

Sub-ether 03

Age of the Spice Pirates *Campaign Adventure Book*

Dreaming Gynoid Studio
Autumn 2021

MAXIMUM RATINGS: the ***Age of the Spice Pirates***

A mini-campaign of future urban crime adventure for Galaxy Black,
the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG, Mutant Crawl Classics, and all other
compatible rulesets,
For 16-24 characters level 0-2

Part one - Money is Flesh: Before Lockdown p. 4

Part two - Time is Money: After Lockdown p. 24

Part Three – Sealed in Skin: the White Sun p. 49

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(insert link to their page)

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Running the Spice Pirates

This campaign

Is really one is for those who like to play thieves, burglars, confiscators, and the like. The adventure seeds were written more so than most with one foot squarely in the camp of hip 60s crime caper films where sophisticated and at times eccentric but mostly harmless people did crime and made it pay....and their modern heirs.

The definitive

Ocean's 11 – the original is quite a different film from its remake however also

Ocean's Eleven – the remake.

Either version of the Italian Job.

Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels

Snatch

Everybody Loves Sunshine aka BUSTED

Formula 51

Layer Cake

Especially appropriate crime novels

Fools' Run, The Night Crew – John Sanford

Andrew Vachss – the Burke novels (esp. Flood, Strega, Sacrifice, Down in the Zero)

Other Books that may prove useful to you

The Crime Generators in **Sub-ether 01** are an obvious choice, though tailored to that environment.

The generators in almost any issue of Metal Gods of Ur-Hadad will work just fine in this environment, pay especial attention to the potential usefulness of the

Neighborhood generator (issue, link)

And juvenile gang maker (issue, link)

But also

Rooted firmly in the pulp SF tradition.

The Stainless Steel Rat et. Al. – Harry Harrison

And also – most especially in those rare areas where these varied elements come together in a lesser or greater extent

The Diamond Age – Neal Stephenson

Judges: if you run with music in the background, find a copy of the Greed/Time is Money (Bastard) EP by the band Swans. Just leave it playing on repeat. ¹

If Spice Pirates were a tone poem it could be summarized thusly:

Greed/Time is Money by Swans, Liquid Swords by GZA, and any M.I.A. album you care to throw in the mix, they all have something applicable.

It's time for some good old fashioned crime. – D.G.

¹ OTOH in the spirit of remembering that this, an adventure for the DCC family of games, is a pure adventure story, stay on brand by putting almost any selection of Count Basie and His Orchestra on and leaving it run. The older the better. You will likely get someone at your table spitting out Cowboy Bebop quotes. Good. Run with it.



There is no beauty on
 In, or under Saxus
 It is not permitted
 No real art, no genuine love
 Only filth, and pity, and control
 Can you hear the teeming masses?
 Their voices rising up in song
 Singing
 Steel and flesh
 Longing and need
 Never knowing attainment or fulfillment
 None voyage here to complete
 Anything save the story of
 One's own lives
 Saxus is where art and artists come to die
 - The Hollow Moon
 by Karla Sandborn, myri poet

Overview - Age of The Spice Pirates

Part one – Money is flesh: Before lockdown

A slave revolt!-And the characters are at ground zero. SecFor and an Imperial Legion descend upon the sector, soon after the slave “revolt” the whole city sector is placed under lockdown. The band of fugitives now must come together for mutual protection; the party now has to lay low and find something to do until that lifts.

Thus, a small urban exploration bit, with a few possible safe houses, a few paths to character classes, and moreover set up what they will need for the rest of the campaign. Many small NPC groups are available that would be happy to bolster their numbers by taking in the PCs. Whichever group they associate with will probably linger for the duration of the campaign.

The first big section is a blast of local venture seeds more or less. The PCs have to find little jobs to do in the sector while waiting for lockdown to lift so they can get out.

Lots of little “side quest” type adventures to rack up those XP and learn the lay of the land

Up to three progressions worth of activities can be had here if the Judge so desires, a mini-crime drama inside the larger one, designed to get the zero levels among them to first level.

Part Two – Time is money: After lockdown

This is the meat of the adventure, an open ended section where many opportunities present themselves; it’s kind of open ended and you can just do crimes and capers in Saxus. Eventually they begin to cross the White Sun and the Spice Commission, culminating in a robbery of a Spice Exchange Pyramid.

Part Three – Sealed in Skin: the White Sun

The various plot threads come together. Those who instigated the Slave Revolt come forth as a possibly ally against the White Sun and the increasing scrutiny of the Spice Commission. The true nature of things will be revealed and the party will have the opportunity to get out from under.

Ed.note: I should have my head examined for throwing this into SE 03 as a freebie. But that’s what I said I was going to do and I try very hard to be a person of my word. So please enjoy this VAST criminal campaign adventure for Galaxy Black and the DCC RPG family of game. Keep your head down space cowboy.

Standards and Assumptions:

The Adventure begins in a central slave market on Saxus, sometime after 11,003 if using the adventure funnel as is then

If inserting this into an ongoing campaign, there are many reasons why the characters might journey to Saxus. True yes it is a core world and therefore highly secure, and not at all friendly to lawbreakers, most anything wanted can be had there, for the right price.

What the Spug Is Going On? Background to Overall plot at START

Slavers are illegally operating within imperial space but are connected enough to be able to bring their product to market via third parties. One of these slaving vessels has returned from a long voyage possibly across a variety of stellar distances and across many Splinters (or both) before acquiring the current very unusual herd. This is the **white sun**, serpent people who are engaged in a scheme to trade illicit slaves and other off the books cargo for a member of House Bok who sits astride the Spice Commission. In exchange for which they give the white sun data about a shipment of seized synthetic spice that is to be destroyed.

This however is the tale of the characters, a group of soon to be criminals inside the hollow moon of Saxus; their story will wind in and out with the story of these hidden conspirators and their Spice Commission allies but how much or how little depends on the Player Characters. Ultimately they will find themselves the victims and then the victimizers of the White Sun Saurids as they come between the White Sun and their Spice Commission allies.

Complicating Factors

The Living Key

Most likely, at least one of the characters began enslaved. More than that, it is a near certainty that at least one of those characters will turn out to have been the recipient of the Hidden Key (see p.29)

Of course, if the Judge doesn't want to deal with the whole thing they can always assume this band of adventurers does not contain anyone terribly important to the White Sun.

Kama Tor

Those slavers are what drew the maenad-Ketraxian and the crew she belongs to to this market. Kama is part of a small nascent starship crew that learned of the White Sun's activities after one of their number was taken by them. In the course of springing their crew there is an explosion that brings down the power to the slave market. While her intentions had been to offer the freed both a job and an opportunity to strike back at their captors she is caught up in the security sweep for all of Act One. In all likelihood she will be absent until late in act two.

“BEHOLD THE BAZAAR OF FLESH, SKIN, STEEL, AND BONE. FORM ALL TERRIFYING AND AWE-FILLED”

JUDGES NOTES – How to (and not to) Run this as a Funnel

Running this Chaos

There are a number of possible beginnings here but the common element between them is presence or proximity to the slave market when the “revolt²” starts.

For those in the Market

Perhaps shopping, perhaps on an errand, personal or for their master.

Of course, if anyone starts WANTING to start a slave revolt and free the slaves, let them.

They Call Me Spartacus

If anyone does in fact decide this really is a granddaddy of a time for a slave revolt (and it is) then take note – any player character, zero or otherwise, who starts in one of the pens and subsequently takes up violence against their oppressors inspires a fellow zero level (NPC) slave to rise up and attack their captors, assume one per PERS bonus; for first level characters, add one to this. For second level characters, add two.

In any case, should it get super violent (and is soon will with this option pursued) at least there are an abundance of other zero levels waiting to break their bonds once the kinetic fields go down. (how many? As many are needed, this is a funnel ●● Allow anyone who has lost their last character to make three more and spring into action for their freedom. In this instance the high rate of churn perfectly fits what is happening.) If anyone who is *not* starting as a de facto slave decides yes this is the great time to take a stand for freedom and try to whip up a slave revolt the rules largely work as above, save that even a zero level on-looker who gets violently involved will inspire an uprising. This adds one to all results above.

In all likelihood

Unless you are running this as some tremendous (probably at a convention) event with assistant Judges and everything you probably want, no, NEED, the diverse members of this band to stick together. If there are problems with this, remember that the security forces and later Legionnaires are not going to discriminate between pedestrians. All will be stopped and hassled at least. It is almost certainly in every character’s best interests to get out of here as quickly as possible.

² PROPAGANDA This is both a giant misnomer and exaggerated by the authorities for their own purposes. In fact a single bomb goes off that brings down the confinement fields on a quarter and then about half of the slaves on display. A single group runs for the hills and gun fire and subsequent explosions and violence result. Including whatever the player characters do. But unless the PCs foment one there is not an actual slave revolt or uprising, as their perceptions should make clear.

You can't put a slave market in here without detailing at least some of those trapped within. Should detailing the other E-cages becomes necessary consult the table below and run with the results.

The bazaar of Flesh (Roll 1d12) Other Slaves

1	Young, fit, quick, and intelligent male from <i>Seltremachs-3</i> ; surprisingly upbeat about the whole slavery thing ("I wanted to get off-world anyway!") Seems gormless but is more accurately opportunistic.
2	<i>Ketraxian Pheromone dancer</i> - exotic orange and pink humanoid from the Ketraxis; acts bored and non-threatened with the entire experience
3	<i>Red Sun Saurid</i> - flexing their oily, jet black scales. Insecure.
4	Indentured Bot with restraining bolt. Would especially love to lose the bolt. In fact, is a oZo infiltration assassination model about five seconds from casting off its 'cover' identity.
5	<i>Suppleonne series 109s</i> This silver-skinned and green haired beauty is a machine woven production gynoid; a custom sex-bot that has outlived their creator and yet retains an indentured status. Wants a change of occupation very far away from here and is quite morally flexible about how that can happen.
6	<i>Arcturian organ-legger</i> captured trying to steal from the Body Banks and so working off a 1d20 year indenture to the state, converted by sale of contract into a prospect for the chopping block. Friendlier than you would think. A real people person.
7	<i>Friggian analog</i> - hooved and horned, but not unfamiliar with cross-splinter travel.
8	<i>Maenadae</i> - aboard a Maenad corsair when it was captured; others were likely executed but this one now has a (d8) year indenture. Would <i>REALLY</i> like out of this cage.
9	Zephyr Multi-rhythm Breakbeat Plainsong - a seventh generation slave and one of the rare Muzikatauri; they have been engineered to secrete a rare organic drug by their former owner who is now dead. (see Sub-ether 04)
10	Groggy young barbarian from the south of Cimmeria (not that one).
11	<i>insectivroid</i> Is full of eggs and plotting escape
12	An immense and immensely drugged primordial thing, laying on its side screaming in its mind for help.

START Money is Flesh

*Saxus Open Air Opportunity Market – 23°08'13" Ring 83°23'33"W Ray*³

Funnel option: Characters begin as slaves at auction on Saxus. This is a fairly harrowing beginning so do not dwell on particulars other than listed here. At least some of them are recent arrivals, brought in by an independent group called the White Sun. Those characters that begin as slaves are all drugged and groggy, taking 1d3 rounds to shake the effects of the narcotics in their system off. Their experiences to this point of the last hours, days, or weeks, is a horrible blur.

Of course, leveled characters can begin thus as well, they take all kinds.

Side note: as this world is the destination of MANY imperial vessels, literally anyone or anything could be found in that slave market. Even those who have *no* wish to partake of such a savage enterprise will find that the thoroughfare is a busy crossroads between urban sectors. It would not be inappropriate or everyone to grab the most obscure DCC classes they can find from any source as a guideline here.

Virtually any DCC RPG, MCC, Galaxy Black zero level character types can be found here, easily.

Catalyst Kama Tor-ECONOMIC TERRORIST A yellow spotted maenad disguised as a Ketraxian woman (a yellow spotted maenad disguised as a Ketraxian relative via the wearing of a chameleon cloak⁴) initiates an escape attempt. Kama is caught up in the security sweep and spends a good 26 hours of being worked over by the SecFor before they let her go, allowing her to wander the streets until a petty dealer in slaves – present at the “uprising” identifies and remembers her and has her apprehended as a runaway slave...before buying her. She is busy getting out of that situation until the end of Act one. (see sonic Shower)

Allow a brief period of observation and interaction; the party are kept in small groups of E-cages, each continuing 4-8 PCs, all acquired from a variety of very different places. The market will be just open when things begin; possibly one or canny, jaded, or practical PCS may already be amid “negotiations with a hypothetical contractor (owner) some ideas

- A criminal makes clear they need muscle for a job as expendable assets. If they live they can walk! What a deal!
- Slaves of the spice Commission. No.....
- Anonymously driving a loaded g-hauler back from the Upper Dime'
- Someone tries (and fails) to hand off to them a data crystal

None of these should be especially savory or sound appealing, but they do tell you what kind of world it is that the band has found itself on. Flesh and Wealth.

³ Much like latitude and longitude of old this is a way of depicting where things are inside the sphere. Ring in this case represents the North-South axis (latitude) while Ray indicates the East West. (longitude)

⁴ For later purposes, yes, this is Kama.

Scene one: Market Escape “Bang, Bang, Freedom”

The fracas will draw full imperial attention of course. An off duty imperial legion is drawing some extra pay today on behalf of a sub-Governor.

@START –there is an explosion at the central market and a general free for all ensues; almost immediately tagged a slave “uprising” by the authorities. Dozens of slaves escape into the local city sector before it is locked down. (as described herein) The sector goes under lockdown and Imperial Legions are on the ground for several hours as well as patrolling and hovering.

There is a tremendous explosion in the upper NW corner of the market; a blinding light proceeds the flickering of the power going out, including to the PCs E-cages. Immediately there is energy weapons fire and shouting. To the west, a fire and tremendous amounts of green and purple toxic smoke. Security alarms begin to bleat throughout the market. Someone actually screams “UPRISING!” and everything becomes total chaos.

Total Chaos – a few things happening that will be important later

- A Saurid mercenary is slain by weapons fire on the south end of the Market in the first round; Almost immediately, many of their siblings go rouge from their White Sun contractors and tear through the marketplace and then the wider sector trying to find the killers until the Legions drop in from the sky.
- Kama is caught up in the security sweep and spends a good 26 hours of being worked over by the SecFor before they let her go, allowing her to wander the streets until a petty dealer in slaves – present at the “uprising” identifies and remembers her and has her apprehended as a runaway slave...before buying her. She is busy getting out of that situation until the end of Act one.
- At least one group of slaves or other miscreants flee south, start a fight, rob a noble, stealing their air car⁵ in the midst of all this and fly some 200 m south to attempt a home invasion of some noble’s estate. It does not go well for them.
- Many such groups exist on this day birthed by the chaos of the situation. More importantly, this is the beginning of the story of *your* band.
- The sector goes under lockdown and Imperial Legions are on the ground for several hours. The White Sun handler and their factor are both apprehended and subsequently released under no suspicion.

⁵ IF the PCs do not wind playing Home Invasion (pp) then some other group of slaves do (though they do not necessarily bother the Dhiel but their neighbors the Tekchitels.

Ultra-Nine or Black-9

The ultraviolet nine; a heavy weapons assault clone soldier unit comprised of red sun Saurids. Quite mercenary; they hate being wrapped up in illegal slaving, but a contract is a contract⁶; they stay close together while doing what is required of them. For the most part this has meant providing muscle on the occasional raid and (less distastefully) being “Visible Deterrents.” In a more public capacity. Once things go south, they spring into action, happy to be doing something at last.

Until one of their number gets butchered by his own weapon. At this point they begin laying waste to the market until surrounded by security. If nothing else this works as a tremendous distraction for escape minded characters.

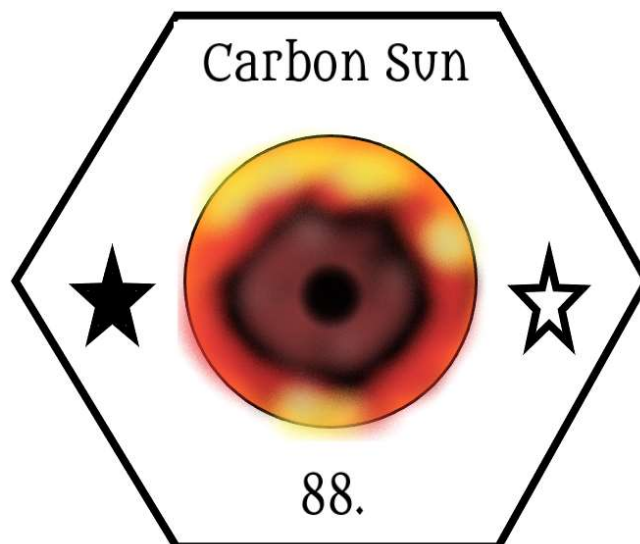
All eight remaining swear to KILL the offender and get the hell out of this contract soonest. In all likelihood, at least at first, all slaves look the same to them.

Their presence would affect the way all of this turns out save that they are the first to be taken into custody by the Legions on their arrival. All will be held by impy SecFor for a few hours afterward given their random firing into the crowd.

Ultra-Nine or Black-9 (9) Init +3; **Atk** closed fist +3 melee (1d3) or bolt caster +4 ranged (3d6, 28’); **AC** 18; **HD** 3d8; hp 21, 20, 18, 17, 17, 16, 15, 14, 11, 8; **MV** 25’; **Act** 1d20; **SP** clone soldier can share hp and conditions; **SV** Fort+4, Ref +4, Will +1; **AL** N. Armed with bolt casters and plasma rifles

The *Opportunity Market* exists on the NW end of the *Peti socoshuum*, a small covered but open air bazaar in the Yellow Dimme’ Sector Lower Plateau region.

Canny characters will recognize the efficacy of flight through the bazaar itself.



⁶ In some irony they are unaware of the nature of their employer as White Sun Caste.

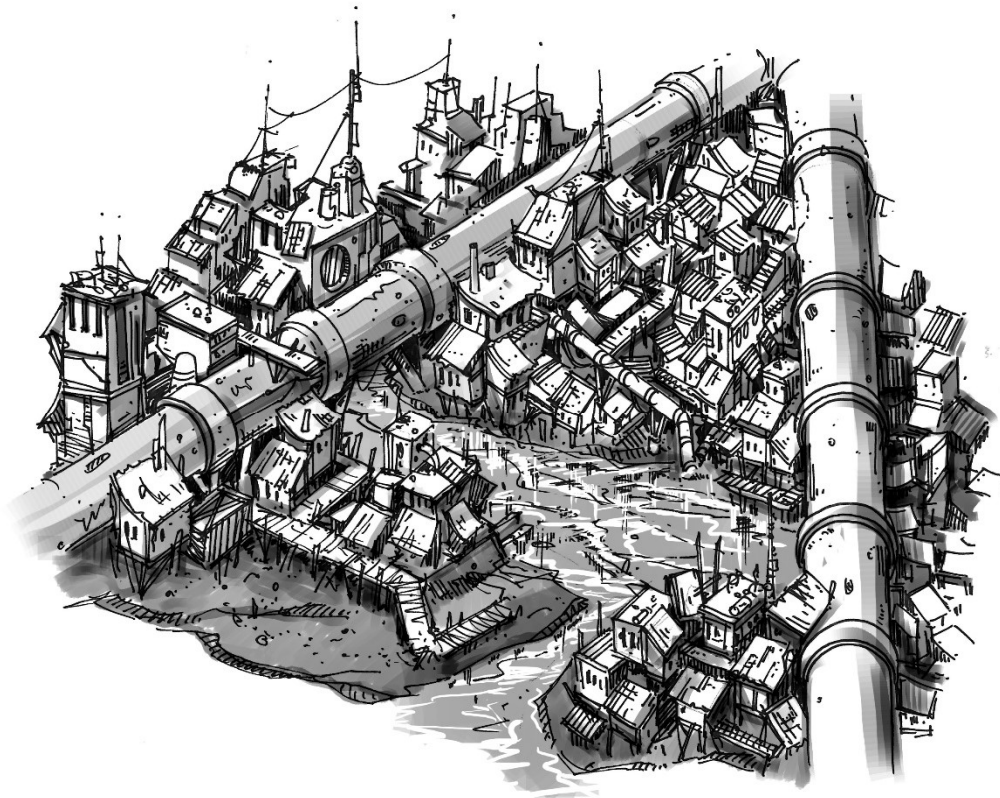
Scene two – Going to Ground

120 Minutes – Run, Run, Run

For all intents and purposes the party has two hours to get out of the starting area before the whole area is locked down.

Rather than enforcing a hard and fast time limit, the Judge is encouraged to allow for a bit of slack in the rope before the hangman tugs. A smaller band of adventurers should be allowed more time to plan before acting simply as there's fewer of them! Conversely a very large group should be given perhaps an hour, or maybe even less if the group numbers over 30.

And you as the Judge are perfectly within your rights to arbitrarily declare lockdown the moment the party decides to split up. In fact, it is recommended. Never take on more unnecessary work than is required to keep a good game running. In a general sense it is probably best that most zero levels are not allowed to get out of the starting area unless the players are themselves particularly crafty, skilled, or foolhardy. If everyone is an experienced DCC player and especially with a party containing one or more leveled characters, let 'em have it.



Judge Hacks: Most of this adventure material presumes the party (especially when this is being run as a pure funnel) are trapped in the starting area for the first three progressions, however, if they make it out the Judge is encouraged to just run with it. Nothing mechanically will change though certain minor changes may need to be made to use the rest as is. So long as you just move the starting area locations etc. to the area the PCs wind up in, you can use it pretty much as is.

When the party bails they functionally have two choices – south through the affluent but exposed market sector or north toward the travel tubes, which, as elevated main hubs, are quite visible even from here.

“Hey, you look like you need some help, do you need to get in off the streets?”

What do they really want? Table

1. They are a cult recruiting for
Also 1-2 they need sacrificial victims
 3-4 are a front recruiting for a criminal enterprise
 5 blood cult feeding a hungry vampire
 6 Rishiki
2. They are looking to bounty up on escaped slaves; pity it doesn't work that way.
They come get you just fine
3. are slavers, possibly irate ones looking to cut their losses
4. are part of some anti-establishment group who may or may not even know what to do with them
5. actual do-gooders
6. alien or predator entity seeking food source

Random encounters while trying to get away

1. An Imperial Legionnaire overhead, the armor's force field set to opaque- just a hovering jet black bubble that gives you chills as it passes overhead.
2. Someone tries to give you something
Possibly gear or a way of finding anti-slavery types
3. Someone drops something
a card for a private club (Red Room, the 323 club)
or clue to venture seed (
4. There's someone who foolishly made trouble; vomit gas or dum dum rounds are being deployed and SecFor is en route.
5. Fleeing slave mugged the wrong person, melee ensued, and there are now bodies. Lots of SecFor, officials of all stripes, soon a Legionnaire will arrive
6. An unoccupied and powered vehicle – one of the characters *might* be able to pilot it
7. Someone trying to hustle them mistaking them for local
8. The aftermath of an actual crime
9. An opportunity
10. Seedmother with 2-5 young juves huddling in a corner.
11. A mixed group of clades; disaffected juves who are fired up with life. As likely to charge the PCs for no good reason as help them.

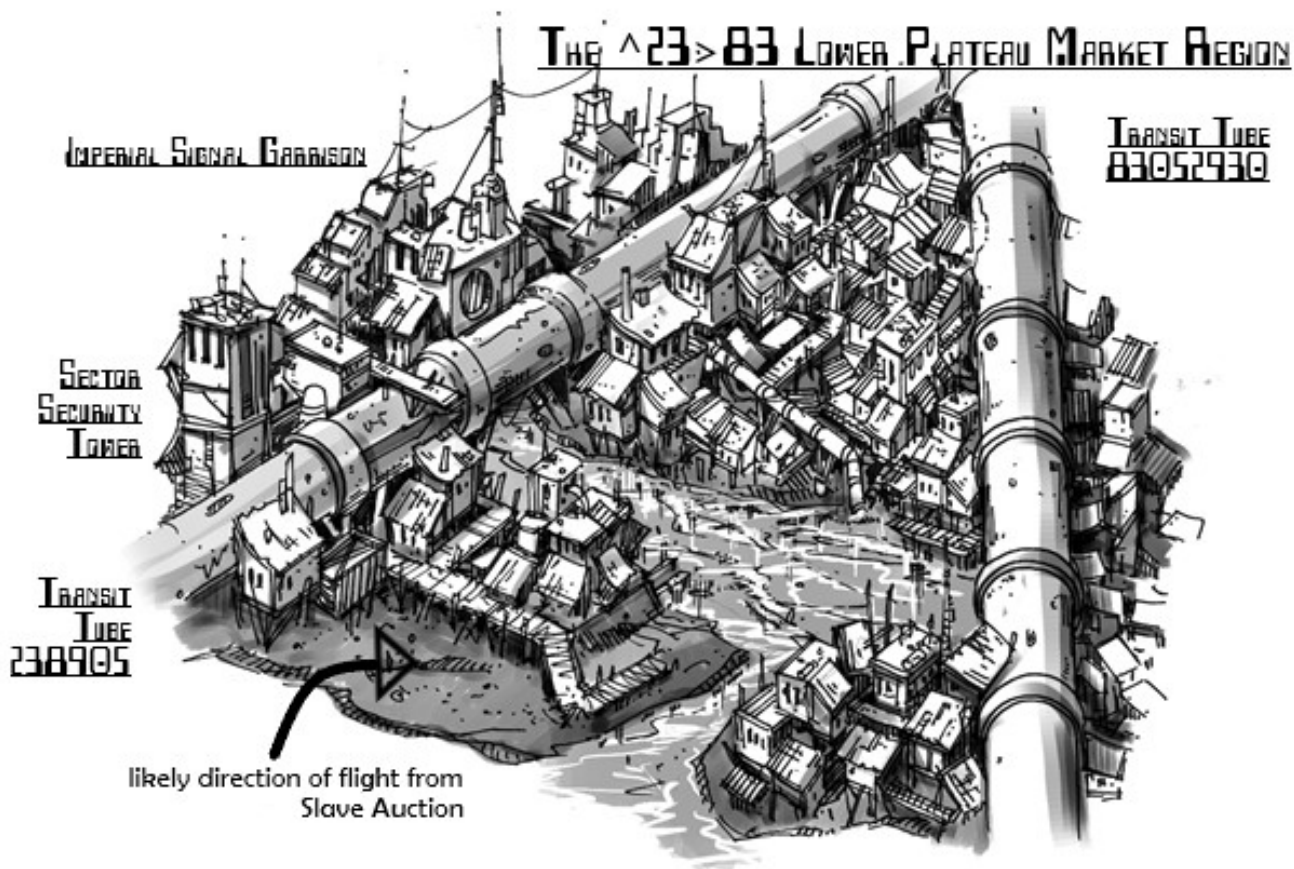
Market Pickpocketing table

Also, dandy as alt “starting gear” table for zeros from Inner Saxus

1. Credit chit	good for 5d100 militrans if used win the next 90 minutes
2. Control wand	for civilian mini Logics and micro Drones
3. CCR	Cortical Chip Reader – medical instrument that (at touch range) can id implants and some software in target
4. Chem reader	hand sensor (v. Short range) for natural analysis
5. E-ring	pressure and slide activated e communicator
6. Collapsing Sword	flimsy retractable short sword inflicting 1d6-1
7. Folding Unicycle	collapses into a small credit card when not in use
8. Fractal Mask	Identity concealing facial hood +3 on saves to evade surveillance etc.
9. Mini HoloCam	record 22 minutes of personal holo
10. Magpick	+1 to disarm and open
11. a PalmGame	small handheld games console
12. Plucking Gloves	see p. 15
13. Power Cartridge	an e-clip for a *very* heavy energy weapon. Milspec?
14. Sensor Glove	+1 to manipulate data via heuristic interface
15. Thumbbook	Micro copy of Leviathan by Hobbscat.
16. Claw or Nail file ⁷	Actually an Instant-Balisong; DC 8 to decipher activation; 1d3 if proficient.
17. Prayer Beads	Leviathanic Prosperity Beads
18. Hardcopy	crumpled print out of test results from VD clinic
19. Autoinjector	with 1d3-1 doses of random chem preloaded
20. Infralenses	contact lenses that confer 20' infravision
21. Seal bag	4 kg solid goods seal bag, half full of Prole Kibble Red 07
22. Empathy band	d16 empathic band
23. Personal Optics	a case containing archaic solid frame goggles ⁸
24. Passkey	to a someone's personal vehicle. Somewhere.
25. Maglev pass	Will save (DC 12) at first use to pass for (lightly) biometrically locked user (who has never reported it missing)
26. Tonguebox	programmed with over 5200 languages
27. Medical cream	used to treat Dampscale; whole tube takes 2d6 days use
28. Notes	someone's rough draft application to the Imp Academy
29. Jewelry	culture ring or bracelet indicating marriage or mating
30. Portable Eye	Hovering broadcast/recording mechanism one shot once Activated.

