Blueshift: Perfectly Legal Traders

A three-hour scenario set in the universe of Blueshift

Version 1.1 • Jan-Yves Ruzicka

Eccentric Kayyik landowner and entrepreneur Katok "Mr Vole" Qaniitiyin has his (her? their?) overly-long fingers in a number of different pies. Word is that one of their archaeology skyships just returned from the Remnants with a hold full of ancient Awngi artefacts. The crew took a number of boxes right into Mr Vole's island compound orbiting Valaria, and immediately after the guard on the estate doubled. Now, you're not a betting person, but you reckon there's something mighty valuable sitting in Mr Vole's basement right about now – something that a number of collectors would pay a pretty penny to obtain.

So you're going to steal it.

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Credits

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Inspired by: *Apocalypse World* by Vincent Baker, *Lady Blackbird* by John Harper, *The Burning Wheel* by Luke Crane, *The Shadow of Yesterday* by Clinton R. Nixon; *Firefly* by Joss Whedon, *Saga* by Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples, *Star Wars* by George Lucas.

The floor plans in this scenario are taken from Whitemarsh Hall, a real-life mansion that stood in Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania. The mansion was built in 1921 by banking executive Edward T. Stotesbury, but following his death in 1938 and the ruin of the Great Depression it fell into disuse. A succession of owners was unable to maintain the property (upkeep costs were estimated at $1 million per year in 1927), and the mansion proper was demolished in 1980. Now only fragments remain. For more information, see: http://www.serianni.com/wh.htm

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Introduction

GM Summary

The group crash a party held by millionaire **Mr Vole**, only to find they're not the only ones there with sinister intentions. They have to work out where these Awngi artefacts are, infiltrate the house, lift said artefacts, and get out without arousing suspicion, and do it before their competitors do.

While this scenario has a good bit of backstory for the GM to use, some stuff will also need to be prepared or made up on the fly to react to PCs' actions. I recommend reading through this scenario fully some time before the game, to familiarise yourself with the materials and have a think about the bits you're going to have to make up.

Tone and genre

Blueshift is a fantastical place, a collection of "islands" of rock orbiting a central star called **Behir**. The largest of these islands are big enough that, standing on their surface, you can often forget you're hurtling through space: they still have clouds and skies and grass and lakes and all the things we're used to on Earth. The smallest of them, though, can just be chunks of rock with the occasional building clinging to the side. The space between the islands is filled with **ether**, a light, inert gas; the core of most islands is made of **lodestone**, a strange rock with weird attractive properties.

Those who get between islands use **Skyships**, something like a cross between zeppelins and submarines. Travel is expensive and not necessarily safe: the engines that power skyships can fail, and sometimes ships just go missing. It can take days, weeks, or even months to get from point to point, and pirates and smugglers aplenty hide in the skies.

Technology is expensive and not completely trustworthy: mass production and assembly line manufacture just don't work, and that means that every mechanical or technological device is assembled by hand, usually by a skilled (and well-paid) mechanist. Here are the sort of mechanical devices you might get used to seeing in a busy metropolis: mechanical clocks, large steam-engines, pocket watches (somewhat inaccurate), flintlock pistols or rifles. The world is full of strange materials which may interact with the world weirdly, and physics may not quite work as we expect, so more exotic devices may also appear from time to time: automatons, rocks that burn with a heat that doesn't die, strange force fields, devices that interact at a distance, and even fantastic things like lightning guns or soul-jars may occasionally turn up.

Somewhere in the unknown sits the blurry line between technology and magic. Some scholars insist that all magic is explicable, that it's all just science or technology we don't understand yet. Some are less certain. Regardless, some people can do things that science can't explain: jump from shadow to shadow, or call fire from the skies, or reading peoples' thoughts. Some claim these are gifts from the gods, while some say it's just natural ability.

The species

The world of Blueshift is full of a number of alien species. Of note, there are no human in Blueshift: no one is “standard”. On the following page you’ll find a guide to the most common of the known races, almost all of which you’d expect to find at Mr Vole’s party. Feel free to make up other races as you see fit. If you need more information on these races, feel free to consult the players’ information sheets (which are tinted slightly be folks’ prejudices), ask questions of the players, or even just make stuff up.

Valari are winged humanoids, known for their enthusiasm and mental acuity but also their constant scheming and bickering between one another. Their home world of **Valaria** is divided into five different city-states, which constant switch allegiances trying to one-up each other.

Kulach are a race of tall, thin, horned folk who are often seen wearing cloaks and robes of bright colours. Kulach are famed as traders, although several criminal rings are run by less-reputable Kulach.

Kanarat, or "golems", are a race of sexless constructs. They often find themselves passionately devoted to causes. A young race, they still have drive and fire in them.

Kayyik are a pseudo-canine race of hermaphroditic hunter-gatherers from the fragments, the pieces of island that float closest to Behir. While the majority of them remain on the fragments, more and more are moving in to civilised society.

Awngi are evolved herdbeasts with basic telepathy. In groups they tend to network and make decisions *en masse*: those who leave the herds are often considered slightly weird.

Ma-Ouma are a race of half-human, half-octopus creatures. Their masters cannot venture onto dry land, and the Ma-Ouma often act at their behest.

Setup

As GM you're going to want to familiarise yourself with the rules section of this document, the adventure proper, and the characters available for play. While the rules fit on one half of the character sheet, there is a more detailed summary included in this document for your perusal and to help answer any more advanced questions.

You will want to print out character sheets for your players, and probably also the supporting photos in the "printouts" section, which may be of use during play. You should print (or write) out the question cards provided in the "printouts" section as well.

The MacGuffin

The players are out to steal something of great value brought back from an ancient Awngi excavation site. I will refer to this in the text as the **MacGuffin**, because that's basically what it is. The MacGuffin can change form between different runs of the game, which may surprise players who've played this before. The MacGuffin could be **rare**, could have **cultural significance**, and could be either **magically** or **technologically advanced**. Something like the Ark of the Covenant from *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* would be an example of an incredibly powerful MacGuffin that Mr Vole could still have recovered. Regardless of its potency, remember that this is something important enough that Mr Vole had it shipped to their personal mansion to keep it safe, and that two different teams are trying to recover it.

Here are some suggestions for possible MacGuffins, although the GM is expressly encouraged to make up their own:

- **A small fresco** carved in granite, depicting Awngi ceremonial rites. The writing (if studied by someone with Academics, or someone who reads Awngi fluently) puts the piece at several thousand years old. The fresco is of immense value, both financially and culturally, but unwieldy and very difficult to hide. It is also apparently impossible to damage: even sharp blades simply glance off of it.
- The remains of a **complex machine**, incredibly old and rusted, but still in one piece (think the Antikythera mechanism, but in better condition). The machine is currently inoperable, and it would be the work of months to recreate it, but a genius mechanist could possibly remove some of the auxiliary functions, replace a gear or two, and maybe even get it to work if they were lucky (or wreck it completely, destroying any value). The machine might do one of any number of things when activated: as it's Awngi in origin, it might let the person who pulled the lever read (or implant messages into) peoples' thoughts, unlock their latent psychic abilities, or just drive them insane. Or maybe it has a different effect, like incredibly strong gravitational attraction, or shorting out every mechanistic object more complex than an abacus within one mile.
- A book written in an **unrecognisable language**. The illustrations seem to indicate that it's a historical account, with several figures recognisable as people of various species (although the art style is somewhat foreign). A number of the figures in the book are not recognisable as known races. Nothing about the book suggests Awngi culture.

The Island

Mr Vole's island (*island* here refers to any piece of rock directly or indirectly orbiting Behir) is a moon of a moon of a planet. It lies nominally within the jurisdiction of the balkanised island of **Valaria**: however, due to long-running territorial disputes the space around Valaria is generally policed haphazardly. While general courtesy is expected, breach of Valari laws generally only results in problems when it starts annoying various powerful factions in the Valari. Effectively, this means that Mr Vole is left alone to his own devices - but he needs his own security to patrol his airspace and maintain order on his island.

