may also take the following special abilities as Veteran advances:

- **THE NIGHT VOICE:** You can **push yourself** to strip an area of the Way for a few minutes. Doing so creates darkness, strange gravitational effects, and disables access to the Way for everyone, including you (abilities, artifacts, and any tech that relies on the Way will stop working).

*When you **push yourself** to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability.*

- **BOUND IN DARKNESS:** You may use **teamwork maneuvers** with any Nightspeaker that has bonded to their mask, regardless of the distance separating you. Also, take 1 stress for your whispered message to be heard by everyone wearing a Nightspeaker mask (Nightspeaker or no).

MENDICANTS

When you are accepted as a petitioner of the Mendicants, you may offer your services at Mendicant hospices and will receive supplies required to help those in need. When you have proven your dedication to the cause and an Emerald Heart becomes available, you may have it implanted by a Mendicant physician.

When you are implanted with an Emerald Heart, you suffer a trauma and gain the following special ability:

- **MENDICANT PHYSICIAN:** You cease to age, become immune to diseases, no longer need to eat, and gain a free **downtime activity** for **recovery**.

The artifact does not come without drawbacks: it changes the user over time. Old (and ancient) Mendicants frequently disguise their changes or live far from civilization, since such changes are seen as anathema by the Church of Stellar Flame.

You may also take the following special abilities as Veteran advances:

- **AURA OF PEACE:** You may extend the biotic field of your implant to someone in your care. **Push yourself** to ease the burdens of another. They ignore all harm penalties until they are hurt again or two hours pass.
- **BIOGENESIS:** Your implant allows you to share your health with another. When you **DOCTOR** someone, you may spend stress 1-for-1 to add extra segments to their recovery clock.

SCAVENGERS

Scavengers are less of an organized group, and more of a well-known group of scoundrels and explorers willing to go where the Hegemony forbids, and risk life and limb to return with treasures.

When you lead a successful expedition to a promising Ur site and scavenge it for all it's worth, you gain notoriety in the underworld as a ruin explorer. You may also take the following special abilities as Veteran advances:

- **MORE LUCK THAN SENSE:** You may expend your **special armor** to resist the consequence of traps or Ur artifacts, or to **push yourself** when running, jumping, or wildly trying to escape danger.

► **GADGETS:** You have assembled a collection of small, common, usually-stable Ur gadgets. Each mission, you may bring up to three of these gadgets for 1 load.

► **Babel Rings:** A set of two rings that scramble all communication in an area the size of a building. Works on writing, voice, and electronics. Takes a day or so to recharge.

► **Cold Cube:** A cube inside a wooden container. When placed on a non-wood surface, it devours heat and snuffs out fire. Causes frostbite if touched outside its box.

► **Gravity Link:** A small pyramid that, when opened, generates a gravity well, drawing in nearby objects up to the size of a person for a few moments. Takes an hour or so to recharge.

► **Mirror Dimension Coin:** When looked through, it shows a small, common item. When smashed, the item appears. No two have the same item.

► **Null Space Pocket:** A small dimensional pocket you can fit your hand and wrist into, attached to a fancy stone carving. You can hide a 1 load item inside it.

► **Pocket Spacesuit:** A badge, bracelet, or amulet that can generate life support in a vacuum for an hour or so. May look like a force field or actually expand into a suit that surrounds a person. Takes an hour or so to recharge.

► **Rocket Boots:** Some sort of thrust. Maybe a beam that propels you or actual small jets. Often difficult to control. Generates small jumps in atmo, but is very useful in vacuum. Takes a few minutes to recharge.

► **Urbotic Pet:** Adorable, small, eerily smart. The tiny AI core seems to have imprinted animal-like behavior.

► **Zero Element Belt:** A belt with a dial. When turned on, the user has neutral buoyancy (floating as if in zero-g). Only works on people. Never seems to run out. Often has trouble turning off.

These items are generally stable and safe to use, but may manifest consequences, particularly if damaged (at the GM's discretion). If you lose your items, you may undertake a job or long-term project at a Precursor dig site to replace them or find new ones.

... See you around, Space Scoundrels.

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