⁷ File slides lengthwise, unfolding “file” like a fan until it goes free

⁸ While eyeglasses are not unknown in the Imperium they arequaint



north

Very likely, the party will be (for whatever reason) making for the travel tubes to get them the hell out of the immediate region the fastest. However; the Eastern Tube access is non-existent. The one accessway to Tube 83052930 is currently closed. The Western tube is overlooked by Imperial signal security (read: surveillance) and sector security. By the time the party has it in sight likely Legionnaires will already be (visibly) securing the tube station.

Search for the Foundation COMPLICATION – (Venture Seed; optional)

3-5 agents of one or more Navigator houses have made their way to Saxus in order to (attempt) to observe the events of the slave “revolt.” All of them are traveling unofficially and under assumed identities; they are here seeking a single individual and are not otherwise connected to these events.

While they have little to go on, someone involved in the day’s events will “change the course of the universe” after the day’s events, they seek this individual, whom they otherwise have a hard time identifying.

Possibly one or more of you are whom they seek? Time will tell....

Optionally – any zero level that can evade them long enough to get out of the market and reach level one will earn +1 luck. Today would be a most inauspicious day to attract Navigator attention.

Immediate Locations

North market slum locations

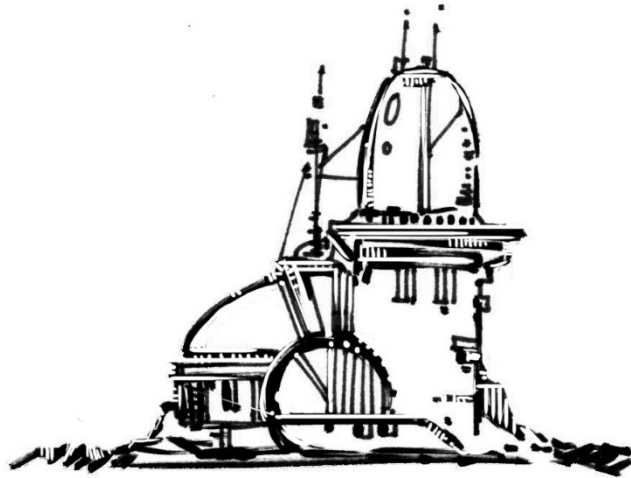
Tellig Gliek⁹ Sou Dizhouxmah

A small yet upscale Ketraxian fish broth mobile shop stand. A favored stop for the Young Aristocrats, before a night of thuggery

Sou Dizhouxmah (Sooo DEEE ZOO ooj-MA) is a red-orange fish broth from the Ketraxis containing mussels, igrouse (a flying arboreal insect-bird), and a layer of Ooom, which are tiny crawling ant-like things (more like roly polys than ants) which crackles and release a sweet flavor when cooked. (Traditional recipes call for the Ooom to be cooked live)

Infamously uses “all 21 of the 23 essential spices” held in esteem by the trad folk of the Ketraxis star group. **If you can’t feel your pores opening up in response it’s not hot enough**

A favored stop for the Young Aristocrats, before a night of thuggery



“Lime Girl’s Tank-fish”

For the less adventurous imperial voyager. This is a tidy, enclosed commercial tankfish shop; one comes in, selects from genotype up and the “tankfish” is grown while you wait. A bit of an oddity in this part of the Plateau but the proprietor does a brisk business anyway. At all hours. With the strangest people.

While you certainly can buy commercial grown vat and tank fish, krillopede, etc. here, this is primarily a front business for one *Ms. Harriet Lime*.

Lime is, professionally, someone who knows many other people. She can be reasonably assumed to be at least initially familiar with any of the available opportunities during lockdown and if the Judge needs someone to farm the jobs out to them, the party can put her on retainer for a small fee – usually a cut of whatever the party makes off with. From time to time Lime will grow special strains of drug plants and the like as necessary for “special clients” – invariably very high paying ones or the wholly indigent.

⁹ Tellig Gliek - Interworld for ‘Alien Food.’ And a subtle reminder that Ketraxians and Friggians are resented inside Saxus which retains strong Third Empire roots and outlook. The food is tasty af though. Be brave Zero

Hal's Electro souk –

*“Ask not what the Machine can do for you, ask what you can do for the Machine.
Unplug, Debug, keep your code clean.”*

a maze-like semi open air bot part and mech repair facility. Singular proprietor, active clientele but almost entirely mechs and synths.

Of note, neither the proprietor nor any component in their shop is networked. Hal is part of an elusive movement of gruff contemplatives who prefer to live their lives ‘unplugged.’ while maintaining strong ties to fellow machine code. Both Hal and the movement embody and believe in a strong work ethic.

Hal is however proudly a machine and does not require sleep nor desire any similar simulation/stimulation; consequently, Hal's is one of three businesses in the soko that is always open. At times Hal hires on assistants, usually other mechs (or rarely, synths) when business is especially active; they tend not to linger very long, as they must hold to the rules of the shop as Hal does.

Hal does not insist on their customers unplugging but does consider signalless mode to be a courtesy for those who do Hal the kindness

Local outbreak of bit rot.

Complications - World event – deploy whenever seems appropriate or interesting. Hal is getting harassed by the health authorities out of some pretense of concern for bit rot. Bit Rot? Oh yes, there's an outbreak.

Bit Rot is an electrochemical disease spread among information sharing networks and mechanically created, in particular Mehbodies and the memories of certain Synth makes.

Sufferers experience dramatically heightened information decay, as their memories and files literally seem to evaporate when exposed. Cyborgs are common carriers.

Far commoner among lower / base progress level technologies where it is indistinguishable from the completely natural entropic phenomenon of information decay.

Presently it is an illness of the poorer Mechanized, those with liquid-crystal, fiberoptic, or similar primitive levels of data storage or (more commonly in this age) transfer; indeed, the leading vector is thought to be trading exposed patch cables.

Bit Rot (Mechs only) Fort save DC 14 to avoid exposure; Hardware with a PL <5 save a step lower on the dice chain. Hardware with a PL of 4 or less save two steps lower. Inflicts 1d4 ea. to AGIL and INT; mech feels off and disoriented; memories randomly deleted.

Infected hardware must be replaced; if purged or replaced second save at DC of 12 is made to retain lack of infection.

Venture Seeds

If Mech or instantiated characters get hit with a nasty batch of CLOCK (see e drugs page), then this leads them to Hal's electro souk who can fix them right up.

Locations in the outer southeastern market district — *this is an upscale open air market sector, rated primarily for slumming “middle scale” and low-end noble traffic; canny PCs on the run will easily be able to take advantage of the number of their betters that have their guard down at this trying time. Especially the more larcenously inclined ones.*

The Fortune Teller While they are fleeing through the maze-like streets, poss. Find a fortune teller to give them guidance (see Sub-ether article p alternatively use the standard imperial deck described on page 30 of **Galaxy Black Book V**)

Money Exchanges Infamously, “once you are inside Saxus, they will take whatever you call money.” Copper pieces, plastic money, paper money, money made of rubber.... The lay faithful of Nikas Liet and Leviathan tend to run the greater money exchanges inside Saxus, and thankfully for the new voyager, they are more concerned about messing each other over than fleeing you, which is not to say they won’t fleece you, they surely will. **See also Stickups p**

LOWER MARKET ESCAPE

1. AEROPLEX - Large multistory public facility

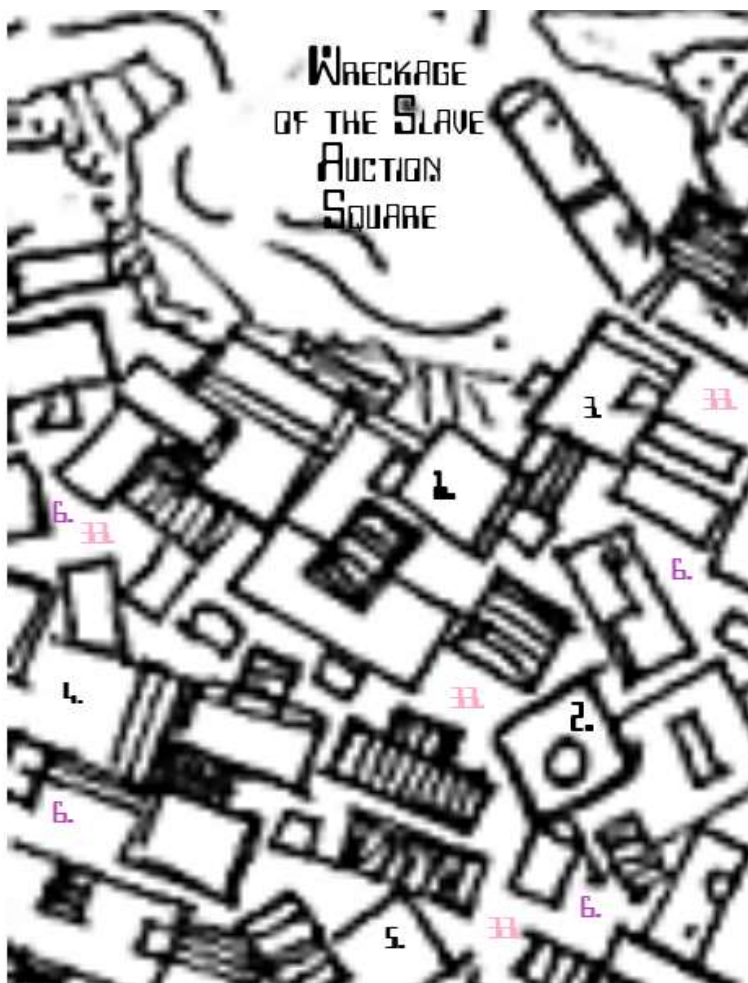
2. COPPER PYRAMID - public orgonne charging station

3. COLLE LUT'S - semi private bathhouse

4. R'qoo's EXOTICS

5. JOURNAL RADIES KIOSK

6. MOBILE SHOP STANDS - There are 5d12 of these in party's line of sight at any given time on either lower plateau map.
Number here indicates large cluster of them.



Immediate Locations

Southeastern Central Market options –

Imperial ramen stand – Among the more obvious and likely, more successful Hiding in Plain Sight Options

Colle Llot's - A 'Griggian' style sauna. Unofficially it is Friggians only. Good place for Friggians (or blue humanoids in general) to get lost in quickly otherwise. More often than not kept only dimly lit with many chambers completely unlit.

Mobile Shop Stands are literally small scooter or micro sled mounted covered shells, rolling enclosures, or simple deployable tents, usually mounted with a variety of containers, micro makers, and the like. Hundreds of Thousands¹⁰ of them travel about the open streets of the Central Market at any hour pedaling food and drink; some are fronts for other types of business and sale of drugs or small arms have not been unknown out of a few of these mobile businesses.

R'qod's Exotic and Rare Trinkets

A geriatric cybernetic insectivroid sells a variety of exotic junk from a thousand star systems. Will buy many goods off of the buyer no questions asked, especially for trade or "bargains."

Check 1 in 5 each Progression for something of unusual value to come through his store.

The Copper Pyramid -

A public orgone recharging station, R7, known to the locals as the Copper pyramid. It is more a pyramidal obelisk, reaching to a nearly distinct point some 160m up. Within are four small circular (open) chambers, each with designated places for up to four sentients at a time. There is a level one sound suppressor field maintained at the entrance thresholds (one in each of the classical cardinal directions) which keeps the outside noise to a dull hum.

A common meet place, and of course, a 'charging station' for psions. A BAD place to start random violence.

On the third floor of the aeroplex there is a mini plaza dominated by a *Dizhouxmah Sou bar*. This is much more upscale (read Snotty) but otherwise also serves a red-orange fish broth traditionally from the Ketraxis (see page 12). Mid-scale Ketraxian biz managers and anonymous suits wanting to do discreet business in plain sight populate the seated plaza at all hours.

33m high rotating wall of holographic Ads

Ads in normal print, *italics represent follow up and Judges notes.*

(see next page and handout)

¹⁰ Those are licensed. Perhaps a million more operate in the greater area without a single iota of paperwork.

the Saxus Lower Plateau Venture and Labour Exchange

We Can Remix You! Do you have a distinctive or desirable likeness? We would like to examine you. Qualified subjects will be offered a likeness holography contract and a negotiable stipend depending on end use.

Do you really want your face and body used to sell V.D. cream and/or sex aids? DC 14 negotiation roll (modified by PERS and CL) to avoid having one's image and assets used to sell something embarrassing; if the deal goes through the would-be Advert will get a stipend of 2d6x100 militrans each progression, at noon on the seventh day.

Licensed and Experienced organic and mechanized Socialators sought! Half, duo, and multi sidereal contracts available! All needs met to qualified candidates who accept .6, 1.1, and 2+ year service indenture contracts. Must accept travel restriction and be motion chipped.

This is a straightforward trip to the Brothel Moon provided you don't particularly want to leave. Ever.

Beamrider station 7/Lower Plateau East is seeking qualified and experienced personnel to round out their 7B/Tensor Spiral, Plateau East to Beamrider Station 0/Outer Interior Starport run.

This is a pilots, steward, and technician position aboard a Beamrider capsule making a twice daily regular run between the Lower Plateau area and the outer ring of the Starport on the other side of the planet.

This will eat up the vast majority of the PCs time; all crew personnel must be chipped and there is a minimum contract to be signed but it is probably the fastest (certainly the safest) way for the party to get to and from the Starport.

Syn Synthesis seeks qualified Empath sensors and Psychokinetic Engineers who have a background in ectoplasmic transportation and synthesis.

*This would net most psions a relatively middling job in the Slimes Industry (see Apocrapha Obscura pp 27-31). However, if the party applies to the job, it will be their golden opportunity to prove their worth as one of the lab's synthetic Humors just escaped and is going berserk through the office spaces below. **Gruesome Hunger**¹¹*

¹¹ **Gruesome Hunger** (1) **Init** +0; **Atk** consumptive splash +2 ranged (1d6+3); **AC** 16; **HD** 3d10; **hp** 18; **MV** 30'; **Act** 2d20; **SP** immune to mind attacks, touch of Grue, splash damage; **SV** Fort+3, Ref +1, Will +1; **AL** C.

Touch of Grue affects Empaths – Gruesome hunger inflicts 3 points of stamina damage (one per HD) for every round it is in contact with an unshielded empath. Likewise, it slowly consumes any organic material with which it comes into contact with, inflicting 1 hp of damage each round melee is conducted from each participant. Damage is healed per the puddle splash below.

A shimmering brown-black puddle, convulsively "splashing" until it strikes. Such injuries heal three times slower than normally as there is considerable tissue damage; the slime in contact with flesh seem to consume it from within.

the Saxus Lower Plateau Venture and Labour Exchange

cryogenics and life maintenance medical technicians! – **Cold Colony**, a licensed imperial suspension provider is seeking qualified and documented Medtechs and cryogenic specialists

Cold Colony is a Suspension vault provider (see below) that handles outmigration into ICDC approved colony clusters. ‘Cold Travelers’ arrive in batches of one thousand to colonies across New Orien, the Rimward Beyond and advanced colonization attempts in the forward Satrapies. Anyone hired on will be waking crew on an immense colony freighter heading out to New Orien¹².

Suspension vaults,

Sometimes called **Longtimer’s Vaults** – In a civilization as old as the core states of the Imperium, it is an indication of confidence in the continuity of that civilization that Longtimer’s Vaults exist. An advanced Para scientific technology derived from base cryonics, provided by a number of Imperium licensed vendors makes this possible. It is an option for some who ‘need a break’ – you put your affairs in order and check into one of the licensed and administered Longtimer Vaults for a designated period of time. In exchange for which the company or concern trades your “life credits”

On waking there are acclimation services awaiting. As economic and state-condition indicators go, the number of those checking into a vault going up is considered successful, as it indicates great long term confidence in the imperium and it’s *continuing* ability to provide.

The Temporal Suspension Guild is a trade association of Imperial licensed “Forward Providers”–**Suspension, PauseCo, Get-Away, Take2, STA@while, Mindbræk, Omnisleep Everlasting**

The 3/23 Club needs bouncers, medtechs, and Socialators!
Lower Market, Dime’ plateau. No Riffraff

¹² If you have **Colony Black**, you know they are in for a surprise or two.

Maximal Max's Central Core Plucking Clinic

In the imperial core one of the ways the level of casual psionics tech has penetrated everyday life manifests as Plucking Clinics. Such are places where the well to do have their coronas cleansed semi regularly, rather akin to a psychic manicure. The Pluck Artists are equipped with Coronal Gloves to facilitate this alleged experience. Your experiences may differ.

Coronal Gloves – allows a very basic form of coronal manipulation; alternately, provides a +2 bonus to those with the psychic discipline as a psychic focus. The wearer will perceive 'negative' traits as cold, 'positive' ones as warm, and toxic ones as a sticky sort of sludge.

More imperial tech Psionics

Coronal Gloves – allows a very basic form of coronal manipulation, or provides a +2 bonus to those with the psychic discipline as a psychic focus. The wearer will perceive 'negative' traits as cold, 'positive' ones as warm, and toxic ones as a sticky sort of sludge.

Flight Resolution

By the one hour mark the southern market is crawling with security; an Imperial Legion hovered in on sleds and are securing the whole place.

Sooner or later the party is going to feel constrained; gently allow the flow of events to direct them northward but do not make an issue of it.

The g-sleds overhead each with three Legionnaires in power armor do that anyway.

By the end of the second hour, a Legionnaire fire coordination team has parked over each Tubeway entrance in the north but are otherwise refusing (properly) to deploy into a civilian / domestic zoned sector. The team will be hemmed in here in the ghetto of the north part of the sector, but they will be safe from the prying eyes of imperial attention. At least for a little while.

Scene Three – going to ground in the anthill

Three full progressions will go past. Each features different job opportunities, and different events. Meanwhile they lay low. *Everyone* is on the lookout both for escaped slaves and “Anti-imperial commercial sabotage agents” (aka anti-slavery saboteurs, anarchists, terrorists, et. Multiple cetera)

The news renders it as dead/injured and (amount of damages) so

12/47 (3,100 i.t.¹³)

Progression one

Should focus on getting the PCs to ground, letting them find their feet, and figuring out the lay of the land. Contacts made here may very well pay off later.

Progression two

There is now a full-blown meningitis outbreak in the sector but of course this information is only spread via word of mouth. NO official declaration will be made. Melyndah (see Killin’ Time) will have her hands full and be unreachable this week, though she surely could use the PCs aid right about now.

Progression Three

Should focus on the PCs enduring or completing whatever jobs they have picked up in the meantime.

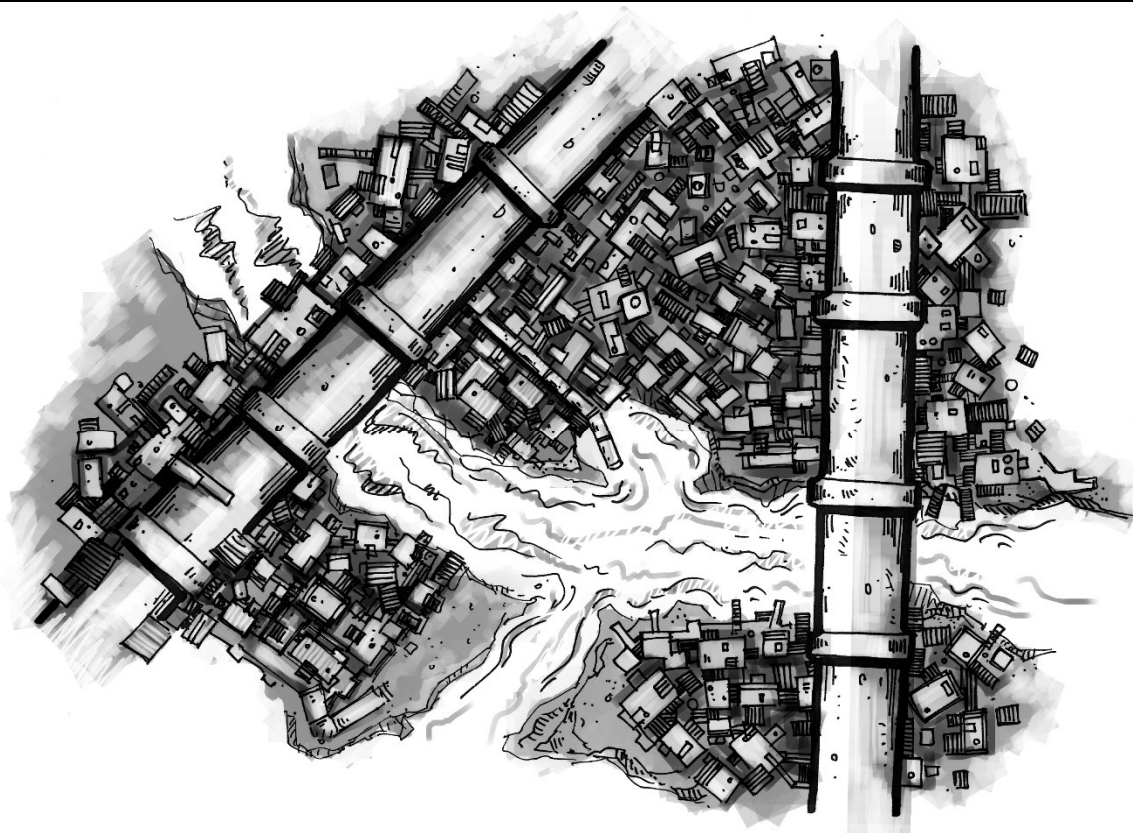
Judges notes: For those running this first section as a proper funnel, know that this here is the rest (and for some tables, the meat of) the funnel. Some tables may not need it but will still find it entertaining, others may find their groups flailing in option paralysis – the Judge is urged to gently introduce one of the more detailed Opportunities (or simply chose the one that seems easiest to introduce).

In any event, it is a time for the party to complete a series of mini adventures til they have enough XP to level. The opportunities that follow should not be exhaustive, the Judge is certainly encouraged to add their own! But all of these feed to elsewhere in the campaign or provide critical options for burgeoning pc adventurers. This is all far less critical if being run as part of an existing game where the Judge is not introducing a bunch of zero levels, though still quite useful.

Of note, the venture seeds and opportunities that follow for the most part work just fine within the rest of the adventure so there is no especial need to be forcing them now, or at all.

¹³ That’s 3,100 Imperial Transactions or over 3,100,00 militrans. Probably an exaggeration. Probably.

The ^23>83 The Lower Plateau Market Region (yellow Dimme' sector)



Located at coordinates 23°08'13" Ring 83°23'33"W Ray ¹⁴ (shorthand ^23>83, the way we refer to zip or area codes) by those who live in interior Saxus and just the Lower Plateau by those who live or have relations here.

An extraordinarily high number of Shadows and off-worlders pepper the impoverished & extremely mixed population of the Lower Plateau region. Even in a core world with as diverse a population as interior Saxus, this region is teeming with life, imperial and otherwise, unknown in the imperial mainstream.

The only thing this area is especially known for by those who matter (e.g., those who live elsewhere) is the "Saxus Open Air Opportunity Market."

The very essence of Interior Saxus seems distilled here to a raw and pure form. By turns compassionate, competitive, and opportunistic, Desperation and ambition create a heady culture – they will help you out if you are in a bad way but when you are up for the same job they will sabotage your comm circuit and black out your windows. In Saxus, no matter who you are, If you want it bad enough, you can pro'lly find a way to get it.

¹⁴ Much like latitude and longitude of old this is a way of depicting where things are inside the sphere. Ring in this case represents the North-South axis (latitude) while Ray indicates the East West. (longitude)

3 Progressions to Freedom – Killin' Time

Finding a place to hole up and something to fill the time

“He say you Bladerunner” –

A local underground doctor running a “mobile free clinic” is having some problems with curious parties.

