

SERENITY
ROLE PLAYING GAME

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FOX
HUNT
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A TALE OF
THRILLING HEROICS
IN THREE ACTS

SERENITY ROLE PLAYING GAME

FOX HUNT

A MING ZHOU PRODUCTION

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HERE'S HOW IT IS

While the fancy folk of the Core might not agree, times in the 'Verse are hard. The Crew is once again looking for a job to keep their ship flying and to keep themselves fed, that is if you can call protein paste food. An encounter with what appears to be a down his luck spacer proves that he is far more than that and when he asks for a favor, the deal he offers is likely to pay far more than what any job the Crew is likely to find would pay, and then some. But all that depends on how much the Crew is willing to believe in a Legend...

GAMEMASTER NOTES

Presented as an introductory tale for ordinary folk, Fox Hunt consists of three acts of two scenes each. The first act entails *Meeting T.H.E. Fox* and *You Can't Go Home*. Act two leads to *A Huntin' We Will Go* and *Down the Foxhole* with the final act culminating in *Bearding the Lion* and *That Ole Black Magic*. Fox Hunt is designed for beginning Crews, but can be adjusted to provide a challenge to more experienced PCs by increasing the number and type of NPCs and the difficulty levels of the tasks needed to complete the adventure.

A LIVING LEGEND

During the Unification War, there were several heroes and rogues of notes on both sides of the fight with many becoming household names due to their exploits. As history is crafted by the winners, all the names of note that served the Independent's faction were relegated to that of rogue regardless of what their

accomplishments might have been when the war ended. One of the most famous of the Independent's once heroes relegated to rogue status was the commerce raider Theodore Harold Edmund Fox AKA The Black Fox.

Renowned for taking forty-six prizes without a single loss of life, The Fox of the Black was a terror to all Alliance merchant marine spacers. Brilliant and so elusive that he remained at large throughout the war until he surrendered when the Independent's finally surrendered. Not being responsible for loss of life, spared his own life, but Fox was branded a traitor and spent seven years in a penal colony. As a part of a general attempt at reconciliation after the initial passions, some say thirst, for retribution at the end of the war began to fade Fox was pardoned early from his twenty-five year sentence. However, a reduction in level of passion does not equate with forgiveness and while Fox was freed, he was left penniless, his lands and home seized.

Haunted by his past and stung by the Alliance's duplicity, Fox wants nothing more than to be allowed to drift into obscurity, but to be able to survive, he needs a bit more than obscurity, he needs money. During a chance encounter with the Crew, Fox asks for help. He asks for an opportunity to restore his dignity. While not a man of endless wealth, he does have a personal stash large enough to live on. If the Crew will just help to enter his former home, he is willing to share some of that stash so he can live out his life in peace. The one thing Fox conveniently forgets to

mention is who has taken over residence in his ancestral home...

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: MEETING T.H.E.

FOX

"I was readin' some history on Earth-That-Was one day and seems like there was this country called the United States of America what went and had themselves one hell of a dust up they called the Civil War. Now tell me how much gorram sense does it got to call anythin' to do with war 'civil'? Anywho, that's besides the point. In this Civil War, all manner of folk ended up on different sides, split families up with sons and fathers, or even brothers takin' up agin each other. Now I don't pretend to have much in the way o' learnin' an' all, but it sure reminded me of the U-War on how ordinary folk had to choose sides and how those choices split families just like this old fight did. Guess its true even after hundreds o' years between them wars, with folk, the more things change, the more they stay the same."

- Gus Jacobsen, itinerant spacer as interviewed by the author Jiang Hu Long for his successful fictional series 'Verse Stories'

While on the border planet of Paquin the Crew has just about worn their shoes out looking for work, but luck, fate, karma, or whatever has not gone their way and the Crew decides that perhaps a stiff drink will drown their sorrows, even if only temporarily. Problem is, with small cargoes, the jobs go to the Crews with an established reputation or the most contacts

and the PCs just haven't been in the Black long enough to have the credentials that would bring in the jobs.

Moving through the streets of Beaufort, the second largest city on the "Gypsy" planet after the capital Tavares, the Crew has to be especially alert. While Paquin is a fairly civilized place, the large amount of tourists draw an inordinate amount of folk that make a living out of separating tourists from their money and is thus home to the highest ratio of tourists to pickpockets in the 'Verse. The following encounter serves as an introduction to some of the Cortex System's rules and serves as a wake up call to new characters that choosing a life in the Black requires that you always stay on your toes. Each member of the crew will have to make an Opposed Roll of Alertness + Perception versus the thief's Agility + Covert / Sleight of Hand to avoid the loss of whatever the character may be carrying such as Credits, Coinage, small weapons, or electronics to the tune of d6 x d6 Credits in value of property lost.

