

ANCIENT TRAILS

SO IT BEGINS

A TWILIGHT SECTOR ADVENTURE

By Filamena Young

TRAVELLER

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A Twilight Sector Adventure

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SPECIAL THANKS

To my husband David, and my girls
Tina and Crimefighter.

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REMNANTS OF THE PAST

INTRODUCTION

This adventure takes place in the VanKilla Kiertotahti system in the Twilight Sector of the Twilight Sector Campaign Setting. It is meant for a Player Character group that either has or is in charge of a ship. Beyond the initial scene where the Players are presented with the job and store the cargo this is a non-linear adventure. Although the layout of this adventure is linear the encounters can be employed by the Game Master in any order.

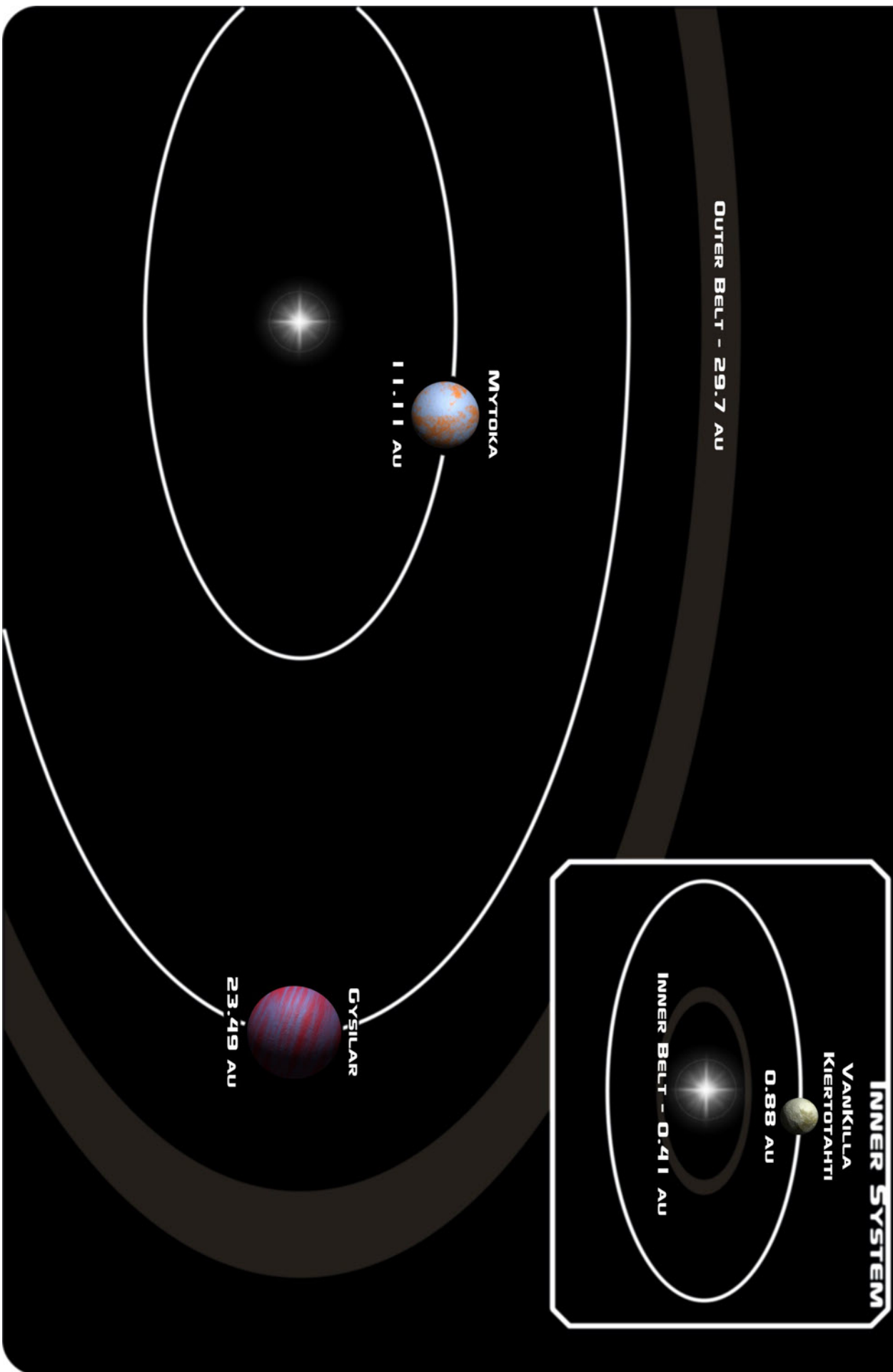
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY OF MARS

Orbiting on the outer belt of the VanKilla Kiertotahti system is the secondary campus of the University of St. Mary Of Mars. Designed and built after the first campus – located in Kansas City on Terra/Sol – this campus is more modern through necessity and design (it is a space station after all), yet most of the students and faculty prefer the venerable main campus with its limestone buildings and old European feel.