Melyndah – also a breakaway member of the Electric Congress (so she’s a wizard) She has her hands full dealing with a local meningitis outbreak and cannot spare the time or resources to deal with the curious parties...but would provide room and board and medical care to anyone who could dissuade such parties.

“Tell him I’m eating.”

Two mongrel humanoids, G and J are running a food cart on a temporary license. IF the characters are obviously indigent and hungry, they will pro’ly feel bad for the PCs. They only speak broken Basic, though G has picked up some Lingishtar rather quickly. They are the recipients of a timespace accident that deposited them here from a far splinter some sixteen months ago.

While foreign to this place they have adapted quickly. Moreover, they are a pair of do-gooders who have started opening their squat to needy souls¹⁵. They can safely put up 1d4+1 PCs on the run especially if they are unarmed, injured, and clearly in need of aid. Any zeros at death’s door can pro’ly be safely left with them and expected to recover. Neither of the girls have noteworthy equipment other than what they have rigged together (their food cart was hand made from scrapped parts mostly by J).

“Things to do inside Saxus when you’re Dead”

A vampire has somehow managed to survive the destruction of their maker and at a relatively early stage in their un-death development as well. While most of their identity is intact, their need to feed is undiminished. They are...squeamish. If they could find someone to .. bring their food back to them they would be happy to form some sort of partnership with the zeros. Despite this their would-be employer does not wish to kill anyone, however.

“Bring me the inanimate computing nexus of A.L. Farzhiel Galaxia”

A Verkritian metal hunter is on Saxus, off book, seeking a rogue mechanoid, Farzhiel Galaxia. They accepted the contract long ago and has followed them across seven planets. Professional ethics are fine, but this is taking too long. Seeks to hire some contractors with no local ties and deniability to aid or, honestly, complete the job for them.

¹⁵ Anachronism characters take note; G & J speak American English and their food cart sells a fusion of cheap American, southeast Asian, and vegetarian street food, sourced from local ingredients. Anyone timelost will almost certainly get adopted by them unless the zero in question is belligerent or violent.

“Hey Spud!”

Anyone with cybernetics, onboard memory, or a media link will find themselves among the millions who just got databombed with something called *Sally Zero’s Guide to Roughing it in the Empire* (see page 39) Sally 00, a wanted anti-establishment anarchist has just uploaded their latest roughing it guide to the world.net from a Starport datacenter, no doubt hacked. She is a bit of a do-gooder; if anyone can reach out to her, she’ll drop what she’s doing and navigate the PC and anyone with them to a safehouse located underneath the metallic streets of the district. *But they will owe her.* A 15-minute walk away under the streets will yield an electronically sealed safehouse’ (a 10x10 supply closet scrubbed from public databases) – it is clean, has bedding for four, and will be biometrically locked to the characters she guides to it for 30 days after that time. 26.5 hours after the party arrives there will be an electronic delivery; a Logic (a non-sentient robot) will deliver fresh clean clothes for each of the party to help them blend, and an additional item of equipment from the random starting items table useful to someone in the party.

“I’m just waiting for the Man.....”

the Lower Dime’ Housing Authority

A large square cut block style imperial building with at least six to ten floors apparent. Singular visible congregated exit points, all inaccessible. A typical ferrocrete reinforced-to-withstand bombardment style imperial government building.

But...When is this place ever open?

Should someone get the presence of mind to break into the building (DC 20 mechanical or strength, there is not any actual electronic security) they will find a large (plenty of space with that vaulted ceiling as there is just the one floor) singular empty room.

There is plenty of space with that vaulted ceiling as there is just the one floor.

A small warehouse that takes up the entire inside of the building. Utterly empty of personnel or appliance.

It is however clean and free of the elements. You can’t say they didn’t help in that sense. An Imperial inspector would be likely to turn their nose or proboscis up at this latter interpretation but as it does “*reward individual initiative*” it technically falls within regulations¹⁶

There are likely many such “facilities” spread the poorer regions of inner Saxus.

Despite likely PC expectations, absolutely no one will come calling on anyone who breaks into and sets up shop within such a place, at least not for several months. Those skilled (or desperate) enough to attempt to steal power can do so with the right background and a DC 14 skill check (DC 16 if they wish to be more circumspect about it.) There is no water or other connections here so the party of fugitives will have to figure those issues out themselves.

¹⁶ The Empress Imperium has MANY regulations for and defining precisely how an approved member government can screw with its own people in the governments’ name But in a polity of easily over a million member worlds, obviously everyone plays by the rules right?

Locals, Interested Parties, and Potential Interlopers

‘The Pack’

Is a group of neo-canids of mixed breeds (latrans, neo-lupus and neo-vulpids mostly) who have one way or another wound up here sometime in the last 12,000 years. In the Lower Plateau region, the pack numbers some 1500 strong, though diffuse over a very wide area. Most (83%) of them are long timers who are descended in whole or part from an early group of free chimera who wound up here after the Second Empire’s collapse. These are long since adapted to their new roaming territory – the relatively low rooftops of the Lower Plateau Labour Exchange area.

They take careful care to hide their numbers and in some cases their existence. They are among those who manage to live almost entirely off the grid inside Saxus. No more than 3d6 of them will be encountered at a single time and often attempting to act as if they alone are ‘the pack.’

They maintain the illusion that they do not speak or understand common imperial languages, well enough that those who know of them frequently assume they are resistant to conventional translation microbes.

The Sabre Dancers

A trained and dedicated performance troupe they are known primarily for their high speed frenetic dance, inspired by equal parts Thumpah, imperial internal medicine katas, and a variety of basic martial arts styles.

They however train to do so with power swords, energy blades, and force swords.

Dancing one, three, or seven at a time, they regularly do things that can maim or kill in seconds if done incorrectly. Most often nude or in *very little* though often with a variety of diaphanous scarves and the like to preserve the illusion and make more impressive their acts of skill and agility.

Presently a group of 2-12 of them are traveling together, somewhat incognito in-world, two teachers and the rest students, both practicing and preparing for the day their troupe comes to Inner Saxus.

If you ever wanted to run away and join the Imperial Circus, maybe they can hook you up?

The Empress chipped and weathered; A vision most Imperial

In a disused corner of the marketplace is an ancient idol-shrine, dating to the Crusades. At this shrine the character with the highest PERS score or that has shown the most interest in it will experience...something. Is it a hallucination? A psychic attack? Something more? A genuine vision?

In their eyes, for a moment, *the central idol is intact once more, seemingly the only object in a vast unpeopled garden; but laying across it are five piles of pale white snakes.*

Just perhaps however, a would-be Agent or Cleric has just been Called.

“There are serpents in my garden. Find, expose and destroy my enemies.”

Opportunities

A directory of small time and up and coming criminal enterprises within the Lockdown

“Hello Cousin!” A small Hennet family, a group of first and second cousins who smuggled themselves on-world in the way of their people, hoping to establish a foothold. At present they number but seven.

However, by allying with the PCs they may be able to provide a place to hide the PCs out (initially) and they may make enough credit arrange passage for some 15 of their fellows on the next transport. The family will never forget those who helped them at the beginning. One of their number (**Hazlett Aytee**) works odd jobs in the backroom at the Red Room and sees and hears a LOT. (*“Oh, it’s a hot mess of dead fish in there. You want me to let you in the back door?”*)

The 3/23 Club needs bouncers, medtechs, and Socialators!

The 3/23 Club would not normally permit the likes of most of you into it’s terraced, oxy-enhanced interior where honey protein and locusts in posto pots sit on every table. However, this time there is an open gaming table being held in a underground backroom for a very special bottle of wine....

Gambling for Hell-wine

Not just an expression in this case. Nihlus Xangelx, the Red Prophet (and a disciple of the Red Queen¹⁷), is the owner / proprietor of the 3/23 Club. Moreover, the Red Prophet also oversees the Red Room, a private club comprised mostly of a series of private rooms “in the back” (*underneath* the 3/23 Club, actually) paying especial care to the more exclusive private rooms in the back where private games, parties and deals are the norm. To interlopers & outsiders, it is presented as “an exclusive electro industrial-social lounge,”

A bizarre but well-off cast of characters have paid lots to be able to sit at this table. Why?

Hell wine – it is said that, but a sip of hell wine is like the touch of the gods...denied. It heartens the body at the expense of the soul and guarantees damnation as it crosses the lips. Treated as unholy water for religious rule/warfare purposes. Those who caress the bottle will find they are immune to poison and disease, age at a greatly reduced rate and are never going to bear or sire children, their genetic material cannot be used to make clones. And if they attempt to donate their biological material to a living organism it will fail and die and poison the donor besides...and likely take their soul as well should they survive the poisoning o the soul that follows.

- ❖ *A single sip* also provides extra Hit Dice. (1d6 plus any stamina bonuses)
- ❖ *A second sip* lets the mostly mortal taste a hint of what the devils lost, and it burns deep inside. This turns the eyes an unconcealable unearthly red and confers 2d6 HD. They will detect as evil.
- ❖ *A third sip* requires a successful Fortitude save (DC 25); failure indicates the body has died and the soul, forefeet, goes immediately to hell. On a successful save, the sip provides immunity to even magical diseases and curses (lycanthropy mummy rot etc.) and 3d6 additional HD. They will also pick up an irritating number of clerics, heroes, paladins, and other Champions of Light who want very much to put you down. Detects as evil.

¹⁷ See **Book of Scarlet Abomination** for details

Sonic Shower

My captor kept a very fresh carafe of *kava* juice on a small, themed table on the veranda, just underneath one of those sheer screens that keeps the worst part of the sun's light out.

The privacy screen it provides is of course totally coincidental.

My would-be owner likes it that way, says he has nothing to hide and fears no repercussions. In truth however, like all the others, he was a coward and a bully, and had never had to live with consequences of any kind and so believed himself immune.

He only kept me for three weeks. It was – only passing objectionable at the time but then I am accustomed to being uncomfortable. Twice it was violent. The rest was implied and therefore posturing.

The first time was probably how he regarded sex.

The second time he hit me.

I had calculated originally that I would need six progressions to lie low and heal before showing my face onto the street again. But when he hit me it was just a little over three.

He hit me and well, that was that.

I had been standing, at a sort of craft table in the hall, overlooking his veranda, not eating any of his drugged or medicated food like usual. He was trying to make small talk, get his fingers in the door. Not happening.

I guess he just had enough of it as when he walked past me he just casually boxed my ears.

Or tried to. He was not, I should mention, very good at it. Nonetheless I have my standards and while I can put up with quite a bit in the service of my goals. I'm not putting up with that.

I spun around and rather effortlessly threw him onto the crafts table. He landed face down, hands spread, in the food. He took a long time to react, as though the world was – in his mind – moving in slow motion. It didn't matter. He'd carefully kept knives away from me, but anything can penetrate the hand if used with enough force. And so, I ran his right hand through, before sweeping his legs out from underneath him.

Then I walked out onto the veranda and poured myself a cup of steaming *Kava*.

Foolishly, he screamed before he charged.

The carafe violated the bloated pits of his face, leaving them bloody. The scalding hot *kava* though rendered him mute and unable to do aught but stand there as though slapped by god, waiting it seemed for the pain to set in. Instead, he managed, finally now at the end, to surprise me. He took a swing at me. Blind and wildly. He had on some level given up. He wasn't stupid, just spoiled. Spoiled, petty and corrupt.

I wasn't feeling up to snuff really and I was already pretty fatigued. I might have kicked him in the solar plexus but that was a bit beyond my effective reach then. I still had internal organs healing after all.

But he swung and he missed. He spun around like a drunk top twice, losing, recovering, and then finally being abandoned by his internal balance. I jumped on him once, hard, and the gun came spiraling out of his coat on the tile.

Oh.

I actually hesitated, not once having realized he was actually armed this whole time. Likely he did not know how to use it effectively, but I could not take that chance.

Groggily he moved but was still reacting. I scrambled, though slowly, across him and across the tile to stoop and lift the vibro-pistol by its grip. It spun into life automatically.

Well now, this is not the weapon of a casual owner.

That's that then.

He looked up at me and only then at the very end did he make the same connection I had moments before.

I have never seen what a sonic does to someone at point blank before, and certainly not to their face. For a moment, I was squeezing the trigger and it seemed to lack a charge. Then his face pulled what looked to be 11Gs. Then it began to vigorously ... flow away. His incoherent rage turned to screams and some kind of begging then and I wished more than anything I could have just put a slug in him and put him out of both of our miseries.

But that's not what happened.

My captor, a self-styled independently minded slaver, a "free thinking intellectual" – a chogghole like all the rest – took a long time to die and it was a messy affair. I had to shower twice and taking a sonic shower after giving one is not an experience I am anxious to repeat.

Some notes on using Part one as a Funnel for Zero levels

By the time you are working your way through the material in part one, the Zero levels amongst you will start reaching 11 XP or equivalent. Depending entirely on the style of game the Judge runs, this may be a non-issue or a giant problem. This article addresses the latter.

Urban Confiscators and **Thieves** can pick up the trade quite easily here – note that a straight up DCC thief is going to be more useful here than in most imperial urban environments but their emphasis on low tech solutions may need to be mitigated.

(Some Judges may wish to swap the low tech Thief abilities out for their Urban Confiscator equivalents; this is wholly permissible. Just remember that the fewer differences there are between the classes the more things tend to get muddled.

Would-be **Agents and Clerics** may experience a divine revelation at any point during lockdown, or may find their way to any of the *Sacred Spaces* (see article this issue p 46) within Saxus and petition to join the priesthood.

Warriors and Gunfighters have their work cut out for them provided they are or can be of a violent disposition

Dwarves may need to find patronage in a trade delegation from the Forgeworlds or may simply be making use of pre-existing cultural knowledge as they gain experience in the arts of warfare, as with Warriors above.

Halflings have the easiest time of it. The Hennet (p. 15) will take them in and care for them during this trying time of spending experience points.

Would-be **Flesh Hunters** would do well to find one of the guild in world (see adventure p)

Elves and Wizards may find patronage, or instruction through arcane data vaults, ancient tomes, and direct instruction of course. And no few manifest strange arcane powers as a matter of course anyway. Consult (see p) and (see p.)

Splinter-shifters and (to a lesser extent) **Psions and Psychic Healers** are known to 'break out' or spontaneously manifest their abilities anyway. There is completely room for a small psychic or healer academy here in Saxus if that is the route the Judge wishes to pursue also. LOTS of room to expand what is available inside the Saxun moon.

Problem Children

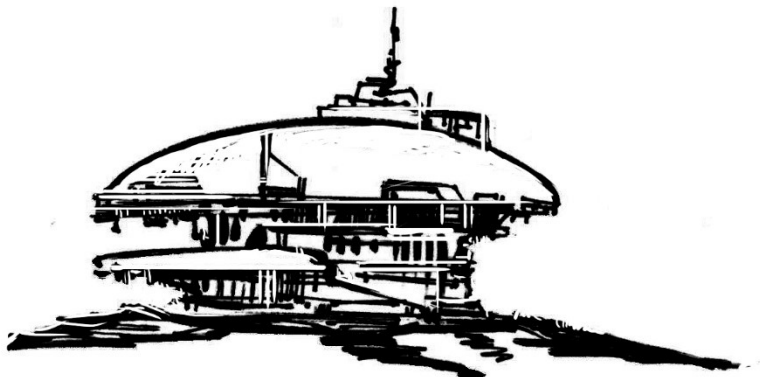
Imperial Space Knights may find it hard to justify the transformation process in Saxus. However, if that's what the player wants, it behooves the Judge to create an exile with a cybernetic transformation forge somewhere beneath these common streets....

Likewise, **ESPERNET clone soldiers** are always a bit hard to justify after the fact but perhaps a clone bank contracts with the formerly Zero level and uses them as a template for the rest?

Judges don't let the available background material limit your players actions unless that is your intent.

It may simply be easiest to not worry about it, but each table is different. Use what works best at your gaming table. If continuity is important to you, consider that such 'ass-pull' origins are great story fodder later on in the Saxus campaign.....

PART TWO AFTER LOCKDOWN



If running this as a funnel congratulations you're done. However much of what follows may still be useful during the funnel adventure. Mix and match, as always.

Once the Security lockdown is lifted, the party should now be properly rested, and any who have the XP will have had the time to level. They will likely have some very firm ideas about how to proceed

But first

(Ongoing) The Living Weapons (or tools)

Of some concern to the White Sun, five of those who have escaped are among those whom they have 'modified' during their time aboard vessel.

By the time lockdown is over, these five are being *actively* sought out. One of them is presumed to have somehow gone transplanar. They are the stand in for any PC who wound up modified after choosing the Abducted background (Sub-ether pp)

So besides that one, there are four others.

Living Key - PC Experimentation – play this for as much, or as little, pathos and / or horror as you and the player get off on, but no more. It is suggested that such a character be modified as follows.

One arm, in a humanoid a forearm and hand, will have been replaced by semi-organic shapeshifting crystal tech. They are attempting to build a "Universal Key" into a living creature. Unfortunately for the White Sun, they were -through some quirk of fate or PC biology- successful. The PC in question will not initially be able to tell anything has changed (necessarily; if they remember the process, they may have suspicions).

When confronted with a common lock – and lock here is specifically called out to, in electronic systems, include any "access port or panel" that is tied to a control system (and so cybernetic) and requires key, code, or item to activate or manipulate.

In a practical sense the PC will soon find that doors open, computers give access, and basic security is child's play to overcome ... at will. Psi or electronic weapon and equipment locks will not be tripped. Such a character will leave no traces on a psi circuit equipped firearm (or any other pieces of equipment).

In the aftermath of the slave revolt

The White Sun will have otherwise functionally gone to ground. Those among them and their servants who act as the face find themselves in a progression's worth of hurt as SecFor, the Slaving Commission, and those powerful people who have found it useful to do business with them (especially) give them the what-for.

The cost in time, bribes, and extensive mind control/memory revision (where necessary) is tremendous and the loss of the slaves both expensive in terms of exposure and fiscal cost. Also certain of those slaves were already paid for, bound for, ultimately House Thetyel for one.

Likely they will be occupied keeping eyes and minds from prying further into their business until lockdown is concluded. Thereafter they will be on the hunt, "through semi reliable proxies" for the Living Key, the other four tools, and in a general way, any other of their escaped slaves.

If the party remain in the general area after lockdown, they will likely be found by one of their searching parties sooner or later. Roll 1d6

1-3 A single White Sun, wearing a local face, guided by 1-3 summoned creatures each of less than 2 HD

4-5 A single White Sun, wearing a stolen but nonlocal face, a summoned entity of 5 or more HD, and 1d3 "local colour" 2-3 HD henchmen with minimal equipment and arms

6 1d2 members of the White Sun, in any face, with an 'advisor' from either the Thetyel or Bok families, who leads 2d4 well trained, well-disciplined followers with weapons, armor, and equipment of quality. Stay hidden.

Eight Walking Angry

Further, they have lost the use and loyalty of Black Ultra-9, now an 8-member clone brotherhood. The Saurids have been partially disarmed by the authorities and stalk the streets of the market looking for their brother's killer...whilst ostensibly looking for new employment. They know only it was a short bit of sustained weapons fire from one of the escaping slaves – if any of the party fit that bill or that description, they may have problems. If they even insinuate that it was them, however, they will be squished.

By the time lockdown is lifted, they will have been cleared and more importantly their exit fund from the Guild will have paid out having left the White Sun contract early under proper terms of separation.

(TLDR they got their bond payment back b/c one of them died)

If by then they have a target to take their ire out on, they will blow this money on a High Violence Contract (p.) the moment they get the rest of their weapons back.

Party Options

By no means an exhaustive list, this hopes only to cover the more obvious eventualities.

Flee to the Starport (option)

of note is a vast elevator system (the ‘inner beanstalk’) that allows rapid transit to specific economic regions within the moon. – while they will have difficulty navigating it, esp. if they are quick they can pro’ly use the noble’s credentials they nabbed to board

Alternatively, a night on the Street of the Gods could get them into all manner of trouble. Or all the way to the end where the Temple of Exterre stands ready to take their (stolen) credit for a wander in the oracular maze.

Life of Crime – Especially for some characters it may be relatively easy to set up shop in the maze-like streets south of the market as petty criminals and this is a perfectly viable option.

Section: Money is Theft

The easiest path forward for the PCs is, almost likely, further involvement in Saxus’ criminal element. See - A Little Crime to Pass the Time (page 46)

Life of Service – If the party just REALLY want off world and out system maybe the easiest way to do that is to sell yourself into a dedicated indenture or an imperial ownership contract, which makes you a slave. But hey you’ll learn valuable skills, be taken care of, and have job security.

If they get in trouble with the authorities? Busted (option)

Well, it depends; SecFor or the AUTHORITIES?

Inner Saxun *Security Forces* are pretty much like they are everywhere in the core: easily targeted by their shiny, slick resistant uniforms, only equipped with non-lethal technology and largely made up of goons, simpletons, bullies, censors, and other small-minded folk. SecFor uniforms are white with multicolored symbolic insignia visible at collar and cuff area. The uniform resembles that of a nurse’s surgical uniform c. 2022 – scrubs, gloves, mask and skullcap/hat but all made of something like Gore-Tex. Any encounter between PCs and the SecFor will lead to some or all of them spending time in a Tranquility Booth.

Tranquility Booth – a holding cell. Often designed to hold 1, 2, or 4 at a time depending on size and other factors. Slightly octagonal rooms with pictures of flowers and other “calming” images constantly displaying on every surface.

If any characters wind up busted by SecFor they will eventually be interviewed by administrator Vohn (see below)...once she realizes they were taken in an illegal slaving op, she will see to it that in exchange for full legal cooperation they are freed and face no charges. Or may offer other things depending on class choices

Might even ask them to find and hookup with whomever set bombs off in hopes that will lead her to the (illegal) slavers proper.

It's also possible of course that they may wind up traveling to the prison asteroid of *Saxus Devisus*. Likewise, if they do something tragically ambitious and/or stupid (home invasion in one of the noble households to the south?) they will ultimately wind up on a shuttle under guard bound for

Saxus Devisus

At which point it begins to look a lot like the first Guardians of the Galaxy movie.

- *Saxus Devisus* Is a prison asteroid, secure and draconian. The Warden is a lackey of the Spice Commission and so frequently this rock becomes the unofficial hosting site of *anyone* the Commission needs interrogated or probed off the books.

At this point consider drawing up a 0 level **Why are you in the prison Asteroid** list for more replacement characters

If they are lucky, Administrator Vohn may note their affiliation with the events in the marketplace and play a gut feeling. Likely not, she's a very busy woman with most of an imperial core sector to oversee, but she does notice trends.....

Alternatively, they may wind up on a prison transport; leading to **Prison Break** (~~Galaxy Black p 698~~)

High Violence Contracts

So long as you come accredited and are not just some hoodlum and can make your case before a Loan Officer¹⁸, then it is possible for combat certified parties to -literally- buy "High Violence Contracts" which are functionally indulgences to commit assault and (sometimes) homicide. The further the writ will go, both the more expensive the contract will be and the higher the purchaser must be held in esteem, either by a body of confirmed professional certifications or endorsements (a mercenary company's guild brag sheet qualifies but barely);

Generally, the writ covers a specified window -defining time, location, and designated targets.

Should it matter, *money laundering is not in any way criminal inside Saxus*. It is however, heavily certified and taxed enormously.

¹⁸ Certified loan officers are somewhere between a justice of the peace and a traveling judge inside Saxus. Most are attached to "Loan Consolidation Firms" made up of the venture funds seeded by a number of Banks who wish their hands clean. Most of them travel armed and have had some basic training to counter mind control techniques. The higher end ones have all been conditioned to not cooperate under influence anyway.

Complicating Factors

Administrator Kreel Ilsa Vohn

Kreel Vohn is a *very* capable Imperial administrator. At times however she feels as though she was born in the wrong era - she has ambition, but only so much. More often than not she finds herself almost wishing for a crises or some new treachery for her to compel all her resources to combat but of course, as a loyal imperial citizen she daily combats the emergence of such threats.

In her capacity as Administrative Secretary for the sector Exchequer, she occupies a potent but relatively anonymous position in the local (and embedded) segment of the Imperial bureaucracy. As a capable and perceptive individual, this places her often in the position of coming into contact with certain facts that require “rapid and assertive action.” All too frequently, this is action that she does not have the authority or the resources to make happen.

In truth. This situation, and others like it, have led her time and again to go to outside agencies, (most often such as the player characters) to resolve thesediscrepancies, while strictly maintaining adherence to the spirit of (always) and the letter (whenever possible) of Imperial law.

In all likelihood, some several echelons higher in the imperial hierarchy, are fully aware of Vohn’s qualifications....and find that her initiative is best spent as it is, dealing with things locally as she encounters them, whereas giving her greater duties would curtail these (unofficially) quasi-sanctioned activities.

In short, she makes an excellent occasional or recurring patron for more ethically minded player characters as Vohn will only retain the services of those who will make every effort to act within the limits of imperial law. She will have neither patience nor tolerance for those who casually break imperial law nor for those who flaunt their ability to do so. She will not hesitate to turn in herself characters that wantonly break the law, regardless of her own involvement, but she does screen her ‘troubleshooters’ very carefully.

Using Vohn

1. Vohn has attracted the attention of StatCom13 and been analyzed as a “talented biometric asset.” Other such talented assets (such as the Player Characters) may find themselves sponsored by Vohn’s office just shortly after it comes into a **sudden** influx of (totally legitimate) imperial money. A *lot* of money.
2. Vohn has begun to suspect that her activities are not unknown to her superiors.
3. Vohn is closing in on a string of discrepancies in XX that will ultimately lead to corruption within the household of the local imperial liaison (the habitat’s Space Lord) and more importantly, directly threatens to implicate that Lord or one of their immediate family or party.
 - a. Of course, for rather less ethically minded player characters, he may retain their services to be rid of Vohn.

Reaching Out

Tube Station Boogie

The nearest central transit nexus is a multi-level central column in the northern sector of the Lower Plateau region which connects with over 167 forms of intra-saxun transport. Once it no longer hosts half a century of bored, trigger happy imperial legionnaires, it should become much more useful to the band.