If any character loses property, they get to make one AVERAGE (7) Alertness + Perception roll to notice the loss in time to have a chance to catch the thief. If they roll fails, they are out of luck. However, if they succeed, they can pursue the fleeing pickpocket in a steeplechase like highly cinematic scene. This will be an AVERAGE (35) Opposed Complex Action pitting the PC's Agility + Athletics / Running against the thief's same skill with each roll taking one round. The first to reach the threshold number wins, if the PC wins, they catch the thief who immediately turns over whatever

he stole and begs to be let go. If the thief wins, he loses the PC(s) in the crowd. If both reach the target number in the same round, whoever has the highest total wins. If the PCs engaged in some roleplaying and made this short scene memorable, the players are awarded with a Plot Point. As this scene is meant to be light hearted, resorting to gunplay will result in severe repercussions with the law. GMs are strongly encouraged to steer the PCs away from excessive violence. However, if the PCs insist, run the fight as normal and before the last shot has stopped echoing, the Crew will be surrounded by Federal Marshals to await long jail terms. The Crew is now even thirstier (or more depressed) than they were before their encounter with the thief and as they approach one of the many Spacers' bars, in this case, the Space Sprocket, which huddle in a cluster near the spaceport, they witness an altercation. An older man is swinging a barstool to keep three younger men, obviously spacers by their garb, at bay while a crowd of perhaps a dozen others are watching the events with great enthusiasm, shouting encouragements and catcalls as they watch. Each PC will have make an AVERAGE (7) if not, Recall roll (Intelligence + Willpower), with ex-Browncoat PCs gaining a one step bonus to Intelligence, while Pro-Alliance PCs suffer a one step penalty, to recognize the older man as none other than the famous, or infamous based on which side the PC supported during the Unification War, Theodore Harold Edmund Fox, known 'Verse-wide as the "Black Fox" and the

most effective commerce raider of the war. Read:

The Black Fox has a split lip, but the three spacers seem to be even worse for wear from the encounter with the legendary raider, sporting new bruises and bleeding at least as much as Fox. When the spacers notice the Crew, the biggest of them snarls: "This ain't none of ya'll's affair! This *liu kou shui de biao zi he hou zi de ben er zi*¹done took my Pop's boat and cost my family everythin'! I figger it's time for a reckonin'! Ya'll keep movin' an none of ya'll will get broke!"

How the Crew reacts to the situation will be driven largely by the PC's background. If anyone in the Crew has Browncoat sympathies, they will feel almost duty bound to assist Fox in his time of need. The reason for a proper Alliance citizen to assist a known traitor is obviously weaker than a Browncoat's, but anyone that fully supports the Alliance should also support the ideals on which the Alliance was formed and should feel obligated to help out a citizen in obvious distress.

PCs also have the option of spending Plot Points if they choose to have a closer connection to Fox: 2 Plot Point will have either met Fox in passing and 5 will have served with or had their ship taken by Fox depending on which faction they supported during the War. While spending 8 Plot Points means that the PC know Fox personally. Either way, the PCs have

¹ Stupid son of a drooling whore and a monkey

several options of intervening starting with the use of an AVERAGE (7) Willpower + *Discipline / Intimidation* or Willpower + *Influence / Intimidation* roll to bluff the three spacers into backing off. PCs can wade in with fists to help Fox, which will cause the spacers to break off after only three rounds of fighting.

Any means more violent to aid Fox, such as the use or display of guns will immediately cause the spacers and the crowd to flee, but will result in a one-step skill step penalty to any further negotiations in Beaufort due to the increased Alliance patrols. Should the Crew go so far as to actually injure or kill anyone, they will have to immediately flee Paquin in order to avoid being bound by law for, at the minimum, assault with a deadly weapon on up to murder based on how the events of the fight played out. .

Regardless of the circumstances, Fox will ask for passage on their Crew's ship, even if they are fleeing the law as he knows the fault will fall on him, even though he didn't use any weapons, he is not interested in going back to prison so soon after being released. If the meeting is not under threat of imminent arrest, Fox proves to be both grateful and charming as he thanks the Crew for their timely intervention. He advises however, that it might be best to get off the streets and asks if the Crew has room for a passenger on their ship. He explains as they head for the spaceport.

"The Feds were 'kind' enough to parole me seven years into my twenty-five year sentence, but they just couldn't

let the past stay in the past. They let me out of prison true enough, but they decided that I was still enough of a traitor that they felt it was okay to not return my land on Hera to me. So sure, I'm a 'free' man, but I'm also an impoverished man and that group back at the tavern shows that I haven't got a hope in hell of being able to find legal work anywhere near a ship."

Fox's next words will depend on if there are any ex-Browncoats in the group or not. If there are he continues with:

"Seeing as how I am in your debt already, it pains me to be put in a position to have to ask you this, however, you know my situation. I've been released from prison, but left without a home or a way to make a proper living. As one Browncoat to another, I've got to ask you for one last favor. When the war first started, I made a little money off of selling the first couple ships I captured and, as it turns out, I was smart enough to sock some of that money away when things started going bad for the Independent cause. Only problem is, I stashed the money on the grounds of the one thing I thought would always stay mine, namely, my home. Now, before you all go getting excited, it's not like I stashed a 'pirate' hoard or anything near enough to make even one person wealthy, but enough for me to live on if times got hard. I'm willing to cut you in for some of my stash if you are

willing to help me travel to Hera and recover only a small part of what by all the rights the Alliance likes to claim exist should already be mine.”

If there aren't any Browncoat sympathizers in the Crew Fox says:

“You’ve been far too kind to an old man and your coming to my aid speaks volumes to your character, so it is painful for me to have to ask to impose upon you one more time. However, while I’ve been freed from prison, I’ve been left without means to stay that way. If you can find it in your hearts to help me reach Hera, I’ve hidden away some money, not much, but enough for me to live on. I can cut you in on a share for your assistance. I ask you in the name of all that the Alliance is supposed to stand for that you help me retrieve only a small part of what should by all rights be mine. If doing what’s right isn’t enough motivation for you, I can offer you a ten percent finder’s fee, which will more than pay for your time.”