The secondary campus features most of the school's higher level engineering classes and anyone who's anyone in the Twilight Sector mining industry graduated from St. Mary of Mars. Their classes in mining technologies are so competitive that students often wait years to get in unless familial donations to the school or internal connections get them preferential treatment. Every year the Dean of Engineers hands out a special grant to one disadvantaged student in the sector. The grant pays their tuition in the Engineering program and carries a built in internship with one of the major mining companies in the area. The program has come under scrutiny in recent years since not one of these special students have graduated, there has been one suicide attempt, and in the grant's history, it has never gone to a Natural Mutant or a Scientifically Induced Mutant.

Despite the air of intense competition among the engineering students and some political disputes over school policy, St. Mary's itself is actually quite beautiful. At its conception, a renowned architect was brought in for interior design, and many of the school's corridors, classrooms, and dorms are designed with ascetics in mind. Bright walls fill the space with light, and though St. Mary's is a space station, the rooms are so carefully lighted they give the impression the station is on a planet perpetually in the midst of its brightest spring day. Greek-style mosaics and columns live harmoniously with the most advanced computer technology. Everything has a feel of otherworldly disconnection.

STELLAR MAP: VANKILLA KIERTOTAHTI



Like Athens in an alternate dimension, these halls of learning challenge both old ideas and new concepts.

The result is staggering and quite impressive to a new visitor. The staff and long term student body have their own opinions, of course. Because it is a closed system, cleaning and dusting seems to be a constant problem thanks to a hiccup in the ventilation system and grime seems to build up quickly in the complicated architectural features, keeping the cleaning bots perpetually one step behind. The technology of the communications systems traveling between parts of the station is cutting edge. So cutting edge, in fact, that much of it hadn't been well tested before it was installed. Much of it was installed just to say that the university has the highest tech available. That said, maintenance teams are regularly scrambling to keep up with the bugs in the system and it sometimes leaves students and staff living rather primitively as a consequence.

PROFESSOR ELSIE ITCHER

"You have to understand, son, that when you dig into the heart of a planet, you will find the value and wealth of its heart blood. But that is not all you will find."

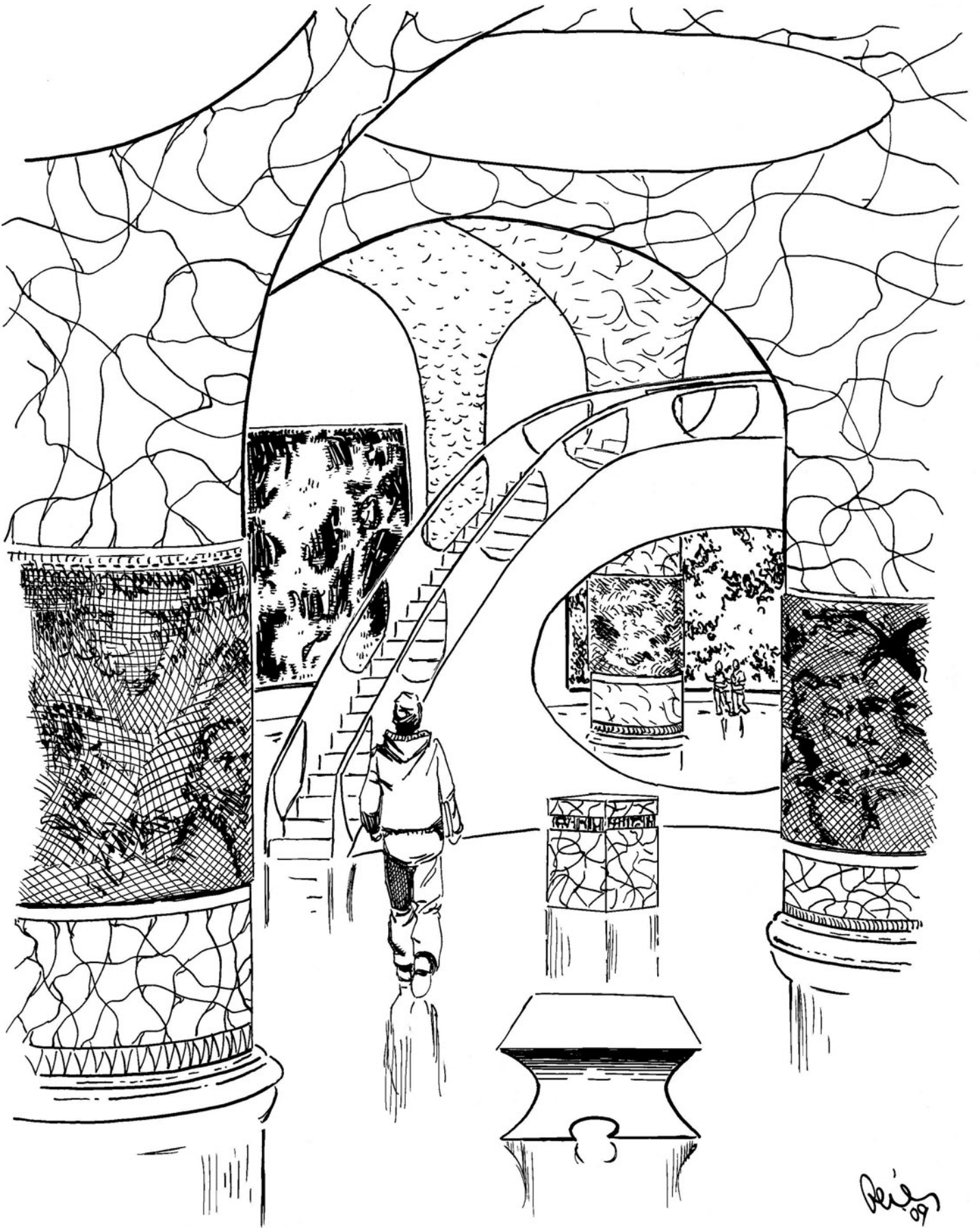
Professor Elsie Itcher will contact the characters through usual channels offering them a job as they pass through the system. She has some valuable mining equipment, very delicate, that needs to be transported to a mining facility on the other side of the Outer Belt. She impresses upon the characters the need for care in transporting the equipment as it is highly sensitive and handling often disturbs the precisely calibrated sensors.