Mr Vole's island is a relatively tiny piece of rock, held together by lodestone-rich veins that run deep into its core. Despite being tiny, it still has a surface area equivalent to a very small country or large city. You could probably walk around the whole thing in a couple of days, maybe one if you were really fit.

When you're out in the middle of nowhere,

there's two things that weird you out. The first is the sky: there's not enough air between you and the depths of space, which means that even during the day Behir's light doesn't drown out the stars. The sky is a deep green-blue, considerably lighter at the horizon but almost black at the zenith. At night the lights of other islands are visible, especially **Valathir** (the moon Mr Vole's island orbits), which is slightly larger than Earth's moon appears, and Valaria, which is considerably smaller but not just a point of light yet. Other islands appear as points of light, and Behir's light also reflects off of clouds of gasses in the ether, helping light up the sky. The second weird thing is the horizon. It's about 200 metres if you're standing on flat land, and there's a noticeable curve in the horizon, far more than on Earth.

While Mr Vole owns the whole island, a small but appreciable part of it is dedicated to his "estate": the well-kept lawns, gardens and promenades that make up the surrounds to his mansion. Mr Vole's mansion is large and sprawling, with plenty of rooms for people to relax in (see attachments). Mr Vole's mansion and estates are clearly the most obvious signs of civilised habitation on the island: the rest of it is thick woods, populated by deer and game birds. There may be the odd place nestled in the trees, although given the small size of the island it's likely to be nothing more than a one-room hut than anything else.

Of course, the island hasn't always been in Mr Vole's possession, and he's pretty reticent about who he bought it off (assuming he didn't just claim ownership and bribe the Valari authorities to recognise him). The thick woods could hide all manner of things - abandoned, hidden smuggler bases, an illegal mine, dead drop locations...the island may be small, but even an island this size is difficult to search thoroughly.

Mr Vole

Mr Vole is one of the **Kayyik** - a species of vaguely canine, hermaphrodite, tribal hunter-gatherers from the Fragments. Over the past few generations, more and more Kayyik have been moving from the Fragments and into the Core Worlds, and Mr Vole made his fortune from this movement. While he initially made money supplying services that Kayyik needed to the growing population, he soon showed a good head for business, diversifying and expanding. At this stage he's an inspirational figure to Kayyik who have just arrived in the Core Worlds, demonstrating that anyone can make a buck in this world.

In saying that, he's made plenty of enemies. Rival merchants, conservative Kayyik who believe that he's sold out to "civilisation", radical Kayyik who believe that he's encouraging young immigrants to blindly hold onto antiquated tribal values, various members of other species who believe Kayyik shouldn't be trying to upset the status quo...the usual assortment.

Mr Vole's business interests lie chiefly in finance, catering mainly to Kayyik-specific or Kayyik-relevant services. However, he's successfully branched out into a number of other businesses, some of which are almost certainly shady. Members of the party may even have interacted with people who work for Mr Vole before.

The Mansion

Mr Vole's mansion is a sprawling expanse done in a classical Valari style, lots of white marble and glass. The island has quite a mild climate, so there's lots of "indoor-outdoor flow": big doors you can throw open, terrace gardens, detached summer houses, and the like.

I've supplied a floor plan of the mansion in the back of this book. There are two copies: one, unlabeled, if the players manage to get blueprints of the place from a local planning office or some-such, and one, labeled, for your reference (or if one of the players thinks up something *really* clever). The basement levels aren't marked on this map: partly because I was unable to secure floor plans of a mansion's basement, and partly because the basement levels are yours to customize to fit the expectations of the party.

Ground Floor

The front of the mansion is graced with a large portico in marble, leading directly into the **Entrance Hall**. This room is dominated by the large staircase leading upstairs and, opposite that, a series of paintings, depicting everyday Kayyik life. Side doors off the Entrance Hall lead to the **Coat Room** and **Reception Room**. The reception room can be used to entertain formal guests in privacy. In Kayyik fashion, both lavatories (marked **WC**) are unisex. The **Billiard Room** also functions as a social room for Mr Vole's

business partners and doubles as a smoking room when required. The **West Library** contains a large collection of popular books (histories by various authors, almanacs, planetary surveys, *etc.*), and a number of comfortable couches. The **East and West Rotundas** are designed to exhibit art and sculptures, as are the **Gallery Hall** and, to a lesser extent, the **Trophy Hall**, while the **Summer Loggia** and **Tea Room** are excellent locations for a small party to enjoy views of the surrounds.

The **Pantry**, **Silver Vault** and **Servants' Wing** are relatively self-explanatory, as is the **Dining Room**, which is used for formal occasions; if the meal is less formal one might use the **Breakfast Room**. Guests may be entertained in the **Drawing Room** or in the **Small Library**, which holds Mr Vole's personal collection as well as a number of curios from his travels.

Should the party spill outside, it will be easily contained either on the paved **Terrace** or out into the symmetrical box hedges of the **Parterre Garden**. The adventurous guest may work their way to either the of the **Belvederes** at the extreme of the mansion proper: both of these shelters allow unparalleled views of the estate. If Behir Is too bright, you could also take shelter under the stone arches of the **Arcade Loggia**, open to the garden to let the outside air in.

Upper floor

The upper floor is dominated by bedrooms, including a number of **Guest Rooms** with their attendant bathrooms (marked "B" on the map). You can reach the upper floor either by the stairs or via the elevators (marked "E"). Mr Vole's quarters take up one corner of this floor, although his **Study** is positioned next to the **Treillage Loggia**, dominated by climbing vines, colourful flowers and plants imported from the Fragments. The rest of Mr Vole's family (those who live in the Core Worlds at least) reside in the **Family Bedroom** and attached rooms. Kayyik have little sense for privacy in the way that Valari do: Mr Vole's separate bedroom is seen as an extravagance. The **Shrine Room** serves as a place of private worship to ancestors of Mr Vole's family. Should members of the family wish to entertain close friends they may use the **Boudoir** or, if the weather is fine, the **Empire Loggia** with its fine views of the estate.

The **Kiliiut family** also has rooms in the mansion, being closely related to Mr Vole and strong business partners. While the family doesn't always stay here, there's usually enough of the clan around that they have a dedicated suite of rooms.

Basement

There is no map of the basement levels. No floor plan was ever filed with any authority, and it is left up to you to populate. If you wish, you could easily draw a simple map of the place before the session; alternatively you could let it grow (or shrink) to fit the players' expectations and suspicions. Here are a some things you may find in Mr Vole's basements:

- A kitchen for the mansion.
- General laundry.
- Servant's dining and common area.
- Coal cellar.
- Boiler room.
- Mechanist's workshop.
- Wine cellar.
- Food storage.
- Long-term storage (furniture, paintings, etc.).
- Private retiring room (locked or secret, with confidential reports).
- Mr Vole's laboratory.
- A small vault (with the MacGuffin?).

You can probably reach the basements by the servants' stairs marked on the blueprints, but there may be other ways down. Perhaps Mr Vole's study contains a secret staircase, or maybe one of the other rooms obscures a passage hidden in the walls of the building.

The Party

Mr Vole's security detail is top-notch, and normally would be all over interlopers before the even set foot on his island. However, tonight is **All Gods Night**, an annual Kayyik celebration that Mr Vole has used for several years as an excuse to hold a nice big party on his island.

All Gods Night is a Kayyik celebration that occurs (approximately) once every year, an opportunity for people to honour and remember their ancestors. Traditionally, families would stoke the fires high, sit up through the night, and tell tales of their predecessors. Mr Vole has made the holiday a part of the social calendar for the local elite.

Political bigwigs, well-known merchants, and ambassadors from foreign nations all come to the celebrations, as do any local Kayyik of means. Some people view it as Mr Vole's way of ensuring Kayyik traditions don't die, while some think it's mercenary of him to milk the holiday for yet another party.