Assuming the Crew agrees, and they wouldn't be much of a Crew if they didn't, as soon as the PCs reach their ship, they will depart for Hera. Plotting a course is an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + *Piloting* / *Astrogation* roll and is a 195 hour trip in a speed class one ship. If the Crew is departing while trying to avoid arrest, the pilot will have to make an AVERAGE (35). Complex Action using Ship's Agility + *Pilot* /

Appropriate Specialty with each roll taking one round to escape before port control can impose a Landlock which will take 10 turns. Failing this roll would be disaster, so GMs are advised to encourage the use of Plot Points, or if the ship has dual controls, to allow the Piloting roll to be an Indirectly Assisted.

Once the Crew's ship has engaged their Pulse Drive, they can relax for the two day trip to Hera. Unless they are fleeing Paquin, then they will see a flag come up on the Cortex that includes a partial description of the Crew. The information in the flag will be fairly generic with rough descriptions (height, weight, race only) and while this will complicate things in the future for the PCs but there will be no pursuit or anyone waiting from them when they reach their destination, but the GM should make the players feel as though such events are possible.

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO: YOU CAN'T GO HOME

“After careful review of the circumstances, your beneficent Parliament announced today that it has decided to parole certain select members that served with the Independents faction during the Unification War. These misguided individuals were all convicted of treason at the end of the war were each noted for not being responsible for the wanton loss of life or unnecessary destruction of property. Each will therefore be released and considered to have served their time for their crimes against the people of the Alliance.”

- Cortex news announcement, June 2518

Once the course to Hera is plotted, the trip settles in and at one point during the trip, probably at the earliest convenience, the entire Crew gathers to hear Captain Fox's story. The ex-commerce raider seems reluctant to speak at first, but he nods to himself and his eyes light with what has to be the fire of decisiveness that was what he was known for during the war and he starts to speak.

"Okay, I'll tell you my story. I do not like to flatter myself, but I believe, at least some of my reputation proceeds me. I am ship captain. I signed with a wallowing lump of *fei wu*² freighter when I was seventeen and have made my living in the Black ever since. Even though that first ship was a public eyesore, I loved that ship and by the time it gave up the ghost six years later, I was first mate. I had some cash saved. Not much, but enough to buy my own ship. God, I look back and wonder what I was thinking when I took that rust bucket out of atmo for the first time. Thing shook so bad I couldn't tell what was screaming louder, the ship or the mechanic trying to hold it together.

"Despite being small and in terrible shape, that rust bucket held together long enough to get a better ship. I named that second ship after a sweet sail powered vessel on Earth-That-Was called the *Cutty Sark*. She was bigger,

faster, and maneuvered as smooth as Sihnon silk. Well after ten years with my shiny new ship, I was doing pretty well for myself. Not rich, but not wanting by any means, but by that time even a blind man could see war clouds brewing and I tried to steer clear of them. In the name of god and all the apostles, I tried. I sold the *Cutty Sark*, brought me a beautiful home on Hera and even got to live there for two whole years raising horses before that storm broke on the entire 'Verse.

"The urge to jump in at the beginning was powerful itch I had to fight off, but I kept to my homestead and tried to live a normal life. Well imagine my shock when none other than the *Cutty Sark* herself drops in for a landing about three months after the war started and my entire crew wants to talk. Her new master was my old first mate and he'd brought in General Josiah Taylor in for a visit. Taylor says he needs a few fast ships fitted out as commerce raiders and would I be willing to captain one of them. When the commander of Independent forces for all of Hera asks you something like that, you can't say no.

"Next thing I know I'm a privateer and it turned out that I was a good one. Took forty-six ships and I can proudly say, not a single life was lost doing it. When Serenity Valley finished playing out, I surrendered the *Cutty Sark* to the first Alliance ship I could find. I'll spare the details of the trial, now this new love-fest the Parliament has got

² junk

going on about forgiving the past got me freed, but the Feds haven't seen fit to forgive the lien that allowed them to seize my homestead leaving me flat broke and on the drift.

"I already told you how I stashed some money in a hidden safe and if I can't have my homestead, I mean to have that money. We'll just have to slip onto the grounds quiet like and I can empty that safe before anyone is the wiser and I'll be glad for a lift to anyplace you happen to be going before we go our separate ways. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to lie down. Those toughs are the bar smacked me around more than I like admit and at my age, a good bar brawl doesn't sound as appealing as it did when I was in my twenties."

Fox refuses any further questions and politely insists on doing just as he said, lying down and resting to recover from the fight. He promises to talk details in the morning and given he has suffered three Wound points worth of damage from the brawl, he is telling the truth. If any medic PC wants to treat Fox, use the standard rules to resolve his injuries, which is an EASY Complex Action of Intelligence + *Medical Expertise*.

The Crew is obviously hungry for more information, but Fox is right, they won't be able to do anything for at least two days, so there isn't a rush. However, once the PCs are alone, they can run a quick Cortex check to see how much of Fox's story is true. Only a few minutes of research discovers his war record and verifies that

he is telling the truth about his parole. In addition, Fox's lands were seized at the end of the war and they were not returned with the proceeds of the sale being used in his defense, per standard Alliance law.

