

The man eyes you for a moment, his face a blank mask. Then his lips curl back into a smile. "I know you!" he exclaims. "You're making a name for yourself, merchant. I take it you've come to learn from Sir Eld, the master merchant himself?" "You've seen some lavish apartments in your time, but none to compare with this one. A glance reveals the finest furnishings and art objects. Floating among the splendor is a man reclining in an anti-grav chaise lounge chair." "Yes?" "Not exactly?" "Excellent! Listen well and I will reveal the secrets of acquiring wealth beyond imagining... But, before I say more, we must strike a deal. A favor for a favor as it were. Agreed?" "What's the favor?" "Not interested?" "Ah, a shrewd bargainer," Sir Eld laughs. "One must always ask toners can be tiresome." "You disappoint me," Sir Eld sighs. "My sources tell me that you failed to deliver the statuette as promised. Your mistake will cost you dear." "Ah, you have returned, says Sir Eld. "My sources tell me you carried out my request perfectly. Much thanks! Now, for my end of the bargain... Three gems of wisdom. First, buy low, sell high. Lagrange has the lowest prices on minerals." "Hiathra, the lowest on hi-tech equipment. Sell agricultural goods on Lagrange, luxury items on Free Guild. Second, know that contraband can be safely - and profitably - sold at Starbases if one takes certain precautions." "Third, always have an ace up your sleeve. Consider this Stealth Box for instance," says Sir Eld, holding up an exotic device. "It can be a great aid for avoiding pirate vessels. Please accept it with my gratitude." "Sir Eld glares at you. "Why have you returned. Do you wish to tempt fate? You are not welcome here." "He slams his fist down onto an intercom and bellows: "Guards, there is a rogue in my room. Remove him!" "Welcome back merchant," says Sir Eld. "I trust my advice has proved profitable. Perhaps one day you will become a master merchant too. Well, I must be getting back to work. Always more credits to be made..." "Before you stands a young miner caked in rock dust. He's nursing a cold beer. "The name's Teb," he says, looking you over. "You're too clean to be a rock picker. Must be a merchant, right?" "Yeah?" "Rock Picker?" "BASSRUTI" "I knew it!" he exclaims. "Must be a dull life. Haulin' stuff across the Far Arm day in, day out. If ya want some excitement, try workin' as a rock picker!" "Rock picker?" "leave" "Work's hard, but ya can strike it rich. Let's say ya hit a vein of pure dilithium. Company will pay ya a 1% finder's reward. Be enough to retire and buy your own 'toid!" Teb pauses and peers into his mug. "It's just a matter of time..." "Only one. Everyone else... dead. I ran, fast. Hid behind whatever I could find. Monsters came after me, but they're not too smart. I'd look left, run right. That kind of thing." Memories flood back into Teb's face, and he starts shaking. "What happened?" "How'd you survive?" "Where are NSBs?" "Oh... NS boosters. That's right. Shipment arrived just before... before it all happened. I think they were stashed in the back room, next to the safe." "You see Teb begin to tremble again. leave As you leave, you see Teb gulp down his beer with a trembling hand, and order another. At the mention of the word "Bassruti" Teb's eyes widen in horror. "Ba..Ba..Bassruti!" he shrieks. "Monsters... gone crazy... everywhere! Ripping, tearing... I don't want to remember! It's too awful..." "Were you there?" "leave" "Gene scientists. They did it. Had this lab on the station. Made these... monsters. They got loose. At night. Things... went crazy. Bodies ripped to shreds, blood splattered on the walls..." "Teb's face starts to twitch. "No! I won't go back... Blood, bodies, ahhh..." Teb is babbling. You shake him by the shoulders, and, for a moment, his mind clears. "Well, it's been nice chattin' with ya buddy," says Teb. "See ya 'round." "What ever ya say buddy... Ya know, a rock picker's life is sweet. Ya should try it." "Rock picker?" "leave" "You know, a miner. Each mornin' we drop down into the bowels of the 'toid. Down where it's blacker than space. We wrestle with half ton plasma drills that'll bore ten meters of rock in the blink of an eye. Or a man, if you ain't careful." "Blutous is slumped over his drink, lost in oblivion..." "leave" "Not that it's any of your business bud, but I was complainin' 'bout merchants. They earn their credits off the backs of poor miners like 'ol Blutous here." "How so?" "leave" "Well, for instance, I was head foreman on this radioactives job. Lookin' ta make big credits. Then this damn fool merchant shipped the stuff on a slow boat to Zed. Can ya believe it? Stuff decayed before it got there. Worthless!" "So what?" "leave" "So what!" utters Blutous. "So I had ta cover the loss. Miner claimed I sold 'em bad goods. Duty officer made me pay him back in full. Can ya believe it! Nobody takes a miner's word!" "Where've you been kid? Shaft collapse, plasma drill misfire, explosive gasses... I've seen 'em all. Course, none's as bad as what happened ta them miners on Bassruti." "Bassruti?" "I guess you've heard enough then," says Blutous. "Well, I've got a cold brew waiting..." "Your sayin' I'm lying," he bellows, "Why you scum!" He staggers towards you, arms flailing. You dodge his clumsy attack easily, but before you can make your next move, the alarm sounds. You find yourself next to a grizzled old miner. He's got a drink in hand, and it's obviously not his first. In fact he's muttering to himself. "What did you say?" "leave" "Typical..." "Neither do I" "That's right," he nods. "And what's worse, we take all the risks. I tell ya, minin's a rotten life. I've picked rock from one end of the Far Arm ta the other, an' what can I show for it? Nothin'. Just rock dust fillin' every pore of my hide." "What risks?" "leave" "leave" "Some monster got loose. Ripped the place apart. A miner told me all 'bout it. Seems he was the only