Regardless, with the number of guests attending, there's plenty of room for a small group to slip by security - either as staff brought in to cater for the festivities, or as guests themselves. Getting onto the grounds is one thing - infiltrating the mansion proper, finding the hiding place of the MacGuffin, and getting out without getting hunted down by security is another.

Here are some people the party may run into at the party:

- **Entelya Ochul-n-Enuch**, Kulach merchant and business rival of Mr Vole's. Trying to get anyone who works for Mr Vole drunk and spill details of Mr Vole's business plans.
- **Irikin Kiliiut**, resident of the mansion, still a teenager. Cosmopolitan, has taken a gender (female), and thinks Mr Vole is behind the times. Will tell anyone who listens that his best years are behind him.
- **Meriano Valencio**, general from the city-state of Elesil on Valaria. He's here because politics, but thinks Mr Vole's a jumped-up alien who doesn't know their place. He's putting on a good face though.
- **Maeuo**, Ola-Ouma consul-chief, ambassador to the city-state of Elesil. Here for the party, she's nonetheless still got her politics face on and is listening out for gossip.
- **Makh Tak-Nahut Bahun**, a famous Kanarat politician and close friend of Mr Vole. Their hardline stance on the role of government wins them both close friends and bitter enemies.

Other characters may be at the party as well, especially if their names come up in the pre-game setup.

The competition

Unknown to the party, they aren't the only ones on the trail of the MacGuffin. By default these are in the employ of **Enyula Ochya-n-Kul**, a Kulach crime-lord from Valari, although if anyone builds a back-story with a suitable figure it may well be that the group are in the employ of them instead. The group are made up of:

- **Nashal Keb Ocha**, a ruthless Kanarat heavy. A staunch nihilist, they're in this as much to spread their beliefs as anything else.
- **Koumae**, a Ma-Ouma who has split from his folk and now works on his own. Mage and general trouble-shooter, lacking in social skills.
- **Suvio Arabel**, Valari, fencer and face-man of the operation. Charming and dangerous.
- **Yanul Yulenya-n-Oyat**, Kulach assassin. She deals with any problem that needs subtlety.
- **Ayutal Kalya-n-Yanul**, nominal head of the operation, she coordinates the actions of the group.

Feel free to have these folks show up in scenes as the scenario progresses - sometimes on their own, sometimes in pairs or more. Play them as smart as you want - give them personality, let them talk amongst one another, bring them up in opposition to the group, and then force them to ally or get them to try to cut a deal. They're not there to kill people: they're there to grab something incredibly valuable and get out of here.

Stats for these folks (if required) are given on the GM sheet at the end of this booklet.

The fleet

Legality is an interesting concept when you're dealing with series of isolated nations, all with their own means of governance. But regardless, it's generally considered pretty illegal to excavate archaeological ruins without the permission of the island's owners. Mr Vole's minions thought they were being careful, but the psychic powers of Awngi herds are often underestimated. As soon as the archaeology team left the Remnants, an Awngi scout ship tracked them from a distance to Mr Vole's island. Now a small fleet (approximately ten large sky-ships: no match for Valari naval forces, but more than enough to overcome even Mr Vole's security perimeter) from the Magwena herd is bound for Valari space. They want their culture back, but Mr Vole didn't make all this money by saying "yes" to people. Spoilers: it probably won't end well.

Playing the game

Starting the game

Before you start the game proper, you're going to need to do setup with the players. This consists of five steps:

- Pick characters
- Hand out questions
- Introduce everyone
- Build relationships
- Planning

Pick characters

At the start of the game, tell everyone the situation in brief, and tell them which characters are on offer. You can use the "description" field of the character sheets so everyone gets a one-line idea of each character. Once everyone has picked their characters, they should quickly read through their backstory and abilities to get a feel for the character. They can also pick which keys and secrets they want for the mission.

Hand out questions

Once everyone settled with their character, hand out the **questions**, one per character. Make sure someone has the question about the artefact (marked with a line in the corner). If you want to have particular details pop up in the game, you can select exactly *which* questions will get handed out beforehand.

Introduce everyone

Go around the table and get everyone to introduce their character. Let them say a bit about who they are, what they're doing on the crew, that sort of thing.

Build relationships

Finally, go around again and let each character specify relationships. These are specified on each character sheet, and each player may specify between 1 and 3 relationships they have with other crew members. Once each player has specified their relationships, they should also answer the question you handed them.

Planning

By this stage, two things will have happened: your preconceived notions about the scenario and how it will run have been ripped to shreds, and you will have gained a whole heap of additional ideas to incorporate. Pass the blueprints to the players and tell them that it's time for them to make a plan. Give them 5-10 minutes to work out their plan of attack, given what they know. While the players are making plans, you can write down relevant facts established during setup and plan your game.

The entrance

The game starts when the group arrives at the island aboard their ship, a refitted small-goods carrier affectionately named the *Sly Bastard*. You should probably ask them how they plan on getting there: they could slip in as staff or arrive as guests, or maybe they actually lucked into actual invites. If they're invited guests they'll be directed to moor in a temporary landing group some distance from the front of the mansion, and will be able to take a small carriage to the mansion proper. Once they get there they'll start mingling. If they're service, they'll expect to put their ship somewhere inconspicuous and then get to walk to the back of the mansion where the servants are busy arranging everything.

GMing

If you're ever GMed a game of A*pocalypse World*, the following will be pretty standard for you. Still, I encourage you to read on.

When you need to set a scene, start by describing the surroundings. Tell the players who's there, what the place looks like, whatever. Make the mansion exorbitant, the grounds lush, the attendees shallow and self-interested. Ask questions of the players, about what they're doing, what they notice, what they're on the lookout for. Whatever the players do, play along with it until you think they should be rolling. The players should be rolling when:

- What they are attempting is *not trivial*, and
- Failure is *interesting*.

If what they're attempting is trivial, let them have it. If failure is boring, let them have it. Of course, if it's impossible, let them know that too.

> Elios is going to pick a lock to get into the mansion's wine cellar. The GM feels like failure right now would be pretty boring, so they just let Elios succeed.
>
> The party have just heard

shouting upstairs - it sounds like someone's found the guard they had to knock out earlier. Now Elios wants to pick the lock. The GM feels like failure now would be more interesting, since Elios has to pick the lock before the guards reach them, so they get Elios to roll.

Of course, you can always *make* failure interesting, using moves (see below).

Whenever the players fail a roll, or are looking at you expectantly, it's time for you to make a move. Here's a list of moves:

- Announce future badness
- Announce offscreen badness
- Threaten to expose them
- Put them in a spot
- Take away their stuff
- Make them pay
- Offer them an opportunity, at a cost
- Do harm
- Separate them
- Tell them the consequences and ask
- Advance a front

When you make a move, never announce its name: just introduce it into the game and run with it.

The party has infiltrated the sub-basement and found a locked door. Everyone hunkers down while Elios gets his lock-picks out and starts working at the mechanism. The GM decides it's going to be a pretty hard lock down here, and says it's a difficult 3 roll. Elios rolls **Theft** and gets two successes: he failed. The GM picks a move...

Announce future badness: "Elios, this lock is pretty hard, but it's not beyond you. You're about to wedge the last tumbler into place when you hear a low growl from behind the door. It goes right to your spine. What do you do?"

Take away their stuff: "Elios, you know how you have those real nice Mantegan steel picks that never snap? Well, for whatever reason, just as the door clicks open, you hear a ping, and find that your hook pick has just snapped in two. That thing's kind of important - you don't know if you'll be able to open any more doors without it. What do you do now?"

Tell them the consequences and ask: "Elios, it's no good - this lock is just too complex to pick with simple tools. Kirikit: you're watching Elios work, and the way the door shifts, you think that whoever designed it didn't pay too much attention to the hinges. You could probably bust it open, but it'd make a bunch of noise. If anyone suspects you're down here, well, that'd tip them off. What do you do?"