Should the PCs decide to force the issue with Fox and demand more answers, they find that after seven years in a penal colony, they are poorly equipped to threaten him. Guns do not scare him and even actual violence doesn't either. Trying to interrogate him will be an Opposed Roll of the PC's Intelligence + *Discipline / Interrogation* or Willpower + *Influence / Interrogation* versus Fox's Willpower + *Discipline / Mental Resistance*. Taking this course of action could seriously split a Crew as Browncoats consider Fox a hero of the first order and will take exception to his maltreatment by any pro-Alliance characters. If a Browncoat character chooses this option, they should be penalized from the Plot Points awarded at the end of the scene for breaking character. In the morning, a well rested Fox answers any reasonable questions about his career as a raider, his trial, and as much as he knows about his home. He doesn't know who owns the property now, only that he is some ex-Alliance official that lost a lot of money due to Fox's raids and that he was given Fox's land to compensate for those losses. Fox refuses to talk about the penal colony limiting his comments to "Not fit to be repeated." All through the questioning, Fox is polite, witty and charming. Only a character that has Trustworthy Gut can roll Alertness + *Perception / Empathy* against an INCREDIBLE (23) task will note that Fox

is holding something back. If a PC mentions this, Fox will clearly be impressed at the character's acuity and admits that he does know who owns his land, none other than Lyle Digby the captain of the Alliance ship that he surrendered to as a reward from capturing him. If a PC discovers this piece of information, they should be awarded a bonus Plot Point.

Less any penalties for poor roleplay or excessive violence, the GM should award the PCs 3-5 Plot Points for their progress to this point.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: A HUNTIN' WE WILL

GO

"Prior to the Unification War, Hera was primarily known as the breadbasket of the 'Verse. Blessed with mild weather and long growing seasons, Hera provided nearly one third of all grain foodstuffs for the planets of the Core that were the foundation of the Alliance in addition to producing more than half of the total food supply to the Rim planets that were the center of the Independents' faction. This one fact made possession of Hera of critical strategic importance to both sides and why the fighting here was so savage. Knowing that controlling Hera would be pivotal to successfully prosecuting their war effort, the Alliance High Command knew that a threat to Hera would force the heretofore elusive Independents' Army to finally make a stand. This stand evolved into the holocaust known as the Battle of Serenity Valley..."

- Serenity Valley Visitor Center narrative

Arriving on Hera, Fox insists on visiting the Serenity Valley Memorial, the sweeping tribute to the half a million who died during the most critical battle of the war. He chooses to go at night to reduce the chance that he causes a disruption. However, despite his precautions, he is still recognized and he and the Crew are quickly surrounded by a hostile group of pro-Alliance visitors. The PCs find they are facing twice their numbers in Pro-Alliance visitors and they are growing more agitated by the moment. A HARD (11) Willpower + *Influence / Intimidation* (with a one-step skill penalty due to being out numbered) or a FORMIDABLE (15) Intelligence + *Influence / Persuasion* roll will cow the crowd into backing down. A display of weapons will gain a one-skill bonus, but the actual use of a weapon, while it will disperse the crowd, will cause a huge outcry for violating the sanctity of such sacred ground. This will result in the loss of 3 Plot Points from awarded points and a two-step skill penalty on Social skills for the remainder of their time on Hera.

If a fight does break out, as long as only fists are used, the attackers will fight until three NPCs have been incapacitated. This lesser sacrilege will still result in the loss of 1 awarded Plot Point and a one-step penalty to all Influence-based actions for the remainder of their time on Hera.

Regardless of how the Serenity Valley encounter plays out, Fox will be thrown into a deep depression and will withdraw to his cabin, refusing to leave to leave the ship. An AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + *Medical*

Expertise / Appropriate Specialty roll or a HARD (11) Willpower + *Influence / Empathy* roll will talk him out of his despair and get him to leave the ship again. The trip to Fox's property can be on foot, horseback, or any ground vehicle the Crew happens to have. The distance is six kilometers (3.6 miles) and will take an hour on foot, twenty minutes by horse, and ten minutes by vehicle. Ground and hover mules would be the most inconspicuous, but even a hover car wouldn't be out of the ordinary, unless the hover car is itself unusual enough to draw attention. If Fox is willing to go with the Crew, he can obviously lead them directly to the property and help scout the grounds. He will however, insist on having some sort of disguise this time and an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + *Covert* will give Fox a two-step skill bonus in any Opposed Roll to recognize him, while a PC acting as make-up artist can, with an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + *Artistry* roll will give a four-step bonus. If he is hold up in his cabin, he will describe how to get to his property and the PCs will have to make an AVERAGE (7) Memorize roll (Intelligence + Alertness) to find the property correctly. If Fox is with the Crew, he will be in his disguise and the GM will have to make an Opposed Roll of Fox's Intelligence + *Covert* plus whatever bonus he has for his disguise against the Alertness + *Perception* of the passersby along the route as a Complex Action to reach the homestead unrecognized. The Task is AVERAGE (35) if on foot or horse or EASY (15) if in a vehicle. However, if the vehicle is enclosed,

no roll is needed. Fox will only be recognized if two botches are rolled. If by some odd chance Fox should be recognized, the PCs can easily break contact as no one that does recognize him will pursue him, thus the Crew can try again in an hour with the primary penalty being the loss of time. Scouting the grounds is a HARD (55) Complex Action of Agility + *Covert* with each roll taking five minutes. The Difficulty Threshold decreases to EASY (35) if Fox is along. Every ten minutes, the Crew will have to make an AVERAGE (7) Agility + *Covert* to avoid the roving security, the Difficulty drops to EASY (3) if Fox is with them because of his familiarity with the terrain. If spotted, they receive one clear warning, if spotted again, Federal Marshals are immediately notified and will arrive after d6 minutes and they will have to flee whether they have completed the recon or not. If the reconnaissance of the grounds is interrupted by Marshals before the target number for the Complex Action is reached, there will be a penalty to entering the grounds. If Complex Action total was between 0-27 there is a two-step penalty and if total was 28-54, a one-step penalty. Once the grounds have been scouted, the Crew can withdraw back to their ship to make preparations for the next scene.

