

Pirates of the FRONTIER

Way of the Pirate

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A young child licks absently on her lollipop as she looks out at the beautiful colors of the Greater Morass observable on account of the specially treated microgranular glass. Its cloudy wisps of red, purple and blue reach off toward the starry darkness, as if presiding over emptiness. In the distance she watches what looks like a distant pale blue comet move slowly across the nebula.

"Momma!" The young girl shouts delightedly as she looks over her shoulder at her mother. Her black curls dangle over milky brown skin. Her dark eyes gleam with joy. "There's a comet! It's so pretty."

"That's nice, honey." Her mother says without moving her eyes from the digital book she's reading. It's a page turning thriller about a Yazirian Star Law Ranger on the trail of a Dralasite serial killer. Then it suddenly hits her. They are not close enough to the sun for a comet's coma to appear. She looks up, her eyes wide in awareness. "Molly! Get away from the window!"

But as she finishes her sentence, Molly looks back in surprise at her mother's sudden declaration, the comet's speed suddenly betrays itself as it streams upward in the window behind Molly towards the path of the spaceliner. The ship rocks violently as the comet strikes the hull somewhere up on a higher level to the sound of punctured and wrenching metal. The whole ship's hull groans in complaint as Molly bounces high up against the window and topples to the floor. People grasp desperately to the nearest steady object or their carry-ons. The latter are thrashed about violently.

Feminine screams go up as panic grips the passengers. A bustling of movement and shouts and Vrusk clicks for assistance go up as many begin tending to injured passengers. Some sit crying and others nurse their minor wounds. Children's cries rise above the throng. Molly cries for her mommy, who quickly crawls over to her daughter, pulling her into her arms.

Suddenly, the windy, high-pitched sound of an automatic gyrojet pistol pulses through the air, mini-rockets bouncing off the vaulted ceiling that is the next floor.

"Nobody move!" The vicious shout comes from the window on the opposite side of the level from the elevator. In the distance, on the other side of the elevator, another can be heard doing something similar. They were apparently already on-board and waiting for the opportune time. It was clear that it was no comet, but an escape ship that followed a signal until it met its source, tearing a whole in the hull. Such ships are designed to punch a large hole in a hull and then fill the spaces created with a quick-expanding foam, joining the escape craft to the hull. When the surgical maneuver is done, its future crew will make their way to the vessel and launch it into the darkness, leaving behind the base.

Molly looks on from her mother's arms with wide, wet eyes as she watches the man gather jewelry from the passengers. Another, a Yazirian, moves about the passengers with a device, pointing to those loaded with valuables she detects. Molly hears her mother whisper a single shaky word:

"Pirates."

PIRATES IN THE FRONTIER

Author's Note: These pirating rules are merely a guideline from which you may take with you what you like, and are strictly story related. Some are unplayable in game as nothing more than story elements, while others are at the discretion of the Referee to require of the players or not. As usual in Star Frontiers, balance should be monitored by the Referee. Be sure to let me know about any issues or comments you have. Much of this information also applies to biker gangs, a.k.a. "land pirates", though on a smaller scale.

"With the spread of civilization comes danger. Pirates inhabit many of the abandoned asteroids and barren planets. Their swift ships ambush the plump targets on major trade routes, and the pirates have no mercy for the innocent victims caught in their ruthless assaults.

"The United Planetary Federation Space Fleet, created to drive out the Sathar, fights to keep order in the space lanes. Pirates and outlaws have learned to fear the deadly effectiveness of the space fleet and the Star Law Rangers. Even so, a few ruthless bands have grown so powerful that they operate as independent nations, and

have even attacked UPF Space Fleet ships.“ So says the Knight Hawks Campaign Book introduction.

From the moment that space travel became commonplace in the Frontier, space pirates took root. It was because of space pirates and corporate wars that the Sathar almost succeeded in dominating the Frontier in the days before the U.P.F. and Star Law. The header “Pirates in the Frontier” in the “Referee’s Background and Campaign Material” section of the *Knight Hawks*™ Campaign Book, p.52, states: “Pirates represent a major threat to the trade routes connecting the planets of the Frontier. Pirate ships are crewed by members of all four races, and every inhabited star system has suffered from their scourge at one time or another.”

Clearly, pirates are a major part of the Star Frontiers setting. Their language and habits seem well documented in the Volturnus modules. These indicate a very classical style of pirate of which we can learn more about through traditional pirate lore with some accommodations for the future and space travel.

IT'S A PIRATE'S LIFE

A person doesn't become a pirate to get rich. In fact, being a pirate is not something anyone should choose willingly. Pirates are desperate. A person becomes a pirate usually because they have nowhere else to turn. Outcasts, beggars, and dangerous criminals turn to piracy for survival. Some might become a pirate for a misguided noble reason, such as to find a kidnapped sister and get revenge on those who took her. But there is little hope for the survival of pirates. They live hard and die unenviable deaths, whether slowly starving or suffocating aboard a craft out of fuel in uncharted space, or contracting some strange plague for lack of proper medical care, or