survivor. Messed him up good, in the head that is. Just had to mention the name of the place and he went crazy. Injection of NSB do him good." "You find yourself peering down at the top of a short woman's head. She looks up, adjusting her thick, black eyeglasses. "Welcome to the I.S.S. Koth," she says cheerfully. "My name's Janus. I'm the welcome wagon. Are you just visiting? Or maybe you're trying to steal military secrets?" "Just visiting" "Stealing secrets" "Ah, very good," she beams. "We love to show off our new carrier to civilians. It's the pride of the fleet. And at a cost of 750 million credits to the tax payers, I guess they deserve a peek," she chuckles. "Tell me more" "leave" "If there's anything else I can do for you, feel free to ask. Remember, the name's Janus. Be seeing you," she says with a wink. leave "Well, the I.S.S. Koth was commissioned in 2310. It's over 200 meters long, 100 meters wide, and has a mass of

slightly less than 19,000 metric tons. It's capable of servicing an entire Titan battle group for 6 months. Quite a piece of hardware!""Are there tours?"leave"Are we now?," she laughs. "But please, let me warn you. This is a military base and it is strictly forbidden to enter restricted areas. I'm sure you understand. Now, did you say you were visiting?""Yes"leaveGive her CRC-07"You know," Janus says studying you, "I believe we share something in common. Aren't you a friend of Avenstar's?""Why yes""No""Very good. I'll keep the form. Now please follow me."You tag along, listening to her rattle off facts."Though this flight deck is only 2cm thick, it's tough enough to bounce a Titan on... That Comm dish can pull in signals from over 30ly distant..."That transmutation coil builds up an anti-matter charge of 87 trillion gravwatts... Those quarters sleep a crew of 231..."After an hour, she brings you back to where you met. Your head aches with facts and figures."Oh, excuse me. I must have mistook you for someone else. Let me start again..."Why yes," she says. "I give daily tours of the facility, and it just so happens that I'm free right now. If you'll just hand me your CRC-07, I'll be glad to take you through..."I don't have one""I'm afraid you don't have the proper form," she says."You can get a CRC-07 (civilian request for clearance form) from your local Imperial representative.""I thought as much. Let me be frank. My associates don't much care for her politics. Nor for her supporters. We want you to forget her: do nothing for her. In return for your cooperation you will be well paid.""Ok""Forget it!"Play the fool then," she says sharply. "You're meddling in things you can not hope to understand. Regretfully, I must report your decision to my associates. It will be taken badly I'm afraid..."Wise choice," she says. "Here is 250 credits for your cooperation. Remember, we will be watching you. We expect you to keep your part of the bargain. Now, where were we..."Are you lost?" he asks. "Do you need guidance in this time of chaos? I, Omas Tyran, know the wisdom of the Malir. Just ask and it shall be yours."Yes, I am lost""You're crazy!"Are you lost?" he asks. "Do you need guidance in this time of chaos? I, Omas Tyran, know the wisdom of the Malir. Just ask and it shall be yours."Yes, I am lost""You're crazy!"leave"Do not fear." says Omas, placing a comforting hand on your shoulder. "Like yourself, many of us were once lost. We had let the tide of chaos overcome us. But then we learned the wisdom of the Malir..."Ages ago, when man still crawled like a beast, the Malir were a glorious race. They built cities in space, conquered a thousand systems, even broke the light barrier. Yet they were not content, for they were still slaves to their own minds."There are so many to save, and so little time," Omas pleads. "Please, return another day."So they mastered psionics. They learned to shatter physical barriers with their minds. No longer constrained by the material world, they left behind their cities and stars and gates, to become pure thought. They achieved bliss."We can follow them! It may take centuries, but the day will come when mankind sheds his material skin and joins the Malir. It will free us from chaos. Spare us from our doom. It is salvation."Omas then leaves you to seek out others."The only madness is mankind's blind rush into oblivion!" he cries. "We are destroying ourselves. Can you not see? Perhaps you are beyond salvation..."I was wrong," cries Omas, his voice full of despair. "The way of the psionics is full of peril. Why was I so blind? Now I have lost my wife to them."Lost your wife?""You're crazy!"leave"Yes. She left to seek out a psionic teacher. I have not heard from her since, but rumor has it that she fell in with the Black Hand Cult. If this is so, I fear she is lost to me."Can I help?"leave"Perhaps," says Omas. He slips out a holopic from his wallet and shows it to you."This is my wife. If you find her in your travels, tell her to return to me. And please, I would be grateful for any news of her." I found your wife," you say to Omas. "She is a Black Hand acolyte on Trochal. I'm afraid she is not returning..."It is as I feared," he wails. With tears flowing, he rips an amulet from his neck and hands it to you."This psionic shield will protect you from them. I have no more use for it. Let them take me." Omas leaves, sobbing."Welcome back," greets Omas. "I have weathered my anguish. My wife is lost to me, but I have gained a purpose. Seek total harmony with nature! That is the way..."You politely say goodbye while you can."Any news of my wife?" Omas asks."Nothing yet," you answer."Please, keep searching. I would find her yet."Before you stands a tall man dressed in a flowing, white robe. His eyes shine with the light of a zealot. He is chanting: "Doom and chaos... Doom and chaos... You that have eyes, do you not see? Doom and chaos..."Dr. Elanius Ferah, cosmetic surgery" reads the sign on the wall. On the table are before and