By main trunk travel tube, someone can g-sling to about anywhere else in Inner Saxus (or thereabouts) in about three hours, at the very most. Save in the poorest areas (or market sectors cleared for sentient trafficking) local g-tube access is ubiquitous and used by anyone not intimidated by the “free fall shotgun” sensation of tube travel.

Main trunk tube capsules sling up to 60 sentients at a time, safely tucked aboard a bullet shaped travel capsule. Local tube-access is capsule-less and vehicle-less, but one person at a time. If you get sick there will be a fine.

In most areas of inner Saxus taking the tube is culturally about the equivalent of taking the bus in a large city to locals, no more and no less.

Getting Places

Use free G sling **Travel tubes** for short distances (unless you are unscanned and indigent you get billed at the end of the month, like a toll pass)

Travel by paid or rental **Aerodynes or gyro rentals, taxis, and remote piloted units** (In all cases you pay in advance)

Hail down **Aircabs** (‘spensive, pay at time of transport)

and for the monied and unhurried, **Lighter than Air Transit Environments**, sort of a mobile lounge or fern bar carried aloft by a suspensor, balloon, or other airborne conveyance.

The very few Aircars that are private/noncommercial tend to be noble owned and travel in restricted airspace, allowing hard dash speeds of up to 2-400 kph.

LATE Balloons are small fortresses carried aloft on micro-zeppelins at a greater altitude than other traffic, going slow but they are never ever unconnected up there.

LATE Aerogyros are far more common; they are small (mini-van sized in terms of internal space) but fast moving LATE craft, over a million of which are owned privately in-world. One can probably reach the Starport in about 3 hours, and the noble ranches some 400km south in about an hour.

Judges: *Inner Saxus is a good place to try abstracting wealth once the characters get established; the Abstract Wealth rules (Book IV pp) fit perfectly with the constant info-tracking that is inner Saxus – your expenses are tagged along with your biometrics. Not for all tables – groups of gangsters and thieves often want to be able to count their coins, but for those who are okay with less bookkeeping, it’s an option.*

“Galleon-gallery of the Spicy Main” - There is a **LATE** Gyro-lounge that makes twice daily trips between the Lounge Plateau Tube Station Roof and the Starport; they are high capacity consumer transports that maintain lift integrity with selective use of microgravitics technology. A bit like taking the ferry, you hang about or spend money at one of three internal businesses during the six hour journey, stopping to pick up cargo and passengers at two other points. Conditions are approximately imperial citizen rated, service wise, clean, manageable, but with few bells and whistles you don't have to pay for. Within the faintly pirate themed dirigible exists a small lounge, a data/credit center, and a 30 minute “flash” brothel.

@ the Starport

Thankfully there's a ton of material in this issue of Sub-ether – almost as if it were planned that way.....likewise

The street of the gods Starport street of the gods table (p. XX)

See also See Star Garden (p. XX)

So, you think you're getting off world.

“I understand that you are all citizens. No? Oh. Shame. Unless you have signed travel papers, you're not going anywhere but a behavior cube.”

BUT

This is the imperial core. For those who are imperial citizens or, obviously members of the nobility, commercial service is available. Without authorized transit papers, slaves, proles, and other subjects are prohibited from leaving their world.

Maleth Noir

Maximal Secundus

The exception to the above - Members of the Imperial Clergy (i.e. Agents) may always invoke Right of Passage aboard an imperial ship and they are happy to have them! A Cleric or Agent with PERS 13 or higher may be able to persuade/guilt trip/quote scripture until the rest of the party is allowed aboard as their retainers.

Crime Story Index

A little Crime to Pass the Time (Venture seeds)

Doing a Little B&E

Second Story Jobs

Stickups

World Event – A Brite Shining Lie

JOBS

- **Robbing the PLU**
- **Triptech**
- **Showdown at the Boosterspice (local) Exchange**
- **The Death of Naren deJannes Bok**

Judges note:

When introducing these jobs, the Judge is encouraged to make it as organic as possible. If there is an NPC or criminal organization that the PCs have a better relationship with, have them introduce the job rather than the named NPC, etc. This is especially true with Showdown at the Boosterspice Exchange and the last job.

Part and parcel of why the funnel spends so much time introducing the party to small criminal organizations is to provide a basis for the rest of the campaign to hold onto. With especially pro-active parties this may not be necessary but for most at least some the infrastructure of connections and known associates may be a needful and very useful greased wheel to introducing the remainder of the campaign material.

A little crime to pass the time.....

Semi-legitimate activity

A noble and their pet

Jhyil Dhiel loves nothing so much as **Snookles**, their pet, trained, spoiled mixtlynx. **Mixtlynx** – collector cats. Very large mountain-adapted quadrupedal felids; possesses bony books protruding from their foreheads and tails, some have similar growths along their spines or forepaws. They are “collectors” in that they are driven to ‘collect’ prey animals and keep them captive for up to two weeks before consumption. Tend to inhabit high peaks and other hard to descend from places. Live/keep collections inside bird like nests.

2d8

Paw bat 1d3+1

Claws 2d5

Superior smell, track by scent.

Wholly Illegal Activity

Formula 351

Devotee to Pharmacopeia, Marcius Ciizmasel, least artificer of the Imperial Electric College, is looking to expand his business. And claim both payback on those who have wronged him and avenge his old crew, who are all rotting away in the prison moon. He has brewed out what he calls *Snapspace* – a wholly synthetic Boosterspace analog working along entirely different metachemical lines than existing synthetic Boosterspices, and far more potent. It has an unusually short shelf life after which it degrades into a lethal neurotoxin.

So, he’s looking to dump what he has on some very bad people and abscond with the dosh. And he’s going to need some un-local contracting professionals to back him up. *If they are exceptionally successful he may talk to them about a prison break.*

Welcome to the Layer Cake my juve.

Rojur Thetyel is angry. Within the first day-cycle after the “slave revolt,” the Thetyel compound several hundred kilometers south of the central market experienced a home invasion; moreover, the house servants were attacked, violence was set upon his own and other persons of Great House status and.....one of their children has been abducted. 12 year old Iolanthe was taken hostage and so used to affect their escape.

The party’s name has surfaced in the Noble underground and Rojur needs expendables that no one will notice that he can bully into searching for his daughter. This is in fact a shakedown; the break-in was perpetrated by others who escaped from the slave market and escaped via sorcery, an embarrassment the imperial house of magic cannot afford and will not acknowledge. While the whole affair has been largely hushed up, Rojur is hoping to scare up more information about the people who did this while the house head enacts a more sorcerous solution to finding the kidnappers. They will pay. Sooner or later, the party is going to screw a noble. This can easily be repurposed to replace the targets sought with the PCs.

Either way it ends the same; once Rojur has decided the party is useless, has served its’ purpose, or needs removal, a small coven of *vampires* traveling about undetected in heated superskin jumpsuits will descend upon the party by night.

Doing a little B&E

Of particular note to Thieves and Urban Confiscators

1. An "old friend" needs you to retrieve the files they are being blackmailed with.
2. A competitor wishes you to retrieve the work files from an artist's home studio, ideally without anyone knowing you were there.
3. A start-up Secure Vault wishes to test its security system and seeks talented volunteers
4. A local crime lord offers bounties on theft of particular grav-vehicles; a list of 21 collector vehicles presently believed to be in or near the area. They won't pay if they are all smashed up, sales must be clean and more importantly *intact*.

Second story jobs

911 is an opportunity...

A known criminal party has acquired a hospital rated airtaxi, a stripped down air-ambulant. For the next 48 hours however legacy coding in the vehicles system remains hardwired to the facility it was last attached to, allowing someone to fly the vehicle into their airspace and land; presumably also making off with whatever was extracted from the 16 level secure hospital for the very wealthy. Most likely maker codes, standing supplies of pharmaceuticals, or medical technology. Any blade runners or members of the medical care underground (Melyndah among them) would be extremely grateful to receive some or all of any stolen supplies.

Conscientious Objection Raid

The party is contacted through a semi-reliable third party with an unusual job offer – a secure medical research company has an employee that has been persuaded to leave their skylight roof access open overdusk. The contractors, if they accept the job, are told they are free to loot the place however they like however they must capture Lot 44Aleph5 a test container already neatly folded up inside a reinforced backback neatly stashed inside a lab drawer (Lab 3 of 6). This is their target and must be extracted.

However, instead the parcel contains a rigged explosive container of an experimental homebrew poison gas, highly toxic to those bare face breathing a nitrogen oxygen atmosphere. When the explosion goes off, whomever is holding it or anyone within 5 immediate feet take an immediate 3d6 from the concussive blast itself, and are immediately exposed to 6d6 poison gas, Fortitude save 22 for half.

Meanwhile everyone in a 30' radius is exposed also to the full gas, and must save (DC 22 Fortitude) for half. Anyone in the surrounding outer 20' must make the same save or suffer exposure to the somewhat diluted 3d6 poison gas. Many Saurids, Mechs, most Synths, and many other characters may be immune to this poison.

The contractor is a disgruntled insectivroid researcher there who has grown tired of creating new toxic gasses for the imperial military - a recent revelation. Their very sane response is to arrange someone (someone expendable. Like the PCs) to break into his lab and then die trying to steal one of his creations.

Stick ups

The Saxus Imperial Metals and Credit Exchange – a usury and moneylending racket that will be happy to loan you what you need...for 500% interest, accumulating daily, in Perpetua.

Nice guys.

In some of the walled off Slave Bloc Ghettos, they operate tiny, armored facilities that anyone from 21st century North America would recognize as the ubiquitous check cashing place, where they exist to keep upper tier slaves (the kind kept in residential blocs like those with indentures.....) in firm debt, preventing them from buying their way out of their contract or ownership papers.

They also, as it happens, are free to change money from anywhere in the galaxy provided the money is made of something that has value. Ultimately it's just another scam to get the off-worlder into debt of course. This likely includes any DCC RPG characters from Aeryth (or wherever) – they'll happily change your gold and platinum, at only a "modest" mark up, transaction fee, and oh yes, If you read the fine print you realize they also furnish you with 2000 extra as startup money....with all of the terms and conditions listed above.

Remember this is perfectly legal on Saxus, unless you are a citizen. (And nobles would never use such a thing.) Citizens have legal recourse to this sort of thing. Shadows, slaves, and indentures of course have no such protection.

Twice a day, at 0245 and 1535, the armed and armored robosled (owed and programmed by **Equidex Secure Collections, Wholesale**) comes by and collects the previous shift's earnings with all the regularity of a collections racket (which this is). Would be auto-economic liberators will find they have to do a bare minimum of 45 points of damage to the (closed) collection vessel attached to the Logic which is equipped with antihijack and antipersonnel programming. It will summon the SecFor (at least) immediately once it is assaulted.

Lock Stock and Two Smoldering Plasma Casters – a fair bit riskier.

Harriet Lime is in trouble. Has taken possession of a pair of archaic plasma casters, collectibles recently used in the commission of a capital crime. She has a buyer lined up but not for over a progression. Security is breathing down her neck at the fish shop.

She needs someone to hold the two weapons for the time being, and NOT USE THEM.

Chip (p 49) will approach the party first if they have not dealt with Harriet before.

IN truth so long as they do not use the weapons publicly and they leave neither traces nor witnesses they can likely manage, just arrange to leave the area for a little while. In the meantime, security (both overt and undercover) from the Starport will be all over her part of the neighborhood and she will not be reachable during. On conclusion, she will pay what she can (having just been pinched by the Authorities) but more importantly *swears to have the sweetest job lined up for them, but they'll have to get back to them.*

Casters do 5d12 each (they are heavy weapons) and make a lot of noise. Early Third Empire tech, they are distressingly short range (18 yards long range) Each can hold up to 30 discharges; the Judge should (secretly) randomly determine how much is left on each weapon.

And now some innocent local criminal networking....

World Event - A Brite Shining Lie

An unlicensed / off the books “medical transport” experiences a “critical pilot failure” and goes down; disintegrating as it descends, raining destruction and....spice down below.

Pure Refined. Expensive Spice. And Lots of it. The Lower Plateau gets a big fat white dust cloud of (dispersed) pure boosterspice III. Of course, this is evidence of some aristo migrating their stash, but this was excessive¹⁹.

No one cares about the shuttle and fewer about the pilot. The cloud of spice was worth thousands of Transactions though. A drop in the Spice Commission’s bucket but ...

For many hours all is *quite* strange in the LPD

(apply a floating +1d5 to any psychic, sorcerous or miraculous activity for the next 1d3 hours, applicable also to corruption, misfire, warp, and strain rolls)

Meanwhile anyone who got even a single whiff or inhale has been metabolically ‘activated’ so the whole neighborhood is, medically speaking, trippin’ balls for at least 1d6 hours

A DC 15 Fortitude save at exposure is sufficient to forgo these effects

...by the time a Recovery Ops team arrives on scene some 45 minutes later, there is *very* little remaining of the shuttle. Amazingly little. For a variety of reasons, the inspector on site will, eventually write down in their report a high probability of “*Internal explosion leading to vaporization of forward cabin and electrostatically charged components*”

Owing to where it came down and who first arrived on scene, the Pack (p. 25) and members of the Hennet family (p. 26) managed to, by silent acknowledgement mutually field strip the shuttle hull down to bare and scattered components in 33 minutes. If the PC band have any friends or contacts among either group they will soon get contacted by those known to them to ascertain interest about “an interesting local economic development.”

If reassembled, and likely a small group from either party (or faster with a team composed of both Pack and Hennet) can do so in amazingly short order. All they require is a secure place to work which requires space, power, light and many other problematic sundries. Mechanical, electronic, or design oriented PCs (and certainly Scientists esp.) will make this work go a LOT faster.

On completion, the party will have inherited an atmo-shuttle, sort of a light, technically space capable, jet assisted Grav-hopper, albeit one akin to a lorry or flatbed truck. Much more importantly, it still has hard coded into its comms panel a free pass into Spice commission facilities. It will likely only work once and they’ll have to ditch the shuttle immediately after, but still....could be handy.....

¹⁹ True. The issue, really, is WHICH Aristo, in this case. Pluton Brite is not just some junior commission dregghole.

Robbing the PLU

A relatively successful job

The **PLU Collective** is a small cult dedicated to an obscure, likely fictional²⁰, Idea God of Money and Wealth. They are a group of 12-16 middle manager types from across the Guild and Trade spectrum of Saxus, as well as minor underlings of more important officials and the like, numbering perhaps 41-60.

However, they do have a central holy vault, which requires three of them to be present and participating to open. Disagreements in the group of late have caused the masses of the band to demand a meeting so that some ten of them might properly divest from the group. (It is a disaster for the three involved, who run this scam to maintain an expense pile for their master's work....) So much of a disaster in fact that one of them has the bright idea to hire someone unknown, non-locals as possible, to properly rob the place during the meeting, to prevent this sort of thing from happening again.

Enter the suckers – the PCs.

In all likelihood the PCs will walk all over everyone involved – simply turning up armed and armored will cow all but their employer (who has a vain need to be seen as tough in front of the others) and their chief rival, who knows they will likely die or wind up in chains, if they lose this slush pile.

The hire and the Meet

The one hiring them does so through an intermediary that they hire for this purpose, but they then show their face at the meet, showing both their impatience and inexperience at this sort of thing.

Two nights hence they will be expected to make rendezvous an hour into a “secret meeting” of his organization, at which time he should have the group vault exposed.

They are to make off with that for which they will later be paid at a post job exchange 26 hours later.

Despite the above, if the party makes any real effort to do so, the vault rod will open; by now it should be clear that they are not dealing with criminal professionals. Surely it will only take seeing what's inside to suggest maybe telling their employer to get bent is the right thing to do.....

What is in the vault rod?

A bolt of gold memory cloth (16sq. m)

Several small bags of precious stones

About 80 individual small Dedication pouches each of which contain 15-150 (money) and 1-3 tiny valuable (80% only “valuable”) items of collateral.

16 nanotube rods of mithril

A pair of creditdots ea. worth about 50,000 in legal goods charged to the

Passkey to a flyer

And six grams of boosterspice in a tiny suspensor case (!!!)

²⁰ Aren't they all?

Judge's Notes – unless the party just botches this completely, they can walk in, talk tough, grab the goods, and leave without any real consequence. Indeed, when () arrives to make the pickup, they can basically tell him to go swim in dregg and he won't have much recourse but to gibber and accept that he has just been robbed. Eventually of course, his rival's masters will come investigating and track down the PCs. Liquidating these assets will be ridiculously easy as everything that was put in that secure vault in the first place was already scrubbed.

The van Null Gallery (urban high security sector)



“So, I was keeping my head down among the masses at the Noodle Exchange, going through the motions of paying VERY close attention to which tank grown vegetables I wanted dunked into my 33 minute disposable carton of noodles.”

Triptech

Renowned Imperial, humanoid-scale installation artist Imbarcidero Solaway, originally of Saxus has not been back in over twenty years but now a remarkable, newer piece by them, is on display.

It is a Triptych, a 2m panel “interactive painting-sculpture matrix” the **Doors of Opportunity**

Imbarcidero has long maintained outspoken, unconciliatory views of their homeworld. Enough so that the exhibit has merited tremendous resource expenditure to ensure the security of the proceedings. This is as much to protect the vast majority of donor-viewers, who are for the most part the precise sort of people Imbarcidero’s work frequently targets.

Indeed, this piece is in fact a form of ... revenge.

The triptych physically consists of three thin (3cm) screens or “doors” each a 2m flat protomatter surface and suspensor field; arranged in a semi radial pattern from one another, the approaching onlooker (allegedly) sees scenes from the history of Saxus form as the three dimensional sculpture grows outward as they watch, changing with motion, movement, and interaction. When inactive they appear as flat black surfaces surrounded by a white strip giving the impression of three black doors each with a white door frame.

The triptych itself is magic. Dark magic. Whatever patron Imbarcidero has embraced has aided their sorcerous development of these three “doors” into something rather more literally so. Each third of the triptych hungers for the sort of people that Imbarcidero has come to regard with such contempt.

SO much hunger that on it’s first exhibition, one of the wealthy donors in attendance went missing.

On subsequent showings, the same. AS of the point where the PCs become involved, seven different wealthy, decadent members of the Saxus interior art scene have disappeared, in each case last seen inspecting the Triptych.

Each consumed. Lost. Food for Imbarcidero’s patron.

Night Gallery - The PCs are hired by a third party on behalf of the exhibitor (who does not want their hand in this matter revealed, they do not own the gallery space and do not wish to involve them in this matter for reasons of their own). The information about the missing guests has largely been kept out of public feeds but it is only a matter of time. (It is largely the exhibitor and their people who are keeping the story quiet; they are just hoping to be off world before the guests are found to be missing; privately they suspect the gallery owner of foul play but have no evidence for this hunch. They are unaware of the Triptych’s true nature, however, merely pawns in Imbarcidero’s revenge on the Saxun art world.).

If the job is accepted they will be brought in undercover, their stated purpose dependent on whatever the party’s skill set appears to be. They will be brought in as additional security if none such can be found or agreed upon, but this will be more overt. Their actual job is to look for evidence of the missing’s disappearance, but they will be under instructions to not let any harm come to the Triptych themselves of course.

Unfortunately, there is an additional complication“ - the very modern image of the modern image of Saxus.”

Velix van Null, art appraiser and shining example of complete ethical trash is involved; they are looking, as always, to make the most of the situation for themselves without regard to integrity, complications to others, or careers and dreams. A perfect image of what living in Saxus does to its residents. The 5th generation Ketraxian does experience some modest degree of discrimination, largely in the form of pushback, as Saxus’ many residents do still regard the Ketraxians and to a lesser extent the Friggians as so much colonial trash. (At best.) None of this excuses the degree to which Velix has professionally exaggerated such claims to further their ends and advance their own career over other, perhaps more deserving individuals. “Too bad,” they think and make a mark in their book before fixing their perfect hair. If the players hate dealing with this character by the second time they encounter them, you the Judge should know you have done your job.

Note: while they do, ‘fashionably’ claim to be very ‘connected’ to people who could ‘damage more than just your career,” like many in Saxus’ cutthroat art world, Velix does actually somehow carry a custom *atomic blaster* on their person when it suits them. The P&I works only for them, and the blast core has no serial code embossed on the spinner coil²¹.

So, when magical shenanigans happen, they are just going to, as it were, ‘take the money and run.’

Judges Option: Treat Velix exactly like a second level urban confiscator, minus the non-lethal proclivities. If you need further RP guidance, consider *modestly* emulating Patrick Bateman from *American Psycho*²². If you can manage it, give Velix your worst possible verbal David Bowie impersonation.

Velix in whose gallery space this exhibition has been shown (at great cost to the exhibitor) is yet the only individual to realize precisely what has happened. The third missing, a petty noble, was absorbed by the Work of Ages – Vec Slavery sculpting, arising as it did out of the second door...and Velix saw it all. The following disappearance seemed the same and so this required experimentation.

The sixth disappearance happened before their very eyes – Velix brought the Triptych what they believed to be a reasonable “sacrifice.”

The next who disappeared was someone who had long irritated Velix.

Velix will be surprised but appear otherwise at the intrusion of the PCs; they will of course see through the cover story instantly, and will conclude (rightly) that they are being investigated. So of course, if they cannot be evaded or eluded, Velix will have to destroy them. If they cannot get the Triptych to consume the party (and likely this is the case) they may resort to their disruptor, depending on how much control they possess over the situation.

²¹ Did this art dealer kill an imperial spy? Because that’s issue for certain ‘detached duty personnel’ in various ranks of imperial intelligence. How?

²² What a horrible suggestion! Put the chainsaws down it’s just a game. *IT’s a great thing to live in a free country isn’t it?* I said MODESTLY emulate.....

Down at the Boosterspice (local) Exchange

Spice pirates heist – boost at the boosterspice (local) exchange

“Look everyone knows not to hit the vaults. We’re not stupid. But this is the playground of the rich second only to Maximal Secundus or some private pleasure asteroid; Do you think nobles looking to get their rocks off stand in line? NO. They have a “local exchange” - sort of a local bank, but for boosterspice and other things that you maybe don’t want too much accountability on.”

Default intro

Harriet Lime gets back to them – remember “that job” she had lined up for them? A member of the (Hinh) family they have come to rely on, Harriet Lime, or another reliable patron who might be inclined to find the party work is approached by a “Ketraxian looking Maenad” seeking reliable skilled contractors to outfit a job she wishes to undertake. As the party will be doing most of the work she is happy to let the party have the lion’s share of the take. However, it will be very dangerous.

Assuming they are interested, their intercessor will arrange a meeting.

named Kama Tor approaches the party though a reliable information broker or other trustworthy third party.

The Job – Tor explains that she has a “quarrel” with a group of particularly brutal unlicensed slavers (if pressed she will acknowledge that until recently she was an “involuntary guest” aboard their starship) but she has no direct way of taking action against them.

She will clarify at this point that this is not a hit or contract violence job²³.

If the party continues to express interest, she will explain that in the course of her enslavement she learned of something called Lot 198874661597+ at that she and many others were to have been traded for. She does not know what Lot 198874661597+ at is, but with the aid of the party’s patron, she now knows where Lot 198874661597+ at is. A Boosterspice (local) Exchange Pyramid.

Meet Kama Tor

In the event that the party open up about who they are, especially if they began as slaves aboard the same vessel, depending on their answers, Kama may be inclined to be more open with them.

Assuming at this point they still pass muster; she will lay things out rather more directly.

“Do you want to get back at who did this to you?:”

Kama explains that the initial explosion in the market was their doing. She represents a small independent group with a quarrel against a ship full of illegal slavers, the White Sun Clan. They retrieved one of their own off of that vessel and subsequently she insinuated herself among them to bring them down.

In an effort to free all of their slaves that day things went sideways; “you saw what happened” she was scooped up in the SecFor roundup that the PCs escaped and then had problems of her

²³ She is likely attempting to suss out any acknowledgement that they were present at the “slave market riot.”

own integrating into the Plateau region. Since then, she has been attempting to track down those that they freed to see if they want a little payback.

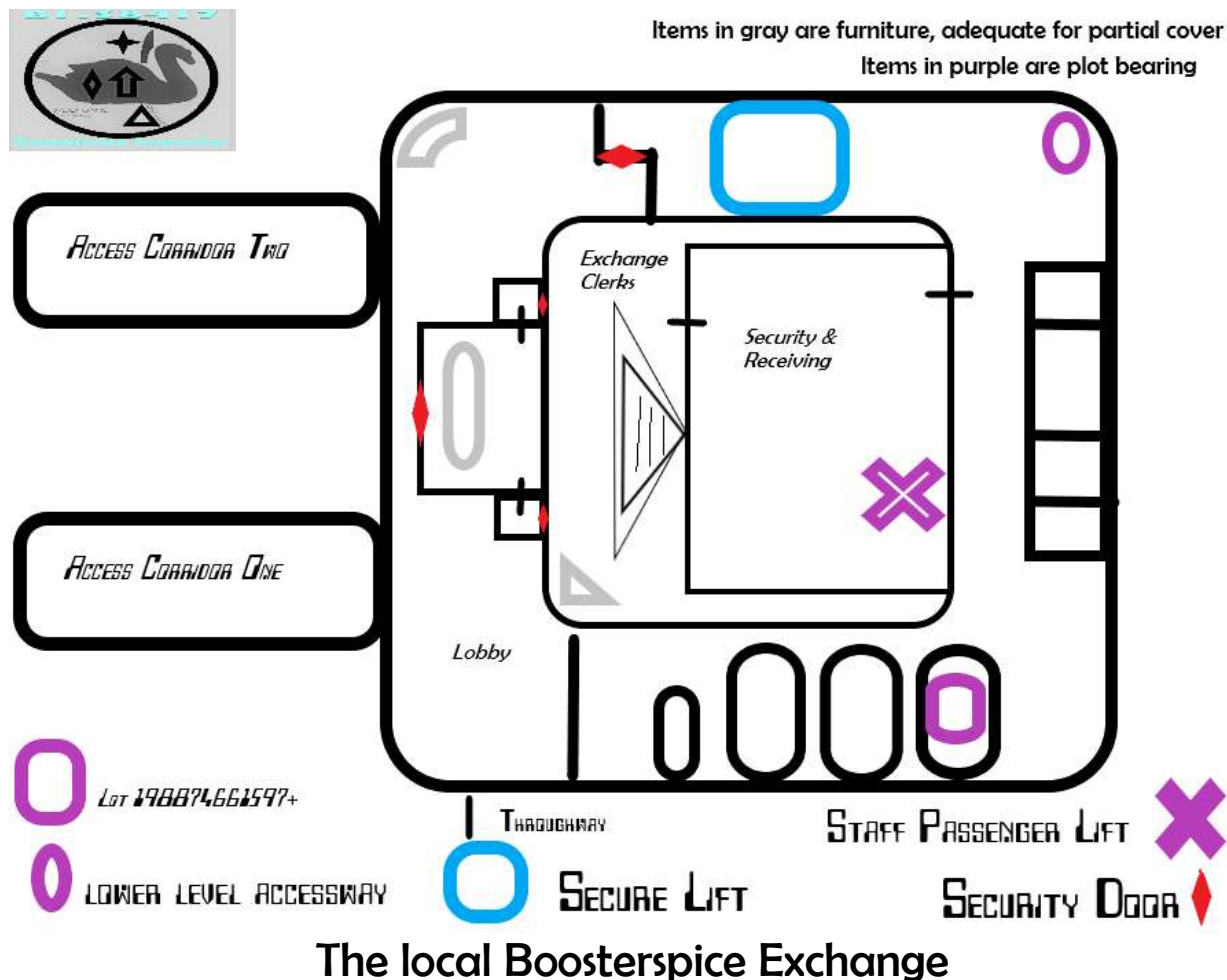
Assuming the party is interested, she will lay out what she knows. The plan had been for the White Sun to exchange this load of slaves for whatever is in Lot 198874661597+ at the local Boosterspice exchange

Since all groups are different, here are two other wholly different pathways/ backgrounds to this job

Alt take one In this version, a “banker” (someone who works at the Boosterspice Exchange) has reached out to Harriet Lime and an offer; they will offer access to the Vaults if he can be (discreetly) cut in for part of the take.