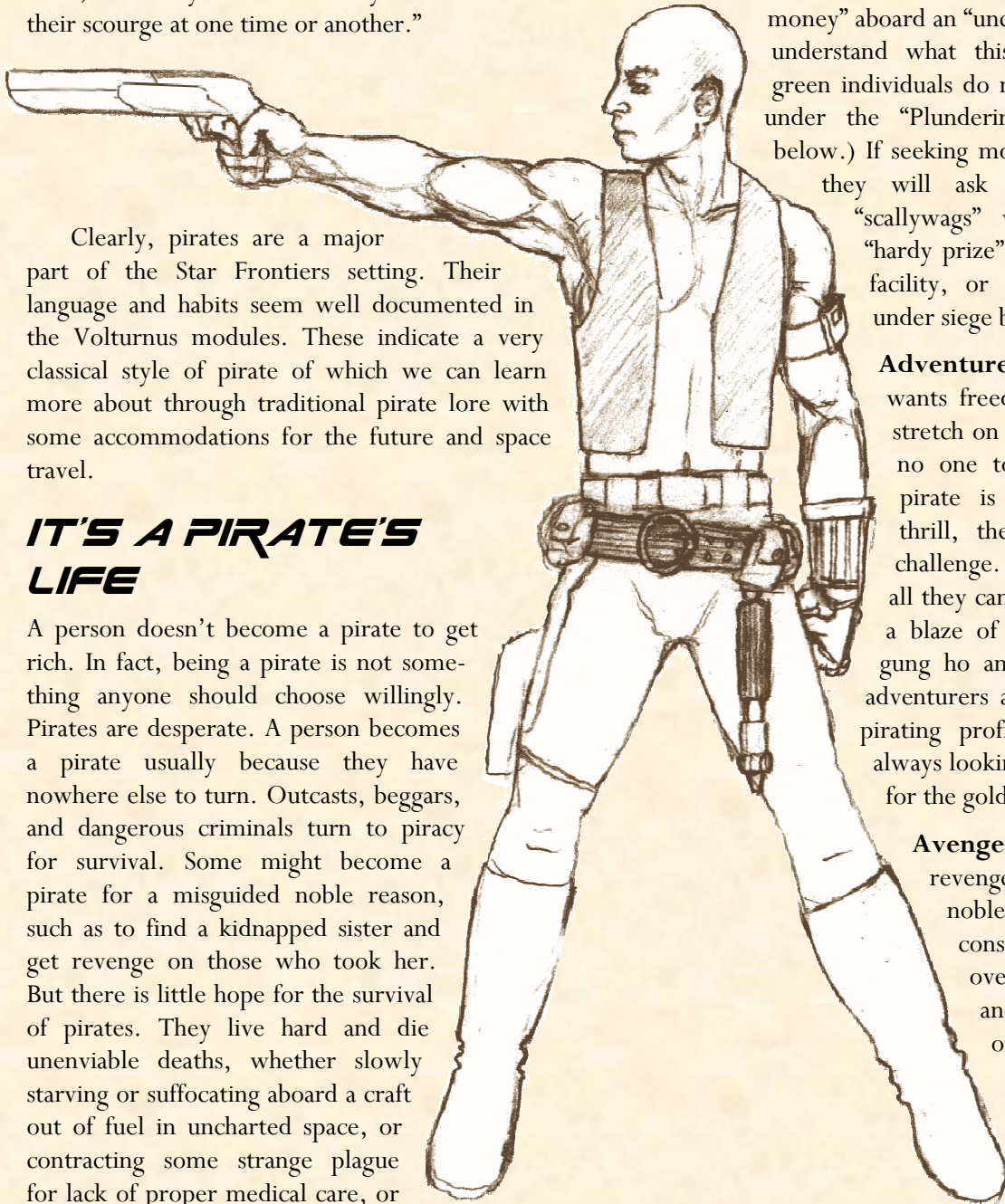
being severely punished for any number of infractions by the law or their fellow pirates, or being killed in a violent raid.

Pirating Backgrounds

Pirate crew are in short supply, so pirate captains tend to accept just about anyone who seeks to become a pirate as long as the Captain has room applicant can be a productive member of the crew, can pass an ident check to make sure they aren't government spies or saboteurs, and as long as the Captain has room. They often find these individuals by going to a port bar and calling for those “down on their luck” or “hard up” looking for “easy money” aboard an “unclaimed freighter”. Some understand what this implies, while more green individuals do not. (See “Pressganging” under the “Plundering the Booty heading below.) If seeking more experienced pirates, they will ask more specifically for “scallywags” with a promise of a “hardy prize”. (A “prize” is any ship, facility, or colony marked for or under siege by pirates.)

Adventurer. The adventurer wants freedom, a new horizon to stretch on to, new challenges, and no one to tell them “no”. This pirate is looking for the next thrill, the next duel, the next challenge. This one wants to take all they can from life and go out in a blaze of glory. Often the most gung ho and the most dangerous, adventurers are the ones who make pirating profitable, because they're always looking for the next take, not for the gold, but for the adrenaline.

Avenger. Contrary to the tales, revenge is neither sweet nor noble. It's ugly and all consuming. Obsession has overtaken the person's life and they are guided by no other thought than destroying the killer of the one they loved. Whether this pirate is looking for another pirate or using piracy



to strike back at an unforgiving government, the avenger's tale is both tragic and vile. There is nothing noble about this pirate. They will stop at nothing until their tale of vengeance is complete, whatever the outcome.

Drunkard. It's a pitiful soul that's so accustomed to the drink that he can't find it within himself to stay away from it long enough to keep a job. Whatever haunts this poor sap that he can't face it sober must be tragic indeed. Let no one ask. He may not be able to stay as steady as most, but he'll keep workin' as long as he can stay drunk while doin' it.

Ex-federal. When a person is tossed out of the military, they have no place to go but down. No one wants a military reject, especially not one who was unceremoniously tossed on his rear for the reason this pirate was. With no prospects and knowing only starships, this ex-fed, perhaps even ex-Star Law, is forced to take up on the other side of the law.

Glory seeker. Akin to the adventurer, the glory seeker wants to make a name for their self as a feared pirate. These are the ones who most frequently become captains or die trying. It's their own name they want to hear posted on the subspace wire. They want people to cower at the name of the fearsome and great pirate. Unfortunately for them, the stupid ones often die young in their own vainglory. The smart ones have many friends and loyal compatriots who have their back and share the glory where convenient, but never at the expense of this pirate's own glory.

Has been. "Washed up." That's what they say. This person was at the top of their game until they got tripped up and came toppling down. The person just got too old, they said. So they forced them into retirement to let the younger crowd have a crack. But this one couldn't let it go. They weren't going to go home and hang it up. This one needs to show that they are as strong and capable as ever. But no one wants to hire someone that old when they can hire someone with more vitality and fresh ideas. This pirate will show them all that he's still got plenty of miles left in him.

Imbecile. This poor wretch was born into the world with half a brain, or perhaps became such through some accident; that is to say, mentally handicapped. They have been led around all their life for their survival, and one day a pirate took the imbecile under their wing, and now the poor soul relies upon the pirate life and doing all that's asked of them, even murder, to please those to whom they are indebted. A nice character who has been

forced into the life may find that the imbecile quickly takes to them for their kind behavior, while the rest of the crew may tend to take the imbecile for granted if not downright cruel to this hapless victim of fate.

On the lamb. Whether truly a murderer, accidental killer, or framed, this pirate turned to the life to escape the long arm of the law. They have no choice but to join up with a murderous gang to protect the runner against prosecution. If innocent, this pirate is not particularly dangerous and does little to harm others in the course of their duties and may even be a means of keeping the other pirates from getting too far out of control.

Outcast noble. This noble individual may be hard to call a pirate in the strictest sense at first. The pirate was once a noble or politician of some distinction before circumstances or their own folly caught up with them. As a result, they had little more choice than to pull the trigger or disappear. These individuals often become Captains, as their learning and stature commands respect among a group of ne'er-do-wells. The noble knows how to speak, how to command, and how to garner respect from anyone and everyone, even if they at one time despised the type.

Pirate's bargain. The captain has made a deal, such as securing escape from imprisonment, for helping the person. The person's affiliation with the pirates is often discovered by authorities and they forever become bound to the pirate they made the bargain with in exchange for protection. Often times, it is the pirate captain their self that made the authorities aware of the new crewman's status in order to bind the individual to them forever.