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO: DOWN THE FOXHOLE

Alliance Magistrate: "*Theodore Harold Edmund Fox, also known as 'The Black Fox,'* how to you respond to the charges of high

treason, grand theft, and destruction of Alliance property?"

Fox: "Sir, I submit the following as my response, as they state my position for more eloquently than I ever could, namely: 'When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the 'Verse, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation...'"

Magistrate: "Quaint, but this is not 1776, nor the King of England's court, nor is this a class on Earth-That-Was history. Answer the question guilty or not guilty?"

Fox: "Sir, based on those two options, I can only answer 'not guilty.'

Magistrate: "So shall the record show that the defendant Theodore Harold Edmund Fox has entered a plea of not guilty. As this tribunal is not a jury trial, based on the overwhelming evidence against the defendant, which I have reviewed prior to these proceedings I find him guilty on all counts and sentence him to twenty-five years in the Dyton Colony Penal facility."

- Entire transcript of Fox's trial

Armed with a clear layout of the changes the new owners have made to the grounds the Crew can now work on how to enter the property undetected. If Fox was there, he obviously notes the differences. If not, he picks up the details from the PC's reports

just as well as if he was there. Fox listens to any plans the PCs develop for their raid, but if they get stuck or after the GM feels the scene has played out enough, he makes an announcement. When he built his ranch house, it was extremely clear that war was on the horizon and he built in a few special features to protect the property, to include an escape tunnel. He stresses however, that it was an *escape* tunnel; he never thought it he would need it to sneak into the house. Based on the recon report, even if it wasn't completed, Fox will make it clear that it will impossible to sneak up on the house directly. Any attempt by any skill will be versus an IMPOSSIBLE (31) difficulty number.

Returning to the house at night is much easier and as long as Fox is disguised, there won't be enough people or light along the way for him to have to worry about him being recognized. The only challenge they face will be to avoid the local police patrol cruiser. Each PC will have to roll an EASY (3) Agility + *Covert* to remain out of sight. This roll is merely to heighten tension as only on a Botch will the police notice anything. For a few heart-stopping moments a searchlight will sweep across the area, then switch off and the cruiser will continue on.

On reaching Fox's home, entering the grounds will require an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + *Covert / Disable Devices* or Intelligence + *Technical Engineering* roll to bypass the security on the outer fence and an AVERAGE (7) Agility + *Athletics / Climbing* roll in order to climb the fence and enter the grounds. Once on the grounds,

reaching the house itself with Fox's help is an EASY Complex Action (15) Agility + Covert with each roll taking one round. Entering the tunnel from the outside requires a HARD (11) Agility + Covert / Lockpicking and a HARD (11) Burst of Strength (Strength + Strength) rolls to get the door open with only character being able to make the roll due to the confines of the tunnel.

When the door opens, read aloud:

The tunnel is dank and the air is musty after lying undiscovered for so long, but it is otherwise as good as the day it was built. Halfway through the hundred meter long tunnel, Fox stops long enough to open a small chest hidden in a niche to one side. He slips on his old Browncoat duster and arms himself by retrieving a gun belt with a well-oiled LeMat pistol in the holster. Looking as dashing as he ever did, he silently gestures for the Crew to look inside and cryptically says. "Your down payment." Any PC that reaches into the chest will find a small bundle that holds one hundred credits in paper and two hundred in platinum coins. Fox continues down the tunnel until reaching the end and turns to whisper. "This is where it gets a might complicated. This door opens into the basement, but the release catch only works from the inside. I am open to suggestions as to how to proceed."

Activating the gear driven mechanism from the wrong side is a HARD (55) Complex

Action of Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering / Appropriate Specialty or Intelligence + Covert / Open Locks, Disable Device, or Appropriate Specialty with each roll taking five minutes. One Botch raises the take to FORMIDABLE (75) and a second will require battering the door open. This is a HEROIC (19) Burst of Strength (Strength + Strength) roll with no more than two PCs being able to try at once and can directly assist each other. The downside of battering the door open is that all attempts at stealth inside the house will be at a one-step skill penalty.

Once the door is open, Fox smiles grimly and says. "Safe is on the second floor. Bear with me a few more minutes my friends and we can be on our way with none the wiser."

The GM should now proceed to the next scene and award 3-5 Plot Points, less any penalties earned for their actions through this part of the adventure.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE: BEARDING THE LION

"Obsolete expression usually attributed to a quote for the bible, specifically I Samuel Chapter 17 and Verse 35 where King David is described as saving a lamb by entering a lion's den and holding the lion at bay by the beard until able to kill the beast with his sword. The idiom, in time, came to mean boldly confronting a problem or enemy directly, and typically, on the enemy's home territory."