after pictures of patients, a testament to the doctor's skill."Who's there?" she asks. "Come closer, so that I may feel your face."Approach her"Forget it""I am too busy to play games," she says with irritation. "If you want to remain a stranger, fine. But do it somewhere else."She reaches out and probes your face with knowing hands."You have a good, strong face stranger," she says, "I will not soon forget it."For the first time you realize that she is totally blind!"What can I do for you," Dr. Ferah asks."You're blind!"Ask about patients"So I am. Since birth. Yet it is no tragedy. In the work that I do, my hands have become my eyes. Capable, unerring eyes that enable me to work wonders. You see, my blindness is actually a gift."leaveHer fingertips brush your face for just a moment."Ah, yes. The one with the strong face who asks so many questions. Welcome back."I've had the privilege of working on royalty, war heroes, disaster victims... even a spy," she chuckles. "At least that's what he claimed. Did you have someone specific in mind?""No"KOTHRAYSONAVENSTAR""I did no work on them."Yes, years ago. I smoothed a scar he had received in the battle of the binary stars. He was not a pleasant man..."As far as I know, her beauty is entirely natural," she laughs. "At least, I have never worked on the Duchess."Rayson, Rayson... Yes, I worked on a man by that name. Altered his appearance. I even grafted a milky white contact lens onto his left eye - to make it appear blind. An odd request, but I do not ask questions."Cebak runs up to you and throws her arms around you."Welcome back rogue. Have you heard from Tiwa? I just miss her sooo much! Did I tell you, I got to 9th drop in HIVE! Can you believe it! It was just sooo awesome..."Cebak

sounds as if she could ramble on for hours about HIVE!, her sister, or anything else under the stars. You have more pressing matters, so you say goodbye and move on. "Cebak, right?" you say to the teenage girl who's a clone of Tiwa. "I've got a letter from your sister..." "Oh, thank you, thank you sooo much!" she squeals, tearing the letter open. "Hey, there's a message in here for you..." "Tiwa writes: 'If you wanna beat HIVE! do 3 things. 1) Hide in the tall grass when you can. 2) Go after mounds, not bugs. 3) If there's too many bugs, put your back to a rock and start blasting. Fry a bunch, then go on.' Boy, that's wicked neat..." "Hi!" says a teenage girl, "I'm Cebak. Who are you?" Before you can answer she's talking again. "Ever play HIVE! I just love that game. It's the best. Have you seen any bugs? I wonder if they're just like the ones in the game?" "What's hive?" leave "Where've you been? On the Trojan colony? Everybody around here plays HIVE! 'Course, I haven't got past 3rd drop yet. But my sister, Tiwa, she's awesome at HIVE! Too bad she's not around. We haven't talked in forever." "Sister?" leave "She's on Lagrange, livin' with our dad. He's a diplomat. I live with mom. You know how it is... Hey, if you see Tiwa, tell her to write. I miss her sooo much." Tiwa looks at you expectantly. "Did you deliver my letter to Cebak?" she asks. "Not yet," you say. "Oh... I miss her so, and I'm sure she'd just love to get my letter..." Tiwa squeals with delight. "Hi! My sister just called on the comlink. She was sooo excited. She told me that she got my letter. You're just the best, helping us out like this. Hey, maybe I can return the favor. You're a rogue, right?" "Well, yes" Cebak was telling me about this guard who hangs his vacc suit in her room. He keeps a key card in the suit's pocket. I bet a rogue like you could use one those cards to sneak around and stuff. "You thank Tiwa for the 'information' and move on. "Certainly not!" "You're kidding me" she giggles. "I bet you're just like one of those rogues I've seen in the flicks. Plundering fat merchant ships, guzzling beers with your mates. It must be sooo exciting! Let me give you some information..." "Hi rogue!" squeals Tiwa. "Plundered any merchants ships lately? I told all my friends about you. They couldn't believe I actually met a rogue. Well, I've got to be running along. Bye!" The teenage girl before you is wearing a HIVE! suit - all the rage among the youth of the Far Arm. "Hi! I'm Tiwa. Are you a rogue?" Before you can respond, she goes one. "Ever play HIVE! I can get into the credit drops." "Credit drops?" leave "Yeah, from the 5th drop on up you win credits. My sister, Cebak, plays almost as good as me. We're identical twins you know. It's kinda neat. Too bad I don't get to see her much. She lives on Hiathra, with our mom. Hey, maybe you could do a favor?" "Just name it" "I don't think so" "Oh, great! I wrote my sister a letter. Could you deliver it? I don't trust the mail. Not since the bugs started attacking the mail ships. Nothing gets through! Let me just finish it up..." She scrawls a few more lines, then hands you the letter. "Oh. I guess you don't want to be bothered with a kid's problems. Nobody seems to care..." "Aren't you the chap with the taste for music? Nice to see you again," chirps Geul Barnet, looking as dapper as ever. "Did you come to hear more about the movers and shakers of our Imperium?" "Ah, a man of taste. So rare these days. Most people would call that noise music. It just breaks one's heart, or one's ear drums. But forgive me, I am Geul Barnet. Perhaps you've heard some of my music?" "Why, no actually" He looks wounded. "How the mighty have fallen," he sighs. "In my prime I was renowned throughout the Imperium as a master musician. Not that I'd expect many in this backwater they call the Far Arm to have listened to my songs." "Excuse me," he says sharply, "I had no idea I was speaking with a musical connoisseur! Your taste and breeding should have been apparent to me the moment you walked in the door." Then he stomps off. What was that all about you wonder. "Uh, yes, I think" "Did you know, I was once the Emperor's court musician. I entertained the