Threaten to expose them/Put them in a spot: "Elios, you're halfway through picking this lock - you've got two picks wedged in the tumbler keeping the first half of it in place and you're working on the rest of the lock with a third. Aueka, you're on watch - you hear conversation approaching. It sounds like a couple of guys are coming this way. What do you do?"

After each move, ask the player (or the party): **what do you do?**

Fronts

The last move you can do is **advance a front**. There's three fronts in this scenario: these are **Mr Vole's security team**, **Enyula's thugs**, and the **Awngi fleet**.

When you think the players are getting a bit comfortable with everything, it's time to up the stakes by **advancing a front**. Pick one of the three fronts, and check off the next box on its list. The thing you just checked off happens now. Most of these advances happen off-stage, and the players will learn of it because you make a move from the list above that's triggered by the advance. If an advance happens off-screen, make sure the players find out about it. Consider how an off-screen advance can trigger your GM moves.

Arumi is trying to shadow one of Mr Vole's security detail, and fails his roll. The GM decides to advance the front **The Awngi Fleet**, which means that the ships have just reached hailing distance, and telegraph it by **announcing off-screen badness:** "You're trying to get close enough to hear something when you're jostled by one of Mr Vole's servants. He ignores you,

approaching the guy you're tailing, and they whisper for a bit. You get close enough to overhear a few words - it sounds like they're discussing naval strategy - ship deployments and all sorts."

NPCs

The players will interact with a number of supporting characters in the course of their investigations. As GM, you get to play all these NPCs. If NPCs stand in direct opposition to the players, you may even have to roll for the NPCs or have them take action against the players.

The GM sheet (as the back of this book) has a list of potential NPCs the players could run across. Each NPCs has ratings in Vigour, Instinct and Reason: these ratings are the average difficulty for actions taken against the character. For example, if a guard has a Reason of 2, and you try to fast-talk your way past them, the action would have a difficulty of 2. Each NPC also has a number of hits, which shows how many hits each NPC requires to be taken out if it comes to combat. Finally, NPCs have moves. Whenever players fail a roll, feel free to use these moves in place of the usual list of GM moves.

When players act against NPCs, you have two choices. First, you can make the players roll against the given difficulty as stated above. Second, you can make an opposed roll, with the NPC having a skill equal to twice their equivalent rating.

The party encounters a cadre of guards deep in Mr Vole's lair. Kirikit engages one guard (Vigour: 3) in combat. The GM feels like making this an opposed roll, so the guard rolls with 6 dice.

Note that the list of NPCs on the GM sheet is a list of suggestions only. Feel free to make your own NPCs up, either on the fly or before the game starts.

Finding the MacGuffin

The MacGuffin could be in any number of locations, but I like to imagine it's in the sub-basement, under the kitchens, the coal cellar, the laundry, the store-rooms, the wine cellar, and Mr Vole's secret laboratory. By the time the players get this far they'll probably have left some clues behind, and guards may well be after them. Of course, depending on how the fronts progress, everyone may be too distracted by other things to worry about the party.

Depending on the level of awesome you instil in your MacGuffin, the party may not care overly much about the guards anyway. Especially if it's dangerous and/or uncontrollable, the party may be too busy staying alive to care about mooks who think they're breaking the law.

Enyula's gang could also show up around this time, ready and willing to cause chaos of their own. Depending on how nasty the MacGuffin is, the two teams could end up fighting over it, or banding together to survive.

The party is likely to be a lot more chaotic when the party leaves than when they got there. Subterfuge may not be the name of the game if the Awngi fleet is already shelling the island. Depending on how much time you have left in the session, the shelling may even have taken out the *Sly Bastard* - or maybe it's still docked with everyone else's skyships, ready to fly.

Timing

Timing a scenario like this is a tricky business, and at the time of writing I have not run this scenario enough to comment on when events should occur. I would recommend that setup take half an hour or less, and that the characters be well on their way to infiltrating the party by the hour mark. Combat and tense situations tend to slow play down, so make sure you have plenty of time near the end to accommodate a few of these.

Endgame and Epilogue

Once the party has escaped Mr Vole's island (with or without the MacGuffin) they can evade any pursuit easily enough - especially with a small Awngi fleet causing problems. You should ask who's in charge of the MacGuffin, and what the party plans to do with it. While players' goals may vary here, I suggest you don't resort to dice-rolling to solve the whole thing, or you'll have a big player-vs-player fight scene on your hands. Ask the group what's the most awesome thing that could happen, or most appropriate. If people can't decide (or start arguing), suggest that this might come up in the next session.

Once the game finishes, everyone should let off steam. Anyone who's been keeping secrets the whole game now has a chance to admit

their treachery, love, loyalty, jealousy, or what-have-you. Let the players ask questions of you, and ask them how they found the game. What scenes did they enjoy? What was terrible? What did they want more of?

Feedback

If you've got this far I'd love to hear how the scenario played out for you. Shoot me an email (jan@1klb.com) and tell me a bit about your time with this adventure. If you have constructive criticism I'd love to hear it too.

The Rules

While the rules are printed on the back of each character sheet, I'm recreating them here for your reference. The rules presented here are also slightly more verbose than those on the characters' sheets. If a situation arises in play that isn't covered by the rules, come to an agreement with the players on how to handle it.

Skills and pools

Each character has three pools:

- **Vigour** is a measure of the character's physical prowess, including physical strength, endurance, but also manual dexterity and aim.
- **Reason** is a measure of the character's mental power, reasoning and book knowledge.
- **Instinct** is a measure of the character's force of personality and willpower.

Every skill is linked to one of these pools. Each pool has a starting value and will be used up throughout the game. Pool points are generally spent on three things:

1. Rerolling failures
2. Activating secrets
3. Attempting tasks while injured

Rolling

When you need to roll dice, first work out what you're trying to do, and which skill it requires. If you have this skill, you'll be rolling a number of (six-sided) dice equal to your rank in that ability. If not (and you could attempt such a thing untrained), you get one dice to roll. One other person can help you, which gives you one more dice as a bonus - but if you fail, they may expose themselves to the consequences of your failure. You may also take advantage of **tags** (see below) to give you bonus dice.

The GM will tell you the difficulty of the task:

Difficulty	
2	Average
3	Difficult
4	Challenging
5	Extreme

When you roll, every **4**, **5** or **6** is a success. You need a number of successes equal to or greater than the difficulty of the task. If you roll less successes than the difficulty of the task, you have one out: you can spend a point from the relevant pool to reroll all your failures. If this doesn't give you a success, I'm afraid you've well and truly failed.

Opposed rolls

Sometimes you're pitting yourself against nature, and sometimes someone is actively opposing you. When you're dealing with an **opposed roll**, there is no difficulty: instead, you and your opponent both roll and compare the number of successes obtained. If it's a tie, the character who initiated the action wins.

If the players are going up against NPCs, you can either roll for them, or treat the roll as having a difficulty equal to half the NPC's skill (rounded down).

Shifts

Some things require that you gauge the degree of success. This is measured in **shifts**. If you succeed a roll, you automatically gain one shift. For every extra success you get, you gain a shift. That's it.

Keys and Secrets

Every character has two keys and two secrets. These are ways in which each character slightly breaks the rules.

A character's **keys** give an idea of what drives them. Whenever a player "hits a key" (i.e. fulfils the appropriate condition) they may either gain an Experience Point (see below), or they may add a dice to one of their pools (although the pool can't go over its maximum value). If they go into trouble because of their key, they get to pick twice (and they may pick the same option twice). Note that the **players**, not the GM, should be awarding themselves when they hit their keys. If you're on your toes, you can often point out when they're hitting their keys, but they should just be marking pool dice or XP. Keys can also be **bought off** by fulfilling a particular condition. In this case, the player strikes that key off their sheet and gains 2 advances (10XP).