Pressganged. Theirs is a truly tragic story. This pirate had no choice. They had to either join the crew or die. Once they committed their first act of piracy, it was made sure that they could never return to civilian life. Their good name and reputation forever destroyed by a ruthless captain and crew. Thoughts of revenge may fester, but the pirate will never be able to get back their old life. Considering that the pirate was unwilling to die to save their good name, they probably won't be willing to die for any other reason. Every day is a fight for survival to squeeze out one more moment of life. So they don't fight unless their life depends on it, and their life depends on their participating in every single raid. To do so, this ghost of a soul must be a vanguard pirate in the raids to prove their right to live among the crew.

Romanticist. This pirate came into the pirate's life with a romanticized image of pirates only to be disillusioned.

sioned by the reality. All the same, the die was cast and their lot was all in. Never can they find a new dream; they must make the best of this one. In so doing, they will try to make their image of pirates a reality. Like the glory seeker, this one will make many friends and be more fare-minded than any other pirate. Unfortunately, they tend not to be ambitious enough to make for good pirate captains, as they have a tendency to give up gold to fulfill their romanticized vision. If romanticism develops into glory seeking, however, they may indeed make a good pirate captain.

Ruffian. A pirate's background is typically quite colorful and usually involves a life of theft and murder. The ruffian has turned to piracy to satiate their bloodlust and villainy. The most dangerous of them all, the ruffian pirate will open a fault in a pirate's neck as much as a harmless innocent if the victim so much as looks at them the wrong way. Of all the pirates, though, the ruffian's life is the shortest, as no one suffers a tyrant forever.

Searcher. This pirate has a mystery to solve. They are looking for something, someplace, or someone that has disappeared with little to no clue where the subject of their search has gone. So they join a pirate crew, the best means of traveling the galaxy and catching bits of information and rumors on where their search subject has gone to. Pirate Captains tend to tolerate the searcher as long as it keeps the searcher with them and they may even take the searcher where they want to go as long as they feel reasonably sure the searcher won't try to leave the crew once they find what they're looking for and that the search may turn up some profit. The searcher often tries to make their search as profitable as possible for the Captain so that the Captain will oblige them. Searchers often take up the role of the information gatherer for cargo manifests and other shipping information to find plump targets under the radar.

Secret passenger. Sometimes desperate people who are unable to acquire trustworthy means of smuggling themselves off-world will pay a pirate captain to transport them to a specific destination with payment and promise of a prize they have knowledge of. These passengers will be disguised as members of the crew and will even participate as pirates until they have been delivered to their destination. This, unfortunately, does not always work according to plan. The desperate passenger may find their self pressganged permanently in the face of a darker alternative.

Son of a pirate. Piracy is considered to be in the blood. Indeed, the children of pirates are considered near as guilty as their pirate parent. Anyone known to be the son of a pirate is marked for life as such and may find employment difficult. As such, they eventually turn to the occupation of the parent to make a living.

Star-lovin' spacer. For whatever reason, this pirate was unable to secure a position aboard any space vessel, so turned to piracy to be near the stars that the individual has loved since birth. This character spends all the time they can either looking out at the stars or navigating a starship. To them there is no greater joy in the universe.

Troglodyte. Not everyone can be born beautiful. In fact, homeliness has nothing on this pirate. A face to make even the most loving mother take a swan dive from the nearest window. Even the plastic surgeon paid their clerk a bonus to hand the poor soul a discount for a full cyborg body replacement procedure for a surgeon on the other side of the planet. With a face like that, no one would hire them. But an ugly mug fits right in among a motley crew.

Unschool. This pirate grew up poor on a border world without a proper education. They spent every day of their youth trying to eek out a living. When they were unable to make their way as adults, they hopped the nearest freighter and took to piracy to survive, as no one would hire a backward being with no records or education. These often speak with street slang and the heaviest hick accents in their territory. They take to and readily propagate pirate slang while at the same time making a very bad pretense at being educated and may not even be able to spell their own name. Don't call them out for their lack of education or you may end up with a new bloody necktie.

Pirate Madness

Just as physical defects are common among pirates for lack of healthcare, so too are mental defects. However, most pirates with mental illness are either shoved out the nearest airlock (usually the more dangerous ones), or left on the nearest planet with a breathable atmosphere. Those left tend to be the following.

Daft. Also known as the eternal drunkard, this pirate acts drunk all the time, whether he's drunk or not; spirited and mischievous. Perhaps the pirate's brain got sunbaked in a desert or spent a little too long in the hole making friends with rodents. This person hears voices and has conversations with himself, but maintains near

full capacity for communication. These individuals are often surprisingly crafty, as people tend to underestimate the daft person's grasp of what's going on around them.

Gone 'Round the Bend. Many good pirate tales have a mad pirate who speaks nonsense. This pirate has lost their marbles and may even be found on the deck looking for where they rolled to. They haven't a lick of sense left. Their Intuition is effectively "25". Can be seen spouting nonsensical riddles to no one in particular. As long as they continue to be of service to the ship, they will be kept around, but the moment it's determined that a mad pirate has become useless, the poor wretch will be dropped off at the first inhabitable planet or raided prize.

Mad. These pirates are a danger to everyone, and if they don't try to kill anyone that gets near them, then they plot to kill the entire crew in a fire or shipwreck at the first opportunity. They are the definition of "mad", for their tempers are constantly flaring. They've lost all sense of reality and are paranoid in the extreme. These are the ones most often spaced and rightly so.

Walking dead. This character has lost all touch with reality in a way that they pay nobody any mind, but go about their pirating life without enthusiasm and without purpose. Their lifeless, pitiable stares can chill the most hardened soul. Captains know these are usually harmless, so keep them around to keep the crew in line and vigilant.

Pirates Under Interrogation

If a band of adventurers or lawmen manage to capture a pirate, the pirate will only give information to their captors if the pirate believes they are in grave bodily danger. However, the pirates will usually only reveal 1) weapons supplies and 2) locations of other pirates in the vicinity. But a pirate is more than willing to die instead of give up any information about himself or his home.

Underworld Connections

It is said that pirates make the underworld go round. Pirates have established many secret trade routes that criminals, smugglers, and refugees travel to conduct business and escape governments for a steep fee. Some corporations even pay for safe passage for their diplomats

or sensitive cargo under certain circumstances. But beyond these simple connections, pirates maintain many other connections to the underworld, whether they are aware of them or not.

The Syndicate Connection

The crime syndicates control the black market, thus no one sells on the black market without crime syndicate connections. Not unless they want to be fitted with duracrete boots for a long dive. Sometimes pirates, particularly those controlling a colonial government, hire the crime syndicate to handle their business needs. Independent pirates, though, must deal with local crime syndicates to sell their goods. However, many of these syndicates employ pirates to perform raiding for them for a cut. In any case, both sides maintain an eternal struggle for maximizing gains, leading to the occasional double-cross. Thus, a good pirate captain is always thinking three moves ahead.