PERSONALITY

Itcher is a shockingly intelligent woman, which is evidenced by her massive vocabulary, fluid manner of speech, and extensive knowledge in her own field as well as many others. She is not one to bore people with useless details; in fact she is rather to the point, knowing exactly the right words to describe a situation for maximum verbal efficiency. Still, there is something distant and dreamy in her eyes and left to her own she will wax poetic about art, literature and history. She comes across somewhat 'touched' or living in two worlds, making her strangely suited to the odd setting of the University.

HISTORY AND MOTIVATION

Itcher is a SIM with an experimental intelligence based gene modification. As a child she was diagnosed with a type of early onset Alzheimer's that would eventually rob her of her intelligence. Her parents sought out the modification in the hopes that it would save her diseased mind. It did, and then some. Her mutation is a



custom blueprint with some odd side effects. She dreams strangely. More than that, she dreams in words. These disconnected collections of poetry or verse have no human record that she can find and she is certain she didn't create them herself. She's no poet. She seeks their source, and though she will not go venturing off wildly to chase leads, she has been known to put proxies into some dangerous predicaments all in the name of satisfying her curiosity. By sending the characters on this very simple delivery run through treacherous space, she is testing the characters to see if they might be valuable in the future.

*"...Why do you assume the things that you cannot know must sleep,
But if so, then sleep we do,
and in sleep we hunger.
Hunger is the root of creation,
and so we are [at] the root of creation..."*
-Transcribed by Professor Elsie Itcher

TRAVEL WITH THE EQUIPMENT

Ask the player characters what methods they're using in order to secure the equipment within their ship's cargo hold. Most of the cargo's bulk is three desk-sized computer units that have not been crated or otherwise packed. When the equipment is loaded, the loaders say that's the professor's orders so that the equipment can be regularly checked in transit. One particularly fragile piece, a special kind of laser measuring unit is little more than an incredibly expensive laser mounted on a tripod-like a video camera. The cost of this particular piece to mining companies could buy and sell a small fleet.

Let the players come up with their own plan for securing the cargo. Helpful skills would include Engineering, Jack of All Trades and Mechanic with a task difficulty of Very Difficult (-4). Or in lieu of those skills an Intelligence Characteristic roll with a task difficulty of Formidable (-6). The plan should be played as a Task Chain (Traveller Core Rule Book pg. 51) of at least 2 or 3 steps. Encourage players to Aid one another (Traveller Core Rule Book pg. 50). The Game Master should feel free to give positive or negative Situational Modifiers (Traveller Core Rule Book pg. 49) based on the quality of the Players plan or any aids (for example tools) they can bring to bear on the situation.

Once the characters have put their plan into action and taken care of storing the equipment, it's off to the mining facility at whatever speed the players deem appropriate.

They are not, however, alone.

Sometime after breaking away from the University's region of space, and outside of any security the University might have, a

ship begins to follow the characters. They are patrolling the area outside of University space hoping to pilfer new technology from outgoing ships.

In this situation give the characters a chance to notice the fact that they're being followed. Depending on rolls, they might even be able to identify the ship as a Child of Orion's ship (if they roll an Exceptional Success, Traveller Core Rulebook pg. 50), in which case they may decide to tip the scales in their favor. On a particularly bad roll (an Exceptional Failure), the characters may assume the ship is sent from the school to insure they aren't going to steal the equipment. In the last case they will be completely surprised when the pirates attack. Appropriate skill rolls might be Sensors or Engineering; Electronics to gain detailed info on the trailing ship, or Comms skill to overhear the ship's communications back to other Children's ships.

Again, this is a chance for the characters to try creative tactics to get an edge over the pirates. They might utilize near by asteroids to duck behind or a magnetic field coming from a group of asteroids as a means of evading the trailing ship and exhibiting some real daring-do. GMs might want to run this portion of the encounter as opposed checks between the players Pilot (Pilot; spacecraft) skill against the pirates pilot's skill. Perhaps give the winning side in the opposed check a point for a success (or 2 for a formidable success) against the other and when one side gets to +5 they have either evaded or caught up with the other's ship. Feel free to let the players be creative. Using Sensor skills to accurately track the pirate ship or communications to try and jam their sensors, a GM could give the players' pilot pluses to his or her skill roll.

If the characters manage to avoid the pirates entirely, it will only be their first brush, and they will be hunted for some time. Game Masters should feel free to keep bringing the Children's ship back into play whenever the action lags. The fight is all but inevitable, but in the meantime, the characters can have a run in with the Gaeon Group.