A character's **secrets** are basically ways in which they can be awesome. Some secrets are simple passive bonuses in specific situations, while some secrets allow a character to break the rules or alter the narrative. When a character uses their secret, it's their chance to

shine, so give them some screen time.

Tags

Sometimes you want to influence the world in a more mechanical way than just making things happen in fiction. For example, when I bull-rush the guard, it may not really be to knock him off his feet, but to force him off-balance so that my ally's attack is that much greater. When you're trying to set something up like this, you want to make a **tag**.

Making a tag is just like any other roll, but if you succeed, you get to take an index card and write your tag on it. Then, right the number of shifts you got underneath the name. Now put the tag in the middle of the table. Anyone else may benefit from this tag: to do so, cross off the number on the tag, and add that many bonus dice to your roll.

Once someone has used the tag like this, it's gone: the narrative consequences of it may hang around, but mechanically it's all used up.

> Elios and Kirikit are desperately trying to get into Mr Vole's locked safe before the guards knock down the door. Kirikit gets his mechanist's kit out and starts examining the safe to work out what model it is. The GM decides the safe is pretty rare, so the difficulty of the roll is 3. Kirikit's player rolls **Mechanist** for a total of 4 successes, generating two shifts. The player takes an index card and writes on it: "Schematics: 2". This is a tag. Elios now tries to open the safe, using this tag. Given the difficulty of the task and the time limit, the GM says this is difficulty 4. Elios' player rolls **Theft**, adding 2 dice for the schematics tag and 1 dice because Kirikit is now helping them open the safe. They get five successes, handily opening the safe in record time.

You may also use a tag as a **barrier**, preventing someone from doing something until they get rid of the tag. An example of this could be standing in a doorway, sword drawn, or setting up a booby trap in a hallway. In order to remove someone else's tag, you must succeed on a roll with a difficulty of the tag's rating.

Harm

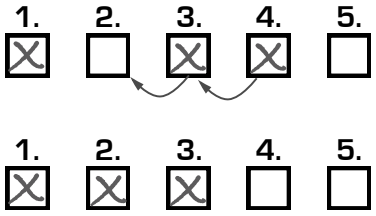
At some point the players will suffer physical, mental, or emotional harm. Each character has five harm "boxes" that can be filled: if you run out of boxes, you're out of action.

Whenever someone takes harm, the first thing you need to do is work out how much harm they take:

- **1 harm:** punching or kicking; vaguely threatening notes left in your room; someone proves you wrong at a dinner party.
- **2 harm:** a hit in the ribs from a crowbar; specifically threatening notes left in your room; someone proves you wrong in a debate.
- **3 harm:** gut-shot with an arrow; Kanarat shows up in your room and tells you what it'll do if you don't stop; someone disproves your main argument wrong in a debate.
- **4 harm:** limb loss, shot in the chest with a bullet; thugs kidnap and waterboard you; someone disproves a central tenet of your life.

Whenever you are dealt harm, mark that box on your sheet. If that box is already full, mark the lowest box **above** the box on your sheet. If you aren't able to mark any boxes on your sheet, you're taken out. The GM decides what that means: you could just be knocked out, you could be so emotionally spent that you physically assault your opponent. In the worst case, you could die.

Whenever you get a chance to catch your breath your harm *shakes down*. If there are any gaps in your harm track, shift the checks on your sheet down until any gaps have vanished.



Effects of Harm

On your character sheet, you have three different harm levels:

- **Bruised:** When you mark bruised, take -1 to your next roll.
- **Bloodied:** When you mark bloodied, note which pool this affects (physical attacks affect Vigour, emotional or psychic attacks affect Instinct, mental attacks affect Reason). Any rolls using skills from this pool now are now one

level harder than before.

- **Broken:** Again, note the pool this affects. You must pay 1 pool point to even attempt rolling for anything from this pool, and even then, you still suffer the +1 difficulty penalty.

Healing

Over time, wounds heal. If you have time to heal, the GM will tell you how long it takes to heal and how much you can heal. Of course, if you have the requisite skill, you can always help others heal.

The base difficulty for any healing check is the highest box checked on the target's harm track. Every shift allows you to remove one check from their harm track. Complicating factors from your harm may still persist, however: if you break your arm, no first aid check, no matter how good, can cause it to heal in five minutes.

Hectic situations

You will often find yourself in situations where a number of players all want to go at once. This generally (but not exclusively) occurs during combat. In this case, I recommend the following method:

1. **Free and clear**. Decide what any opponents are doing. Every player states their intent. Players may change their intent based on what other players are doing. Once everyone has settled on what they're doing, proceed to step 2.
2. **Support.** Anyone who is setting up tags acts.
3. **Attack.** Anyone who is attacking acts.
4. **Misc.** Anyone performing other actions acts.

This allows you to have players set up actions that other players can then follow up on.

Experience and Advancing

Characters may gain Experience Points (XP) by hitting or buying off their keys. At some point they may accumulate five XP, which are equivalent to one **advance**. Players may spend an advance to:

- Gain a new key
- Gain a new secret
- Add 1 to any pool's maximum
- Add 1 to any skill

The last two options are pretty straightforward, and if players are picking one of the first two options they'll likely have an idea of what sort of key or secret they want. Use the current keys and secrets as guidelines, and let the players make their characters their own!

Rules and rulings

The rules as laid out above are somewhat sparse. I don't want to bog down GMs with mountains of rules for a one-off game, and the players don't want to learn a whole book's worth of special cases just to play. If a situation arises in play which you feel isn't covered by the rules, I recommend that you publically make a ruling, letting the table know how future instances will be addressed.

If you do find that these rules have vast and gaping holes, please let me know via email (jan@1klb.com) so I can fix them up for later editions of this.

Printouts

The following pages contain a number of printouts for use with this scenario. These printouts include:

- Character sheets and general summaries for the five characters.
- Maps and images of Mr Vole's mansion, both for GM reference and for the players to plan their heist.
- A GM reference sheet, including a list of moves, possible locations under the mansion, NPCs, names, dispotitions, and general difficulty levels.
- Scenario start questions.

Print these out before play so you can give them out during the game. If you're printing everything off before your game, you probably want to detach this section from the rest, ready for distribution to your players.

This section is designed to be printed double-sided. You may find I've inserted a blank page or two to make sure that the proper pages are printed back-to-back.

BLUESHIFT

Character name: Arumi Perellion

Species: Valari

Description: Captain, face-man, and on-the-ground coordinator. Capable and focussed.

XP/Advances

ABILITIES

Tactics (R): 6
Command (R): 4
Melee (V): 4
Firearms (V): 3
Bureaucracy (R): 3
Gunner (R): 3
Deceit (I): 2
Athletics (V): 2
Charm (I): 2
Alertness (I): 2

POOLS

Vigour
Max: 3

Reason
Max: 3

Instinct
Max: 1

KEYS

Pick two of the these.

Key of command: You're used to people doing what you say. Hit this key when you take control of a chaotic situation. **Buyoff:** Follow someone else's orders without question.

Key of culture: You're a product of the Valari academy, and you'll be damned if you spent all that time studying the classics for nothing. Hit this key when demonstrate how cultured Valari are. **Buyoff:** Indulge in a base vice.

Key of rivalry: You and Elios tend to vie for dominance. Hit this key when you show Elios up in front of the crew. **Buyoff:** Defer to Elios' advice.

SECRETS

Pick two of the these.

Secret of education: Whenever you draw on your classical education to help you in a situation, **take +1 dice**.

Secret of concealment: It doesn't matter how well they searched you, you always have a knife stowed somewhere.

Secret of decisive action: Whenever you react cooly to a new threat, **take +1 dice**.

HARM

Bruised: -1 to next roll
☐1 ☐2

Bloodied: -1 to all rolls
☐3 ☐4

Broken: 1 pt to roll, -1 to all rolls
☐5

ADDITIONAL

EQUIPMENT

Duelling sabre
Short-arm
Key to the Sly Bastard

Skills

Alertness (I): Spotting stuff: fine details or momentary clues.