"Sompin's no' right abou' 'im. 'E jus' as soon chew on yer liver as share yer bread. E's a bleedin' zombie, 'e is!" —Nerberg, a pirate deck hand about "Ghoul" Kladik.

The Sathar Connection

Many of the tactics of pirates proves to be of advantage to the Sathar. Sathar spies in fact often help facilitate the flow of shipping information to pirates to encourage them to further activity, and even specific activity that can benefit the Sathar

horde. While pirates are rarely, if ever, aware of this, they prefer not to speculate on whether they are being used. There is even a rumor that one pirate crew has even been found fighting alongside the Sathar. It has been speculated that whole pirate crews have been compromised by Sathar hypnosis, due to their long periods in deep space and exposure to Sathar attack.

The UPF Connection

Whatever the case, pirates generally avoid conflict with Sathar ships and will only join in a firefight against the Sathar if granted the promise of pardon and a share of any booty recovered, which of course, any request for Sathar treasure is a moot point; what they really want is any of the Frontier ships that have been scuttled along with all the dead and their things as a result of the battle. This request is typically granted with caveats.

The Privateering Connection

Corporations offer full pardons by means of a “marque of reprisal” for pirates who plunder in behalf of the corporation. These agreements are usually come to against the pirates’ will. Those who plunder in behalf of a corporation are known as “privateers”. Privateers can also be private business men and property owners who enter the agreement voluntarily to earn extra cash or to participate in a cause they believe in. Sometimes these privateers turn to piracy after their agreement with the corporation has been dissolved.

PIRATE ORGANIZATION

You may think of pirates as a group of adventurers without any central organization who answer to no one and live by chaos in total freedom, but the reality is very different. The fact is that pirates do have organization and pirates fulfilling specific roles. They also have a democratic system, articles of incorporation, and adherence to a pirate’s creed.

Pirate Roles

Pirates may appear unruly in a raid, but they are actually quite organized. Below are descriptions of the common roles among pirates, and beneath each description are sample pirates updated from the Crash on Voltarnus adventure module that a Referee may cut and paste into a campaign.

All crew members act as raiders. They are distinguished only by seniority. These include engineers, gunners, pilots, astrogators, demolitions experts, healers, and even cooks. They act in whatever capacity they are ordered to by the Captain. They are not expected to keep up their hygiene, but they are all expected to keep the ship or camp clean, orderly and running smoothly.

Pirate Lord. A pirate captain who controls all pirating activity in a solar system or region of space, most notably having other captains under his command. Equivalent to a Commador.

Captain. Captains make the plans and take part in flying the ship. They expect their orders to be followed to the letter and live like kings. They are seen as the one responsible for the entire crew’s wellbeing, thus earning the respect and the ire of the crew. When things are good, the Captain is praised, and when things are bad, the Captain may find himself voted out of office ... and/or pushed out the nearest airlock.

First mate. This is the ship’s astrogator, responsible not just for helming the ship, but backing the Captain’s decisions and advising the Captain. It’s usually the first mate that passes orders to the quartermaster, but is also expected to assist the quartermaster in keeping the crew in line and acquire occasional information to make sure the quartermaster is not making any secret plans (usually by sharing special treats with a raider or two).

Quartermaster. In charge of conscripting new labor and keeping the crew in line, but also carries out the crew’s wishes regarding the Captain, and oversees the choosing of a new Captain. They usually lead the raids. They are the man the Captain trusts to fulfill his word to the letter. Though given leave to make suggestions, the quartermaster is generally treated as any raider in public by the Captain and First Mate in order to maintain trust between the quartermaster and the crew, but the quartermaster is also privy to the Captain’s personal confidences and has private meetings with the Captain to report on the general feelings and welfare of the crew and what can be done to maintain or improve crew morale. The quartermaster represents the crew to the Captain.

Gunners. The pirate gunners don’t just man the cannons. They are expected to be the weapons experts.

Pilots. Pilots, of course, fly the pirate space vessels. They may also be called upon to man ground vehicles and perform vehicle maintenance.

Weigh-men. They weigh-men look after the cargo and estimate its value.

Engineers. Pirate engineers don’t just fix the ship and maintain its engines, but they also perform mechanical maintenance and ingenuity of all kinds.

Shift cooks. Even pirates need to eat. The cook is teased, harassed, and jibed, but is always a beloved member, because they fill the crews’ bellies. When the pirates return from their raids, they are very hungry and expect their food to be fixed promptly.

Healer. The medic(s) aboard, though given no voice in the affairs of the ship, are usually treated with as much respect as the first mate on account of their specialized skills and because they usually aren’t pirates themselves, but are forcefully conscripted for their skills, and it would not be smart to harass the person treating your wounds. Healers are not expected to fight. The Captain may even turn to the healer for advice in dealing with their crew or in dealing with a particular problem, as the

healer is educated and likely better equipped on a social level.

Deck Hands. These are the front line men in a raid on a ship or settlement. They keep the ship clean and tidy (or as clean as the Captain wants it), and serve the tea. They aren't typically reliable for much more except the fighting. Deck hands are the most often to be punished because they have too much time on their hands and end up with ideas in their heads. The most useful deck hands get promoted into other positions when a vacancy opens up. But some deck hands are happy right where they are.

Voting

Pirates vote in their captains by very democratic means. One or more crew members put their names up for consideration, or the crew chooses from those they put up for consideration. They then throw the name of their chosen candidate into a spacesuit helmet and the votes are tallied by the quartermaster.

Articles of Incorporation

The articles of incorporation are the ship's procedures and are decided upon by consensus of the crew. Most are authored by a captain and each article is read to the crew and voted on. Though these are rarely understood by the majority and are often revisited when a problem with their application or interpretation arises.

The Pirate's Creed

A ship without operating rules is a ship sailing for destruction. Thus there is a loose pirate's creed. Below are common rules found on pirate ships, and the reasons for them. This creed is taken quite seriously aboard a pirate ship.

Ship, Captain, Crew, and Treasure

This is the order of your allegiance. Treasure is last, because your mates can help you get more, but if you betray your mates, you have no one to help you carry the treasure and the Captain will push you out of the nearest airlock as a traitor. The Captain means the survival of you and the crew, so he must be honored. All your decisions must be for the greater good of the ship and secondarily for the Captain, and thirdly for the crew. Fuel and working engines are not treasure, but are the life of the ship and everyone on it. As long as you take care of the ship, the ship will take care of you.