most powerful people in the Imperium: Hiathra, Koth... I've many a lively story. But I suppose none of this interests you." "Please go on" leave "Well, perhaps a pint of Selvian ale would refresh my memory..." says Geul, eyeing you expectantly. Buy him ale leave You signal the bartender who refills the musician's mug. "That's our best ale," says the bartender, "10Cr please." Visions of wasted credits pass before you. To your distress, you find that you don't have the credits to pay. The bartender snatches Geul's mug and pours back the ale. "I guess I'll have to wet my throat elsewhere," says Geul. "See you around." "What person of greatness do you wish me to speak of?" asks Geul. HIATHRAKOTHAVENSTAR "Oh, how my throat is parched. Perhaps if you'll stake me another Selvian, I be able to tell you more..." Buy him ale leave "Well, it's been pleasant chatting with someone who appreciates the finer things in life," says Geul heartily. "Have a nice day." "I have nothing to tell you about them." "I am flattered. But did I not already tell you? I was the Imperial court musician, famed throughout the Imperium. Of course, that was ages ago." "He's a lover of fine music. Even plays the lute on occasion, quite well in fact. It's too bad he's gotten so old and tired. He can no longer escape the court manipulators I'm afraid." "He thinks he's a noble, what with his medal and all. But he's a commoner, through and through. And a crass one at that. The man had the nerve to call my music just so much fluff. Said he liked the sound of blaster fire better. What a buffoon!" "She's a charming girl. At court, she always had praise for my music. Too bad she was given that backwater Deneb fief when she came of age. The rumor at court was that Koth somehow arranged it. There's bad blood between those two." Raucous music blares from huge speakers, and against one wall, a HIVE! game beeps and clangs. "Awful, isn't it?" comments a richly dressed man standing before you. "Yes, it is" "I like the music" "Yes" leave A roA robot bristling with odd appendages bumps right into you, bruising you slightly. "Excuse me human," its speakers blare, "I hope none of your components are damaged. Like all HAL9K series bots, I tend to be rather clumsy I'm afraid." "I'm ok" "I have a data packet concerning you," says HAL9K. "You helped a close friend of mine in need, LUX-23A. Let me repay LUX's debt of gratitude. This is one of the new miniaturized models," he says, handing you a tiny repair droid. Then he rolls off. "I'm hurt bad!" "HAL9K series?" "The HAL9K series is a much more sophisticated version of the common repair droid.

We can repair practically any mechanical device known to man. And we have a perfect operational record." "Did you have a query?" asks HAL9K. "I am expected back on the Princess Rowena shortly, but there is time for a few questions." "Oh my," says HAL9K, his voice full of concern. "I'm not programmed for biomechanical systems, but I could attempt a repair." He swings one of his appendages towards you. On its tip blazes an acetylene torch. "Should I start welding?" "Get that away!" "Go ahead" "I was only trying to help," says HAL9K, retracting the torch. "Maybe you should seek medical assistance." The pain of the torch searing your arm is mercifully cut short when you collapse to the ground. "Oh my," you hear HAL9K cry. "It seems I've caused you disfunction." You rise and stumble off, with a deep burn to show for your foolishness. "Fight any Manchi?" "Princess Rowena?" "leave" "Why no. Our fleet commander has not yet ordered us into the fray. He is waiting for the Manchi threat to escalate. But we are all expecting to see action soon..." "A Titan class warship. She is the pride of the 5th fleet." "Tell me more" "say nothing" "State your name," requests HAL9K. You do so. The bot whirs for a moment... "I am sorry, but you are not cleared for that information. It seems that you are listed as an undesirable on the Imperium's data bank." Switching to a public relations program, the bot says: "The Rowena is equipped with the advanced attack and defense systems. For instance, her turret mounted particle beam is a deadly weapon, able to lock on any target within 1.5 km." "And her class 3 fore and aft shields provide sure protection against attacks. The Rowena's only weakness is her large size, which makes her sluggish: ill suited for catching fleeing ships." "leave" HAL9K trundles off, bumping tables as he goes. "I don't talk with your kind," he growls. "Get lost rogue!" "Hello, friend," he says. "The name's Kale. I'm the guy pirates least like to meet. What's your line of work?" "So you say. But I can smell a bounty on a man. It's a sweet smell," he says, sniffing the air, "...just like yours." You approach a cloaked figure. From beneath the hooded head, a pair of burning eyes watch you... "Well, well.. a bounty," says the man, running a tongue over his teeth. "I see two ways we can handle this. Either you pay me 100Cr to let you go, or I'll hunt you down and kill you when you leave this base. Which is it going to be?" "I'll pay the 100Cr" "Get lost scum!" "We'll meet again soon," he hisses, pointing towards the stars. "Out in deep space, where its legal to slaughter rogues." "Wise decision rogue. Now you can keep your hide, for a little longer at least." "Seems you don't have enough credits," hisses the bounty hunter. "But don't fret - the Imperium will make good on your bounty when I collect it." "Merchant" "You look familiar, friend," comes a harsh whisper. "I think I've seen your mug on the bounty lists. Could this be?" "Yes" "No, not possible" "Bounty hunter" "leave" "You look pretty new to the business. Let me give you a hint: contraband sells for a fortune at Hiathra and Denebprime..." He bursts into laughter. "Listen to me, trying to drum up more work for myself! Tsk, tsk." "The competition, eh? You look pretty green. Here's some advice - if you want to bag the big ones, try