Athletics (V): Running, jumping, climbing trees.

Bureaucracy (R): Dealing with organisations, knowing who to talk to and what to say.

Charm (I): Being disarmingly good-natured, putting others at their ease, schmoozing.

Command (I): Getting others to do what you tell them to, through charisma and decisiveness.

Deceit (R): Lying to someone's face, making a disguise, bluffing.

Firearms (V): Shooting people with guns.

Gunnery (R): Operating large guns.

Negotiate (R): Brokering deals, bargaining.

Mechanist (R): Creating, repairing, operating and destroying machinery.

Medical (R): Stopping people dying with science. Includes first aid and a basic knowledge of different species' anatomy.

Melee (V): Hitting people, with weapons or your fists.

Pilot (R): Operating a large craft (such as a skyship).

Psi (I): Weird mind-magic mumbo-jumbo.

Sneak (I): Getting places without being seen, avoiding notice.

Tactics (R): Improvised combat manoeuvres, finding and taking cover, taking the initiative.

Theft (R): Breaking and entering, casing a joint, locating valuables, opening a safe.

The Rules

Rolling dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle: pick which skill to use, and roll that many dice. Every dice that rolls **4 or above** is a success. You need successes equal to the difficulty level of your task.

Helping others

When you help someone with a task, they get **one bonus dice**, but if they fail it affects you too.

Difficulty levels

2 Easy – 3 Difficult – 4 Challenging – 5 Extreme

If someone is opposing you, both of you roll and whoever gets the higher number of successes, wins the roll.

Shifts

If you win a conflict, you get **one shift**. Each extra success you get gives you **another shift**. So if you get 4 successes on a difficult task, you have 2 shifts. You can use shifts for other effects sometimes.

Tags

When you act, you may try to create a tag. Tags are things you can use later to help you out, or stop your opponents doing something. Tags have a value equal to the number of shifts you get on your roll.

Helping: When you use a tag to help you, get rid of the tag and add its value in dice to your roll.

Hindering: When your tag stops someone from doing something, they must first remove it, by rolling shifts equal to or greater than the tag's value.

Pools

Each skill is linked to a pool. If you fail, you may spend a point from this pool to reroll your failures.

Secrets

Secrets are how your character breaks the rules. They're not necessarily "secret", although they *might* be...

Keys

When you **hit a key**, choose one:

• Gain 1XP

• Put a dice back in one of your pools

If you **go into danger** because of your key, choose twice. When you don't know what to do, look at your keys, and try doing one of those. You mark these, not the GM. If **you think** you hit your key, grab a dice or mark an XP.

When you have 5XP, that's an **advance**. You can spend an advance to:

• Increase one of your skills by 1

• Add a new key

• Learn a new secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold onto your advances if you want, and spend them at any time - even in the middle of a tricky situation!

Each key has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff happens, you have the option of removing your key and earning **two advances** (10 XP).

Harm

Sometimes you take harm. If you do, mark the appropriate box on your harm track. Marking boxes 1–2 means you're bruised - you need an extra success on your next task. Marking boxes 3–4 means you're bloodied - you need an extra success for all tasks of this type (Vigour, Instinct or Reason) until you heal. Marking box 5 means you're broken: it's the same as bloodied, but now you need to spend a point from the appropriate pool to roll. Any greater and you're out of action.

Inhabitants of The Rings

The **Valari** are a noble race of builders, architects and warriors. Fiercely independent and strong-spirited, their passion for life and structure have defined the culture of the Rings, and have produces a number of wonders of art and craft. Valari resemble winged humanoids, generally somewhere between five and six feet in height, with complementary feather and hair colours ranging from light grey through browns and reds to black. Their homeworld of Valaria is split into five nations or city-states, which constantly bicker and vie for power. Most Valari worship Behir, the widowed maiden – either as part of the Church or through a splinter sect.

The **Kulach** are a race of tall, thin, horned folk often seen wearing brightly-coloured cloaks and robes. Legend says their homeworld was destroyed long ago, but they've still set up their enclaves and homes on other islands. A number of big trading and criminal families are Kulach.

Kanarat, or "golems", are a race of sexless constructs, made of stone or clay or something. Stories say thay were once slaves, but freed themselves through hard work and conviction (although they don't say who they were slaves of). Kanarat are often passionately devoted to causes – political arguments can take days or weeks. A young race, they still have drive and fire in them.

Kayyik are a race of dog-like hunter-gatherers from the Fragments, the pieces of island that float closest to Behir. They're slowly becoming more civilised. On the fragments they live in big family units, and some of them do that here too. They have weird mating habits.

Awngi are evolved herdbeasts with basic telepathy. In groups they tend to network and make decisions en masse: those who leave the heards are often considered slightly weird. The Awngi are an older species, but lacking the drive of other species, they haven't made such an attempt to make their mark on the Rings.

Ma-Ouma are a strange race of half-human, half-octopus creatures. They're the servants of the Ouma, a bunch of octopus people who can't venture forth onto dry land. The Ma-Ouma wear big robes and are often up to no good: the stereotypical Ma-Ouma is a plotter and a schemer, subtly influencing things from the sidelines.

Arumi

You were trained in the academies of the Valari, but these days you captain the *Sly Bastard*, and help oversee the worthless thugs that are your crew. Your job is to make sure they work as a team - although if you pull this heist off you may never need to work again.

The job

Aueka's a Ma-Ouma who occasionally hires your crew for contract work. This time she's given you a doozy: rumours say Mr Vole, a Kayyik entrepreneur, has brought back some valuable goods from an archaealogical dig of an old Awngi settlement way out in the Remnants. Goods like that would usually get transported to one of Mr Vole's secure warehouses on Valaria or nearby, but this shipment went straight to his personal mansion, on his personal island, orbiting a moon of Valaria. It gets better, though: right after the shipment arrived, Mr Vole discretely doubled security on the island. Whatever they discovered, it's got to be incredibly valuable or highly illegal or both.

It'd normally be impossible to steal something from Mr Vole's private island, but it so happens that the shipment arrived just over a week before the Kayyik holiday of **All Gods' Night**. Mr Vole famously holds a party every year on All Gods' Night, and it seems like he doesn't want to raise suspicion by cancelling it. Security might be tight, but you can probably sneak onto the island in the bustle of people.

Once you're on the ground, the plan is simple: find out where this artefact (whatever it is) is being kept, and get out of there with it. Aueka's coming along too, to provide an extra pair of hands and an extra four pairs of tentacles.

Your part

As the captain, you keep your crew out of trouble and on-task. You get to coordinate their actions, make sure they're doing what they should do, and when everything goes to pot, save their asses once again. This time along you'll also be telling Aueka what to do, although you don't know how she'll take that.

There's also the question of how far you can trust the Ma-Ouma. They always say that squid have at least three ulterior motives for every action, and sure, she gets a cut of the profit from this heist, but is that all she's here for? Of course, you then have Elios, who as far as you know will run off with the artefact the moment he sees it, and Kirikit, with their almost fatal attraction to money. So you're sure you'll have plenty to deal with even withou the Ma-Ouma in the picture.

Relationships

I used to be romantically involved with _____.

I'm trying to find a reason to ditch _____ from my crew.

_____ doesn't know it, but I've left them the *Sly Bastard* in my will.

BLUESHIFT

Character name: Aueka

Species: Ma-Ouma

Description: Mastermind, mission-lead, and general organiser. Suspicious-looking by nature.

XP/Advances

ABILITIES

Firearms (V): 6
Psi (I): 4
Stealth (I): 4
Medical (R): 3
Deceit (I): 3
Alertness (I): 3
Tactics (R): 2
Melee (V): 2
Athletics (V): 2
Command (I): 2

POOLS

Vigour
Max: 1

Reason
Max: 4

Instinct
Max: 2

KEYS

Pick two of the these.