Your Life for the Ship

When it comes down to it, your life is expendable, but the ship is not. If you are called on to give your life for the ship, you are to consider it your honor and know that your courage will be recounted even beyond the lives of your mates. You die for glory and honor and eternal treasure.

Kill Only Blighters

Anyone not deserving of death must be spared, lest you bring the full weight of the UPF upon the ship. While not a rule of all pirate crews, it is important to remember that every death has an impact upon how intensely your ship is hounded by the authorities.

Honor the Fallen

Don't speak ill of the dead. Life confined to such a small community is prime ground for a Captain to spread superstition. The foremost superstition being that to speak ill of the dead will bring misfortune to the ship, and will call the Jagged Prince, demon Captain of the Vulgar Wake from the ethereal realms to claim the ship in defense of the dead man's honor. The only way to appease the Jagged Prince is to sacrifice the one who speaks ill of the dead. Even if a pirate doesn't believe the legend, they still see it as a serious mistake to do so, as they are likely to be sacrificed for the dishonor. Though playful and honorific titles such as "scoundrel", or "bastard" or other terms are not considered dishonoring if used in an affectionate tone.

Take Only What You Can Carry

This means to take a reasonable load of treasure that won't impede yours or your crew's escape. The goal is to acquire the booty and leave as quickly as possible.

Leave Them Limping

Some pirate captains require very specific treatment of raided prizes. Their rule is to take everything except what the target ship needs to make it to port. No one should be made to suffer a slow death. But as long as the target ship has a reasonable means of getting assistance, take all you want except their power or their beacon and even leave a beacon if necessary.

Mind Your Own Treasure

Distribution occurs at the Captain's good pleasure. Jealousy at another mate's treasure will not be tolerated. The Captain has given you the share of which he feels

you deserve. If you wish to deserve more, then be a better pirate. Theft of another pirate's treasure aboard ship is considered a mutinous act. And don't blame others if any of your treasure comes up short. It's your own fault for not taking care of it more closely. It is only who you catch red handed that matters.

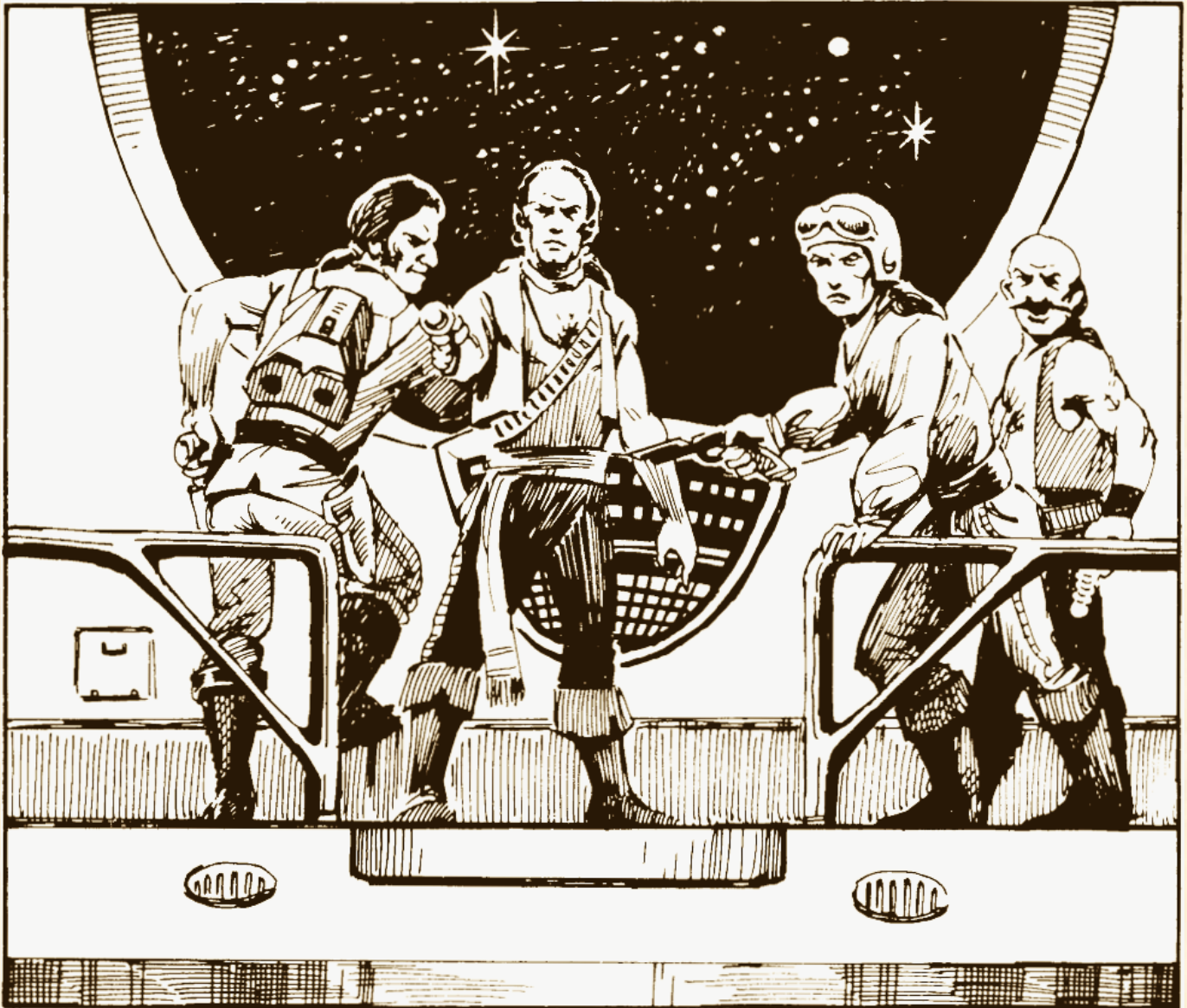
Do What You are Told

Disobedience and disorderly conduct, an unkempt ship, and general anarchy are not tolerated. You are to do your assigned tasks and do what you are told. If someone of equal lower rank and seniority tells you that someone of higher rank or seniority wants you to do something, you do it. If they were lying, they will hold an accounting for mutinous conduct.

PIRATE ACTIVITIES

Wherever there are spoils to be had, pirates will figure out ways to acquire them, and whatever illegal activity takes place between the stars, pirates take part in them. If they don't take part in a particular illegal activity, then others pay the pirates to allow them to carry through with their illicit activities without being accosted. Below are the many of the approaches they use to get what they want.