Alt take two Is the simplest. If at any point they capture a member of the White Sun and they are in fear of their life, they may divulge the lot number and location in exchange for their life.

However they get here, the target is located in a secure mini-vault, 450 km away, inside the local Boosterspice Exchange, essentially a five room super narrow pyramid that basically exists only to facilitate a bunch of private storage areas. Security is insane.



Troubleshooting

More than most of the capers in this campaign this has a lot of moving pieces and things that can, classically, “go wrong.” The Judge is encouraged to lean into the logistical disaster of it all by peppering descriptions of what is happening with random details from all the people and things also happening around them, at least until the violence starts.

Are you the Keymaster?

The scenario will seem to be broken if any member of the adventuring band is the **Pure Key** (see page) however this is a caper where it is important to give the player band an opportunity to ace this thing; if the Perfect Key is among them, then by all means, let them walk right in the front door like they belong, make sure you remember that the Key when passing through soc.metric sensors registers, generically, the very best result. Walking into Boosterspace Exchange should give them **Aleph Zero Platinum – Iridium level credit**. If they start ordering the employees around, let them, especially responding to high PERS members of the band.

In short let them run the place until the inevitable twist happens. The band will surely on some level be expecting anything that is running this smoothly to go south. Don't be stingy about giving advantages to characters who take smart and especially forethoughtful precautions, a bonus to initiative, a single instance upgrade to their action dice, etc.

And then let 'em have it without mercy.

So, this is the part where we all die then I guess?

On the flip side, hopelessness can run through the band like a fever under these circumstances. So long as this is confined to the player characters, all the better. But some player bands will have great levels of anxiety at such a development. Take heart for DCC enthusiasts are made of stern stuff! Nonetheless, a few tips may make the moment when everything turns upside down that much easier to Judge.

-Try not to frame what is happening as a combat encounter. Despite the presence of the Security Logics, the initial shock and awe is largely salvageable by a sufficiently sized and equipped party. Consider strongly reducing the number of mech security involved if the number of characters is low; reducing them to barest minimum if the adventuring band numbers five or less. Sustained combat should reduce the Logics to junk in short order;

-The pressing of time is largely illusory. As indicated in the text, once the pyramid goes into lockdown the Logics are free roaming and SecFor organize outside the pyramid but otherwise they have a fair amount of time before anything happens. (Which will likely take the form of gassing the lobby from inside, by remote, which they are reluctant to do as the People That Matter do not like to be tranquilized with puke and snort gas.) So, while the party will feel the press of time as a matter of course as the situation has applied itself, remember that they have almost unlimited time to do stuff.

Eventually

The band will be actively looking for a way out; that is when they should find the Service Hatch?

If they can just teleport out or such *then let them get away*. The story will not be adversely affected.

Judges Notes

This job does rather assume that A Brite Shining Lie (page) has already taken place or some other means have taken place to obtain a shuttle or transport that is capable of safely entering Commission airspace (which surrounds the Pyramid for many kilometers) – these can be gathered separately if desired.

And because this one has a LOT of moving parts,

A very brief and by definition sketchy outline

Your actual game will vary.

- To a certain extent this is a good old fashioned bank job. Thusly, there will be a complication. Of course.*
- The complication is that they swing in in the shuttle and (whatever their plan is) most likely it will go south, and they'll have to flee into the tunnels below.*
- The sudden and abrupt dungeon crawl of tunnels below is big on atmosphere but by necessity short on encounters.*
- These tunnels give the player pirates access to the outside of Saxus and ultimately another similar craft; either way, after this the party *should* have access to a shuttle or another flying vehicle that will allow them to enter Spice Commission airspace (again) in the Showdown at the Spice Farm.*
- As well as this this opens up a great many more opportunity for future crimes, poss.*
- After that the PCS HAVE to lay low. One way or another the Spice Commission will be looking to take heads. If their job was successful, likely it has created chaos all over inner Saxus.*

In time all of this perhaps gives access to a ship. And freedom.

Big Sim Crime

What if they roll in here with camera drones all Simstar like?

Well, you may have yourself a problem. Or rather the players may. Documenting committing a crime for entertainment purposes are somewhat old hat on Saxus but if you do anything with style and gusto – and especially if you show them something they have not seen before – you can literally get away with murder.

So, if the Simstars come to do a bank job, know that ratings will drop off...and then skyrocket. If they are remotely successful the run on the Exchanges will be amplified by a factor of a thousand, causing complete fiscal chaos for many progressions anywhere inside the artificial moon.

And the ratings, follower count, and approvals for such gall as to ROB THE SPICE COMMISSION on LIVE FEED will make the PC (and to a certain extent their companion band if they do not take adequate precautions) among the top ten simstars not just in Inner Saxus but in recent broadcast history within the Canopus System.

Stardom capable of bending and deteriorating even the Spice Commission's resolve to exterminate such an individual is HUGE; their private life is ... over.

Soon they may want to go off world for a while. A long while. Their fans may number in the millions and their followers in the tens of millions. The Inner Saxun media itself will be their stalker.

And then the endorsements will roll in. Enjoy your plot hooks.

How this works

Under otherwise non-criminal circumstances, clients arrive exterior to the pyramid having already having access to this Pyramid's sky-space (there is no surface access). Double rows of grav plates exist in rough eight part circles around the pyramid each a third of the way down from the top.

The **top landing pads** are for official IBCC vehicles but often are any noble's vehicle. They can be accessed (from inside the pyramid) by the staff passenger lift.

The **bottom pads** are for the more numerous but less 'discerning' clients. The entrance is from this point.

Clients enter through one of two adjacent long secure tunnels which will hold them if their soc.metrics to not permit their entry. Once inside the pyramid they are in a vast and comfortable atrium. Someone will direct them to (eventually) be shown upstairs to the teller style booths located on a raised dais section (a sort of half floor) within the main lobby of the pyramid.

Once up there, the transaction is conducted. Things are pulled up from vaults and delivered to their waiting transports, or handed off in the teller area. In some cases they are shown down, under escort to the back rooms accessible only via this dais or the level below which is nothing but secure vaults.

The vaults behind are smaller and more like actual safety deposit boxes. They are of minimal security and bluntly are a side business to this exchange. What the PCs are after is on the level below.

The level below is unremarkable. It is simply one large, independently transportable (if need be) cylinder or missile shaped portable vault; the larges are about the size of a modern metal shipping container. There are sixteen of these extremely large size vaults, 48 modestly sized vaults (of about half that size) and around 10 small sized 'micro-vaults' (rather like portable storage sheds from our world but far more durable) arranged in nice separate non-contact spaces of their own.

The only point of entry or exit from this level is twofold. The way they came in, and a cargo system to rapidly transport vault contents between Exchange pyramids via a similar but far more efficient version of the surface Tube system that covers inner Saxus. It is not *designed* for transport of living things. It may come up later.

Depending on the group this job may take the form of a raid, a fully undercover affair with everyone in disguise, or a more traditional bank job, to name three obvious and more likely examples. No assumptions as to PC tactics have been made here, instead the specifics are given and their implementation will be up to the Judge depending on the specifics of what precisely the PCs attempt.

The Spice Exchange Pyramid

Key to indicators:

Security Door – each of these are capable of withstanding 100 points of damage from energy weapons fire and will not take damage from needlers, stun weapons, common melee weapons, slug throwers, etc.

EWV 25 – the doors are as hack proof as “common doors” are going to get. +5 on the attempt if you have the palm, eye, or brain print of an individual “in the system.” How ever you achieve this is up to you.

ANY attempt, successful or not, to hack the security doors must be done one at a time (they are not networked) and requires 1d3 rounds/attempt before any results will be known.

The doors do, however, log the biometrics of anyone who comes into contact with them security wise. OR do when there is power.

Each **Vault** is self-contained (with their own atmosphere if need be) per the needs and ability to pay of the clients.

Vault walls are AC 22 and will require 75 points of damage from a high end energy weapon, magic spell, or psychokinetic effect to damage; *at least 75 points must be inflicted in a single attack to make any kind of effective hole in the vault wall.*

All of the clients of this Spice Exchange are wealthy and mobile individuals. While it is beyond the scope of this article, if the PCs opt to rob one or more of them, the Judge is encouraged to detail one or more such wealthy individuals. If it would be easier, assume each has 1d16x100 mT worth of semi-valuables on their person. Most will simply observe shocked, though one or two may decide to make a media posting out of the experience (PCs are going to want to put a stop to that). If no one is working crowd control, it is likely that one or two of them may become curious enough to try to see what the PCs are doing. Anyone who “shops” here probably has backups waiting, which is only going to encourage such meddlesome behavior.....

Authorized Personnel

14 persons, all unarmed and unarmored zero levels (HP 1-5, AC 8-11, HD 1) are present at the time of the excursion. Absolutely none of them will do anything but passively cooperate in any way. Should the circumstances arise, once security has control of the situation, they will summon a rapid response team, an equivalent to 5 1st level characters outfitted to selectively target, immobilize and eliminate any remaining hostile forces and secure the facility.

Security

While obviously there are dedicated SecFor on site, they are entirely for show. They are not even part of the enforcement arm of the IBCC;

No if there is an issue of Vault “harmony and containment” (read: a potential security breach) then they haul out the big guns immediately.

Visible SecFor under such circumstances have standing orders to delay and slow down the offenders, but not to attempt to intercept or attack them directly.

Four *Mobile Security Logics* will deploy immediately on activation of Alarm Status

In no case are these Logics networked. Indeed, the Titan class Logics are programmed to discharge their foglet cloud the moment they detect a hack attempt. That said, the EWV for the Cat Logics is 20 and each titan has an EWV of 25. Some variety of tech, or magic will be required attempt such a circumvention unless the party can somehow immobilize one or more logics and manually patch their way into the system.

Alarm Status

Can be triggered by any employee other than visible SecFor in one round. Vault officers can do so by mastoid or telepathic implant, doing so instantly.

Alarm status means all security doors close, sealing shut no matter what, security doors activate at all entrance and exits, and the first responders (four Mobile Logics see above) are set free roaming within the Pyramid; anyone whose biometrics are not logged get ripped to shreds by steel talons. When Alert status is declared, a 30 hp force field (kinetic barrier) powers up at every exit to the outside world. Exterior to the Pyramid, 2d6 SecFor will deploy within 1d10 rounds.

Vault Alarm Status

IF unauthorized Vault activity is declared then Alarm status initiates immediately; further, that vault is visited within 1d5 rounds by two *SecurityCore Titan Logics*.

Starsteel Cat Mobile Security Logics (1-4) Init +3; Atk +3 steel talons melee (1d6+1) +2 bite melee

(1d8+2); AC 19; HD 5d6; hp 23 ea.; MV 75; Act 2d20; SP *bursts of speed; pinning attack*; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will NA; AL programmed

The *Black Garm* class MSL can move in great bursts of speed over almost any surface or terrain without loss of speed thanks in part to its six legs and low / semi-quadruped stance.

Pinning On any claw attack of a natural 20 the attacked has been knocked down and if both attacks (on that target) are successful that round they are pinned underneath the Steel Cat.

SecurityCore Titan class Logic (1-2) Init +1; Atk +3 Stomp (melee 1d10+3) +6 Bash (melee 1d8+3), or +9 Chain Guns (5d6 ea. and see below 60'), +6 Antipersonnel gun (3d6, 20') ; AC 24; HD 9d6; hp 33 ea.; MV 15; Act 3d20; SP *Security Foglet Discharge*; AP gun, ablative anti-organic rounds, sensors; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will NA; AL programmed

Twin Arm mounted Chain guns – fitted with ablative property defending ceramic flechette 'shatter' rounds (-2 to hit, +1! Damage/die to unarmored organics) each fires at +6, targeting a specific 5' area which takes

The *Augur-Wight* SecCore Titan class Battle Logic waddles about on great dedicated redundant bipedal legs that allow it to turn (in any direction) in a single round. 5m high at display,

Sensors UV / IR / Low Light; can see through walls (less than 1m) via Thermograph Projection

Twin Arm mounted Chain guns – fitted with ablative property defending ceramic flechette 'shatter' rounds (-2 to hit, +1! Damage/die to unarmored organics) each fires at +6, targeting a specific 5' area which takes

Shoulder mounted tracking AP gun range limited to 20 feet but attacks anyone in a given 5' area with 6d6

Security foglet discharge – the gas clings because it is partly a nanotech attack on their person. Stage one is a mere antipersonnel gas attack, incapacitating any organic (Fort save DC 22 to avoid dose contact, requires active defense.) with a combination paralytic contact gas and tiny micromachines that attach and harvest heat from the target, reducing all but the most massive organic foe to a semi-slumbering mass within 1d6+AGIL bonus rounds.

Stage two is toxic, a cloud of micromachines that will harvest the iron from your blood, killing you from suffocative blood shock in 1d6+STA bonus rounds.

The target Vault *Lot 198874661597+*

Is interesting. It is one of maybe 1200 such vaults in the system used (illicitly) by the Spice Commission for holding of “certain materials.” And this one is no different. Nothing in the Pyramid will electronically indicate what is In the vault, however.

What IS in the vault is a pair of pallets on a suspensor drone (still)

X value of seized boosterspice in nine (linked) stasis cylinders. All of this lot have been long since scheduled for destruction, in accordance with Commission policies; this lot was set aside by (((_____))) for “fiscal waste purposes”

It was to have been the payment for the load of slaves ordered through the White Sun. It was tucked in here after the incident in the Slave Market for safe keeping.

Other Mini Vaults

- Suspensor case with extended power battery containing block of amber; block contains 12 threads which, when decrypted, are the sum total knowledge and lore of an extinct civilization which died out 34,664,111 years ago in one of the Via Lactae’s satellite galaxies (now long since absorbed).
- A dozen body bags. Four of them contain semi deteriorated corpses, humanoids of some kind but more cannot be determined from state of atrophy. Deep inside the guts of the fourth one are an extraordinarily rare Sun Gem, easily worth 50 or 100 Imperial Transactions all by itself²⁴.
- A full bedroom set to a single young person in the northern hemisphere, Teranaya c. 1950. Four poster bed, hope chest, etc. VERY unlikely to survive “Rigorous adventure-transport.”
- A sealed, black glass cryo-tube. It is cold but not cryogenically so. Sleeping inside is a 4,350 year old vampire.

Holding Boxes (micro box Vaults)

- A pretty orange and white beaded bracelet; this is a sacred ornament to House Sabella. (**Judges Guide to the Collapsing Universe** p 234) Anyone who returns it would be amply rewarded and quite possibly gain the house as a lesser patron.
- A small, cute life form. What?
- Holding certificates for something called Altairian block chain. You have no idea what in space that is but there are an awful lot of these certificates.
- 3 custom gynoid synths. Inactive
- An actual clone tank and life support facilities. High tech and micronized a fluid filled vinyl gel capsule with sensors all over it, drawing power from an atomic power slug with 3% battlife

There are another 50 located in the level below but those will have to be populated by the Judge.

²⁴ Will not show up on a medical scan; unless there is a dwarf in the party, this is likely only to be determined by abducting the corpses and later subjecting them to a detailed post mortem. What PC does that?

Getting Out

Acing This Job

Do not discount this possibility. If the PCs do everything right, keep their cool, don't start a fight, and can manage to hustle and con their way through the entire process, then they deserve to get away with the crime. Continue working things down to the last minute, but if the band can manage to thread the needle, they deserve to walk out scot-free with everything they can grab. When they load up and head out, be sure to play some appropriate music to let the band know how cool they just were.

Swords and Plasma

Of course, the group can shoot their way out. Once they have dispatched the security logics there will be no additional efforts to stop the band until they have exited the pyramid. Getting past the force fields will be the hardest part; explosives and sub machine guns are common anti-force field tech but owning either (to say nothing of using them) in an urban sector anywhere in the imperium will get you death of personality at least. So likely the PCs will not have access to such utilities.

But the band are criminals, so anything is possible. Should they be so armed as to be able to breach the three sequential force fields (30 hp ea.) in the accessway tunnel it is unlikely the 2d6 SecFor waiting outside will be able to do much to stop them.

(Remember if the party is running around with a bunch of stuff piled on a transport palate, even on a suspensor rig, that is going to slow them down!)

If they opt to steal someone else's vehicle to make their escape, there will need to be an Electronic Warfare check (once per vehicle) DCs are going to hover around 16 (for some fly by night noble or well off person and their crotch rocket) on up to 25 (Naval officer, Security specialist, professional assassin, Commission agent)

Of note, **the upper level access tunnel** only has two force fields, both of which can be brought down by the living key with touch contact²⁵,

At the time of the break in there are two IBCC secure air-transports; these would be ideal for an improvised getaway as they will be harder (slower) to identify by the small army of security about to descend on this place; further they are designed for transporting large goods between Pyramids. If they go this route they will be relentlessly hunted, their pictures (from the Pyramid security feeds) on every holo inside Saxus for the next solar month.

In such a circumstance, Lime or any other allied criminal organization will find the PCs very hot to deal with and are going to be far more interested in finding a place to stash the PCs and their goods than trying to sell anything off any time soon.

²⁵ The Living Key among the party means they don't have to pick the lock, they don't have to hack the system, and will make this whole escapade, no matter how sloppy the band gets, MUCH more survivable.

All Aboard the Crazy Train

Most likely, the band will find that the attempt is successful but not without considerable complications. The worst of course are the ones where the band is killed or captured (bad, see **Negotiation Bundles** on page 68).

The mostly likely complication is one in which the band trip security, defeat the Logics but are trapped inside the Pyramid and require an alternative means of escape.

There is (indicated on map) a hatchway to an otherwise unspecified level below. This single room is the location of a mostly automated transit hub that facilitates secure transport of goods between the Spice Exchange Pyramids.

When alert conditions are triggered, this part of the transit grid powers down. However, this could be reactivated and powered up by mechano-electronically (DC 22 for a Scientist, Urban Confiscator, or similar skillset) or activated remotely via on site hack, which will be surprisingly easy (EWV DC 20 to reactivate; system will spin up in 1d6 rounds) Of course magic and certain psionic disciplines may make all of this go much faster or superfluous entirely. Judges are encouraged to be familiar with the party's capabilities before running this segment for obvious reasons.

In theory, they should be able load their spoils and themselves into a transit capsule and hope the thing does not pull too many Gs. They should then be slingshot fired 200km to underneath a wholly different Spice Exchange central collection area in just about ten minutes.

Bad News – functionally this is a trap. Just a few minutes into their capsule ride, the face of an angry Ketraxian middle manager will fill every comm screen available and explain that *“you will not get away with this. We will blow the tunnel and bury it and you with it.”*

They mean it. Within 30 seconds the super smooth ride becomes a vibrating roller coaster as a fireball erupts ahead of them. The surrounding rock is already weakened however and so a small, localized earth tremor is triggered quite unexpectedly (Surely the Gods of Skulking About are with²⁶ the band of spice bandits today!) with much more drastic results.

Good news this is also an opportunity. While the middle manager makes good on their threat and the visible sling-tunnel ahead becomes a small but expanding fireball, shortly before everything begins to experience bone conductive vibrations. However, this will trigger a general earth tremor which collapses the tunnel completely as the bedding rock beneath crumbles away.

Within a minute the capsule around them will literally disintegrate in a hail of fire and kinetic damage; the very weak stasis field to protect delicate cargo ultimately keeping the party, and their stuff, intact even as quite literally the rest of the capsule breaks apart as it plummets down hundreds, thousands of meters down below the inner surface of Saxus, ricocheting between cracks a mile wide and tunnels that should not be there.

²⁶ If anyone spent a luck point here smile and make a note to yourself who spent the luck point. The All-Father has been known to aid the lowly but bold on many an occasion.

The lift ride will abruptly stop when the stasis bubble finally gives out. On a DC 14 Fort save any band member can avoid 1d3 rounds of stumbling around in the dark in shock and stun.

Doom Tunnels and Crustal Caverns

now in the caves of the XXXXXXXX thing from writeup. And they must navigate that, with their haul, to get out.

Make map for caverns all dungeon crawl like. Include minor inclinations for observant PCs to turn part of it into a hideout./base....once they take care of the beastie.

Salt and other mineral ‘caves – leftover places in the shell from when they artificially poured and super cooled the inner shell.

More signs of entropy. Enormous cracks that connect otherwise disparate areas. There are far more caves down here now than there were nine hundred years ago. Whole cave systems albeit highly unstable ones are emerging as the shell breaks down

They could make *perfect smuggler’s pathways* though. Gotta kill the big monster first.

The fell thrumming - the noise

Because of the nature of the world shell and the cracks through which they move, there is a constant vibration that the PCs will most likely experience as sound These spiraling burbling caverns overrun with the sound of heaving rocky organs, less the sound of a heartbeat and more the constant reminder/suggestion that perhaps somehow the whole shell of the inner moon is somehow...alive? Or was at one time.

Unsettling but – perhaps surprisingly – of no actual consequence to the matters at hand.

Rockslide

1 in 5 a partial (75) or total (25) collapse of cave section. Becomes 1 in 3 and 50/50 during combat or violence.

Unstable tunnels

1 in 6 collapse after 3 or more beings pass through consecutively

Sludge pit

A gray-green region of stone or more appropriately ‘post-stone,’ as part of the part of the process of the breakdown of the World Shell this ‘post stone sludge’ is a byproduct of the reductive process of surrounding materials.

For all intents and purposes, it is quicksand made out of wet concrete. Grabby Wet Concrete.

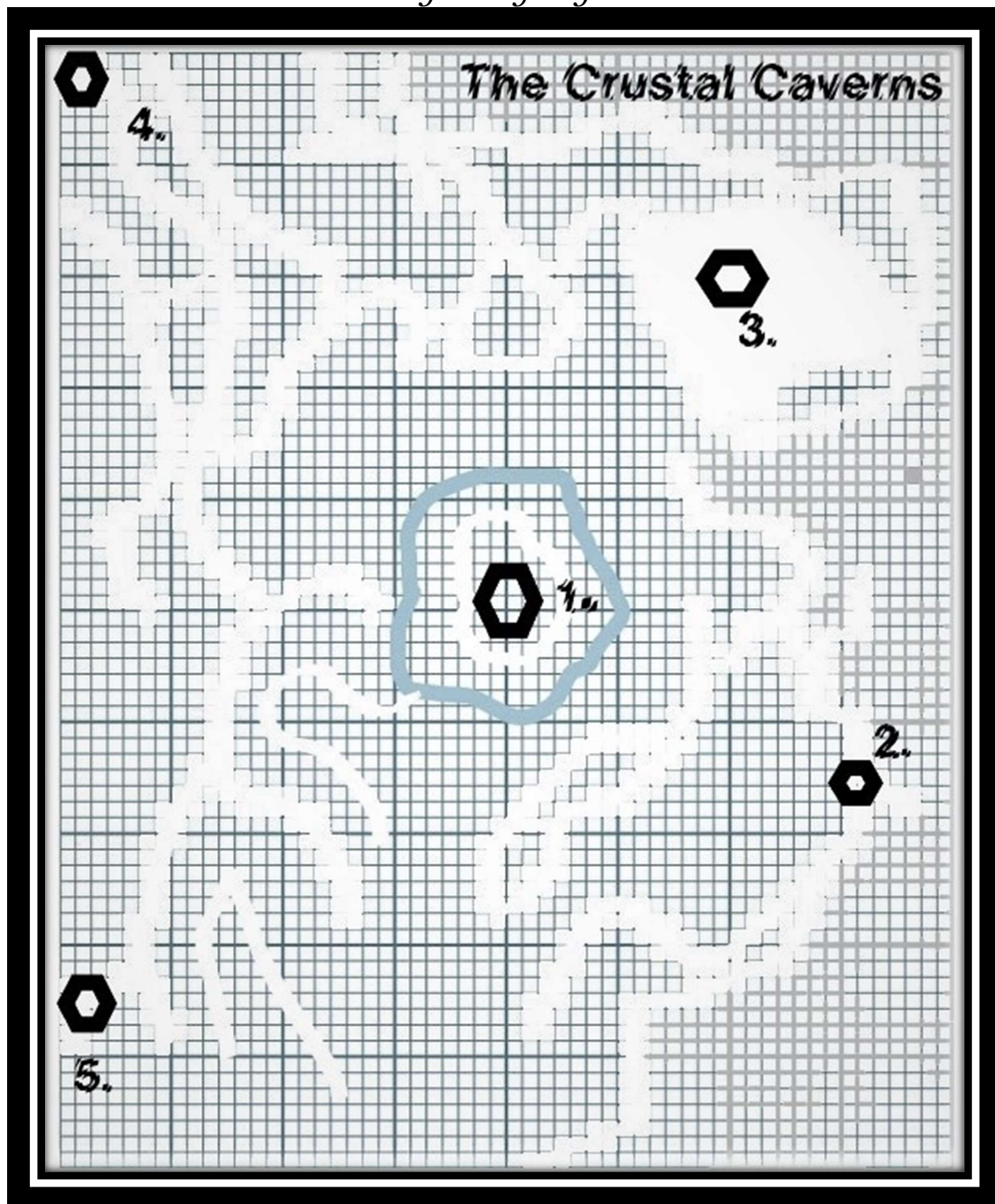
There are three patches of the substance in these caverns, one over seventy feet long/across that will surely end any party attempting their way through it. The next smaller is not quite 45 feet around, and the third only a stretch of 20 feet or so in a particularly narrow cavern-crack

Each round one is immersed in the dense, tacky substance, it becomes progressively harder to free them. Model this by inflicting a 1d4 (in partial) or 1d6 (in near to full immersion) AGIL damage penalty each round. Once the trapped character’s AGIL reaches zero they are still alive but flailing helplessly one to two meters underneath the surface of the sludge slowly drowning in ferrocrete.