- Cortex linguistic database entry

Creeping through the darkened ranch house will pose a challenge even for Fox as everyone is seeing the remodeling the new owner has done to the interior for the first time. Regardless of the changes, the stairway upstairs is still in the same location as is the master bedroom. Fox will want to proceed alone, but will not balk at one person going along. However, if more than one person wishes to go upstairs, he will have a serious problem refusing to proceed. Since most Crews will not have an experienced safecracker with them and even if they did, they do not the time or the proper tools with them forcing the PCs to have to relent.

Reaching the master bedroom undetected is an AVERAGE (35) Complex Action of Agility + *Covert / Stealth*. A single Botch increases the task to HARD (55) and a second will wake up the occupants of the house, consisting of the owner, his bodyguard, his valet, the butler, and the cook. The owner and bodyguard will shout a challenge if awakened before coming out of their second floor rooms. A female guest will be behind Fox and the PC at the top of the stairs and the rest of the household staff will stagger out of their rooms unintentionally blocking the way out. If such an event does occur, run the combat as normal, but it will be completely obvious that murder will result in a life sentence and unrelenting pursuit by the law as well as a warrant placed on the entire Crew. If the two make it to the master bedroom, they will have to make one final AVERAGE

(7) Agility + *Covert / Stealth* to cross the room undetected. If Fox and the PC fail this roll, Fox will have his weapon drawn and will silence the person in the bed with the cocking of his LeMat pistol. The guest is a terrified woman (who if the PCs bother to ask will say that her name is Rachel Taylor) and will quietly submit to being bound and gagged, as long as the PC can make a HARD (11) Willpower + *Influence / Persuade* roll or an AVERAGE (7) Willpower + *Influence / Intimidation* roll with either roll gaining a two-step skill bonus for the situation. If this roll fails, the woman will fight and the PCs only have two rounds to subdue her without the use of firearms before the commotion rouses the rest of the house. If the PC resorts to deadly force, they will receive a two Plot Point penalty for excessive violence.

Assuming the intruders make it into the room quietly, Fox hisses softly when he sees that a large armoire has been placed on the safe. They have no choice, if they wish to open the safe, they have to move the heavy piece of furniture first. As there is no chance to move the armoire silently, if they haven't done so already, they will have to bind and gag the guest. Since they will have complete and utter surprise, the woman will remain silent with an EASY (3) Willpower + *Influence / Persuade* roll or Willpower + *Influence / Intimidation* roll. Once the woman is firmly bound and no longer a threat, moving the armoire is a FORMIDABLE (15) Burst of Strength roll with the PC able to directly assist Fox. Finally able to reach the safe and since Fox knows the combination, he quickly unlocks

the safe and retrieves €10,000 in cash. He hands over €1,000 to the stunned PC and then whispers that it is time to leave.

[Note: If the GM wishes, Fox can slip something into his coat pocket that the PC will only see with an Opposed Alertness + *Perception* versus Fox's Agility + *Covert*. If the character wins, it is up to them if they wish to confront Fox about the item, if caught, Fox will only state that it is 'insurance' and that 'now is not the time' to discuss the matter. If the GM chooses to include this additional scene, the object Fox grabs can be the a special transmitter to send a signal to some of Fox's friends the crew will meet later or a hook to another adventure of the GM's choosing.] Read aloud:

On exiting the room, Fox walks directly into a plump, 50ish, bald man and it is difficult to figure out who is more surprised, the man or Fox. The man sputters for a few seconds in rage at the intrusion before his eyes fly open in recognition.

"YOU!" He gasps.

Fox smiles and replies: "Evening Magistrate Evans. Not quite as in control of the situation as you were the first time we met are you?"

"How dare you break into my house!" Evans replies his face growing redder by the second.

"Technically, it's you that broke into my house, but let's not split hairs your honor." Fox responds calmly.

"Phillips, seize him!" Evans snarls. "I'll see you hanged, I'll..."

The Magistrate's tirade is cut short by a bone jarring right cross that causes Evans head to snap back and his eyes to roll up into his head as he slumps to the floor.

"My but that felt good." Fox manages to quip before Phillips, the bodyguard, roars in attempting a vicious tackle and Pandemonium breaks out.

Fortunately, Magistrate Evans' staff is more enthusiastic than skilled. Only Evans is a skilled fighter and now that the need for silence is gone, the PCs that have been hiding in the tunnel will be able to come to Fox and their comrade's assistance. The GM should run the fight normally per the standard rules with none of the NPCs being armed. In addition to the regular rolls, the GM should make occasional additional hidden rolls, making a great show of looking at the results in order to keep the suspense high. These rolls mean nothing, but should give the PCs pause as they think Federal Marshals are on the way.

As none of the NPCs are armed, this fight should remain only a brawl as an EASY Intelligence + *Knowledge* will know the use of deadly force on a Magistrate will draw every Marshal in the sector and result in warrant placed on the entire Crew Once the last of the household staff is subdued, the PCs are free to escape through the tunnel. The GM should then proceed to the next and final scene.

Since no one will be able to respond to anything the exterior security might detect, the PCs only have to make the one AVERAGE (7) Agility + *Athletics / Climbing*

roll to get back over the exterior fence. The GM is again encouraged to make a few extra rolls to keep the pressure on the PCs, but the Crew will reach their ship before any alarm is raised.