Ammunition Runs. Private arms dealers and diverted cargo are the most common sources for pirate weapons. WarTech, Inc. weapons seem to be the most easily acquired by pirates for reason that have yet to be proven by the authorities. However, pirates also acquire ammunition through theft and raids. Pirates sometimes acquire their ammunition from ammunition depots, usually at



large colonies or small military bases. They don't generally attack the weapons manufacturers directly, as they are often guarded by mercenary corporations. The pirates will attempt to sneak into the facility, perhaps dressed as employees or military personnel, and pre-load the ammunition on palettes. They then put up a smoke-screen and blow some ammunition to hide their escape and to occupy the facility's workers, who are usually instructed to escape instead of fighting the fire. The pirates often leave behind barrels of sugar or specific chemicals to make the fires burn hotter and longer as well as produce repeated explosions as if there is more ammunition in the fire than there really is, allowing the pirates to make their escape long before the rouse is discovered.

Colony raiding. With an armed freighter or a couple of assault scouts, pirates will often lay down a suppressing fire upon a colony while the pirate crew pillage the town. Substantial loot can be acquired from a prosperous young colony. This is a frequent tactic used for freeing their pirate brethren from a prison. They don't just free their comrades, however; the raid must be made worth the risk and effort.

Drug Running. Pirates will make credits any way they can; illicit drugs are no exception. Pirate connections and secret star routes make ideal drug running operations. In fact, this is also the means by which they help refugees and fugitives make their ways to other planets for a demanding price. They may even employ smugglers to assist in getting the cargo at least to a safe transfer point or to pick up cargo. There are many, many drugs shipped in the Frontier, particularly potent and exotic drugs.

Ship raiding. The most common prize of pirates is a lone freighter or spaceliner. They generally prefer cargo-laden targets. They will disable the prize's drives and maneuvering thrusters and then board, though they have been known to use a variety of other tactics for raiding ships. The pirates will then proceed to methodically round up all the valuable cargo and sometimes even healthy passengers and crew of the prize who can be used or sold for slave labor or pressganged. In many cases this may be considered a mercy compared to the fate of those left behind, as they have only the faint hope that their beacon will be answered before their food or life support runs out, though some pirates simply execute those left behind as another mercy or simply to eliminate the witnesses.

Hijacking. Though requiring substantial planning and resources, pirates will occasionally hijack a commercial or military starship for their own use. Characters attempting this will often meet with much resistance from the ship's crew, port authorities, and Star Law in their escape. Passenger liners are not a particularly attractive target for hijacking as they draw too much attention from authorities and are near worthless for pirating purposes or resale. Since military targets are so difficult, cargo freighters thus tend to be the most frequent victims of hijacking, and pirates can make a hefty profit from hijacked freighters and cargo. This is a common means by which pirate captains can get their starts.

Mine raiding. A mining operation, particularly a new one, or a consistently yielding mine are tempting targets for pirates and privateers. The raiders will often press the advantage with a frigate or two assault scouts and then load the processed product. Other times they may acquire themselves a mining ship or simply digger shuttles and undertake squatting operations on a vein of ore or oil owned by a corporation or private business. They employ slaves acquired from ship and colony raids to operate the heavy machinery and work in the holes. They may even take the effort to scout out a location under the radar using every geological skill at their disposal.

Ransom. Instead of enslaving the more famous or rich victims in their raids, pirates will often hold the person for a substantial ransom or other demand, such as prisoner trade. Some pirates choose not to hold slaves indefinitely and only enslave them for a time and either sell them or return them to their families for whatever they think they can expect from the families.

Slave Trade. Pirates are particularly common source of slave trading. Not only do pirates acquire slaves from raids, they will also perform slave rounding operations in a large port where a lot of people are found in transit, especially attractive young women and even men who will catch a hefty price on the black market (Though you will not find these working among the general slave population).

Pirate Tactics

Pirates utilize any tactic that can give them an advantage, but the most common tactics follow. A pirate wouldn't be a good one if he didn't do these:

Blackout. Just before a raid, the pirates will activate a white noise broadcaster, causing a communications blackout. The white noise broadcaster remains in effect

until the pirates have left the area. The white noise affects all communications of every type, audio, video, subspace, and radio.

Blitz. Pirates work against a clock from beginning to end. Like bankrobbers, they will move in as quickly as possible in order to give victims very little chance to respond or to make plans.

Crippling. When pirates raid a ship or compound, they will set charges in the engines and on any cannons and weapon consoles. They will also destroy the weapons locker after taking any weapons they can use. They will not harm nor jettison the escape pods. Nor will they disable the emergency beacon unless they intend there to be no survivors. If no survivors is their goal, they will usually blow the ship to pieces when they leave.

Holding hostage. If pirates meet with overwhelming resistance, they will often hold people hostage. This is a last ditch effort to get cooperation and make their escape. However, this usually ends in several pirate deaths as their comrades make their escape.

Securing. Pirates will be spread throughout a location to guard cargo bays, docks, airlocks, and the command area (such as a bridge). They will also round up the passengers and guard them. Mistreating the passengers is not usually discouraged.

Terrorizing. Pirates use shock and awe coupled with terror tactics to discourage heroism. They may beat or even kill certain passengers to make their point. (Though some more honorable pirates may only pretend to kill someone.)

ACQUIRING SHIPPING INTEL

The actual taking of a ship is only half of what you need to do. You must first find the right ship with good cargo, and that requires information. A common pirate phrase is: "Any prize could be your last." Underestimating your prize's defensive capabilities and firepower, or falling prey to a decoy, could mean death to a pirate crew. Thus, knowledge isn't just power, it's survival. So a pirate needs all the information they can get on a ship, including cargo, departure time, destination, projected ETA, escorts, defenses, firepower, and federal interest in the ship. This information can be gain in various ways.

Shipping Schedules

This, of course, is the easiest information to acquire. All that needs to be done to get it, is to ask for it.

Bribing Porters

Porters are the people who take your tickets and direct you where you need to go. A porter whose hand has been properly lubed can tell you who and what type of cargo is being carried and if there is anything sensitive being carried, though may have problems obtaining information on what that sensitive cargo may be.

Inside Information

If you can acquire information from anyone further up the command chain both at the space port and the local authorities, you will be able to receive just about any information you ask for. However, such inside contacts must be cultivated. You don't simply have them and expect the Referee to give you all you ask for unless you have cultivated specific contacts.