CHILDREN OF ORION

MASSIVE PIRATE/SMUGGLER OPERATION

The Children of Orion are, as they like to call themselves, a 'planet-free political and ethnic nation.' Most planet or system-based policing forces see them as roving gangs at best, or more commonly as a dangerous criminal enterprise with so many heads and such a complicated structure there is simply no good way to stop them entirely. Like a hydra, if a family head is brought to justice, two more appear to replace and avenge him.

They are brutal and violent in piracy, but also in politics. Most ship captains and fleet admirals (or as they call them, family heads,) are law savvy and know just how to protect themselves in case of arrest and find ways out of even the most dramatic legal trouble. Most authorities see the Children of Orion as such nuisances that they let them slip through the system rather than get into the legal nightmare of trying to hold them. Less legally minded systems tend to shoot first and would rather destroy a Child's ship than hassle with the law.

Of course, the Children have a means of combating that as well. Being politically-minded, when such attacks are leveled against a Child's ship, they often start on a media-based attack on the planet or system involved, crying out against the 'racially charged' assaults and accusing their attackers of attempted genocide. This sort of assault has caused reparations be paid to the pirates and many worlds just won't risk having to deal with such an onslaught.

The Children feel no guilt in using any of these tactics, physical or political, because they truly believe that they are the spiritual inheritors of the Terra/Sol system. They believe that they are the decedents of Orion, and that they were wrongly chased from their home world long ago. Much of their patchwork 'culture' is based on an elaborate myth of the planet. They attempt to stylize their clothing, ships, and even their elaborate tattooing to remind anyone looking at them that they are 'ancient natives' to the region.

It is, of course, a lot of bunk. There is no scientific evidence of any original inhabitants of the world and all but fringe anthropologists are certain that if there ever was prior human habitation of Terra/Sol it was certainly not the Children (though the media backlash the Children render to anyone foolish enough to publish or speak about it is often not worth the effort to demonstrate that fact.). It is far more likely that early in Terra/Sol's history, ancestors of the pirates squatted in system. Most likely they were driven off as the system developed and willfully chose to create the myth of their origins in order to give credence to their criminal activities. While there might be Children alive who are in on the gag, most believe in their fake heritage with religious fervor.

CHILDREN OF ORION SHIPS

The Children are flying a Corsair (Traveller Core Rule Book, pg. 129) named Bloom of Terra.

Stewart Wyatt

Pirate Captain

S: 10(+1) **D:** 9(+1) **EN:** 6 **I:** 11(+1) **ED:** 9(+1) **S:** 6

Skills: Gun Combat, Energy Rifle 1, Leadership 2, Gunner; Turrets 1, Astrogation 1, Computer 0, Advocate 0, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Finances: 738,000 cr

Equipment: Hostile Environment Vacc Suit (TL12, protection 8) which is equipped with Magnetic Grapples/Computer Weave (TL11)/Medikit/Laser Com (TL13). Laser Carbine (TL11), 2 Stun Grenades

Pirate Crewman

Pirate Spacehand

S: 9(+1) **D:** 8 **EN:** 7 **I:** 8 **ED:** 8 **S:** 5

Skills: Gun Combat; Energy Pistol 1, Pilot 1 or Navigation 1 or Gunner; Turrets 1, Jack of all Trades 1

Finances: N/A

Equipment: Laser Pistol (TL11), Vacc Suit (TL12 Protection 6), 2 Stun Grenades

Pirate Crewman

Pirate Marine

S: 11(+1) **D:** 8 **EN:** 8 **I:** 7 **ED:** 8 **S:** 4

Skills: Melee (Bludgeon), Stun Baton 0, Gun Combat Rifle (slug) 1

Finances: N/A

Equipment: Stick, Assault Rifle, Vacc Suit (TL12 Protection 6), 2 Stun Grenades

CHILDREN'S TACTICS

While there are instances of Children Captains deploying any number of tactics to get to their quarry, some general guidelines apply, especially when it comes to attacks the characters will face in this encounter.

Do it fast

The longer a combat goes on the more chance that the quarry ship will escape. Extended chases do happen, but the longer that chase goes on, the more likely other matters will confound the Children. Authorities or allies might get involved. Something on the Child's ship might break down. As such there are no warning shots. No early messages for surrender. The Children follow, and when they have an opening— as soon as they have an opening — they swoop in and empty everything they have on their quarry. That said, most survivors of a Child's attack survive because they withstood that first strike.

Cut and run

If the first strike was unsuccessful, and the Children believe they were not recognized for what they are, they may back off entirely, letting the ship move on and harry the quarry until a more ideal time and place to attack arises. If none does the Children's ship still lives to fight another day.

The tech is all that matters

Ransom and slavery are little used tools in the Children's philosophy. When the Children attack their interest is in their quarry's ship, its cargo and technology. Usually all other concerns are forgotten.

Leave no trace

Survivors create a witness to the crime, so misdirection is crucial. Massive casualties would demand a reaction from the authorities so it's imperative for the Children to leave no trace of their actions. So identification of ships or personnel has to be avoided. Electronic detection methods like video or scanner recordings are wiped immediately. Personal recording devices like Neural Computers are more problematic and that's where the Children's expertise in Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP) technology serves them well. No captured ship is ever freed without being subjected to an EMP blast. Other security measures like never revealing faces or leaving DNA evidence are observed. And given the nature of Child culture they always have someone to provide them an alibi. If no one can provide any evidence as to their guilt any accusations cast against the Children must be lies or more likely prejudice, right?