Bassruti. One day I'm going to catch Gut himself, if he ever leaves Free Guild. Too bad the Imperium won't let us hunt 'em on bases..." "You see a ragged man running a hand through prematurely greying hair." "You. Are you from the insurance board?" he demands. "Why, the money for the shipment of NSB's I lost... the one's that never left Bassruti station's loading pad... because of the disaster." "What are NSB's?" "Somar Tan. I'm a dealer in exotic and expensive goods. Some of which I got cheated out of by the insurance board! Now, don't avoid my question - are you from the board?" "No, why" "leave... quickly" "No, why?" "I'll get my money, you hear!" the man raves. He is obviously beyond reason at this stage, so you feel it prudent to make a quick exit. "Because the tight wads won't pay off the loss I incurred during the Bassruti disaster. I've been chasing them across the Far Arm, and if I'm not paid soon, I'll go under." "What loss?" "leave" "Who wants to know?" "leave... quickly" "NSB's man, NSB's - Neurostabilizer Boosters. They're hypodermic injections used to temporarily calm nut cases. Enough serum in a single shot to stabilize a psycho ward. Very valuable. And they're sitting somewhere on Bassruti." "So, just get them" "Be suicide to dock at Bassruti, what with the monsters loose. And don't think the Imperium will clean it up soon. They're stuck in litigation with the genetics lab over who's responsible. Years might pass before anything's done." "Besides, I've no idea where they are on Bassruti. One guy did survive the disaster, some miner. He might know, but I doubt you'd get much out of him. The disaster twisted him - just mention Bassruti and he flips. Well, I've got to move on." "Sorry, human," says Veda. "Can't talk now. We're busy consulting with our various parts. Try us later..." "You beat a hasty retreat, careful to avoid the creature's groping tentacles." "Why yes. We are an Ursellus: a collective organism composed of twelve individuals. For all of our adult life we live merged together as one. It is the way of our kind. Now, how 'bout that beer?" "Sure" "leave... quickly" "We noticed that burn scar on your arm," says Veda, pointing to the badge of foolishness you earned from HAL9K. "It is ugly. Perhaps you would like it removed? Just 25Cr..." "Yes" "Not interested" "Did you know, human," says Veda, passing you a beer, "that we Ursellus specialize in bioproducts? We fabricate all kinds of useful items from living tissue. Perhaps we could interest you in one?" "You don't have the credits human." "Veda takes out a jar. From within, Veda draws a gob of phosphorescent matter, and slops it on your arm. It quivers, then falls off. Your arm is healed! Veda then collects the gob and puts it back into the jar." "What do you have?" "No thanks" "Oh well. I'm afraid we must be shuffling along now human. Goodbye." "Amoebic contact lenses. These tiny organisms will protect your eyes from intense light. Great for watching novas! They work by burrowing into the optic nerve, where they can shut down the receptors if the light's too bright. Only 250Cr..." "Buy it" "No thanks" "Today we have these Blog Globes. Great little item. The globes pulsate with color when put within earshot of music." Veda holds up a Blog Globe, and it starts to shimmer with the beat of the music. "Only 100Cr." "Buy it" "No thanks" "Veda opens up a capsule, takes out a pair of tiny phosphorescent disks, and puts them into your eyes. You feel an odd sucking sensation as the amoebas start burrowing. Your

vision suddenly dims, then slowly returns to normal. Veda hands you the shimmering globe. "Remember to let it hear music at least once a month," warns Veda, "otherwise it may die." You see a bizarre creature with phosphorescent orange skin, and a mass of tentacles for a head, slurping a beer. It looks at you with all 12 of its eyes and says: "Greetings human kind. Join us for a drink?" "Sure" "Us?" "leave... quickly" The young man you've approached is dressed in the casual uniform of the Imperial Guard. This means he's on leave. "Toom's the name, civilian," he says. It's obvious he wants to talk. "On leave?" "Can't talk now..." "Sergeant. Just a grunt. It could have been different. I had a fine officer, Captain Targon. He was teaching me the ropes. But he up and left. Rumor was he got on the bad side of the Duchess... Anyway, since Targon went, command's been ignoring me." "Yeah. The Guard's given me a bunch of time off, so I'm touring the Far Arm. Everywhere I've been I've met all kinds of nice folks." "Like who?" "What's your rank?" "It's been sure nice meeting you," says Toom. "Bye." "Oh, like Duchess Avenstar. She's one of the grandest people I ever did meet. And real sharp. Too bad she's run afoul of that Black Hand Cult." "Oh, like Flitch. He's a funny one. Pretends he's some kind of mean, old pirate. But he's actually real nice. What a joker." "Oh, like that skin twister on Ross. She's got a magic hand. Did ya know she operates blind!" "Well, there's Vilanie. Now, I ain't sayin' she's nice, but she is interesting. What with her psionics and all. And she's got neat interests, like in bug lore. I heard she even collects bug stuff." "Hmm, let me think... Who did I meet recently?" "Captain Targon?" "leave" "Great guy. I remember hearing stories about him before I joined up - how he was the best single ship fighter in the Far Arm. He'd hunt Corsairs with just a scout!" "Office of the Imperial Representative" Welcome to Hiathra's cantina, the Twelve Thrusters, serving the finest ales this side of the Imperial Arm. From these windows you can see just a few of the millions of asteroids that make up the rich Regfelt Fields. Visitors desiring to meet Duchess Avenstar must present themselves to the Duchess' bodyguard, Vengor, for prior approval. Welcome to G.M.'s Blog House, purveyor of fine spirits. Attention - you must obtain clearance from the quartermaster before removing equipment from