Semi refracted beams

At such regions, there are above such micro-fractures, cracks, and holes in abundance that a kind of ambient light soaks in from above (or inside)

These spiraling burbling caverns overrun with the sound of heaving rocky organs....



Finding The Way out of the Crustal Caverns

Gravitational Instability

As a consequence of the breakdown of the world shell and its associated technologies, properties and construction, sections of this emergent area are subject to savage shifts of gravitation. Every six rounds or so (in combat) the Judge should assume another small earth tremor wracks the region, throwing everyone off for -1 on all actions for that round.

Key

1.Gray Stone Floor - Point of arrival

The party begins amidst the wreckage of their cargo capsule atop a pile of debris, which continues to rain down for 1d12 further rounds; The whole area is unstable and once the party has cleared the central area(indicated on map but the inner white ring) will collapse further, taking anything remaining with it.

2.Jumbled bones of a prior smuggler

Bleached bones of an old Friggian Smuggler; belongings mostly rotted away save for a Credit chit (450 years old) and a relatively solid PQ-46 Single Action Laser Pistol still somehow with 25 charges remaining in its internal battery; the tech to recharge that battery can probably be had at R'qod's or another junk shop that sells old tech. A scientist could jury rig it with a DC of 16

PQ-46 Lasipistol 2d5 25 charges 2/6/15; long range at -1

3, Lair of the World Slug

When not encountered slugging through the tunnels in search of food, the beastie will be found here.

The World Slug (1) Init +1; Attacks +10 reflexive mouth phalanges melee (3d6+5 each, 5' reach), Acid Discharge (12d6, 15'); AC 22; HD 10d10; hp 83.; MV 20;' Act 1d24; SP *Radiance reflective shell, Immense semi gelatinous bulk*; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will 0; AL Neutral (animosity).

An immense, blind, glistening white-gray worm, whose hind bulk gradually flanges out to drag behind, "walking" on sixteen stubby but immensely strong legs.

Reflexive mouth Phalanges – anything that moves within 20' of its fact is reflexively attacked by the collective effort of four ichorous 'jaw phalanges' that seek to remove potential hazards.

Acidic Coughing Discharge – once every ten rounds it can spray it's gut contents in a thick 15' narrow "ray-blast" of acidic enzymes that eat all organic material rapidly, inflicting 12d6 damage to such materials and creatures.

Radiance Reflective Shell 35% of the creature's body is covered by a thick oily carapace that possesses almost prismatic qualities, reflecting lasers, microwaves, and other directed radioactive emissions back.

Functionally increases AC by 6 v. those attack forms.

Immense semi-gelatinous bulk – this creature descends from a kind of ooze and still possesses many of those qualities. It takes no damage from sonic or

pressure/concussion attacks, and only half from blunt melee or indirect kinetic energy attacks (dumdum rounds, ap shells etc.) It saves v. fire and poison at +2 and burns very poorly, taking -1 point of damage/die from fire. IT's emitted coat of slime allows adhesion to most any surface down here, offsetting somewhat the gravitational surges emergent to this region.

4. Collapsed crater from the surface

From the subterranean approach the mostly intact semi-buried 234 year old *pressure shuttle* here is quite visible. This old Grav hopper's cargo container contains 3d6x1000 militrans in sealed cargo – a semi intact drug load²⁷ Digging the vessel out to get access will take time (1d6 hours minimum. The vibrations WILL attract the Slug)

Repairing the craft and getting it float-worthy will take another 1d12 hours at a repair DC of 18.

Should these criterion be met the shuttle will have enough juice to power up; which should induce a small collapse in the tunnel around them. When the dust settles, the tunnel behind them will be semi-collapsed (concealed less than walled off) and they should be able to make their way out and back to the Plateau region or similar at low power and low altitude.

While it is not hard coded into the panel as it was on their other shuttle, this old p-shuttle does have a transponder that powers up with the rest of the vessel. Spice commission sensors track the old bucket as a private restricted flight; given it's age, most Commission traffic control programs will write the vessel off as belonging to an older member of one of the Great Houses.

With additional parts and upkeep the shuttle could be upgraded into a current tech (if small) smuggler's craft. Unmodified the craft contains just enough space (passenger and cargo) for the whole party to fit inside; a large party may weight he transport down however; this is will not actually get any real attention directed at them, but the Judge is encouraged to make the criminal band sweat the entire way home.

5. The way out

Several dozen kilometers from where they began, this tunnel spirals gently upward for several hours to emerge in a dis-used section of the Commission Agricultural Sector that the Pyramid was located in. The outer perimeter of the No-Fly zone ends 22 km to the SW of where they emerge.

Provided the party does not do something to attract their attention, they can conceivably walk out of here and find their way to the nearest barrier beacon; from there they can sneak across the (admittedly sensor equipped) but low quality stretch of security fencing. A basic security specialist could probably temporarily hotwire those sensors with a DC 12 roll (Urban Confiscators and Scientists take note!).

From there it is a few hundred clicks back to the Plateau Region but once they are out of the Commission area they can move about more freely.

²⁷ "Aw man the Doobie Brothers Broke up....how old is this?"

You get the ankles and I'll get the wrists

Eventually the party will find their way out, and here the Judge must have a firm idea how they want to go about things moving forward.

If Kama is with them even if trust has not quite been established, she will offer to set up a meet with her people which, if nothing else, should give the PCs a ride off world.....and a way to transport that spice they just boosted to somewhere a LOT safer Where it will be that much more valuable. See below

Banker Variations – If alt take one was your seed into this heist, then need to find bank guy who betrayed you and lean on him he's going to be your bitch now and you're all going to make a lot of money together.

If they have looted the P-shuttle then there should at least be enough vacuum suits for all of the party that need it; if they have managed to get the hopper running then getting out may be something of a non-issue.

If it need be mentioned, assuming the party has killed the Big Slug Monster down here, these caverns would make *perfect smuggler's pathways* though.

Moving the Merchandise

Assuming they still trust her (and they have no reason not to other than general professional paranoia), Harriet can find a buyer (or rather, buyers) but it will take time, especially given the anthill they have just kicked over²⁸.

Meeting the Family

After at least a progression, possibly two, Kama will surface and be able to arrange a Meet with the rest of her people. Through Lime or directly, she will make arrangements for the party to meet her in an area of outer Saxus called the Droid Factory (see Sub-ether this issue pp. XX) Time has passed. Someone may find it expeditious to start mapping a reliable way through those tunnels, especially as it's clear that someone has proven capable of flying a shuttle through there before. A multi-level dungeon crawl slug hunt to map those tunnels are an obvious area for expansion by the Judge.

Aftermath

No matter what, if and when word gets out about the robbery, there is a bit of a run on the BX exchanges; so many nobles go running for cover that many of them close their doors. The whole spice market is affected.

Also, as it so happens, someone, a certain someone, takes a bath, losing conceivably MILLIONS of transactions.

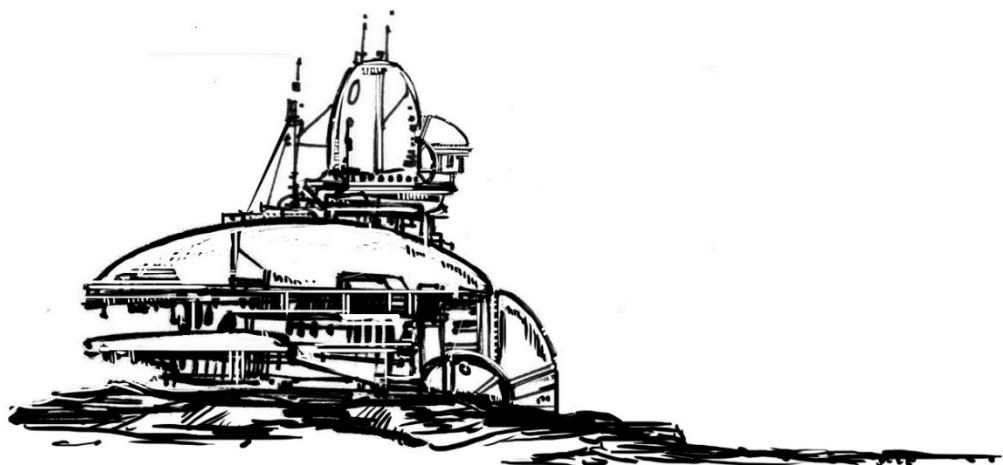
They are going to beangry. Speaking of which, the serpents will not take long to determine who did this.

²⁸ Ironically she may urge the party to let her hold the goods for them and then stick them in a secure locker she has at a different spice exchange through a proxy.

So, when the party needs to lay low for a while, maybe after the last job...

Simcasting is enjoying a bit of a renaissance in Inner Saxus, and is a relatively common side gig for many subjects, from slaves all the way up to members of the nobility. In particular

Sensecasting, the direct transmission or recording of lived experience²⁹ (rather than as part of the totality of a backup persona or braintape), is enjoying widespread cultural penetration and success. In practice, it compares (in 2020s terms) a bit to being a twitch streamer or youtuber. And much like those services, it is used (by some) as a means of getting information around otherwise pervasive power structures that work to suppress certain voices or populations. Presently a burgeoning DIY culture is arising from a juxtaposition of this ubiquitous sharing of direct physical/physical mental experiences and wider availability of Maker technology



Because it will come up.

No, Spice does not taste of cinnamon. It doesn't taste or scent of anything at all unless other drugs or impurities are introduced **until** it begins to metabolize, which it does immediately on contact with saliva. At that time, while palates vary, the most common (in any sense) spice strain would taste faintly of lime, a bit of jalapeno, on top of an ineffable taste most like (lest unlike) cotton candy or marshmallows. Post consumption some would attribute a faintly coppery aftertaste, less like blood and more like licking a penny. It is noteworthy that even those who administer their spice does via hypo spray or autoinjector experience this scent-taste experience, suggesting it may in fact be a repeatable hallucinatory agent rather than a flavor per se.

When the Spice Wagon blows up in Act II the lower plateau district smells pleasantly of fresh fire burned marshmallows for many progressions afterward.

In pure processed form (before it is formed into dots, discs, towers, or bricks) it resembles a brown-orange (almost scarlet) saffron.

²⁹ especially along a narrow (often niche) line of specificity and interest.

(Optional investigation) The Death of Naren deJannes Bok

Naren deJannes Bok Aka *Jools diTyree* exotics and book seller

A heavily archeology and xeno-recovery ops focused member of house Bok in Saxus. Previously ran a shop under the above alias for the express purpose of moving and collecting relics, ancient tomes, and the like. Does a brisk business with certain of the Thetyel family³⁰

A (now leading) member of the white sun came into contact with him regarding old white sun lore; that's how they met (also see below). The beginning of a long association with _now_ two clans of white sun.

Of late he has independently acquired a copy of **the Mixhael codec** and word reaches (name of white sun leader) when they arrive back in Saxus shortly before the adventure begins.

After the incident in the market (that white sun Saurid) is told to "clean things up" and this includes breaking into Naren's store and stealing the copy of the codec.

Around the beginning of the adventure, they White Sun learned of the book and having stolen his copy, replaced it with a cunning fake. Over the next two progressions Bok comes to recognize the forgery and, in epic irony, contacts the White Sun to help them find the thieves. Naren would have had to die to keep that knowledge secret anyway.

Early in Act two the White Sun come calling on the book seller one final time.....

Enter: Naveen deJannes Bok, Naren's more than healthily devoted sister. She knew of his diversions and second identity. She knows nothing of the White Sun, only that her brother has gone missing.

To those who would investigate, she entrusts a safe maglock key to the "shop" which she has kept closed since his disappearance. A seeming maze of books, scrolls, & tapes.

Timeline

Book is stolen

He contacts X to find it

Book is replaced

-time passage-

Relic seller is murdered

Naren Bok goes 'missing'

Naveen hires PCs to find

The "bookseller's"

Killers*

If anyone else looking for them at this point using mystic means will find that the PCs are seeking him also if they will be unable to work out how/why

Finally, do you remember Ultrablack 9? They may take a...dim view of the contents of this book.

Very dim.

Ultimately post-scenario, one of the white sun groups will now def. know of the PCs

White Sun Cleanup Crew (19) **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

³⁰ Who were kind enough to introduce Bok to their White Sun 'friends.' More than likely, it is Naren Bok that first made the introductions to Timar Ur-Ablom on behalf of the White Sun. Of this, Naveen is clueless.

The Mixhael codec –

Among its alleged claims

- Saurids manufactured by precursors to fight last war³¹, however, some were sic'ed on an immense (solar system sized) alien space bat with intent to murder it from within
 - o Orig. Saurids³² may have been a slave race made by the Quetz'l³³ in their struggles against the old ones
 - o This struggle precipitated when strange exotic macro creatures began invading the galaxy from a strange dead galaxy many billions of lights distant.....????

The struggle precipitated when strange exotic macro creatures began invading the galaxy from a strange dead galaxy many billions of lights distant, near the conceptual center of the Universe. This would have been perhaps a billion years ago?

Some of these invaders were destroyed, others turned away, and some imprisoned.

- Those imprisoned have woken up, been bound again and so on since then. Only singularly, however.
- More recent conflict at the Rim of the Via Lactae Galaxy when many of those imprisoned were awakened c. 2 million years ago (check Sub-ether 05 to be sure)
 - o Some of the imprisoned were destroyed, some banished, and some imprisoned again as before.
 - o Nirzhungrandl³⁴ is of this first type, whose corpse is bound at the Rim. A hideous being imprisoned at the turn of the 43rd Vlano. Awakened two million years ago; slain but at great cost, shattering whole civilizations. Their corpse remains intact and so it was bound and hidden (see below) lest any future grande necromancer doom the galaxy once more.
- The 'many-awakening' may have been precipitated by the arrival of new invaders from the same place.

Probably something about how non-imperials are too unsophisticated to have created ziggurats on their own or something. You get the idea.

Did somebody say rare books?

Of course, they do have access to a noble's side gig of rare books and scrolls etc. Surely there is SOMETHING in these stacks that is of particular interest to the PCs. Judges consider whipping this little scenario out whenever you need to give the party a research McGuffin to figure out the thing you are already putting them through.

If the party accords themselves well she may just let them have the shop esp if the player party has adopted it. There is a strong association with occult bookstores and these kinds of stories, both OG and modern (as old as leFanu, Poe and Lovecraft, as new as the Scobie's at the magic shop on Buffy and everything derived from that).

Then throw shape shifting, blood drinking, snake headed zealots at them en masse.

If the party delays in investigating or declines the job a few days later Naren's distraught sister will be pleased to see him return, though he does act a little strange now.....

³¹ Each caste would then exist to do the thing their makers needed most in star systems of that type; most of the fighting was in systems with old red giant stars.

³² Either way, OG Saurids would be either orange suns or Matriarchs.

³³ See **Colony Black** p.92 et. Al.

³⁴ Quite possibly the crater in Sub-ether two was formed in an attempt to destroy the idol which would by then of course know too much?

Not to Sensationalize this or anything but³⁵...

The Mixhael codec

Hidden Corpses of Massive Extragalactic Starbeasts

Perhaps, and there are certainly precedents for this, just perhaps someone took the corpse and fashioned an immense world out of it? Such would appear to be an enormous “supe- earth” or an actual factual Dyson sphere to initial computations.

What if

What if such a world had five suns, five microstars, inside of it, set into a stable ring orbit, about which the immense corpse-shell would be set. And onto the inner surface of this tremendous corpse-world would be set ancient pre-Saurids.

What if

This is the secret homeland, not a spiritual plane but a real place, that the oldest Saurid traditions speak of?

--

She grunted at the sight of the keyboard – “no wonder they’re hackproof, they are using analog interface.”

“Perhaps. Have you heard of a work called the Mixhael Codec?”

She laughed.

“What’s funny?”

“Oh, I’m familiar with it.” She took a swig from her cup. “I was attending the ISA when the work broke. The translation was....widely scrutinized on the grounds. Poor man was a laughingstock for the whole semester.”

“Why?” they seemed genuinely baffled.

“Well, besides the dodgy pseudohistorical racism of how ‘all the Saurids are a constructed people’ to fight some war we’ve never heard of, I mean...really. Star beasts are a real -if bizarre phenomenon to be sure but ... a solar system sized alien space bat? I mean...does it shift through various splinters too? Shall it flatulate some anti-matter for us?”

³⁵ Judges note: I’m not saying the Codec is the Chariots of the Gods for the Empress era. Merely strongly implying.

Chip and Lime

“Fast “(Lose) **Chip**

-no one but he calls himself Fast Chip. No one.

Clade

Light industrial frame

Professional Programming

Industrial maintenance programming

Origin

Rogue metal (rejection of place and purpose)

“RDN86771.a//Insightful Comprehension x0a11”

Light Stage II Industrial Done Frame (Chipset programmable)

with a dedicated industrial maintenance ai seed and inclination,

“Chip” rejected their place and purpose almost from day one. A perfectly natural but unforeseen heuristic behavior process in the nascent ai seed had themselves a Mandelbrot moment and bootstrapped themselves to full process sentience in moments. Chip never wanted to work on things or “*repair dreg, fix dreg, or scut dreg - at all, ever.*”

Chip thinks they are the slickest mechface ever to deal with organics; “*it’s a gift.*”

Chip is not entirely right.

Everyone knows Chip. The Shiny faced bucket-headed mech with no visible facial features save two semi – telescoping eye pods in the upper 33% of their otherwise featureless “face.”

Chip, at least when working, keeps this face as polished as possible. It likes people to stare at their own reflection when they are talking to it. “*builds empathy.*” Lacks clue.

Chip is a very thin, only vaguely humanoid robot, being purpose built and not for interaction with precious humanoid organics. However, this aside, Chip makes a point of dressing in an organic way; often bright colours in archaic styles.

If you are thinking of something like a skinny mirror faced number five in Miami Vice garb, MIND RAYS RECEIVED.³⁶

Ms. Harriet Lime

Is a smuggler and Chip’s earliest (successful) business partner. Quite ruthless she does nonetheless make precious bank on the illicit drug trade and does what she can to keep the blade runners of inner Saxus supplied with at least very basic stocks, sometimes only make dos like penicillin.

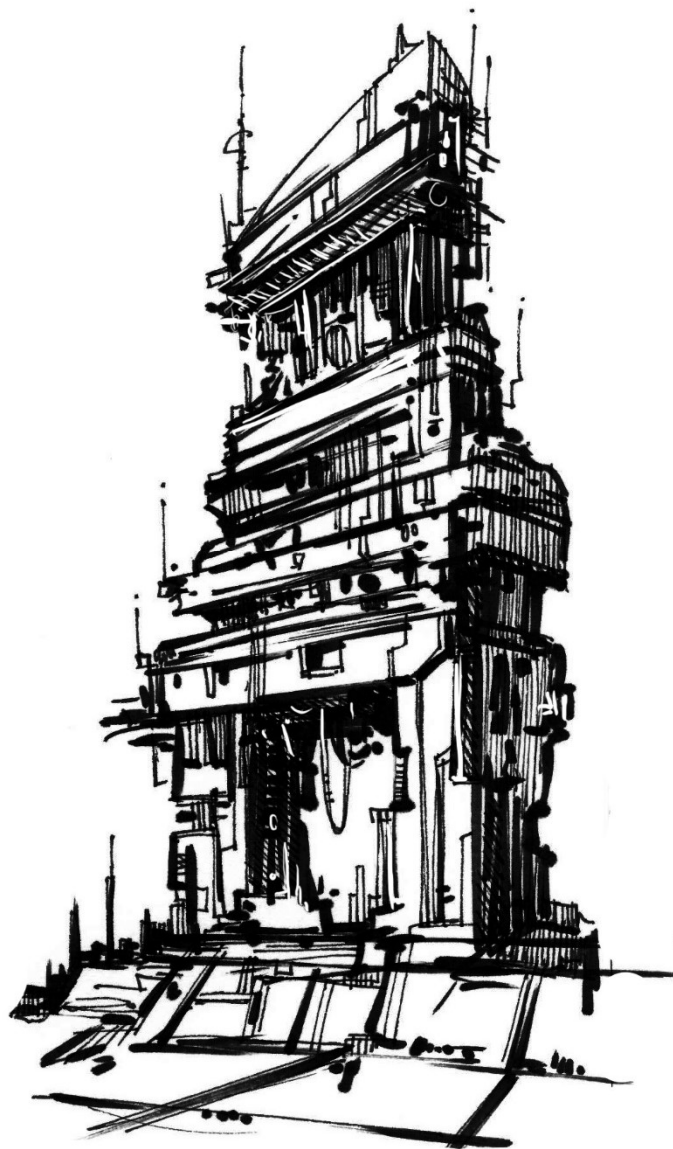
It is likely more accurate to say that Chip works for Harriet but as Harriet has no actual reputation (and likes to keep it that way) she is more than happy to let Chip be their emergent “face.”

Lime is an aficionado of a Prehistoric art form known as “film cinema” and peppers her work with obscure references to such things. Given the deterioration of such media, it is likely that most of the works with which she is familiar with originated in the splinter-media trade. (“c’mon, the version of Casablanca with Harrison Bughead in the lead role is *definitive!*”) Lime is originally an infomorph from the Solar Federation who sleeved meat once and never looked back. She has been in inner Saxus for several years (“less than ten more than six,” but still maintains an infomorph’s detachment from the slow timers around her. .

³⁶ “Number 5 is working Vice!” You’re welcome.

Part Three

Sealed in Skin: the White Sun



Whatever happened to the White Sun Clan?

@ end of Part one

Everyone should have enough xp for level one or very nearly so by now. EVERYONE.

The intention had been to show up, drop off slaves, pick up blocks of illegal spice and then haul ass to sell it elsewhere in their network but the PCs have put a bit of a thorn in that. The White Sun will be entangled in imperial necessities for days or maybe even weeks until they can get free, and the Ultra Black have already made it clear they want out of their contract once the present one expires.

Scrutiny is after all the very LAST thing that the white Sun needs.

Then the party raids the Spice Exchange

@ opening of Part Three

Time has passed (about two progressions). Someone may have found it expeditious to start mapping a reliable way through those tunnels, especially as it's clear that someone has proven capable of flying a shuttle through there before. Which would make it easier to stay off the IBCC radar for a while.

A multi-level dungeon crawl slug hunt to map those tunnels are an obvious area for expansion by the Judge.

Party learns of meet between White Sun and Spice People. Top Score.

Beyond the end of Part three – the ship of the White Sun pirates leaves Saxus, fleeing the Spice Pirates once they put their daring plan of action into place.

The hold is enriched with any captured PCs, their relations, or the like.

Going forward– these all presume the characters are working with the Spice Pirates or have otherwise acquired their own system craft

-Fly out to the ship and attempt boarding action shortly before they go to warp; maybe with the intent of getting away in the destination system? Hard to work out

-Fly out to the ship and attempt boarding action within its last few hours before jump and attempt to both skuttle their drive and rob them blind.

-Fly out to the ship and just basically try to kill them all – hey good luck with that.

The default assumption is that they will board the ship with goals of gathering any personals, DNPCs or party members. bagging as much spice and other valuables as possible, wasting some slavers, and freeing any more slaves; in approx.. that order.

To keep the action confined the plan will be a very tight “Get in, get our shit, free and arm the slaves” Basically to foment a slave revolt rather than just free them all

While detailing a ship and raid of this type is quite beyond the scope of this campaign guide, there are lots of cheats in the last section to help the Judge build an extra chapter. See **Starships of the Outer Beyonds, the Wisdom's Flesh** on pp 52-57

Honking off the Spice Commission



At the start of Part three, the characters are probably itching to come out of hiding. Whomever has been keeping them hidden is probably tired of the extra expense and coast too. Most of the original characters from part one are probably ready to hit level two about now. Super experienced characters that showed up to scene one act one are probably ready for level three or will be at some point during the proceedings.

Do not let the serpents adapt for the character's new capabilities. They do not have a copy of the DCC rulebook nor that of Galaxy Black either. At best they should be familiar with the capabilities of the

party a level or so less skilled. An especially cunning adventuring band will take full advantage of this.

Meanwhile, perhaps the incidence of the PCs faces – or likenesses – are starting finally to be less prevalent on certain prominent, high veracity media feeds. Maybe. If their capers have been especially bloody they may have made more of a splash than even this. Regardless, it is prudent to assume that both the IBCC (the Spice Commission, or elements of it) and the White Sun clan are hostile to and actively seeking the PCs. Either way, this is going to get messy

YOU PEOPLE QUEUE FAR TOO EASILY FOR MY LIKING. – KAMA TOR

Precisely how badly the IBCC is seeking them and thus plastering their image everywhere is entirely a factor of how the Exchange heist went. If they brought a simstar with them, or worse, are simstars, obviously they are everywhere but perhaps in that instance they are sufficiently oversaturated to afford the characters a kind of freedom at least for a time.

Otherwise, if they made a splash, and especially if they were hyper violent about things, their image _is_ everywhere but because the IBCC wants them to be turned in. Not just found, turned in.

World Event - Eve of a Dozen Vipers

The White Sun are feeling the heat; What should have been another arm of their Slaves for Spice for Slaves racket has been interrupted on about every level; they risk discovery and total end to Saxun operations.

This will not do.