STEWART WYATT - PIRATE CELEBRANT

"What is there to fear from their illusionary authority? We are the inheritors of the Galaxy. Now, blow a hole in their port side, let's give 'em something to think about."

Once Stewart is sure that the characters are carrying valuable technology, he will close in for the kill. Evasive maneuvers or just doing nothing at all are all the 'proof' he needs, so he will close in no matter what the characters do.

Stewart Wyatt lives by a 'shoot first and pick apart the bones for answers' creed. If someone has something he wants, or he believes they have something he wants, he will not hesitate to hunt them to the end of the universe to take it. His methods are all out, every time. His current ship, "The True Believer," is not his first as he has lost ships and crews to his quests. His no-holds-bared attitude makes him a revered figure among the Children, though he has never risen too much political power because he is simply too careless to be given authority over anything larger than one ship at a time. He is a poster child for how a Child should behave while at the same time held up as an example to outsiders of just how dangerous they can be.

MOTIVATION

Stewart lives from one single-minded quest after another and so in times when he has nothing to fixate on he will find something. In this case, discovering what the characters are transporting and stealing it is his newest quest. He will not stop pursuing, though he will be careful to only confront them in space where they

cannot hope for backup from local law enforcement. His passion is singular, but should the characters realize who he is, they may be able to use his methods and madness against him. Killing him is only one method to get rid of him once and for all, and the characters should be encouraged to find other ways to sate his madness.

THE GAEAN GROUP

The Gaeans are a group of females who founded a society in 2138. The original Gaeon colony was established on a space station in orbit around Earth's moon. Perhaps unsurprisingly, A group of women living without benefit of men raised suspicions and fear among many. This was compounded when it was discovered that the Gaeans were reproducing through the use of exo-wombs. Many men were frightened by a human society in which they ostensibly had no role. Rumors began to spread of a radical agenda being surreptitiously promoted by the Gaeans advocating the elimination of males in human society. Even wilder rumors of kidnapping of males for biological experiments and worse spread through the solar system. As time went by most of these were chalked up to urban legend, but even today there is distrust among a significant number of people regarding the Gaeans.

Since the first widespread development of natural mutations, there have been mutants saddled with flaws that make life more difficult. Not all mutations are a positive thing, after all, and because they are effectively a part of the person's genetic makeup, there are some problems that cannot be fixed if they are indeed fixable.

Testosterone allergies in female mutants are not common, but it is ubiquitous, and tragically it is a side effect of other mutations that nearly always pass from mother to female offspring. At it's most mild manifestation, this allergy is undetected, leaving the female mutant in question to suffer mild flu-like symptoms in the presence of any being giving off testosterone. Because these women produce little or no natural testosterone they are often small in stature. Combined with sick frequently their condition can be passed off as just a part of their 'fragile nature.'

Forty years ago, a group of Gaeon doctors studying mutational trends as they related to women's health noticed the percentage of female mutants who regularly suffered bone and ovarian cancer and how those cancers came after a lifetime of illness. This led to the discovery of the testosterone allergy. Because in many cases the allergy is a double whammy, effecting only minorities (mutants) who are also women, many female doctors and scientists worried that the illness, which often resulted in premature and ghastly deaths of its victims, wasn't being taken seriously. That's when the Gaeans stepped in.

Twenty five years ago the Gaeon group established an orbital research colony around VanKilla Kietotahti where women could live in an environment mostly free of testosterone while helping to bring about an end to the mutation. Over time, fewer and fewer purely human scientists and doctors became involved with the studies as even their low-level of testosterone might harm truly sensitive mutants. A generation of women have lived and worked together at the colony, with donors, cloning and exo-wombs used to create the next generation of females for the station.

In fact, for the station, male DNA and testosterone samples are a regular import as they are used in clinical studies, careful reproduction, or in an attempt to find a strain of DNA that produced testosterone the mutants can stand.

After years of accusations of man-hating and insults many Gaeans have developed a level of indifference toward men that borders on dislike. This is most common among the Gaeon Research Vessels that must most closely deal with the outside mentality in order to collect DNA or bring mutants suffering from the allergy to the colony.

THE GAEAN RESEARCH SHIP

The Nightingale is a Research Ship (See Traveller Core Rule Book pg 121 for stats) outfitted with all the latest scientific bells and whistles. Visitors are not given the run of the ship. They enter through the bridge and are quickly whisked to Cargo Bay 3 where they fill out a questionnaire and then to First Lab 5 where any medical or other procedures necessary are done.

DOCTOR MIRIAM SOPHIE - GAEAN RESEARCHER

"Yes, yes. Very clever. I've certainly never heard that vulgarity before. Your puerile sense of humor has once again left me speechless. Now, do we have a deal, or will I have to contact the advocacy group to sue you for malicious breach of contract?"

When the characters encounter the Gaeon group, the woman they will encounter is Doctor Sophie. Like many other effected mutants, she is diminutive and child-like at first blush. However, she's pushing a hundred and fifty now, and has suffered enough slings and arrows as the commander of a research vessel to carry herself with far more menace and stoicism than might normally fit her small frame. Over the years she has been harassed, mocked and even assaulted all while trying to seek a better life for women like her. She lives daily with the clock ticking away moments of her life before some part of her mutation brings on a slow and agonizing death. She is driven like few people.