ACT THREE

SCENE TWO: THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

"Knowing they were facing overwhelming superior numbers in troops and ships, one of the first acts of the Independents was to revive an ancient Earth-That-Was tradition called Letters of Marque and Reprisal. These contracts between a government and an individual authorized that person the specific permission to seize or destroy designated property of another entity that need not be a government and while typically issued during times of war, a Letter of Marque could be used as an act of retaliation short of a declaration of war. The Independents issued dozens of Letters of Marque during the war, but only a handful were successful. Considered nothing more than pirates by the Alliance, most of these so-called privateers were ruthlessly hunted down and destroyed with only Theodore Fox eluding capture for the duration of the war. There were many superstitions about Fox during the war, the most persistent being his uncanny ability to evade capture, typically referred to as 'That Old Black Magic'."

– Cortex historical database entry

Once clear of the homestead, reaching the spaceport will be complicated by the arrival of Federal Marshals setting up a cordon looking for Fox and the others that

assaulted the Magistrate Unknown to the Crew, Evans' bodyguard slipped free of his bonds quicker than the Crew had hoped and freed the others. The Magistrate is now throwing his considerable weight around and has ordered the spaceport locked down. The only reason this hasn't happened already is the Port Master has so far refused to acknowledge Evans' authority to give such an order. As Fox is now a red hot fugitive, he must be kept out of sight at all costs. The partial descriptions of any PC that took place in the fist fight results in those PCs having a one-step skill penalty to all Social skills.

Regardless of mode of travel the Crew uses, they will be challenged by Marshals. Tricking their way past the cordon is a HARD (11) Intelligence + Influence roll. Fox will also have to make an Opposed Roll of Fox's Intelligence + Covert plus whatever bonus he has for his disguise against the Marshal's Alertness + Perception. PCs can assist Fox by attempting to distract the Marshal with an AVERAGE (7) Intelligence + Influence / Persuade or Agility + Craft / Acting roll to cause a one-step skill penalty to the Marshal's roll.

If Fox is recognized, or if the PCs fail their roll to bluff their way through the cordon, the PCs will have to fight their way through the roadblock. Fortunately, the Marshals did not believe the reports that the Black Fox was in town and are sluggish in their reactions. However, and EASY (3) Intelligence + Knowledge roll will know killing a Marshal is an extraordinarily bad idea and while assaulting a Marshal is also a crime, they won't face the same level of

pursuit that murder would. Run the fight as normal with the Marshal's slow reaction represented by giving the PCs the chance to act first in the round.

On reaching the spaceport, they can see a flurry of activity and all the various Corvue screens announcing a lockdown in progress message. The Crew will have to act quickly if they are going to get away before the entire facility is under Landlock. Escaping while Evans and the Port Master are arguing will require an AVERAGE (35) Complex Action pitting the Mechanic's Agility + *Technical Engineering* to quickly jumpstart the ship's engines.

While the PCs are making their rolls, the GM will also be rolling a Complex Action of Evans' Willpower + *Influence / Persuade* to get the thankfully stubborn (FORMIDABLE 75) Port Master to order the Landlock If Evans reaches his threshold before the PCs reaches theirs, the PCs' ship is Llandlocked. As escaping is critical at this point, it is suggested that the GM encourage the Crew to use Plot Points or Indirect Assistance to meet their threshold first.

Once the ship starts, the Pilot will make an AVERAGE (7) Ship's Agility + *Piloting* to get the ship airborne quickly. However, as soon as they start to move, an ASREV moves quickly to stop their escape. At this point Fox will suggest something he used once during the war to escape a sticky situation. He explains his plan quickly, which consists of the Pilot making another AVERAGE (7) Ship's Agility + *Piloting* roll to put the ship on the correct takeoff vector, while the Mechanic makes an AVERAGE (7)

Intelligence + *Mechanical Engineering* roll to dump one quarter of the ship's fuel supply. The Pilot will then have to make an EASY Intelligence + *Piloting* roll to cause the ship's engines to 'backfire' and ignite the highly flammable oxygen and hydrogen mixture they are trailing behind them. The resulting explosion is high enough to not cause any harm on the ground, but ASREV will will spin out of control. By the time they regain control, the PCs will be high enough to go to Hard Burn and escape.

Safely away from Hera, Fox gives the Crew a set of coordinates and asks to be taken there. The trip is only three hours and is on the way to whatever course the Crew was planning or if they didn't have a plan, Fox's course is as good as any. When they reach the coordinates in deep space and less than twenty minutes later, a ship is detected approaching fast. If the Crew gets alarmed, Fox explains that it is only some friends coming to take him off their hands. The sleek freighter arrives and clearly visible on the prow is the name *Cutty Sark*! Fox grins at the Crew's reaction and at his old ship before replying.

"While I do thank you for your assistance, I wasn't sure if you good people would be up to the job. I am proud to say you most certainly were. Anyway, some old friends of mine purchased my old ship when it went up on the auction block and I was able to send them a wave shortly before that unfortunate scene back on Paquin. I hope you don't mind that I used the Cortex in my room to send them a

couple updates so they would know where to meet me. Thank you again for your assistance and I must now be on my way.”

By this time the *Cutty Sark* has docked with them and he says his goodbyes. If any one asks him where he going next, he smiles enigmatically before replying:

“Second star on the right and straight on `til dawn.”³

He closes the hatch and the *Cutty Sark* disengages, pivoting away with a flourish, before going to Hard Burn and quickly disappearing from sight.

The next time the probably paranoid PCs check the Cortex, they find that despite the partial description of them and their ship, the Alliance does not order an arrest warrant and they are free to continue on with their lives. However, the GM now has a ready made hook to follow up with if he chooses to exploit their encounter with Magistrate Evans as a new Deadly Enemy.