this storeroom. Dr. Elanious Ferah, cosmetic surgery All miners on the 8:00 shift must have their beds made and ready for the returning 22:00 shift. Welcome to the Miner's Grime cantina. This area must be kept clear for military traffic. Visiting civilian craft should park on the off runway quarter of the carrier deck. Welcome to the Minimal Surface cantina. Please pardon our appearance. We're remodeling. You must pressurize your Vacc Suit before you leave the protected environment of this facility. Remember, accidental exposure to vacuum is our number one killer. If this power plant fails, call 367-21309 for service. Ask for Bert. Welcome to Free Guild outpost. All patrons welcome, no matter what their standing is with the Imperium. This area is strictly off limits to outpost personal without prior approval from Sir Droughton Gut. Lab technicians are reminded to seal their petri dishes before they leave at the end of the day. Otherwise, unwanted genetic mutations may result. Please be quiet. Meditation in progress. You are invited to join in our weekly Psionic's Guild bridge game, held every Saturday night in the Trochal cantina. No cheating please. Welcome to the Spacer's Market. We accept Galaxycard. Notice to all miners - your crew quarters is not a dump! Please don't leave garbage strewn about. ⌘ Before you is the carrier's behemoth powerplant. It has an access panel, which you remove. A blinding light emerges. Luckily, your amoebic lenses adjust for the intense light. From within, you grab a transmutation coil. ⌘ Before you is the carrier's behemoth powerplant. It has an access panel, which you remove. You try to peer inside, but a white hot light scorches your eyes. Frustrated, you replace the panel and move on. stealth boxbeam lockturbo thrusterrepair droidnull damperkey cardManchi eggCRC-07 formtransmutation coilNS BoosterstatuetteMalir artifactruby cubeTiwa's letterpsionic shieldmicrochippilot's licenseforged cargo papersamoebic lensesblog globedilithium gemYou're meat slimeballI've got you now dirtbagPirate scumShip under attack, send helpYou are instructed to surrenderYou are in violation buddyI'm collecting your bountyMake my day lawbreakerHail mateyKeep the solar wind backsideGreetings space farerNice day for space travelStay clear civilianAcknowledging presenceSeen any pirates?It's been a slow day for hunting\*A laser beam sears across your ship, slicing clean through everything in its path, including you. One of Vilanie's guards lashes you with a stun whip and you slump to the floor. Unable to resist, you are dragged to the nearest airlock and tossed out into space - without your Vacc Suit. A hideous monster scoops you up in one taloned arm and draws you towards its gaping maw. Your screams echo through the corridors, unheard by any caring being. Within your head you feel a terrible pressure, building and building. Your body begins to spasm. Vilanie's demented laughter fills your ears. And then... its all over. Borf's gigantic jaws descend upon you. The last sensation you feel is of a hundred razor sharp teeth snapping you in half. You scan around but find nothing! Not a planet, not a star, not a galaxy. You're lost somewhere in the infinity of deep space. Before you starve, you'll have many days to contemplate why you gave the wrong coordinates. \*\*\*\*You find a~PICK UPPOSSESSIONS\*You stepped on an alarm plate!Embarking on shipJettisoning cargoThe guard ignores youThe guard then escorts you back to your ship and shoves you aboard. Seems you're short. You just earned yourself a bounty bud. Good luck with the bounty hunters."~It will be deducted from your account."~breaking into a secured area is 25Cr.~breaking into a safe is 100Cr.~A burly guard grabs you. "Ok bud, we caught you red handed. Now you'll pay. Under Imperial law, the fine for~A burly guard grabs you. "Alright buddy, no use putting up a fight. It's time you moved along."~\*Manchi homeworldMiner's BaneMiCon IV station houses the Prosk Grav Lab - the most advanced facility of its kind.Stranded AsteroidsDorf's Planet, set aside as an exotic wildlife refuge.Log 10-Jan "Pirates hunted Manchi before bounty was instated. Why?"\*\*Star is unstable. Expected to go nova within the next 10,000 years.Trochal Outpost is a privately operated base administered by Tanatha Vilanie.Historic Marker - Here the

exploration vessel Leading Edge crashed during an Ion Storm in 2217sy. Log 14-Feb "Trouble at Trochal. I think Vilanie is on to me."\*\*Sixteen light years to Deneb. Bassruti station has been placed under Imperial interdiction due to an unspecified hazard. Stay clear. Barrier Nebula Free Guild Outpost, devoted to open trade free of oppressive regulation. Log 1-Feb "Must infiltrate Scarlet Brotherhood." Historic Marker - Former site of MiCon III, destroyed by drifting shard fields in 2285sy. Lagrange mining station, producer of the highest grade ores. Tifrugal's Planet Traveller's advisory - shard fields have drifted into Malir Gate, proceed with caution. Log 22-Dec "Too many spies here, I might be recognized. Must do something!"\*\*Grieger's Planet MiCon II mining station, major producer of radioactives. Far Channel Log 17-Dec "Be sure to pay rent for HQ when I come back."\*\*Rocky Waste Ort's Channel Free Miner's Territory Historic Marker - Site of battle of the Binary Stars, where the Imperial forces crushed the rebellion in 2303sy. Log 13-Dec "Our cover story worked! They believe we split."\*\*Ross mining station, renowned for the quality of its Dilithium deposits. Spacer's Gap Denebprime Starbase, ruling house of the Deneb Fief. Granted to Duchess Avenstar in 2304sy. Trogan Belt Westward Rift shard fields Log 3-Jan "Skin twister did great job. Remember to tell 'D' that I changed face."\*\*Hobart's World Dark Horn Nebula MiCon I Outpost, first base to be established in Far Arm. Seventeen light years to Deneb, heart of the Far Arm. Eight light years to Gryphon. Hiathra Starbase, named in honor of our glorious Emperor, Detras Hiathra the 3rd. Log 23-Feb "Can't think straight - too much pain. Must warn 'D'. Got to arrgh..."