Personality

In interactions with peers, the ill, women, and mutants she has a soft if sad bedside manner. When dealing with authoritarian men,

dismissive scientists and anyone behaving crudely, she is short, cold and harsh. She's been at this a very long time and does not engage in pleasantries nor can she be baited into a fury by slurs or insults. There are women on her ship who through training or mutation are quite capable warriors. Sophie is not and knows it. When she comes to a table to deal with anyone less then receptive to her bargains she leans on outsmarting them and is not above blackmail, legal threats, or other intellectual aggression to get her way. In at least a few instances, she has sent particularly brazen and misogynistic men away from her ship who later met their end at mercenaries she secretly hired. She has taken an oath not to kill, but does believe in the preemptive self defense that has saved her life more than a few times.

Goals

As it stands, the doctor is on a quest for medical Eldorado and she has no illusions that her goals will be reached in her lifetime. Her goal is, instead, to lay the groundwork for future generations of women to be rid of this debilitating mutation. She has collected samples far and wide and has taken her ship into war-torn space to transport a single mutant safely back to the colony. Her crew is loyal to her unto death. Her contacts are widespread and so moved by her sad mission that they are greatly and easily influenced by her requests. People all over Known Space will practically kill for her, a thing she is well aware of. When she first meets the characters, if they are receptive to her proposal of exchange and behave in a respectful manner she will make a fantastic contact both in the medical/scientific fields and in the political arena. If they are crude, cruel, or violent in their response they will have made a very powerful enemy indeed.

COMPLICATIONS

- If the players find themselves on the Gaeen ship (or anywhere else for that matter) providing samples or for any other reason, they could be approached by a young girl. She seems a little taller and more robust than the average Gaeen. The girl will approach one or a group of Player Characters when they are alone. Her name is Diana and she will ask the Player Characters to take her with them. She's only 17 and is desperate to get out and see the galaxy. The situation calls for clever diplomacy and a little fast talking no matter what the players decide.
- The Player Characters could become involved when a guy who had originally agreed to provide a biological sample (either on the Gaeen ship or off) decides not to go through with it and gets violent. A fight could erupt when the Players come to the Gaeans defense and some of the guys friends come to his defense.

A variation of the above could involve the guy having already been subdued by the Gaeans. They offer the Player Characters a thousand credits to take him to the nearest station or the Players

next stop the Gaeans don't really care; they just want him off their hands. All the way to where ever the Players are taking him he complains about "those lying, thieving bimbos" (feel free to insert any colorful language of your choice here) and how they stole his mining claim.

Irate Miner

S: 9(+1) **D:** 8 **EN:** 9 (+1) **I:** 9 **ED:** 7 **S:** 7

Skills: Melee; Unarmed Combat 1, Comm 1, Computer 0, Pilot 1, Broker 0

Finances: 28,500 credits deposited in the Miners Belt Bank, a branch of which is located here in the outer ring of VanKilla Kiertotahti

Equipment: Cloth (TL10, Protection 5)

TO THE JUNKYARD

After fighting with, or avoiding the Children of Orion, the characters should come across the unfortunate fact that some part of the laser measuring system in the professor's delicate equipment has bumped a bulkhead, another piece of equipment or seemingly nothing at all and has therefore broken.

At that point they might contact the professor to explain, or she might contact them in order to see how things are going. Professor Itcher isn't as angry as the PCs might expect. She states that some amount of breakage was anticipated and that they're not far from a place they can pick up a replacement sensor. She gives them coordinates and thanks them for only breaking just the one sensor.

The coordinates are to a small dense planetoid at the edge of the outer belt. It creates just enough gravity to serve as a good ship graveyard but too small to have much value on its own. Huge robotic towing ships drag abandoned refuse and abandoned ships or part of ships into the planetoid's gravity as a means of containing the debris and keep the rest of space uncluttered. Ships of every make and model float in the junkyard from a hundred years back or more and a clever scrounger could likely find just about any kind of part a ship might need.

With a sky full of pirates, smugglers, mercenaries and other desperate souls with a shoot-first philosophy what keeps the junkyard from being completely stripped of its value? In part, it's because a preponderance of the floating junkyard is just that – junk. It takes a clever eye to find the pieces of value in the mess, and most just don't have the time to find and track the debris. Only the caretaker has a good tracking system established to follow the valuable or possibly valuable wreckage. But more than that, the junkyard's caretaker has his own unique approach to security.



All throughout the debris the caretaker has planted chargers. Whole ships or parts are rigged to blow for the most massive damage possible to anything around. The theory goes that trying to plunder the yard may result in nothing happening, or it may result in the caretaker spotting you and blowing up several ships around you adding your ship and your corpses to the yard. It's happened, at least enough times that the caretaker's tactics are widely known. For that reason even the Children of Orion deal with the caretaker rather than risk their ships.

Beyond its use for spare parts, smugglers frequent the yard to lay low or regroup after or before a good run. More than a few smuggler ships in the region are designed in a way that they can float into the yard and power down most of their external power to appear like just another derelict. The Children of Orion have used this specific technique to ambush targets coming to poke around the yard. The caretaker has never hindered such an ambush though he has never specifically endorsed the practice either.