The PCs should now be awarded 4-6 Plot Points with a 2 point penalty for excessive violence when dealing with Evans or the Marshals.

THE END

Cutty Sark

Built in Scotland in 1869 and one of the last merchant clipper ships expressly built for the tea trade. Clipper ships were noted for their high speed for a wind powered sailing vessel (The *Cutty Sark* once logged 360 nautical miles in 24 hours for a speed of 15 knots and is a standing record for a ship of this size) and capable of making the run from China to England in as little as 122 days, an unheard of speed for the time. Her name is an old Scots term for a short smock once worn as a woman’s undergarment. In addition it was specifically the name of a character in the Robert Burns comic poem *Tam o’ Shanter* written in 1791 and was also the name of the ship’s figurehead.

As with all the clipper ships, the *Cutty Sark*, after far too short a career, was replaced by more reliable steam driven vessels. After being sold and re-rigged several times, the *Cutty Sark* was fortunate enough to be restored to her original configuration in 1922 and preserved as a museum ship in Greenwich, England, surviving today as a popular tourist attraction.

³ The directions to find Neverland as described in Peter Pan

FOLKS AND RASCALS

Theodore Fox

Agi d6, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d8, Int d8, Wil d12;

Life Points 20; Initiative d6 + d8.

Traits: Leadership (Major Asset), Talented: Perception/Tactics (Major Asset), Military Rank (Minor Asset), Credo: Spare Innocents (Minor Complication), Straight Shooter (Minor Complication), Memorable (Minor Complication), Branded: Black Fox (Major Complication)

Skills: Animal Handling d4, Athletics d6 / Dodge d8, Covert d4, Discipline d6 / Mental Resistance d8, Guns d4, Influence d6 / Leadership d10, Knowledge d4, Mechanical Engineering d2, Perception d6 / Tactics d12, Piloting d4, Survival d4, Technical Engineering d2, Unarmed Combat d6 / d8 Brawling

Description: Dashing, intelligent, and confidence building, Fox is the quintessential example of a natural born leader. Initially a simple freighter captain who tried very hard to stay out of the war he could see brewing years ahead of others who became a fairly successful rancher. He was specifically recruited as a privateer and succeeded beyond expectation in that role. Forty-six ships captured and not a single life lost in the process. His prizes added almost three dozen ships to the Independent's ad hoc merchant fleet and when the war was over, left him branded as either a brilliant swashbuckling hero or a blatant traitor. Fox would like nothing more than to be able to sink out of sight and leave any and all limelight behind him. However, his notoriety has made it abundantly clear that he will not be able to find anything like a normal life again.

Magistrate Evans

Agi d6, Str d8, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 14; Initiative d6 + d8

Traits: Moneyed Individual (Major Asset), Friends in High Places (Minor Asset), Prejudice: Former Browncoats (Minor Complication), Portly (Minor Complication), Overconfident (Minor Complication),

Skills: Athletics d2, Guns d4, Influence d6 / Intimidation d8 / Negotiation d10 / Persuade d8, Knowledge d6 / Law d10, Perception d6 / Deduction d8

Description: Plump, coddled and smug, Evans has had his way pretty much his entire life and his attitude reflects his firm belief that the 'Verse revolves around him.

Aaron Phillips

Agi d8, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d6, Int d6, Wil d6;

Life Points 14; Initiative d8 + d6

Traits: Steady Calm (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication)

Skills: Athletics d6, Discipline d4, Guns d6 / Pistol d8, Knowledge d4, Perception d4, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Description: A professional bodyguard in every way. In his mind, there are only two types of people in the 'Verse, his 'principle' Magistrate Evans and threats.

Valet, Butler, and Cook

Agi d6, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d6, Int d6, Wil d4; Life Points 12; Initiative d6 + d6.

Traits: Steady Calm (Minor Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication).

Skills: Knowledge d4, Influence d4, Perception d4.

Description: Generic house hold staff that take care of Magistrate Evans home.

Marshals

Agi d6, Str d8, Vit d8, Ale d6, Int d6, Wil d8;

Life Points 16; Initiative d6 + d6.

Traits: Wears a Badge (Major Asset), Loyal (Minor Complication), Prejudice: Civilians (Minor Complication)

Skills: Athletics d6, Covert d4, Discipline d6, Guns d6 / Pistol d8, Influence d6 / Intimidation d8, Knowledge d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Planetary Vehicles d6, Perception d6.

Gear: Pistol – Damage d6W, Range 100, ROF 3 (8) with two extra magazines, Stun Baton – d2S, Uniform, Mesh Armor – 1W, Communication Headset

Description: The Standard Federal law officer, reasonably competent, but is completely dedicated to enforcing the law.

Pickpocket

Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d8, Ale d6, Int d6, Wil d4;

Life Points 12; Initiative d8 + d6.

Traits: Talented: Covert / Sleight of Hand (Minor Asset), Greedy (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics d6 / Running d8, Covert d6 / Sleight of Hand d8, Influence d4, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d2.

Description: This young thief has made his living on the streets for as long as he can remember. Small and gifted with his nimble fingers, he's always looking for an easy mark that isn't careful with protecting their cash.

Hera pro-Alliance crowd

use *Settler Family*, p. 182 (Father w/d4 Unarmed Combat instead of d4 guns)

Paquin thugs

use *Unification War Vet*, p. 180

Hera passersby

use *Rim Shop Keeper*, p.185

Rachel Taylor

use *Society Belle*, p. 184