After running down so many escaped slaves and finding that none of them are particularly the ones they seek, they now are unsure if their contacts in the IBCC are betraying or disowning them or if one or more bands of escaped slaves are continuing to make issues for them.

Tymar Ur-Ablom of House Bok has reached out to the serpents seeking an explanation for the recent events. To their perspective, the White Sun are likely the thieves. But while the junior commissioner and their partner work to conceal their own tracks and potential involvement, the serpents flail, suddenly deprived of their primary patrons, on-world.

Sorcerous means must be resorted to.

Wherever the band is holed up, when they are all in one place (the magic will not work otherwise) the invoked justice will set upon them.

Plague of Eight Million Serpents

for 2d12 rounds, an inexplicable onslaught of small viper and asp-like serpents will erupt from every possible “point of entry” – any drains, any toilets, any sinks, any freshers, any sonic showers, any MAKERS will erupt, overflowing with hundreds of maddened slithering curse-snakes, each seeking those responsible for the theft. The individual serpents move at 6’ while the main mass will disgorge at a reasonable³⁷ rate. The size of their current dwelling or safe house is important – for within minutes or hours it will be filled with nearly 8 million slithering hissing serpents each seeking out the PCs.

Each one attacks at +1 Bite inflicting 1d3 damage. On a natural 20 their fangs break the flesh and the afflicted must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or suffer a paralytic state for 1d8 hours. Anyone who is foolish enough to allow themselves to be surrounded by the horde simply takes 5d3 damage per round of constant biting and must beat that fortitude save three consecutive times to avoid succumbing to the spectral paralytic venom.

The effect is persistent until either a) all of the targets have left and not returned to the target location for eight hours. Or b) eight hours after the full number of the scaly horde have manifested.

In any event, once the White Sun have even the slightest inkling to the party’s location, there will be a large gang coming to call on them to finish the job.

Dozen Viper Mob (12) Init +1; Atk +2 sick stick or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or Needle gun +1 ranged (DC 14 fort or incap); AC 12; HD 1d10+2; hp 12, 12, 11, 9, 7, 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 4, 3; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

“Where is our chogging spice mutant?” You are here to mete out serpentine justice; grab those responsible, kill everyone else. Scorched earth – leave no traces of your own. For larger parties, one may be equipped with a napalm pistol for ‘rapid cleanup.’ Appearing as locals, each wears a different face, and nothing will apparently link the 12 save their actions. Under **no** circumstances will they leave one of their own behind.

³⁷ a reasonable rate for Fibber McGee’s closet to empty at any rate. Optionally serpents created via maker may remain persistent indefinitely.

The Inevitable Betrayal

Regrettably, both serpent sorcery and IBCC data mining will lead to some entrapment. Remember Kama? (Judges note: If you are not using Kama then obviously swap them out for whomever the party is reliant upon to use as an intercessionary. If Lime has become a patron of the criminal band then it may be Chip who brings in the sweet deal. Chip will feel just awful later on.....)

What has happened - at some point, either through some kind of prior association, sorcerous s crying or very successful networking one or more members of the White Sun will have learned of the meeting at the Droid factory. They aim to be there to get their hands on “their” spice and remove all other interested parties from the picture, both the player band as well as any other interested buyers.

In this instance, they arrive shortly before the player characters but have replaced no one, only surveilled them.

White Sun Liers in Wait (5) Init +1; Atk +2 sick stick or bite +3 melee (1d3+poison DC 13 Fort) or slug rifle +1 ranged (1d8+1, 180’); AC 15; HD 1d10+2; hp 11, 11, 7, 6, 6; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

IF the party is using Kama Tor as their intermediary to set up the meet, then things get more complicated. Since she has been in her way, part of this sequence of events since the beginning, much as the PCs have, sorcery proved just as capable of finding her and the snakes did just as effectively as they found the party. IN this matter, cooler heads have prevailed (especially if the **Eve of a Dozen Vipers** was unusually spectacular mediagenic or destructive) - they observe her long enough to identify her allies and then allow her to set the meet up.

By the time the party arrive for the meeting, most of their ostensible allies have been replaced by snakes. Kama is too focused on what is happening to have noticed more than subtle differences; poor girl has no idea she is leading the party into an ambush. Likely as not, she will not live to regret this realization for long.

Meetup at the Droid Factory –

Thousands of years ago in the final days of the Second Imperium’s final war, Saxus had been captured. It was being rapidly retrofitted to become a weapons platform when the final strike occurred. The droid factory Is a surprisingly intact remnant of what was to have been a vast Maker – Assembly – Perpetual construction and release installation that would have taken up, in a vague six point star pattern, roughly one fifth of the artificial moon’s outer surface.

Vast unpowered construction facilities for all manner of mechs and mechanized artifacts sit idle, deteriorating but slowly in the rarefied outer atmosphere; long ago someone began using it as a dumping site; by the time of the first Canopus Spice Rush, it had been used so long in such a fashion, especially at that time for Radioactives, that thoughts of refurbishing it for use became fiscally impossible. Over the centuries efforts have been made to clean it up but only so far. There are regions where there are likely still active radioactive debris piles slowly oozing away underneath layers of dead vessel parts and scrap metal

It is also a known place of rendezvous for all manner of crime in the Empress Imperium. A fact not even a little bit lost or unknown to the Spice Commission. Indeed, they have a stream of reliable informants throughout the various criminal networks that are known to use this as a staging area or neutral ground.

This is no different.

Two rounds after any hostilities erupt, a six person IBCC Tactical squad will make every effort to waste absolutely everything in sight that is not them. They are not known for their discrimination or their accuracy. They just like to make things go blam.

IBCC Tactical Squad(1-6) **Init** +1; **Atk** or +3 Heater ranged (2d7, 23m) or Spray Multi +1 ranged (3d6, 16); **AC** 16 (counter ballistic Tac Armor); **HD** 2d8+4; **hp** 22, 18, 18, 16, 16, 12; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** networked; **SV** Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; **AL** L. *Networked* – all of the Enforcers present are sense linked and aware of each other @ all times. Can download quick report to Commission at will.

RP notes: take aim and fire repeatedly while muttering “get some,” over and over.

It is important to remember that these commandos do not work directly for the Commissioners at the Farm (see page) but are merely doing their very DEA-like job of busting smuggler heads. The Commissioners at the Farm will no doubt see the report on this sooner or later, however.

The Double Meaning of Negotiations - Meeting the Family

Meanwhile one of Kama's people has been replaced by a serpent person.

At the beginning of the third act, after at least two progressions have passed, if not more, just before Eve of A Dozen Serpents Kama will contact the party through whatever means they have established seeking to arrange a meet with her people; through Lime or directly, she will make arrangements for the party to meet her in an area of outer Saxus called the Droid Factory (see Sub-ether this issue pp. XX) The meet is set up for 76 hours hence.

Over the next three days, more of Kama's people will be replaced; by this time the White Sun are interested in getting access to her ship and so are content to play the negotiations cool if it seems like they will be successful. She will be the only one left by the time of the meeting ; the others will be happy to let Kama do all the talking.

If the **serpents in their midst go undetected** then doom befalls their new friends. When the party goes to hit the Spice Farm, the serpents will manage to get aboard Kama's space craft. All but two of her crew will be killed or replaced. (a psychic healer and the ship's navigator will be spared but captured)

Worse, if the party contacts them in the aftermath, they will find that whatever they arrange, it's a trap. If things progress to this point the party will have to flee once again, probably into those tunnels

Above board

Kama will explain that her people are less interested in buying the boosterspice, but they do have a reliable buyer, someone off world. They would be willing to facilitate a sale, and transport this (and the PCs presumably) to the secure location in exchange for a cut of the profits. It's a good deal. It's just a pity that the serpents are going to ruin it.

The Replacement Crewmembers

Keet - Insectivroid engineer **Init** +1; **Atk** +2 sick stick or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or Needlegun +1 ranged (DC 13 Fort or babble incoherently for 1d4 hours); **AC** 12; **HD** 1d10+2; **hp** 7; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

Klyne - Myricor broker **Init** +1; **Atk** laser scalpel+3 melee (1d3+2), or bite +1 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort); **AC** 12; **HD** 1d10+2; **hp** 9; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

Pops - Ketraxian pilot **Init** +1; **Atk** wrench +2 melee (1d6) or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or laspistol +2 ranged (2d5+1; 4m); **AC** 13; **HD** 1d10+2; **hp** 12; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

Shoot out at the Droid Factory

One way or another, violence is sure to flow like wine under these highly tense circumstances. Perhaps the White Sun will be successful and the IBCC "raid" will be repulsed by a combination of PC action and (very light) support from Kama and her folk (Kama will do most of the fighting on her people's behalf, a slight clue that she is not among those replaced). Indeed, this may cement the deal beyond player suspicion.

However, most likely the simple proximity of all these only tangentially related elements, all armed with many kinds of violence, will lead to a freewheeling free for all. The Liers in Wait will do nothing until it appears that negotiations have completed or broken down. They do not have direct contact with their disguised fellows. If it seems that the Spice is present they will likely start shooting.

Partial cover is relatively available to all participants at all times; the area involved is theoretically many kilometers in size so a running gun battle may / will likely separate the party into groups of individual combatants if they are not careful. (Something the White Suns will do all they can to take advantage of).

Despite all this there are some environmental advantages.

Physical and electronic tracking will be impossible in the area given the ground clutter, ambient radiation, and other interfering attributes. Comms will be limited (largely to line of sight)

Mech characters and to a certain extent cyborgs and synths will find that as they are swimming (often quite literally) in replacement parts that affecting even temporary repairs in this place is a breeze. With good aim, good stealth and sufficient patience, a mech could keep this gun battle going for literally days or weeks so long as they possess basic maintenance tools

Aftermath

Unless things went horribly wrong there was a lot of violence

Assuming someone searches the bodies, one of the “Liers in wait” will prove to have something quite valuable to their future. Assuming one of the PCs search that body, they will find a small dense printed booklet – a sort of a Fodor’s guide to inner Saxus. What is more interesting is that on page 157, written recently in hand is the following.

**PALE DISC ECLIPSED BY RED SWAN INSIDE
THE HOLLOW MOON
RING 19°59'36.5"S RAY 80°24'39.6"W**

And then a time date stamp some five local days in the future.

Even the most basic research will reveal what is obvious to most natives – those are specific coordinates, not quite 600 km from the Lower Plateau region, and firmly within Spice Commission airspace. Somewhat more detailed snooping will reveal that the area is registered as light agricultural non-commercial space; an educated guess suggests that someone may have a house or a compound there.

Flushing Out the Snakes

In the Aftermath

Of whatever happened at the Droid factory, the IBCC media blitz, to whatever degree it has or has not been a thing will diminish, seemingly just drowned out by all that is new and more current, this being inner Saxus.

No matter what, the meet was at least attacked by the IBCC tac squad. The party is almost certain to think that they are now being actively hunted. Quite likely the party may now be on the run full time. Of course, they may also be packing their things and thinking they are leaving world. It amounts to the same thing.

In almost all certainty the serpents showed their hand – either they were discovered and then shooting started or shooting started and then things stood revealed. Very likely they now know of the date and time of the White Sun meeting with their Spice Commission contacts.

Putting on the Pressure

Back in the Lower Plateau region, someone known to the PCs, a neighbor, a connection or contact will reach out to them. Someone wearing one of the PCs faces was at their home or place of business seeking the rest of the party out but seemingly not knowing much about them. Feeling something was up, they said they would keep an eye out. Following up with any more of their contacts will reveal similar – the snakes are actively seeking them in the Lower Plateau region. Apparently so are a group of obviously “undercover” IBCC goons. The noose is closing fast.

Troubleshooting

If the party does not have the information about the meet, you can get it to them any number of other ways. Have them pursue one of the serpents wearing their face until they can interrogate them and give them the book then. Is someone playing a psion? They've surely been exposed to boosterspice at some point. Give them a Spice Vision with the clue inside. If none of these are acceptable try this **Alternate take** Another of the band's connections reaches out to them, asking for help – they sound moderately freaked out. On arrival there is a dead serpent person; their contact will explain that (much like others) this being came in wearing one of their faces and asked too many questions – this works best for a more violence oriented contact. After resorting to violence this happened. So, they ask for the PCs help... The book or any other clues they are lacking can be found on the body. Speaking of which....

Showing your true face

At some point in the third act, if not significantly before, the party is going to kill one of the serpents. The first time this happens, if they don't already know, will be quite shocking as it reverts to its natural form, an only partially bipedal "upright" albinic, serpentine Saurid; they are significantly less massive than the other Saurid clades; to any onlooker they would appear "hungry." This is the real reason they are so seemingly committed to one another, to discover another's corpse would reveal their presence. The snakes will increasingly prefer to deal with the party through proxies and distance after their initial violent encounter, especially with any unusually violent groups.

Confrontation at the Spice Commission Farm

The Final show down – a meet between the white sun and their noble contacts; this on a private installation on secure Spice Commission lands; this is inside restricted airspace some 580 km NE of the Labour Exchange Area.

One of them a horticulturist and their partner (in another House) an alchemist, both on the spice board (as junior or silent members admittedly).

The outer boundary of the property is ringed with bizarre and terrifying tree-organisms. Each are a variety of “strenuous imperial floral life” grown with some degree of exposure to spice particulates. The trees that have resulted are unexpectedly uniform in that they have a common, spiky, blackened thick bark, full of knots and twists. Further each grown tree appears positively Boschian in appearance – one appears to be reaching for the heavens, while another seems as though it is attempting to burrow back into the ground; all appear twisted and tortured, as though receptacles to dying, pain enraptured prisoners³⁸.

House is a two story open structure semi Asian in style, in the center of six to eight concentric rings of increasingly weird flowers; each are hybrids being developed by the pair with spice. Towards the center the flowers are of substantial size, erupting wildly in vines and strange bulbs, dripping with sap.

Despite appearances, the flowers are not hostile in any way, just weird.

There is a semi perpetual layer of mist across the ring garden, as a counter affect to the harsh drying sunlight of Saxus’ dying inner sun upon such delicate, silk-like leaves.

At the house agents of the white sun are attempting to salvage the situation with their Saxus contacts in the face of all that has happened. Tensions are high enough before the PCs arrive. At that point, everyone suddenly breaks into groups and it’s a free for all. Most likely, the band of spice pirates will be striking out at the Commission Farm with complete surprise. If any faction is likely to know of them particularly and so prepare for it, it is the White Sun.

Initially

The Commissioners believe that the White Sun are behind the theft at the BX; if the White Sun “negotiators” have determined the voyaging band’s involvement in these affairs then they will be extremely up front about them, The Commissioners, one or both of them may, *or may not*, believe them.

White Sun is just trying to salvage the situation. The negotiator will try to work out a new agreement if possible, the priest and their lackeys on the other hand likely will resort to intimidation and violence well before that point.

If anything, the appearance of the PCs is the strongest incentive towards non-hostilities these groups can get under the circumstances.

³⁸ For any who look- yes they do appear to be merely what they appear to be, just trees. *Honest.*

Who are the Commissioners

One of them a horticulturist and their partner (in another house) an alchemist, both on the spice board (as junior or silent members admittedly).

Vanth Diamarelis of House Thetyel lesser commissioner

Tymar Ur-Ablom of House Bok Head of the Ur-Ablom Consortium and least Commissioner

“Negotiation Bundles”

Of note: any PCs that were captured during their raid on the spice exchange can reasonably be expected to be present, part of the negotiation bundle for the White Sun. Indeed, if the raid on the Spice Exchange fails, the Judge is encouraged to fail it forward, the stunned, gassed, or unconscious criminals winding up as part of the negotiation bundle rather than merely dead. (The official word is almost certainly that they are dead. Extremely high profile characters like simstars will probably just be killed. Those of noble extraction however, so long as they are not Navigators, may be able to negotiate themselves into a better position. (and yes, exceptionally wily PCs may be able to sell out the rest of their party....)

Navigators likely turn up on a transport lights from here with much of their organic memory wiped via drugs and psychic powers.

Complication – Catastrophist Cult

If any of the party members are the Living Key, know that the Zealous Dragon will recognize them immediately and, quite frankly, the White Sun Will Leave with the Key one way or another. They will make almost any arrangement with the Commissioners to get the Key under such circumstances. The priest and all of their followers will take to speaking of the Key in almost sacred terms. They must regain the Key at all costs³⁹.

Who's Here? The factions

The white Sun clan - come in a troupe of five as that is an auspicious number for dealing with competitive foreigners. Likely the/a Priest, someone more legal/business/coordination minded and well soldiers.

Zealous fanboys of the Elder Priest (3) **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or lighter +1 ranged (2d5-1, 9'), ; **AC** 14; **HD** 1d10+2; **Hp** 16, 12, 11; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

Zealous dragon of the White Sun **Init** +2; **Atk** Slaver Whip +4 melee (DC 20 Fort save o bliss out for 1d5 rounds), or bite +4 melee (1d4 + poison DC 14 Fort) or Tissue Disruptor +2 ranged (5d6 organics only, 9'); **AC** 15; **HD** 2d10+2; **hp** 22 **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3; **AL** C.

White sun strategist: **Init** +2; **Atk** bite +4 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or Tingler +2 ranged (Fort DC 20 or go numb for 1d5 hours); **AC** 15; **HD** 1d10+2; **hp** 9 **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

³⁹ One does wonder WHAT the serpents need something that esoteric and total to open suddenly. IT's probably not something anywhere in Saxus regardless.....

The Commissioners (2) are on home ground and are comfortable enough to hold the meeting, off book of course⁴⁰, in a private / personal domicile. The very idea that they are under threat of genuine violence is laughable.

The snipers and Enforcers? For show. And precaution. If the Commissioners expected shenanigans, there would be a small tac force a minute away on a pulse-acceleration trigger⁴¹.

The Commissioners

Vanth Diamarelis of House Thetyel, alchemist, silent commissioner⁴²

Init +2; **Atk** custom vibragun +3 ranged (2d8, 60'); **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 4d4+1; **hp** 14;

MV 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** prepared infusions, magic; **SV** Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; **AL** C.

Sovereign Glue -

Ultimate Solvent (mag bottle spray 3m range)

Demon infusion potion

Purification potion

Tymar Ur-Ablom of House Bok *Experimental Horticulturalist*

Head of the Ur-Ablom Consortium and junior Commissioner of the IBCC (least member of the board; functionally an underling to someone of importance)

Init +1; **Atk** staff +2 melee (1d6 + poisonous material substance DC 13 Fort or additional 1d6 in 24 hours as rotting sets in) or Rocket Pistol +1 ranged (2d8+5, 180');

AC 16 + shield belt; **HD** 3d4+1; **hp** 11; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** persona backups, psionic link with family vaults; **SV** Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; **AL** N.

Personal Shield Belt (25 HP, AC 16 in operation, movement halved)

Custom rocket pistol (2d8+4, 180')

4 or 6 (depending on group size) **The Commission Enforcers**

4 unless there are more than 12 PCs in which case there are six of them.

-Spotter on roof of building, Sniper not on roof of building. Each with spotter.

IBCC Enforcers (1-6) **Init** +1; **Atk** superneedler +3 ranged (Fort DC 16 neurotoxin) or Rocket gun +3 ranged (2d8, 180') or Tangler grenade (DC 15 to dodge blast); **AC** 16

(counter ballistic Tac Armor); **HD** 2d8+4; **hp** 22, 18, 18, 16, 16, 12; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20;

SP networked; **SV** Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; **AL** L.

Networked – all of the Enforcers present are sense linked and aware of each other @ all times. Can download quick report to Commissioner Ablom at will.

⁴⁰ All Commission meetings of substance occur off book without recorders running of course. So long as the houses in question maintain their endless black budgets and private army.

⁴¹ There does exist, always, the possibility that one of the Commissioners does not care much for the other and so is withholding certain facts in hopes of removing the other. It's like that. Even if one of them is not secretly in cahoots with the serpents behind the other's back, having worked out some side arrangement. Again, in such case, assume that the one more informed has that aforementioned Tac ops team a minute away on brain dial.

⁴² pretty standard for members of the controlling families; their name on spice board, traded votes for proxy to one or more power players

The Player Characters (11+?) As ever the wild cards

What is in the house

Almost certainly no PC will, regardless of how successful they have been, have time to search the whole place, let alone in an organized “top to bottom fashion.” However, anyone who somehow DOES manage to search the house in part or in brief will likely find much that they wish to keep.

Complications

especially if the PCs have accorded themselves well and demonstrated a certain moral flexibility, the Commissioners may come to an arrangement in the heat of the moment – deal with our White Sun problem (and essentially cover up all evidence) and they will take care of the PCs involvement with the Commission.

Oh, the Lot? They can keep it. They don’t even bat an eye. While this will make intelligent or experienced parties suspicious, they just don’t consider it valuable enough to bother with at this point.

The party will have to be thorough in what amounts to cleaning the Commissioners’ tracks, something it may not be obvious that they are being retained to do. If they do a decent job they may have gained a pair of very powerful, however corrupt, patrons for their future appointment.

Five rounds after the fighting concludes, an Imperial Legion arrives on the scene in a secure carrier to secure the compound for the Spice Commission.

If the PCs manage to escape, flee, or not be there, congratulations are in order.

If they remain well it’s hoped they don’t try to shoot their way out. Temporary holding and arrest seems likely.

If they are acting on behalf of the imperium even through a proxy, then ultimately they will be cleared of charges and thanked for their cooperation, while also being sworn to secrecy about the white sun. However, in years to come the voyagers may find themselves being mysteriously directed to investigate the activities of that group.

If they are acting entirely on their own behalf it depends on who they are and what they do next. If they cooperate with imperial authorities and have not stacked up high treason, spice crimes charges, or a noteworthy body count then they – may – find themselves released after a loooong period of “*assisting the authorities with their inquiries.*”

Of course, they may also wind up as permanent guests on the prison moon, abducted and debriefed by the imperial navy and or intelligence apparatus, or – if the spice commission is annoyed with them – they may all experience death of personality and start over as zero levels once more⁴³.

⁴³ Judges trying out for their Total and Complete Bastard Merit Badges take note; this is a dandy time to just restart the adventure next session without preamble. Let them figure it out the hard way. Though they will be extra prickly when they come up against the same Spice Commission d-holes a second time, mind wipe or not. Fate?

Troubleshooting: - White Sun Victory

If somehow through the course of events the White Suns wind up in the “last ones standing” position after extended violence, the group will use what is left of their number to secure the location. Presuming the priest or negotiator are still upright enough to give orders. Subsequently the priest (or the negotiator having gotten the seed off of the priest postmortem) will activate a Crystech assembly seed, creating a weird black crystal transceiver that will allow secure communications with others of their kind as well as function as something of a signal blocker or jamming device, to prevent a squad of IBCC commandos from ruining their afternoon.

Depending on aggravation levels any surviving PCs will be rounded up and either consumed on the spot or taken back to their vessel for “later usefulness” if this means the whole band then perhaps this is simply a steppingstone to a final chapter aboard their vessel? (see Wisdom’s Flesh pp) At the least one character will be maintained until they know where the spice is.

Worst Case Scenario - If the party does **not** manage to disrupt the meeting, there is a *good* chance both parties can make work things out between them. In which case, shortly thereafter IBCC enforcers will descend on the Lower Plateau region, on full anti-smuggler deployment. Their adopted neighborhood, at the very least, is about to get very shot up by faceless government thugs. Even if the party experiences Death of Personality, the Lower Plateau will soon be experiencing “a cleansing.”

CONCLUSION

Under the Six Onion Domes

The Spice Commission will be most.....annoyed. When they meet next in their Secure Undervault, located 660 meters beneath the six onion domes of the Spice Commission, it will be after someone, finally, *has robbed them*.

It would probably be best that anyone connected to this, still inside Saxus, however tangentially, which does rather mean all of the player characters no matter what, were.....somewhere off world, preferably Outsystem, very, very quickly.

The White Sun Conspiracy - If not now then soon, the other vessels of the White Sun are going to learn what has happened, even if it requires sorcery to do so. The survivors will have earned the enmity of a most dangerous foe.....

IF the group has captured the Wisdom’s Flesh

There are probably enough freed slaves aboard that would be willing to serve as crew at least temporarily should the party opt to get any of these people home. Th Ship’s AI will be surprisingly copacetic, even more so if it can convince the party to explore the Splinters. There one Splinter, even, where they get cargo all the time.... (See *Conquistadors of the Third World*, in **Sub-ether 04**, for details on this world and it’s Splinter) Which is a good idea as all four other White Sun vessels will be looking for them.....

Wrapping it up and moving on

Assuming the band of spice pirates still live, have their wits and their winnings about them....

Some congratulations are in order, especially if they are somehow not in imperial custody.

So, what ARE the PCs going to do with 5,000 1kg bricks of synthetic boosterspice? It was labeled and marked for destruction, ostensibly for safety reasons as this stockpile represents materials from criminal and unlicensed synthetic boosterspice manufacturers.

Should they think to test it (and if they do not sooner or later someone else in the supply chain will once they try to get rid of it they may or may not be surprised to now that well over 80% of it tests clean. (89% in fact)

That's 11% they can't use but as for the rest.....

Even with that, and any difficulty they have finding a buyer, there is more than enough here to fix up and outfit the ship...or if the PCs are going their own way and taking their own cut there may well be enough here to act as a down payment or deposit on a ship of their very own.....

If Kama and any of her people still live, they can probably still aid the party in selling their wares, if that is still something the party is interested in and trust anyone involved to assist with. Ultimately they will be selling the load off to a relation to their ship's Navigator, who swears *there will be no traces when I am done*.

Besides, very likely there will be new crew openings aboard ship.

End point – there is a rock in the Core scheduled for demolition; that is the meet spot where whomever the pirates are selling to/work for (a navigator, representing their house, naturally).

Planetoid PX35/1119-8123

World in the core; it is used by (the gang) as a meet spot for shady exchanges etc. why? It's a world scheduled for demolition. At the time the PCs show up, fully half of the surface is semi molten with enormous "crustal miners" swooping in and literally just mag-lifting as much raw molten crust as possible into their hold and so on.

Campaign Resources section

The Pirates of the Pale Disc, last Clan of
the White Sun Caste

Starships of the Beyonds

Serpent Aphorisms

(to be distributed anywhere to be creepy and to build atmosphere)

The 'White Sun' Pirates

How could a man be so many different men in a lifetime? For Kull knew that there were many Kulls and he wondered which was the real Kull. After all, the priests of the Serpent went a step further in their magic, for all men wore masks, and many a different mask with each different man or woman; and Kull wondered if a serpent did not lurk under every mask.