\*\*black hole binary stars G2 star A3 star asteroid shard field nebula\*\*Entering Faulty jump! Entering worm hole Warning: nearing strong gravity well\*\*outpost granted. Visitors are forewarned that this is a private facility run under tight security. Infractions of the law will not be tolerated. Enjoy your visit. ☿ Smart move. You don't have the credits! denied, unless you agree to pay off your bounty. denied. Didn't the guards tell you? Trouble makers are not welcome here. denied. We don't appreciate crazies attacking our base. Until you cool your rockets, you're not welcome here. A recorded message crackles: "Bassruti mining station has been evacuated due to a deadly hazard. Travellers are warned to stay clear." \*~Cr prize. Congratulations trooper! ☿ You have displayed extreme valor by surviving more than four combat drops. The Star Force rewards your feat with a~☿ Drop successful!~is under way. Prepare to deploy on planet's surface. <hit key when ready> ☿ Combat drop #☿ A pair of Manchi grab hold of your battle suit and rip you in half. You lose. Welcome to HIVE!, the arcade game of the century. Brought to you by Origin. ~~~~INSERT CREDIT~~~~QUIT GAME\*A merchant told me that Captain Targon left Avenstar's Imperial Guard. Rumor has it he broke with the Duchess over a, shall we say, indiscretion. Too bad, he was a good man.~Did ya hear about the Bassruti disaster? Seems the Station's genetics lab brewed up some kind of mutant monsters that got loose. Bloody mess. Place is still quarantined cause nobody is willing to go back in there.~Did ya hear? Someone tried to knock off Duchess Avenstar! Her bodyguard caught the assassin. Fact is, he broke the assassin's neck right then and there. No word on how the Duchess fared. Hope she's ok. The Far Arm sure needs her.~Psst, buddy. I got an hot rumor for ya. Seems somebody has been askin' too many questions about Captain Targon. There's a contract out on him. Likely as not, it's Black Hand business. I pity the poor guy.~I got some bleak news for ya. A trooper told me that an armada of 1,500 Manchi ships is headed this way. Looks like war. Course, the Imperium won't confirm it. They don't want to panic nobody. If you ask me, it's time to pack it in."~Hey buddy, did ya hear about the Emperor? Seems he's been censured by the Imperial Council for not taking stronger action against the Manchi threat. They say if he won't fight 'em, they'll find somebody who will. His days on the throne are numbered.~Good news. Avenstar is alive and well. Heard she fled the Far Arm though. They say she's going direct to the Emperor to seek protection. Can't blame her. Maybe when things settle down she'll come back.~Did ya hear the 'bout Professor Prosk? They say he's working on a gadget that'll warp a ship anywhere in the galaxy. If you ask me, it'll never work. Man just wasn't intended to go faster than light.~There's been some strange things said 'bout Trochal. Odd characters wandering its corridors. Bizzare rituals performed in secret rooms. Visitors who go in, but ain't seen to leave. I'd stay away if I were you.~Rumor has it somebody screwed Vilanie over good. Took a thing of value from the witch. I think I know who this somebody is. Well, ah... you've got more guts than the rest of us combined. I wish ya the best of luck with whatever you're up to.~\*I tell ya, business has been slow lately. All the fightin' with the Manchi has scared away my best customers. Too bad the Manchi don't drink.~I heard a rumor that Hiathra is gonna be replaced. Some say he ain't tough enough on the Manchi, that the time's right for a new Emperor, one that'll squash those bugs. Seems like crazy talk to me.~Ever been through a Malir Gate? The ride's wild! Ya go light years in the blink of an eye. Only way to travel.~A word of advice: steer clear of Gut's band of pirates, the Scarlet Brotherhood. They're a raw bunch. Heard they operate out of Free Guild. Almost own the place!~Since the Imperium put a bounty on Manchi kills, all kinds of crazies been coming through here looking for a quick credit. They're as likely to shoot you or me as a Manchi! I tell ya, no good's gonna come of it.~Psst. Heard another noble was bumped off. Some say the Black Hand did the hit. Wonder what's at the root of all this bloodshed?~If you've got quick reflexes, try the HIVE! arcade game over there. The top players earn a living off the thing.~A Baakili Trader came by here yesterday. What a nosy creature! Asked all kinds of questions. I wouldn't give him space standard time. No sir, I'm not one to let my lips flap.~No accounting for taste.~It's cheap.~Must be watching yer weight.~That stuffs mostly water.~A classic brew.~You got fine tastes.~Another one buddy?" "Here you go.~The barkeep ambles over to the counter and says cheerfully: "You look thirsty, what can I get ya?" The bartender reels back from the reek of your breath: "Whoa buddy, you've already had a few too many beers. Imperial law says I can't serve ya any more."\*\*missile launcher beam weapon engine aft shield fore

shieldECM unitNot enough room in your missile bay⌘Repair estimatearmor fixed cost100%50%25%DONE\*⌘Starship  
ordnanceordnance cost1 SM-1 Missile 151 Nova Missile 301 Plasma Torp 55 SM-1 Missiles 755 Nova  
Missiles 1505 Plasma Torps 25DONE⌘Repair estimatesystem costYou don't need any repairsSHIP REPAIR &  
SUPPLYYou bust 'em up, we patch 'em back together. We also carry a full line of starship ordnance.\*no one herenothing  
here\*The collision cracks your ship's hull wide open. Moments later the violent out rush of air spills you into the frigid  
vacuum of deep space, leaving you adrift for eternity.The corrosive gases eat through the last of your ship's hull armor, then  
seep into the cockpit. Just before you succumb to the lethal gases, you smell the pleasant aroma of cinnamon in the air.The  