Key of the mastermind: You excel at scheming of all sorts. Hit this key whenever you put a plan into action. **Buyoff:** Charge into conflict without stopping to think.

Key of manipulation: Your people make a living from deception and double-dealing. Hit this key when you indirectly influence someone. **Buyoff:** Bare you soul to someone.

Key of connection: Unlike other Ma-Ouma, you actually care for these other species. Hit this key whenever you display empathy for another species. **Buyoff:** Betray another's trust.

SECRETS

Pick two of the these.

Secret of clear thought: Even in the thick of battle you keep your cool. When you make a split-second decision, you may spend points from any pool to reroll.

Secret of the silver tongue: Whenever you try to sweet-talk someone, **take +1 dice**.

Secret of attraction: Your spawn has an uncanny power over gravity. **Spend 1 Instinct** to alter gravity locally. If people are fighting this, you might need to roll Psi.

HARM

Bruised: -1 to next roll
☐1 ☐2

Bloodied: -1 to all rolls
☐3 ☐4

Broken: 1 pt to roll, -1 to all rolls
☐5

ADDITIONAL

EQUIPMENT

Three short-arms
(hidden in your tentacles)
Blueprints of the estate

Skills

Alertness (I): Spotting stuff: fine details or momentary clues.

Athletics (V): Running, jumping, climbing trees.

Bureaucracy (R): Dealing with organisations, knowing who to talk to and what to say.

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Inhabitants of The Rings

The **Ma-Ouma** are a chimera – a half-humanoid, half-octopus race – bred in batches by their masters the Ouma, an aquatic race that cannot venture out onto land. The Ma-Ouma act as their ambassadors with the other races. While the Ma-Ouma often act on their masters' behalf, they can (and often do) act independently, following their own agendas. Ma-Ouma find most islands drier than they'd like, and often wear thick clothing with an inner layer soaked in water to keep them hydrated. This doesn't help with other species' view of them as suspicious and untrustworthy.

The **Kulach** are a race of tall, thin, horned folk often seen wearing brightly-coloured cloaks and robes. Their legends say their homeworld was destroyed long ago, but they've still set up their enclaves and homes on other islands. Kulach regard family seriously, and their core philosophy focuses heavily on debt and repayment. This has made them prolific and trusted merchants, but some families also deal in crime.

Kanarat, or "golems", are a race of sexless constructs, made of a form of living clay. Stories say they were once slaves, but freed themselves through bloody revolution. Not everyone considers them true citizens yet, but they will eventually. Kanarat are often passionately devoted to causes – political arguments can take days or weeks. A young race, they still have drive and fire in them.

Kayyik are a race of dog-like hunter-gatherers from the Fragments, the pieces of island that float closest to Behir. They're slowly becoming more civilised as Valari and Kulach outposts encroach on their territory. They're multi-sexed, any Kayyik able to either father or birth children, and live in large clan-like family units rather than having "traditional" families.

Awngi are a race of herbivorous herd-beasts that evolved a kind of group-mind to deal with predators. They can read others' minds, although with a bit of disciple it's possible to keep your thoughts from them.

Valari are a race of winged humanoids, competitive and passionate. If they didn't spend so much time fighting each other they would probably have taken over the rings by now. The value architecture, mechanisms, and other gestures of civilisation, and were the fire species to truly embrace the technology of mechanistics.

Aueka

You've worked with the crew of the *Sly Bastard* before, and they're good at their job. So when you needed a crew to run a burglary, they were the first group you contacted. As long as they follow your lead and don't ask too many questions, everything should go according to plan.

The job

The group of Ouma you work for have passed on a choice rumour: Mr Vole, a Kayyik entrepreneur, has brought back some valuable goods from an archaealogical dig of an old Awngi settlement way out in the Remnants. Goods like that would usually get transported to one of Mr Vole's secure warehouses on Valaria or nearby, but this shipment went straight to his personal mansion, on his personal island, orbiting a moon of Valaria. It gets better, though: right after the shipment arrived, Mr Vole discretely doubled security on the island. Whatever they discovered, it's got to be incredibly valuable or highly illegal or both. The Ouma want it; you don't know if they know what it is, and they declined to tell you.

It'd normally be impossible to steal something from Mr Vole's private island, but it so happens that the shipment arrived just over a week before the Kayyik holiday of **All Gods' Night**. Mr Vole famously holds a party every year on All Gods' Night, and it seems like he doesn't want to raise suspicion by cancelling it. Security might be tight, but you can probably sneak onto the island in the bustle of people.

Once you're on the ground, the plan is simple: find out where this artefact (whatever it is) is being kept, and get out of there with it. As long as Kewenen fences it, the Ouma can get to her dealer and make sure the artefact gets back to them. You're along on the job ostensibly to lend a hand, but really to make sure everything goes according to your plan.

Your part

You need to be on the ground to make sure the crew do what they're supposed to, but you'd prefer to keep a low profile. If people realise there's a Ma-Ouma on the team, they might jump to exactly the conclusion you were hoping to avoid. The crew may suspect that there's something else going on, so you need to make them think this is your own job and profit is your only motivation.

Relationships

_____ saved my life once, and I still owe them.

I've pulled my own private job with _____ before.

I know a secret about _____, and I haven't told anyone...yet.

BLUESHIFT

Character name: Elios Perentes

Species: Valari

Description: Pilot and infiltrator, a charming sort and a bit of a flirt.

XP/Advances

ABILITIES

Charm (I): 6
Theft (R): 4
Pilot (R): 4
Firearms (V): 3
Deceit (I): 3
Sneak (I): 3
Melee (V): 2
Alertness (I): 2
Athletics (V): 2
Negotiate (R): 2

POOLS

Vigour
Max: 2

Reason
Max: 1

Instinct
Max: 4

KEYS

Pick two of the these.

Key of the flirt: You're a sucker for a pretty face. Hit your key when you spend time in light-hearted banter with a good-looking lass (or lad...). **Buyoff:** Get in a serious relationship.

Key of the showoff: You're good, and you know it. Hit your key when you pull off a risky or reckless stunt. **Buyoff:** Someone is hurt because of one of your tricks.

Key of the rebel: You and Arumi have a long-standing love-hate relationship. Hit your key whenever you do exactly what the captain doesn't want (knowingly or not). **Buyoff:** Admit that Arumi is a good captain, to his face.

SECRETS

Pick two of the these.

Secret of shadowblood: Noble blood must run somewhere in your heritage. Spend 1 Instinct to disappear into the shadows, seemingly vanishing.

Secret of winning ways: Take +1 dice whenever you're chatting to someone who might be romantically interested in you.

Secret of experience: Whenever you examine a building, structure or room in preparation for a heist, tell everyone around you about the job you once did that this job reminds you of, and **take +1 dice**.

HARM

Bruised: -1 to next roll
☐1 ☐2

Bloodied: -1 to all rolls
☐3 ☐4

Broken: 1 pt to roll, -1 to all rolls
☐5

ADDITIONAL

EQUIPMENT

Lock-picks
Fancy short-arm
Knife (in your boot)

Skills

Alertness (I): Spotting stuff: fine details or momentary clues.

Athletics (V): Running, jumping, climbing trees.

Bureaucracy (R): Dealing with organisations, knowing who to talk to and what to say.

Charm (I): Being disarmingly good-natured, putting others at their ease, schmoozing.

Command (I): Getting others to do what you tell them to, through charisma and decisiveness.

Deceit (R): Lying to someone's face, making a disguise, bluffing.

Firearms (V): Shooting people with guns.

Gunnery (R): Operating large guns.

Negotiate (R): Brokering deals, bargaining.

Mechanist (R): Creating, repairing, operating and destroying machinery.

Medical (R): Stopping people dying with science. Includes first aid and a basic knowledge of different species' anatomy.

Melee (V): Hitting people, with weapons or your fists.

Pilot (R): Operating a large craft (such as a skyship).