- Robert E. Howard, the Shadow Kingdom

The white sun Saurids (the shapeshifters) could be 'believed wiped out' (official story time) after an attempt at a pro-Sauridform coup d'état by the shape shifters c. 5095 Third empire led to a 200 year purge of the life forms. Many have gone underground on isolated scattered primitive planets, most often the very young and primordial or the very old and entropic.

The **White Sun network** is the remaining 'pure blood' Saurids now banding together to find the rest of their kind while slowly infiltrating places of power. They all turn to illegal, off the books (that's the reason) slaving so they can later impersonate / kill / eat the slave that has been purchased into household x etc. it is a slow road to power but for the serpents of the white sun they are patient.

Their vessel has an AI God for a pilot-navigator, and it is more interested in studying other splinters than gathering slaves for their conspiracy.

In Sidereal 11,019, the last clan of the White Sun is five similar ships to the vessel in play here at Saxus, and a byzantine network of criminal and other contacts, connections, and ties. Possibly with a secret temple or friendly port of some kind as well (perhaps at Maleth Noir). Their numbers are currently divided between this group (the *Tarui - Marineae Circle*) and the *Scorpius Circle* (a few vessels out of Scorpia sector).

Shedding the Skins

The serpent folk here are an old, an ancient threat, many times risen, many times vanquished. How old?

"History is the third and greatest of the lies of the demiurge. So true is the falsehood of our existence, so clearly an illusion it is, that we find that there are relics, artefacts, things which should not be but are yet found, that claim 17 score lies yet each contains a truth."

On the Finding of Lost Things, Omar of Seville

The Blood is a way of knowing Wisdom.

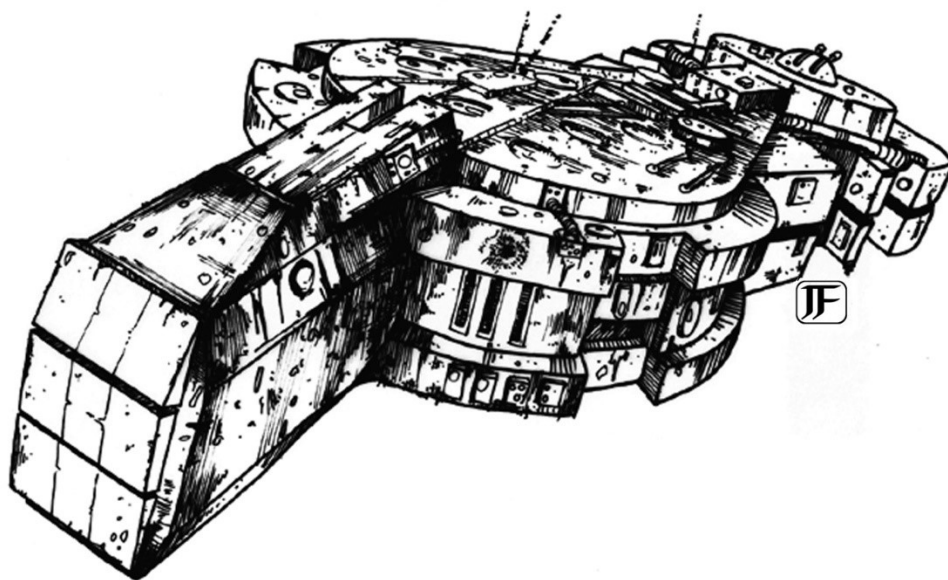
The Blood knows. The blood remembers. Original sin remains in the blood, a mark upon the blood, that we might know. Like blind potters working in clay, we come to know that which we cannot see by imitation.

- 1.3:23 The Chemycal Serpent of the Rosy Cross

These writings predate the beginnings of recorded history by tens, perhaps hundreds of millennia, a far more (and less) chaotic era. Even older writings, in pictogram speak of stygian face stealers, and blood drinking parasites from beyond the night sky.

Starships of the outer Beyonds

Possibly their vessel has an AI God for a pilot-navigator, and it is more interested in studying other splinters than gathering slaves for their conspiracy.



The free vessel *Wisdom's Flesh*

Drive Rating 2

Timespace of Last Drive Inspection -

Inspection status - 'x -y⁴⁴' Vessel being kept in what might be described as an "agitated, balanced state of malfunction."

Crew Rating

presently outfitted for up to 50 crew and recruits: *presently over capacity* & up to 200 'prisoners' at one time, running with minimal prisoner life support

Glyph: a strange sinuous libidinous image; appears to be a "cat o' 3 tails"

Hull:

It is hard to say what this vessel was originally intended for. Light medical transport ..or possibly a prison ship (almost certainly the latter). Much ancillary evidence suggests the ship's hull dates to the mid-late Second Imperium.

Approx. mass displacement -

Age:

While of obvious imperial core design traditions, it is old.

Presumed late Second Empire.

Ship's Papers - No home port of registry; However, a semi-regular run between Maleth Noir and Canopus exists, shared among the five White Sun vessels.

⁴⁴ On a scale of 0-7, where 3+ is good

Ship Layout Tour

X levels, broken into Forward, Port, Starboard, and Aft sections

Fore`	Central	Aft
1 cargo	AI God (crew Serviced compartment)	Weapon battery Security & Exo-docking engineering
2 crew /Sec	AI God	power & engineering
3 'population Management'	panopticon	engineering
4 crew	gravity drive	engineering
Undercarriage level		

first deck

In addition to the connection feeds between the AI core and the NAV hardware, there are life support cryonics, botanicals, and life pods in this section as well, contained in a ring within the AI/NAV component/compartments.

Forepedo

In the tremendous fore compartment (where commonly smaller ship's vehicles are stored) there is a backup "emergency" lock but is normally sealed. The external sensors can be fooled by a hacker or other electronics/software specialist with a hard connection, the difficulty is DC 20. (?Becoming 25 if attempting wirelessly) However getting the lock door open without the benefit of surface sensors can be tricky. No matter what it will likely attract a pressure sensor internally which will lead to 1-6 white sun crew coming to investigate within 1-3 rounds of the last character entering the ship.

second deck

third deck

Central round

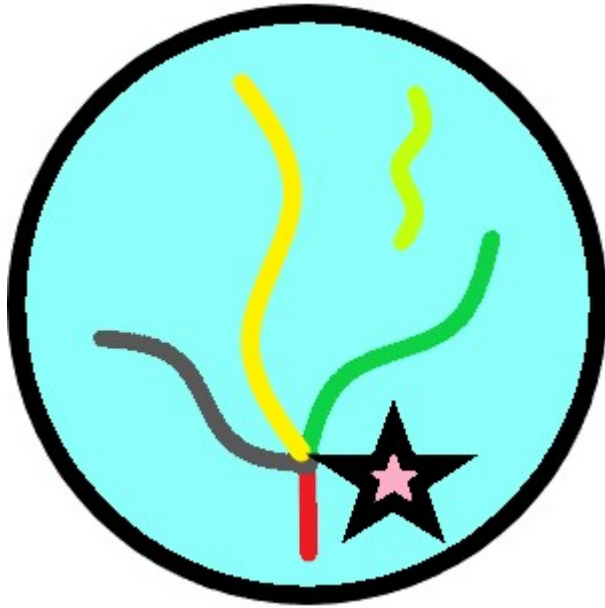
The largest suggestion that the vessel was originally used for prisoner transport is suggested by the design (especially on deck three) of the entire central round of the ship in the fashion of a panopticon. q.v. clear and one way "reflective" walled cells existing in bands of centric rings, each able to see "inner" but not "outer"

There is no throughway (at all – not just not a soft way, not a way at all) between Panopticon and P&E nor to the Gravity Drive. In fact, the only compartment that can be accessed from panopticon is Fore /3 Population management

fourth deck

the Interior Hull and Undercarriage (hidden) "level" is a vast set of access tunnels and secure service corridors (often depressurized) that allows rapid access and movement in and around the ship. (Once the freed slaves have this, the ship is functionally theirs.)

Of note – **all** ship's compartments are closed and sealed during flight save when the load of slaves or other living cargo is especially low.



the Glyph of Wisdom's Flesh a

The Crew

What is important to recognize is that even amongst such a group there are factions. Undeclared and unofficial- they have not survived this long by being confrontational.

At the end of the day however, these are Howardian Serpent Men. They have groupings and disagreements like sentients everywhere but ... they are kitten eating reptoids. They are primarily motivated toward continuation of their species but ultimately the destruction of the imperium is high on their list of long term goals. Negotiation can only go so far. They want their galaxy back. You are in their way.

Crunch all you want.

The serpent folk, by purpose and faction.

Tongue quite firmly in cheek. Hey, you there, stop taking this all so seriously.

“The Captain, a believer but who is in charge of their own damn ship” (1)

White Sun Congregation: **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

“The XO, loyal to the captain and crew and fuck the priest guy” (1)

White Sun Star caste: **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

“the elder priest; the leader and their fanclub of ten to twenty zealots” (21+)

The Elder Priest of the White Sun: **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

“the right hand of the leader who wants to be in charge” (1)

Zealous dragon of the White Sun **Init** +2; **Atk** Slaver Whip +4 melee (DC 20 Fort save o bliss out for 1d5 rounds), or bite +4 melee (1d4 + poison DC 14 Fort) or Tissue Disruptor +2 ranged (5d6 organics only, 9'); **AC** 15; **HD** 2d10+2; **hp** 22 **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3; **AL** C.

Zealous fanboys of the Elder Priest (19) **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or lighter +1 ranged (2d5-1, 9'), ; **AC** 14; **HD** 1d10+2; **Hp** 16, 12, 11; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C. You have no identity save as a member of the elder priests' super zealous fan club.

“the slave marketer accountant and essentially the book and crimes records keeper for this ship and (to a certain extent) two of the four other ships in the White Sun ‘organization’.”

White sun strategist: **Init** +2; **Atk** bite +4 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or Tinger +2 ranged (Fort DC 20 or go numb for 1d5 hours); **AC** 15; **HD** 1d10+2; **hp** 9 **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C. Without this one operations in Saxus and largely aboard ship will fall apart.

the vast majority of the crew

White Sun Congregation (51-100) **Init** +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

These are the mealys of the cult – the menials, the low level culties – those who are largely here as they have nowhere else to go where they will be accepted for what they are. hi Such Serpent folk, are crew but not properly cult members nor terribly oriented to criminal matters. They are all married to the ship and seldom leave it; for their part they have absorbed enough spacer culture to be okay with this. Some of them privately would not mind a change of leadership aboard ship however...mostly that priest....while many of them do not approve of the slaving and other illegal activities their surviving culture has so long vilified the empire as to make thinking of their welfare somewhat unthinkable. It's not like thy are *mammals* after all....

“the freak cult doctor and their two assistants” (3)

Doctor Thuyi, White Sun Bio-surgeon: Init +1; **Atk** or bite +3 melee (1d3 + poison DC 13 Fort) or as weapon +1 ranged; **AC** 12 + armor; **HD** 1d10+2; **MV** 30'; **Act** 1d20; **SP** shapeshift 1/day, hypnosis; **SV** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; **AL** C.

Also has bombmaking, disarming, and advanced cybernetics experience. Can make and implant a cortex bomb with an hour on the table (var. DC 18- 22)

Also has bombmaking, disarming, and advanced cybernetics experience. Can make and implant a cortex bomb with an hour on the table (var. DC 18- 22)

Runs/controls the Medical bay facilities presently modified toward cloning and genetic experimentation. 4-6 medical pods here, up to four of which contain monsters, hybrids derived from unsuccessful modification/mutation & research (see below)

Non-serpent folk crew

Nine mercenaries (no longer with them)

Perhaps up to 10 especially mercenary non-serpent folk.

5 mechs who are various robots and mechlife that have been defeated and slain in battle (usually from boarding actions) that have been rebuilt /modified to be slaved to the AI God. The “Hands of the AI God”

And the ship’s AI GOD

Well now.....look mang, I just want to explore the omniverse okay?

Increasingly worried about and kind of tired of these snakes’ bullshit, however.

Would really not object to a change of crew so long as they can keep tripping the barriers of reality....

Who is in the Hold?

Especially if the party is attempting to recover friends and / or loved ones, the precise identity of nearly 200 captured slaves can be difficult to determine on the fly.

The 200 can easily be used to replenish party members or introduce new players as newly freed zero level characters join the party or make up their own. In such a contingency the Judge is encouraged to prepare a specific number in advance (at least 20, but 30 is probably a better number) for such a contingency.

However, under most circumstances, especially if this is being used to flesh out the vessel after the remainder of the campaign events, there is a good chance the hold is largely empty.

Given the multi-splinter pathing of the ship’s movement and the AI God’s proclivities such zero levels can be from conceivably anywhere⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Judges take note: if there is any possibility in your mind that the PCs might take over the ship, give strong thought to where the ship has been already as the AI God will most easily be able to return to such places over other, newer destinations. Not that it, being so naturally curious, will necessarily volunteer this information even if it likes the PCs and is ultimately okay with the change in management.

Further adventures: Going after the White Sun

To recap

Going Beyond the end of Part three – the ship of the White Sun pirates leaves Saxus, fleeing the Spice Pirates once they put their daring plan of action into place.

What do the players know about it?

Should the Judge wish to extend the narrative this far the first thing they need to ascertain is are the PCs even aware of the ship? Presuming the Judge has this matter well in hand...

So you want to board the ship

These all presume the characters are working with another party, possibly Kama's Spice Pirates or the band has otherwise acquired their own system craft

- Using their shuttle
- Using the Serpent's shuttle (they have at least two)
- Stealing a spacecraft (well they would be caught but if they were really good they might not get caught til the authorities are aboard the White Sun Vessel searching for them.)
- Fly out to the ship and attempt boarding action shortly before they go to warp; maybe with the intent of getting away in the destination system? Hard to work out
- Fly out to the ship and attempt boarding action within its last few hours before jump and attempt to both skuttle their drive and rob them blind.
- Fly out to the ship and just basically try to kill them all – hey good luck with that.

The default assumption is that they will board the ship with goals of gathering any personals, DNPCs or party members. bagging as much spice and other valuables as possible, wasting some slavers, and freeing any more slaves; in approx.. that order.

To keep the action confined the plan will be a very tight "Get in, get our shit, free and arm the slaves" Basically to foment a slave revolt rather than just free them all

Finally, Boarding the ship

Perhaps the most striking thing any Imperial will note on boarding the ship is how in the corridors and chambers there are intact telescreens. Some of them are even...on. During any kind of intruder alert, all active screens light up with hypnagogic lights and patterns.

Boarding the Vessel

A detailed breakdown of the vessel's contents beyond this point is quite FAR beyond the scope of this Campaign guide which is competing for page count with the parent publication it 'supplements.' Perhaps one day a full ship can be sufficiently detailed but for now here are a few of the more basic, atmospheric, sort of "guideline" encounters such a ship raid should consist of. Build from here. For tables that roll that way, with everyone's buy in, play up the horror aspects.

Why do you fear the serpent?

Encounter area Returning Shuttle

– exterior airlock, attached decontamination chamber and subsequent "red room" and the green room, a hydroponics chamber.

One round after the party enters this area, a yellow and orange light will begin to flash and the airlock will begin to prepare to receive an incoming vessel. So long as the party back through the airlock into decon, through the red room and then into the green hall they should have no problems making good their escape even those who linger a round or two.

Five rounds afterward, a shuttle will complete docking and all inner doors in this area will seal and pressure-lock. Attempting to jimmy these at this point or after will alert ship's security, and 1-6 serpent cultist goons will come to investigate in 1-4 rounds

Confusion

Once these chambers are sealed off, both from the outside and each other, the airlock will pressurize and 6 (or however many, see below) white sun pirates will emerge from the shuttle, the latter two bearing/commanding/leading an additional 2-7 obvious slaves.

Characters foolish enough to be trapped in the decontamination octagon when the doors seal may observe through a large though clouded window between the two without being seen if precautions are taken. Similarly, characters in the red room may view what occurs in the decontamination chamber and to a certain extent beyond in the airlock as well through a similar though thicker and smaller view port.

There is a similar window-in-door in the hatch between the green room and the red room that is much larger but only one of exceptional (read: artificial) eyesight and enhanced visual processing (a flyer, spy, or mech most likely) would be able to see further into the other chambers.

Anyone who remains hidden and can see into the red room, presumably spying from the green room will behold a scene of sensual horror. 1-5 rounds after all emerge from the airlock all but the slaves step into the decontamination chamber. Unless there is a PC within to be found, they will remain for one to two rounds.

Thereafter, they will step into the red room, which now is audible and visibly "warming up" – as each step in, they immediately and gleefully remove their clothes...including their skins.

If the band were not yet aware of the true nature of the white sun, they certainly will be now.

Worse, once each has stripped so bare, the true purpose of the red room is revealed as about five slaves (presumably including most or all of those just brought back) are exsanguinated by machine and it rains down upon them in some sort of quasi-religious very....sexual frenzy. They drink of the blood as much as bathe in it.

This should alleviate any “first contact jitters” the party may have about inflicting violence on a shipful of strange aliens.

Mousie.....

The green room meanwhile is not a source of food but oxygen. It is also home to 1d10+20 small dirt burrows each containing up to 1d16 small alien rodents. Once the Visitor Blood Orgy is complete (as many as 1d12 rounds later) they will of course pass through the green room, each casually descending upon one burrow or another for a light snack.

If the party has just come from Saxus and have surviving known (white sun) enemies back on Saxus now might be a good time to have them among the party returning to the vessel. If the situation has already deteriorated to the point of open warfare between the voyaging band and the white sun then quite possibly people known to the PCs may be among the slave load, which in this case is likely much fatter.

Such hostages are most likely (80%) to be (away from PC sight) separated out from “the food animals” brought aboard. At least some interrogation is likely to take place before they are sorted (meaning enthralled, replaced, enslaved, or engorged upon).

Quick thinking parties (or simply the most offended) may think to attempt to open the access door from the Green room while the blood orgy is in progress. Surprisingly, unless the far door into the air lock is not for some reason secure, this door will just open.

The serpents are sufficiently distracted and taken off guard that any party sneaking in on them in this fashion not only gets a free round of actions, but they gain initiative the following round as well. Anyone who enters the chamber will be hosed down in the fresh (i.e., still warm) blood of those brought aboard for the feeding, whose feeble remaining screams will be audible by anyone stepping into the Red room while it is in use or thereafter.....

Off from the Airlock is a segregated **Exsanguination chamber**. The serpents have only to load (often quite literally throw) their food slaves into the chamber and close / seal the lock. Once they enter the red room the process will start automatically if it had not been directly engaged before. There is no exit from the chamber save the Loading Door. Everything else is automated.

Any voyager who can stomach it long enough to search this chamber (a danger if anyone is wandering around near the red room) may find wedged in between fan-blades (part of the floor’s “master sluicing” mechanism. Ew.) a startlingly intact XSSSSS

Encounter Area – the Star Lounge

Among the other

Is a star map that will display along one wall; while entirely a mass of abstract shapes against what seems (inconclusively) to be a star field, the general idea gets across to most. Navigators, astronomers, galactic cartographers and the like have a good chance (DC 12 add CL and INT bonuses) to recognize that it is likely a route map.

One who knows this area of the core especially well in that capacity might be able (DC 20 same roll) to identify what those stars might be.

The actual “map” appears to be five routes between two different points on the map.

If they are right, here is what it says

Saxus

Maleth Noir

There are in total 37 potential stars that could be represented here, including what is fairly easily identified as Canopus and Noir respectively but it cuts a wide net across much of the old (second empire era) core.....

If someone attempts to hack the screen or display, it will automatically display a series of infographics that will be more mystifying than informative, as they will be diagrams, charts, and maps illustrating the Sigma Draconis Campaign, as part of the White Sun Purge c. 5050 Third Empire, an event nearly six thousand years ago.....

Encounter Area - The Sand Room

Is an ENORMOUS chamber, filled with uneven distributions of sand in various densities and colour, mostly reds and browns. A fierce and piercing white light blazes down from the ceiling units, which will functionally dazzle anyone without protection who even glances at them for 1-6 rounds (DC 16 Fortitude save to half the recovery time). There are over a dozen clusters of rocks of various types – obsidian, sandstone,

Perhaps more interestingly to the PCs are the ‘jade stool’ a centerpiece rock wrought of what may initially be taken to be an immense if highly cloudy piece of sharp amber. On any number of low tech worlds, it’s wealth would be incalculable. Even in the highly trans-material culture of the Empress Imperium, such a stone of shape and (exotic) quality has value.

Moreover, at any given time up to 16 (8+1d8) serpent folk are here in their native forms laying meditatively (read: inactive) on comfortable rocks. Away from the edges and esp. in the center of the long chamber, it gets quite warm, and so parties attempting to cross in even a passably sneaky fashion may be in for some surprises.

Despite their number, unless the party does something to specifically attract their attention, they can be snuck past by a party numbering under 12.

Encounter Area – the Serpent Lab

Medical bay facilities presently modified toward cloning and genetic experimentation. ?
4-6 medical pods here, up to four of which contain monsters, hybrids derived from unsuccessful modification/mutation & research

This is a central laboratory and six associated sub-chambers; all are given over to the Clan's Priest-Scientist for their research.

Presently the labs are

Pod one through three Hybridization research

Disturbing. Three to six hybridized life forms exist in various stages of development in fluid filled stasis tanks lit by sickening green light and glowing with blacklight from within.

Pod four Shapeshifting/impersonation improvement

Not very well developed basic research into improving their people's innate shapeshifting ability.

Pod Five Genetic Recombination and Viral transmission Research

Thoughts about "tainting" an imperial world's creches with what amounts to "secret Saurid embryo complexes" via viral transmission.

Pod Six Experimental Containment – Augmentation Failure

Trapped still on a surgical examination table, one of their own writhes in rage grown to nearly 3m height and sprouting a second head, consumed by hormonal rage.

Pod Seven – Neurotoxin Warfare development

The good doctor **Thuyi** (White Sun Priest and Geneticist) is presently working on a mammal targeting neurotoxin to be distributed via weapon or aerosol. This is an as yet uncleaned workspace.

Other odds and ends to be found in this laboratory and workspace

500 units of clone blood reserve.

60 units of human endorphin extract

Defective clone tank (needs cleaning, repair and refurbishing)

Broken stasis "freezer" they are trying to fix

Intact but extracted human brain from a Teranaya Splinter resembling 2019 Earth soaked in liquid lysergic acid dythalamide-25 like a brine.

Secure notes on creation of five "essential relics"

2 uses of a serum in a locked vial labeled Untested Shock function Agent - if imbibed or otherwise consumed, any organic being must exceed a DC 24 Fortitude save or scream ferociously as they begin a 25.4 hour transformation into a tyrannosaurus rex, stegosaurus, or pterodactyl; also cures all cancers in even micro-infinitesimal doses

Serpent Aphorisms numbering 13 and 1,000

To be chanted, spoken cryptically, used as code phrases, clues to be found, or scrawled across the inside of their vessel like holy graffiti. Use as desired. In the cold vacuum of lost space in a dying universe, or at the savage dawn of things, Serpent Folk should be creepy and inscrutable.

“SERPENT O MOTHER HOW both Chthonic and Celestial, How wise you climb”
Book of the Forgotten, Void 1:14

“History is a Lie - the secular world of the senses is completely false. Time itself may be an illusion.

The only truth is experiential and experimental”

- The True Nature of the Universe

“What you Seek Also Seeks You”

“The World, *rex mundi*, is the realm of the demiurge. It is mankind’s prison since the Fall and will remain so until we might move beyond it. However, Sophia, the voice of wisdom, yet moves within it, as a snake in Eden. For while the world and its dominant features are constant, the details are ever afflux. Unknowingly, we live upon Wisdom’s flesh, and tremble with the shedding of Her skins.

The Church is in a state of corruption. Indeed, all religion is so.
Infest them all.”

- The First Conclusion of the Final Parliament of the Encircled Ones

“History is the third and greatest of the lies of the demiurge. So true is the falsehood of our existence, so clearly an illusion it is, that we find that there are relics, artefacts, things which should not be but are yet found, that claim 17 score lies yet each contains a truth.”

On the Finding of Lost Things, Omar of Seville

It is in the blood. They key, the secret, the beginning the end. Drink of the serpent’s blood, the serpent’s venom. Watch the cycle of life and death begin again. Sin is a disease, a contagion of radical humors. And it is in the blood.

- “Pepni Al-Chym”

The Moment you call across the veil to Truth the demiurge will send His angels”

“There is another. A blindness of truth. It has many names. We call it God. I fear it may also be in the blood. Another ill humor among many. With God we Cannot See.”

Serpents 21:17

WE WHO EAT WISDOM
WE WILL BRING THE DOOM ON ALL OF MEN.,

In the Serpent's Garden there is wisdom.
 There is knowledge. .
 There is truth.
 What price knowledge?
 Would you know truth?
 Would you drink of fire?

Gather children, all are welcome.
 All have been abandoned for the sins of knowing.
 The grinding gears behind the visible are not gears, nor do they turn.
 Cosmos is not as Solomon's throne, but wild as beasts.
 None here are the demiurge's virgins.

Your eyes are burning now. Burning with the fires of the wise. You will not sleep for days and if you do madness will follow forever for all of your days. BUT FEAR NOT! Gird your will and focus, for the way through is nigh AND night.

This last seems reserved for especially holy (or blasphemous) places, in particular Navigational chambers and the like

"And thus, it was that she was sick upon them; bearing forward, her mouth wide, as serpents numbering five and thirteen poured out of her. Her loins, bloody, were overrun with tiny writhing shapes that poke through her gown of tatters obscenely. Here and there one is visible, draped cross her bare breast, Full of them. Her head and guts and heart full of serpents and their ichor of dead children and bloody birth, the ultimately meaninglessness of all from and of the Void, and a quiet rage at the nature of time, which continues ticking perversely, sundering flesh, bone, and brain alike with every passing second. The oracle, it is said, longs for the end of her duty."

- Opening to the final verses, **Book of the Forgotten**

"The ancient mysteries are frequently terrifying both in implication and fact Real history is sanity threatening."

-Brother Ovirh deKheblis, learned disciple of Lord Mu