Information Brokers

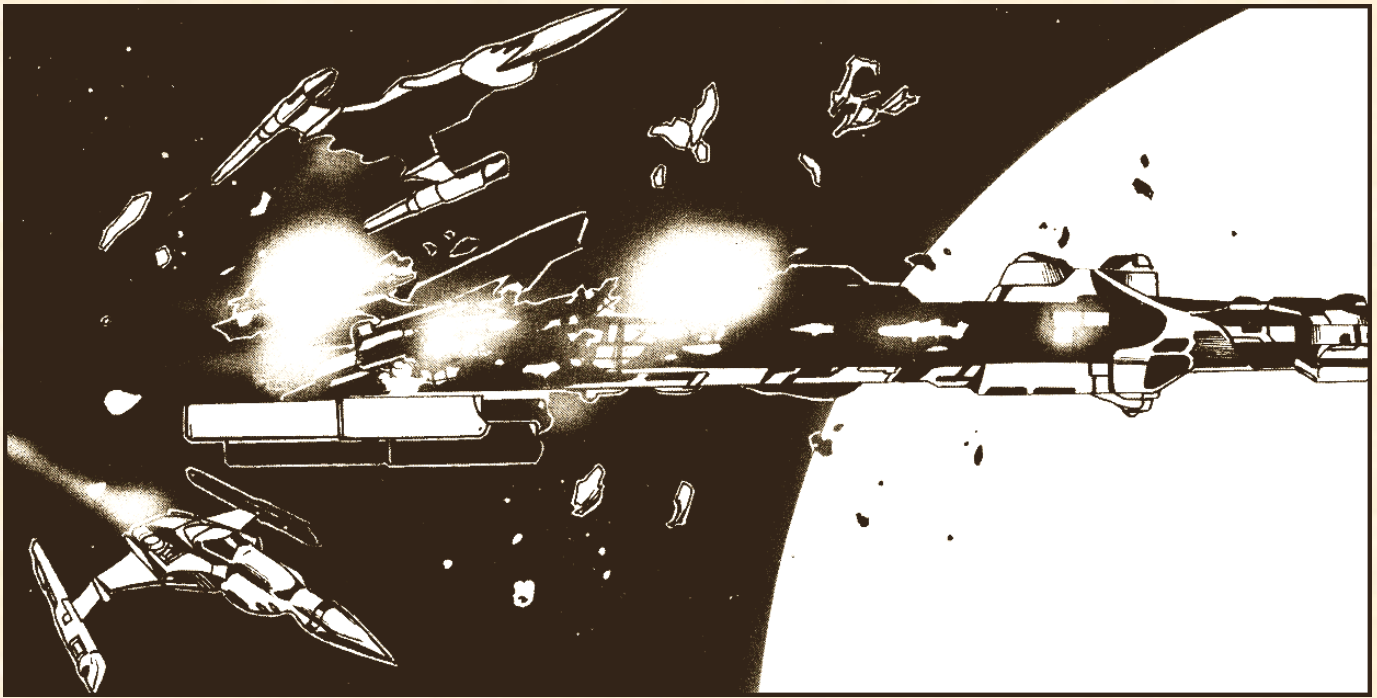
Information brokers do all the hunting for information for you. They know the ins and outs of just about any operation. If you need it and it can be had, they will have it. However, the information is not always 100% accurate, but it is rarely so inaccurate as to cost severe damages.

Hacking

Not as easy as paying people off, but having a good hacker aboard can save the crew a lot of cash.

PLUNDERING THE BOOTY

Few—if any—raids end up in a wealth of raw credits, so it is necessary to seek revenue through more practical acquisitions. The Business Ventures section in the Knight Hawks Campaign Book, pp.43-47 (Remastered!, pp.85-90) provide many clues about how pirates can profit from stolen cargo, salvage, mining, and trade. The article "Buying and Selling" in issue #6 has cost adjustment recommendations, including black market trade, though costs may be adjusted down by half for supplier-side criminal trade. Below are the many ways that pirates profit and benefit from their activities.



Trading Stolen Goods

Once the pirates have acquiring the valuables from the ship they raided, they have to turn around and sell them in order to make any credits. For this reason, they keep a number of black market buyers on their routes to keep the credits flowing.

Resupply and Expansion

Pirates can't exactly walk up to their local supplier and ask for what they need. They usually have to take it, so they acquire what they need from the ships they raid. So they take their needs into consideration when choosing the colonies or ships they wish to raid.

Slaves

There are usually a small number of slaves kept on board for filling any of the needs of the ship, camp, or crew, and always at least one to serve the Captain alone. Slaves do not take part in raids, as they are typically demoralized and in search of escape. But neither are they let free during raids. They are usually locked in their cells when they sleep and during raids. They will even acquire slaves strictly for resale on the black market.

Pressganging

This can be done one of two ways: 1) by kidnapping people from a port of call, or 2) by taking them from towns and ships they raid. The forced or misinformed conscripts are made to understand that their "voluntary"

cooperation in the smooth operation of the crew is in their best interest. After their first raid, they are then reminded that they are now officially pirates. This is sometimes done by making sure there are people left behind on that raid who know the conscript's name and face or the captain may send a message to the authorities as to the person's activities.

Distribution

Most such spoils distributed according to the needs of the ship and then according to position.

NATURAL ENEMIES

Due to their undesirable nature, pirates have a number of enemies, some corporate, but most legal. The law despises the disorder pirates bring. 'Suppose they're not so keen on a fun-lovin' bunch such as us, says I.

Bounty hunters. Kindred treasure seekers, the lot of 'em, but crafty. They'll enter into your crew like they's one of 'em and then sidle up to you all friendly like, and before you know it, you're snapped up tighter than a rat in a trap with the first dust-up at a civilized port. So beware and know who yer friends are.

Star Law Rangers. These capable wits have proven a real thorn in our sides ever since they were loosed from their cursed cages. Its got so that you can't tell a star from an assault scout anymore. The skies are closin' in, they be. Thank the merciful heavens that rocks be more plentiful than steel. Of course, if not for them we

wouldn't have these wonderful assault scouts we occasionally capture ourselves when they unwittingly fall into a den of pirate Corvettes. Ah, we not short on our own sharp wit, says I.

Patrols and escorts. Easy enough to dodge and to fool their sensors from a distance, but careful not to get too close. It's hard and dangerous to take a ship with fast maneuvering escorts or rocks with these kind' patrols.

The East Indiaman Freight Corporation. A right crafty bunch that likes to sniggle fer pirates. They even lease their special talents out to other comp'nies to rid them of their scurvy pests. But little do those comp'nies know that many of those plaguin' 'em be in the employ of EIFC themselves. It be plenty easy to call off yer own ships.

PUNISHMENT

Even pirates recognize the need for appropriate discipline and even a form of justice. Pirates can be both creative and cruel in their punishments. They are not bound by laws on criminal rights. Punishments varying in severity, are as follows:

Extra duties. This is one form of light punishment, usually for such minor offenses as speaking out of turn or making a minor mistake.

Half rations. This is usually a prolonged punishment, lasting anywhere between a week and two months, reserved for those who consume more than their allotted share of food and drink or who have angered the Captain so as to cause him to add this punishment to extra duties.