Psi (I): Weird mind-magic mumbo-jumbo.

Sneak (I): Getting places without being seen, avoiding notice.

Tactics (R): Improvised combat manoeuvres, finding and taking cover, taking the initiative.

Theft (R): Breaking and entering, casing a joint, locating valuables, opening a safe.

The Rules

Rolling dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle: pick which skill to use, and roll that many dice. Every dice that rolls **4 or above** is a success. You need successes equal to the difficulty level of your task.

Helping others

When you help someone with a task, they get **one bonus dice**, but if they fail it affects you too.

Difficulty levels

2 Easy – 3 Difficult – 4 Challenging – 5 Extreme

If someone is opposing you, both of you roll and whoever gets the higher number of successes, wins the roll.

Shifts

If you win a conflict, you get **one shift**. Each extra success you get gives you **another shift**. So if you get 4 successes on a difficult task, you have 2 shifts. You can use shifts for other effects sometimes.

Tags

When you act, you may try to create a tag. Tags are things you can use later to help you out, or stop your opponents doing something. Tags have a value equal to the number of shifts you get on your roll.

Helping: When you use a tag to help you, get rid of the tag and add its value in dice to your roll.

Hindering: When your tag stops someone from doing something, they must first remove it, by rolling shifts equal to or greater than the tag's value.

Pools

Each skill is linked to a pool. If you fail, you may spend a point from this pool to reroll your failures.

Secrets

Secrets are how your character breaks the rules. They're not necessarily "secret", although they *might* be...

Keys

When you **hit a key**, choose one:

• Gain 1XP

• Put a dice back in one of your pools

If you **go into danger** because of your key, choose twice. When you don't know what to do, look at your keys, and try doing one of those. You mark these, not the GM. If **you think** you hit your key, grab a dice or mark an XP.

When you have 5XP, that's an **advance**. You can spend an advance to:

• Increase one of your skills by 1

• Add a new key

• Learn a new secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold onto your advances if you want, and spend them at any time - even in the middle of a tricky situation!

Each key has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff happens, you have the option of removing your key and earning **two advances** (10 XP).

Harm

Sometimes you take harm. If you do, mark the appropriate box on your harm track. Marking boxes 1–2 means you're bruised - you need an extra success on your next task. Marking boxes 3–4 means you're bloodied - you need an extra success for all tasks of this type (Vigour, Instinct or Reason) until you heal. Marking box 5 means you're broken: it's the same as bloodied, but now you need to spend a point from the appropriate pool to roll. Any greater and you're out of action.

Inhabitants of The Rings

The **Valari** are a noble race of builders, architects and warriors. Fiercely independent and strong-spirited, their passion for life and structure have defined the culture of the Rings, and have produces a number of wonders of art and craft. Valari resemble winged humanoids, generally somewhere between five and six feet in height, with complementary feather and hair colours ranging from light grey through browns and reds to black. Their homeworld of Valaria is split into five nations or city-states, which constantly bicker and vie for power. Most Valari worship Behir, the widowed maiden – either as part of the Church or through a splinter sect.

The **Kulach** are a race of tall, thin, horned folk often seen wearing brightly-coloured cloaks and robes. Legend says their homeworld was destroyed long ago, but they've still set up their enclaves and homes on other islands. A number of big trading and criminal families are Kulach.

Kanarat, or "golems", are a race of sexless constructs, made of stone or clay or something. Stories say thay were once slaves, but freed themselves through hard work and conviction (although they don't say who they were slaves of). Kanarat are often passionately devoted to causes – political arguments can take days or weeks. A young race, they still have drive and fire in them.

Kayyik are a race of dog-like hunter-gatherers from the Fragments, the pieces of island that float closest to Behir. They're slowly becoming more civilised. On the fragments they live in big family units, and some of them do that here too. They have weird mating habits.

Awngi are evolved herdbeasts with basic telepathy. In groups they tend to network and make decisions en masse: those who leave the heards are often considered slightly weird. The Awngi are an older species, but lacking the drive of other species, they haven't made such an attempt to make their mark on the Rings.

Ma-Ouma are a strange race of half-human, half-octopus creatures. They're the servants of the Ouma, a bunch of octopus people who can't venture forth onto dry land. The Ma-Ouma wear big robes and are often up to no good: the stereotypical Ma-Ouma is a plotter and a schemer, subtly influencing things from the sidelines.

Elios

You grew up on the streets, and that's where you learned to burgle and hustle. These days you're in a bit more glamorous career as the pilot of the *Sly Bastard*, although you do thief work for this crew too.

The Job

Aueka's a Ma-Ouma who occasionally hires your crew for contract work. This time she's given you a doozy: rumours say Mr Vole, a Kayyik entrepreneur, has brought back some valuable goods from an archaealogical dig of an old Awngi settlement way out in the Remnants. Goods like that would usually get transported to one of Mr Vole's secure warehouses on Valaria or nearby, but this shipment went straight to his personal mansion, on his personal island, orbiting a moon of Valaria. It gets better, though: right after the shipment arrived, Mr Vole discretely doubled security on the island. Whatever they discovered, it's got to be incredibly valuable or highly illegal or both.

It'd normally be impossible to steal something from Mr Vole's private island, but it so happens that the shipment arrived just over a week before the Kayyik holiday of **All Gods' Night**. Mr Vole famously holds a party every year on All Gods' Night, and it seems like he doesn't want to raise suspicion by cancelling it. Security might be tight, but you can probably sneak onto the island in the bustle of people.

Once you're on the ground, the plan is simple: find out where this artefact (whatever it is) is being kept, and get out of there with it. Aueka's coming along too, to provide an extra pair of hands and an extra four pairs of tentacles.

Your part

Your previous career as a thief is going to come in real handy on this job. You get to case out Mr Vole's mansion, work out where the loot is kept, and help extract it. And if you need to sweet-talk some pretty young thing into giving out that information, all the better.

Arumi, your captain, is a rich nob who's turned to a life of crime, and Aueka's a Ma-Ouma, whom you can't trust, but neither's betrayed you...yet. This job could be worth big money if the treasure's as valuable as everyone says. You just need to make sure that everyone does what the need to and no one gets greedy.

Relationships

I'm currently trying to kindle a romance with _____.

I've broken into _____'s place before.

I still owe _____ rather a lot of money.

Blueshift

Character name: Kewenen

Species: Awngi

Description: Merchant, fence, and occasional psychic investigator. Not inclined to violence.

XP/Advances

Abilities

- Negotiate (R): 6
- Psi (I): 4
- Alertness (I): 4
- Deceit (I): 3
- Athletics (V): 3
- Bureaucracy (R): 3
- Firearms (V): 2
- Melee (V): 2
- Sneak (I): 2
- Mechanist (R): 2

Pools

Vigour

Max: 3

Reason

Max: 1

Instinct

Max: 3

Keys

Pick two of the these.

Key of bargaining: You like to make deals and trade favours. Hit this key when you make a bargain, make a new contact, or exchange a favour. **Buyoff:** Cut yourself off from your network of contacts.

Key of peace: Just because you're in crime, doesn't mean you like hurting people. Hit this key when you prevent a situation from spiralling into violence. **Buyoff:** Be the first one to throw a punch.

Key of the alien: You're a herbivore on a ship of carnivores. Hit this key when you demonstrate your mistrust of the crew. **Buyoff:** Trust one of the crew with your life.

Secrets

Pick two of the these.

Secret of psi: You can read others' surface thoughts and emotions. If they're trying to keep those emotions in check, you might have to roll.

Secret of stampede: You're well enough able to influence folks' minds that, with effort, you can spur them to action. Spend 1 Instinct to mentally instruct a crowd to perform a simple action.

Secret of empathy: Whenever you let someone pour out their inner feelings to you, **take +1 dice**.

Harm

Bruised: -1 to next roll

☐1 ☐2

Bloodied: -1 to all rolls

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