BUDDY BRICKER - JUNKYARD CARETAKER

Buddy is a peculiar kind of trade rat. Since childhood he had a fascination with technology, though, specifically with taking technology apart to see how it works. Unfortunately for Buddy, he did not have a fascination with putting devices back together or improving on design. Mostly, he just liked picking things apart. His family didn't have much in the way of money or standing, but his uncle ran a salvage operation out of the junkyard and by the time he was a boy able to handle space flight his parents pawned him off to his uncle so he'd stop picking apart their home computer.

Buddy took to junk and salvage like a fish to somewhat-oil-slicked-water. He thrived with a keen eye for what value might still exist in any sort of wasted space trash. In short order, his uncle was looking to him for advice and shortly after that, retired in luxury from the business leaving Buddy in charge.

However, a lone salvage ship wasn't quite enough for Buddy. He imagined a future where he was the Emperor over an empire of trash, knowing it like a lover. From the moment he laid eyes on the junkyard, he knew it had to be his and began a jealous plot to be the go-to-man there.

In a few years time he had the run of the yard, and hoped to pass his empire on to his eldest son someday. Now he's a benevolent dictator of trash, however, and should the characters approach him to help them find the sensor equipment he's happy to give them a good price. Laughing at his jokes go a long way with Buddy, and having a few good ones he hasn't heard yet goes even

farther. If pushed, he will blow up any threat to his control, however, but with fair warning to the characters before it happens.

HEADING TO THE EXPERIMENTAL MINE

After working with Buddy, the characters have made a good ally for future repair work or augmentation of their ship. The professor, if reported back to, will be pleased that they got such a good deal on the sensor parts and will reimburse them in kind.

It all looks like smooth sailing to their final destination and be rid of all this delicate equipment once and for all.

But things never go that smoothly, now do they?

A little while before the characters' ship leaves the area of the junkyard, a lone smuggler's ship left, heading to a small asteroid with a clear shot at VanKila. Three months ago the captain's brother had been sent there on what might be an indefinite sentence, and the smugglers think they can break him out. Their plan is only halfway thought out and will lead to nothing but death and collateral damage as they have little understanding of how the prison planet actually functions. They have three resupply torpedoes that they intend to fire towards the area where the captain's brother told them he'd be. They are bio-locked so only the brother can open them. They contain guns and other weapons, a large supply of Oxyre, some computers and several data crystals with details on the Captain's plan to swoop down on the planet and rescue the brother. They have also drastically underestimated the planet's defenses.

That's not going to stop them from doing it, however.

The first clue the characters get that something is amiss comes in the form of a problem with their communications system. Long range communication will fail suddenly, cutting off any local ships from contacting nearby authorities. If they look for the source of the block, the characters can trace it back to a smuggler's ship putting out a signal. They'll note a few other ships in the area as well, but with no way to contact these other ships, they won't be able to tell what those other ships are doing.

An astute search of the smuggler's ship will indicate pretty quickly that they are setting up a platform on a nearby asteroid from which some sort of missile might be launched towards the prison planet. It isn't going as quickly as the smuggler's planned however, leaving the characters with a few choices.

If they think their ship is fast enough, they could conceivably get to VanKila and warn the authorities in person. That's a gamble, since there's no good way of determining how long the assembly will take to create. They can also assault the smugglers head on if their ship is equipped for that. However, they have an idea that

the ship might be carrying some heavy fire power and it might be too much of a risk. Give the players a chance to discuss some creative alternatives to the problem, of course, but a GM can heighten the tension by setting an egg timer on the game table with no explanation, or keep checking her watch in order to give the appearance to a time limit without actually stating one is in effect.

THE SMUGGLER SHIP

The smugglers' ship is called the Emerald Dawn and she's a Fat Trader (Traveller Core Rulebook pg. 119). She has a basic military sensor array instead of the basic civilian array that is standard in this type of ship. She also has two single turrets with a beam laser in turret #1 and a sandcaster in turret #2.

RINCE MANC, SMUGGLER

Rince loves his brother Tate more than life itself, and before Tate got pinched, he called the shots on the ship even though Rince has long been the technical captain. He's good at managing a ship, managing the smuggling business is another thing entirely.

Worse still for Rince, Tate's wife had long ago gotten very used to living a certain lifestyle thanks to her husband's business. Now, she is demanding the same quality of life from Rince. She is a woman with a loud, imposing personality and Rince doesn't know how to tell her 'no.' He's run himself ragged trying to please her while having only half of a good idea on how to run the business. It was his first mate's suggestion that maybe they needed Tate back. Tate's wife latched on to the idea and has been dogging Rince endlessly to rescue her poor husband. She's never seen VanKila and knows little about it, assuming it to be an easy matter to land on and grab Tate. Rince knows a little better, but not much, and at this point he's far more afraid of his sister-in-law than he is of the authorities on the prison world.

That said, there is a small chance that the characters can talk Rince out of his plan, but only if they can find a way to contact him.