Lashing. The crew member must take 5 lashes from a sonic whip. This is often the fate of insubordinates, thieves caught red-handed, pirates who fail to maintain their post or their duties, or for anyone whose mistake cost the life of another pirate. Drunkards often fall prey to this punishment to remind them to keep enough of their senses to fulfill their duties.

Hand lopping. This is the fate of anyone who steals from the Captain.

Final Voyage. The person is put into an escape pod and launched wherever they happen to be, which is usually deep space far from a space lane.

Scuttled. Left on the nearest planet with a breathable atmosphere to fend for themselves.

Jettisoned. Launch the offender in a torpedo towards the horizon of the nearest planet with a subspace communicator. If the person survives, they can contact the ship to retrieve them and they can rejoin the crew with what is considered divine reprieve.

Long walk, a.k.a, "spaced". Shoving out the air lock either with or without a VAC suit.

Hole. The person is shoved into a shipping crate without light and only half rations for a period set by the Captain. Usually 3-6 days.

Curse of the black mark. When it is unknown who a traitor, thief, or killer is and there is seemingly no way of knowing, a black dot is penned in water-soluble ink on a small piece of paper. Then each member must take the paper and crumple it in one hand with the dot facing the palm. If the black mark remains in their hand, because their hand is sweating, then they are believed to be the traitor. Those with chronically sweaty hands should hope this is the one day that their hands are dry as a bone.

Imprisonment. If an offense just requires a long time of cooling their heels, some offenders may be kept in a cell for a set period of time, or until the Captain feels they have paid their debt or decides he or she needs them. This is also the fate of kidnap victims and slaves.

The glove (Shock Glove). Electrical voltage is a handy demoralizer. The pain and general feeling of helplessness imposed by an electrical shock can be effective for correcting a disruptive crewmember's perceptions and motivations.

PIRATE HIDEOUTS

There is a reason that ships must start and finish jumping outside of a solar system beyond simply the gravity of large planets within the system, and that is asteroids and planetoids surrounding the system. Every system is so cluttered with extra-solar bodies swaddling the entire system in a sphere, that there is no way to jump into the system without a strong likelihood of being ripped apart by either the gravity from a large planetoid or an asteroid itself, that it would be suicide to attempt it. Thus extra-solar bodies are prime territory for pirate hide-outs. And the reason the pirates go without detection so near a system is because there are just too many extra-solar bodies to search. The proverbial needle in a haystack has nothing on a pirate base. There are literally millions of asteroids to search. The time and resources required to con-

duct such a search is beyond even Pan-Galactic's means, thus insuring that cargo for pirate raids is a common investment and quite lucrative for insurance companies, as only a small percentage of cargo actually gets raided by pirates and they will raise their rates for ships that travel through high-risk areas where pirates plunder.

Uninhabited planets and unexplored regions of outlying worlds and moons are common locales for pirate bases. Pirates do not bother to reinforce their bases or expand them on account that they are frequently found by Spacefleet or system militia and must make quick escapes.

Pirate Governments

Some small colonies and border worlds have pirate governments, and because of the UPF Charter, direct action against these worlds is forbidden. So Spacefleet and system militias must be content with random unscheduled boardings and shadowing until they can catch a pirate ship in the act. Outer Reach (Dramune) is an example of just such a pirate-ruled colony. One pirate town, unfortunately recognized with a charter government, is the Star Devil's center of operations on Voltturnus. However, if a ship recognized as belonging to the pirate government is found raiding in another government's territory, this can be construed as an act of war by that government and the UPF may not interfere, nor would they want to, except to help out, which is also forbidden by the Charter. Spacefleet, may, however, perform a police action against the pirates to cease what may be perceived as ongoing activities and ground the pirate fleet.

PIRATE MEDICINE

Unlike the common spacer, pirates do not have healthcare, do not re-grow body parts, and do not retire if severely injured. They must instead keep serving or die of starvation or worse. As a result, they often tend to look like scarred and tortured individuals as they collect injuries from shipboard accidents, ship-to-ship battles, boarding raids, brawls, and severe punishments.

It is an unfortunate fact of pirate life that pirates do not have access to public healthcare due to their fringe life and fugitive status. As a result, pirates rely upon cybernetics designed by a robotics tech or turn to the notoriously unreliable black market geneticists to replace limbs, in which they may receive more than what they bargained for, or else they fall to the traditional outdated prosthetics or even peg legs and weapon-capped nubs. As

a result, pirates are often seen with jury-rigged cybernetics, pincer prosthetics, or grotesque animal or malformed replacement parts.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Besides the many pirating methods described above, here are many ways you can make adventure for pirates or for a party to encounter pirates.

Pirating adventures

Deal Gone Bad. The Captain has arranged for a resupply of weapons and other goods in a deserted area of a colonial or unsettled planet. Those with the goods may have a double-cross planned to keep both the goods and the crew's money, and to feed the worms with the crew's flesh.

Illegal Salvage Mission. Pirates thrive on war and will seek any means to survive. Thus the crew has heard word of a recent battle near Timeon, which means space debris and derelict spacecraft rolling about in space, allowing the pirates to 'pick the flesh from fresh kills' so-to-speak. But the crew was unaware of a ship sent to recover a particular piece of valuable cargo.

Offloading Stolen Cargo. Taking cargo and treasures is one thing, but turning it into credits or usable goods is an unfortunate part of pirating, though not as frequent as the crew would like. The Captain arranges for a sale of goods with a shady character who attempts to weasel the cargo off the pirates at half cost with petty excuses. Unfortunately, the man is not without his own security that has the pirates at a disadvantage.

The Outpost. The pirate crew has been commissioned by the pirate lord to set up an outpost on an unsettled planet for refueling and supplies. The Federation discovers the outpost and sends Star Law officers to take it. The pirates must fend off the attack and evacuate with the supplies. Failure means loss of both the outpost, its supplies, and perhaps their lives.

Retrieval Plan. The crew's last mission went south and now the crew must rescue their Captain and other shipmates from the authorities. A straight on attack is out of the question, so guile and cunning must be used, causing confusion and stealing away with the fugitives.

Pirate Antagonism

Following are a few adventure seeds using pirates as the antagonists.



Hunting the Pirates. The party is entrusted with the task of hunting down a pirate hide-out and rousting the pirates until they are all captured or dead.

Pirates Attempting to Claim a Planet. On the party's way to investigate a planet under orders from a corporation, they discover that pirates have set up shop on and around the planet to claim it as their own. The party must defeat the pirates in order to claim the planet for the corporation.

Shipping Route Plagued. The characters must protect a merchant vessel from attack by pirates on a shipping route that has been plagued by pirates of late.

Missing Family. A benefactor has hired the party to track down his missing relative(s), feared enslaved or killed by pirates. They get paid a certain sum for proof of the family member's demise and twice as much to bring the family member(s) back alive.

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