plasma torpedo engulfs your ship with blinding light, superheating the hull until it spontaneously combusts. Nothing  
remains of your ship but a few glowing embers.The missile burrows deep into your ship's flank and explodes with gut  
wrenching violence, igniting your ship into a raging fireball.You plunge into the soupy atmosphere of the gas giant. Your  
hull is battered as if sand blasted by boulders. In mere seconds it rips apart. The remains cascade into the murky depths,  
beyond the reach of starlight.A surface dweller watches your ship blaze down from the heavens like a fiery meteor. When  
your ship impacts on the surface, it digs a crater 100 meters deep. It's a wondrous sight.Like a twig in a maelstrom, your  
ship is sucked inexorably into the depths of the black hole. Mercifully, you pass out just before the titanic forces squeeze  
your ship down to the size of a pea.As the outside temperature soars to 5000 degrees Kelvin, the hull of your ship starts to  
bubble and melt. Your last living memory is of a brilliant solar prominence streaming into space.~Better luck next  
time.We've done a routine check of your cargo hold and found~mining station granted. It's always nice to have star  
travellers stop by: we don't get many out this way.outpost granted. Enjoy your visit with us, and don't forget to stop in at our  
renowned cantina.We hope you will have a pleasant visit.contraband! As per regulation 19.3 of the Imperial penal code, we  
will impound it.~everything in order.~granted. Docking privileges  
at~...unknown.....pesky....fierce....deadly.....aceinvincibleREPUTE....You receive no response.RECEIVE: Then suffer the  
consequences fool.RECEIVE: We don't deal with your kind. Prepare to die scum!RECEIVE: Nice doing business with  
you.RECEIVE: It seems that your cargo hold is empty. What a pity.RECEIVE: If you give all your cargo to us, we will  
spare your miserable hide.RECEIVE: Unfortunately, you lack the credits to pay the penalty, so we are obliged to  
attack.RECEIVE: Wise decision. Now you are free to go. Have a nice day.RECEIVE: Under the Imperial Penal Code, we  
can accept your surrender if you pay off your bounty plus a 50Cr fine.TRANSMIT: What terms of surrender will you offer  
me?RECEIVE: Sorry to tell you this, but you've got no room in your hold for our cargo. Well, I'm sure it was an  
oversight.RECEIVE: We've loaded the cargo aboard, let us go our separate ways now.⌘RECEIVE: I'm glad we could come  
to an understanding. Give us a minute to pull along side and load our cargo aboard your ship.⌘RECEIVE: If you won't take  
our cargo, you'll have to settle for our blaster fire. Prepare to die scum.⌘RECEIVE: This is the ship's captain speaking. We  
wish to end hostilities. If you allow us safe passage, we will give you our cargo of \*\*Whoops! It seems you triggered an  
alarm.You locate the optomagnetic locking mechanism and give it a tug. With a satisfying click, it snaps opens.You fiddle  
with the lock for awhile, but it stays shut.The door before you is locked. A bold sign reads: KEY CARD ENTRY -  
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY. What do you do?You insert you key card into the lock, and it snaps open.Your key  
card does not fit this lock.You don't own a key card!You are spotted trying to pick the lock!Before you sits a massive safe,  
built out of torch proof plasteel. What do you do?~In one swift motion you snatch up all the loose credits in the safe, then  
close the door softly.\*Save game? (Y/N)X-rated holosexplosivesforged CRsanagathicsshunt valves1GB  
RAMsantibioticssupercomputermethanetitaniumradioactivesdilithiummanureseaweedsolvent greyhybrid  
grainsouvenirsvideo gamesbrandyxotic petsspoiled\*\*\*8 ECM 50%7 ECM 25%6 aft III5 aft II4 aft I3 fore III2 fore II1 fore I  
I⌘Force Shieldstype costFore I 375Fore II 950Fore III 2500Aft I 375Aft II 950Aft III  
2500DONEYou already have one of thoseWe only sell upgrades\*\*⌘I'm sorry, but you'll have to earn your Star Pilot's  
License before I can sell you one of those. Imperial regulation you understand.Your ship has no room for that⌘Special  
Equipmentitem costcargo pod 150armor plate 325turbo thruster 1500DONE⌘ECM Unitspower  
cost25% Unit 50050% Unit 150075% Unit 4500DONE⌘Beam Weaponsweapon costGarnet Laser  
225Beryl Laser 550Sapphire Laser 1400Particle Beam 3650DONESTARSHIP OUTFITTERGreetings starpilot. Look  
over our fine selection of after market starship equipment. Everything we sell comes with a lifetime guarantee, and  
installation is free.Sorry your cargo hold is fullIt's a dealYou don't have any to sell bud⌘Cargo Offer⌘Looking over  
your cargo manifest the merchant says: "I might be tempted to buy some of this stuff. I'll make you the following offer."⌘I  
have a fine selection of goods available today, all at very reasonable prices. Take your pick.Cargo CostHappy to take  
that off your handsThe cargo merchant says cheerfully: "Welcome freetrader. If you're looking to trade cargo, you've come  
to the right place. What will it be?"<empty>I.S.S. Koth carrier, shining symbol of Imperial might.ConVec East mining  
station, home of the famous Miner's Grime  
cantina.....ally.....liked.....neutral....disliked.....hatedPirates.Guild...Imperium\*BOUNTY.....CREDITS.....~RACE.....  
homo sapienCargo Paid....<bad>....<ok>ECM unit...aft shield.fore  
shieldengine.....launcher...laser.....armor:DAMAGE CONTROL<none>⌘ONBOARD EQUIPMENT% ECM unitaft shield  
fore shield \*nova missiles.....sm-1 missiles.....plasma torps.....particlesapphire...beryl.garnetlaser.....⌘I.S. Jolly

RogerMore Space Rogue Hintsank mask. Then his lips curl back into a smile."I know you!" he exclaims. "You're making a name for yourself, merchant. I take it you've come to learn from Sir Eld, the master merchant himself?"You've seen someSÊ√□√+√/,"~"Ä□2/21/25810:38:58212/21/2510:38:58\\□  
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