Rince Manc

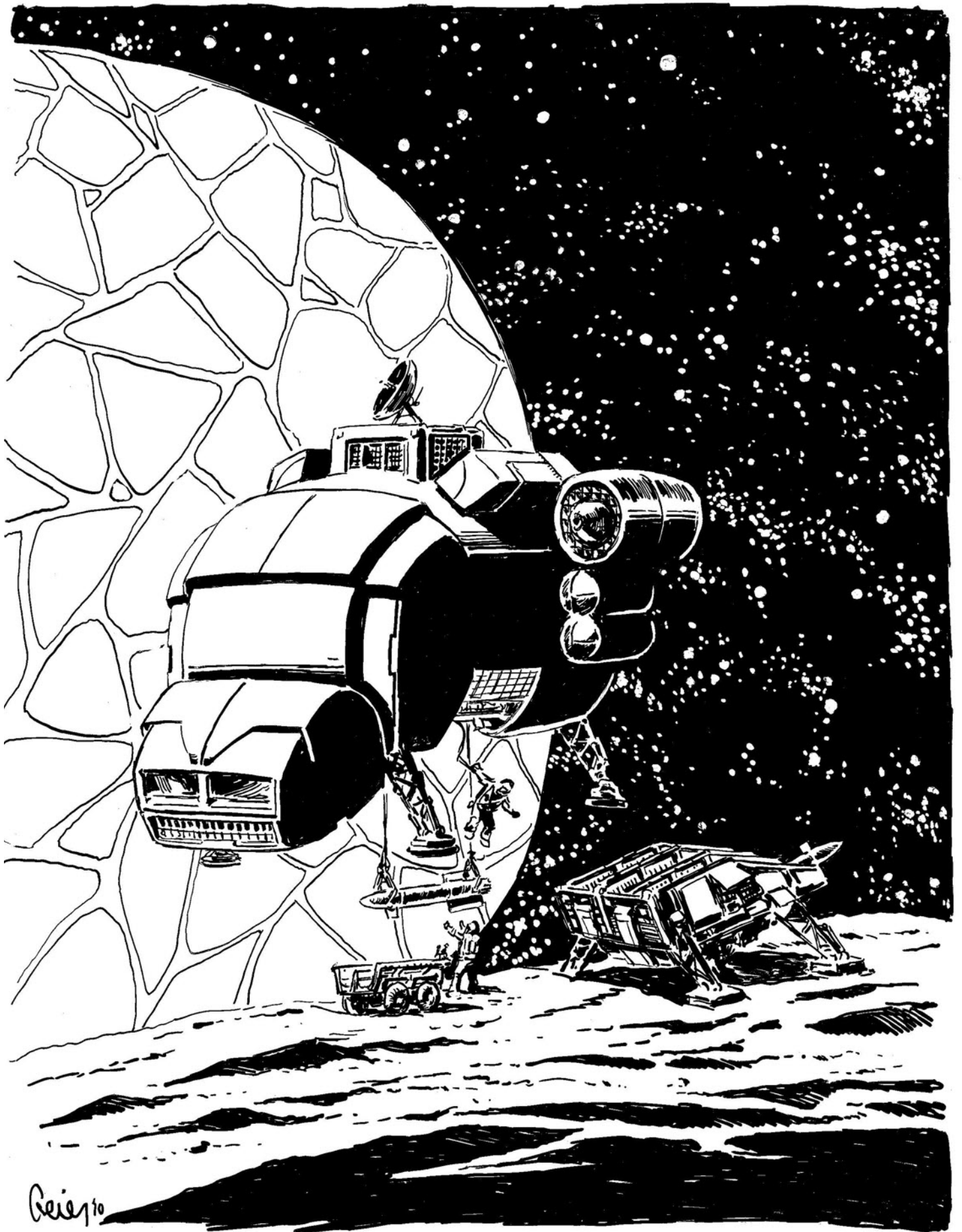
Smuggler Captain

S: 8 **D:** 9(+1) **EN:** 9(+1) **I:** 10(+1) **ED:** 9(+1) **S:** 7

Skills: Pilot; Spacecraft 3, Navigation 1, Engineer; Jump Drive 1 – Manuver Drive 0 – Electronics 0, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1, Tactics 1, Sensors 1

Finances: 2.7 million credits in the Bank of Athena in the Terra/Sol System

Equipment: Vacc Suit (TL14, protection 8) which is equipped with Magnetic Grapples/Computer Weave (TL11)/Medikit/Laser Com (TL13).



Smuggler Crewman**S:** 9(+1) **D:** 8 **EN:** 7 **I:** 8 **ED:** 8 **S:** 5**Skills:** Gun Combat; Energy Pistol 1, Pilot 1 or Navigation 1 or Gunner; Turrets 1, Jack of all Trades 1**Finances:** N/A**Equipment:** Laser Pistol (TL11), Vacc Suit (TL12 Protection 6), 2 Stun Grenades

REACHING THE EXPERIMENTAL MINE

After dealing with the smugglers in one way or another, the characters reach the outer belt and are able to be rid of the equipment. Professor Itcher thanks them for their time and promises them work in the future. She then pays them whatever remainder of their pay may be waiting. She also says that one of the pieces of equipment looks unfamiliar to her, and she's not sure where it came from. She's happy to leave it with the characters to use as they like.

CASH AND PRIZES

Professor Itcher wants to reward the Players for their good work in the delivery of her cargo. She makes arrangements for the players to choose one of the following items for their ship:

- A repair robot
- A probe drone
- An expert 2 computer program
- A TL 12 Vacc Suit

