

Terrifying Space Monkeys: Monkey Business

Part one of the Terrifying Space Monkeys trilogy.

Background: Jamie "J.J." Jeffers isn't exactly the wisest business man on Paquin. So when it was suggested that he could ease his gambling debts with a quick and easy loan from a loan shark, he didn't immediately think that was a horrible idea. J.J. isn't the bravest guy around either. So when his "good friend" and business partner Arthur Morgan offered to take the payoff and deliver it to the loan sharks in his place, he took him up on the offer.

Nor is J.J. the sharpest tool in the shed. When his "good friend" disappeared a couple of days later, he didn't instantly put two and two together.

Since Arthur Morgan skipped out with the cash entrusted to him, J.J. has been under the impression that his debt was paid and was consumed with worry for his friend. He's since picked up a bit more debt here and there from gambling but has managed to avoid any huge losses such as he'd previously suffered. He has fortunately been paying his debts as they come as it seems J.J. does learn from his mistakes somewhat. Nevertheless the loan sharks have been compounding interest on his previous loan all this while and J.J. was oblivious to the fact that their heavies were on the street looking for him for some months. By the time they tracked him down the loan shark in question had since become disgusted enough with all the trouble finding him and written him off as an example to be made. So, even though J.J. has since become aware of his foolishness and has scrapped up enough cash to pay most of his accumulated debt, he's unaware that the loan shark in question intends to take what he's got and have his thugs leave him as an unfortunate statistic in an alleyway somewhere. And, as mentioned, J.J. isn't the bravest guy around, so he's looking to hire a few sturdy looking folks to watch his back when he makes the exchange. Enter the PC's.

Simultaneous to all this "Gonzo" has just made a major deal with a group of smuggler's he's done business with over the past few months. Their current job for him represents a sizable investment, one that he simply can't afford not to have pay off well.

While Gonzo has no reason to think anything will go wrong with the deal, that's exactly what's going to happen and the distraction of dealing with the PC's and J.J. will play a large part in that. These smuggler's are inbound for Paquin at the moment with a cargo of stolen animal test subjects that are in rather high demand in certain circles. This deal once completed will net him a huge profit and will likely put him on top among the lowlife thugs in the area. Unfortunately all those involved have failed to take into account the nature of the animals being transported, which leads to the smuggler's crash landing out in the wilderness and Gonzo scrambling to recover something from the wreckage that might keep him from being completely ruined.

Synopsis:

This adventure takes place in four acts. During Act One the PC's are hired to guard J.J. while he goes to negotiate with Gonzo and pay off most of the debt he owes. As this represents a pretty sizable amount of cash, bodyguards are a good idea. The amount of cash in question has J.J. confident there won't be any trouble and his explanation for having not paid in so many months will be accepted. Normally this is true but the loan is small potatoes in Gonzo's estimations right now compared to the deal he's currently focused on. So he's decided to make an example of J.J., which puts the PC's in a dicey situation. Before things can come to a head though Gonzo receives a call from the inbound smugglers, who are busy crash-landing outside of town. In Act Two Gonzo's poor judgment causes a big problem. He hasn't a ship or anything fast at all to send out and secure the crash site and he's probably alerted everyone in town who does of the situation. If the PC's don't immediately offer their services in order to bargain their way out of their mess then he presses them into service himself. The PC's must then make a frantic dash across town to get to their own ship and get out to that crash site, including a race against a rival ship attempting to do the same thing.

In Act Three the PC's deal with deal with the rival crew intent on salvaging the *Achilles*. Neither of the two ship crews are aware that another group has beaten everyone else out

to the crash site and is already in the process of looting the place. The PC's have to deal with their rivals and secure what they can.

In Act Four the adventure wraps up with the PC's hopefully having secured the site and calling in to Gonzo. By then word has already gotten out that the Alliance is hot on the trail of the smuggler's and will arrive any minute to start making business tough for everyone. When the PC's contact Gonzo they're surprised to find him acting as if he's never heard of them and breaking off communications completely. Which leaves them with a crashed ship full of crazy monkeys to deal with and no idea the Alliance is already entering atmo.

Opening Scene: The Mulligans

Depending on how long you want the session to drag out I'd recommend a quick bit of trouble in a local bar to set the stage for J.J. approaching the PC's. There's nothing to say that J.J. hasn't simply heard of the PC's already and contacted them on their ship or waved them out in the black (or whatever you like if you want to skip the unnecessaries).

Assuming not, let's kick start things a bit with a little rough housing. This needn't be a full blown bar brawl, as the PC's even persuading or intimidating a couple of bullies to back down will sell them to J.J. as bodyguards right off. A short brawl wouldn't hurt though so let's introduce them to "Short Eye" and "Lefty" Mulligan, two amateur brawlers who just swaggered in the front door of the Lucky Lady looking for trouble.

"Short Eye" Mulligan

Agi d6, Str d10, Vit d10, Ale d6, Int d4, Wil d6

Life Points: 16

Initiative: d8* + d6.

Traits: Lightning Reflexes* (Major), Intimidating Manner (Minor), Dull Sense (Minor)

Skills: Athletics d4, Guns d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6/Improvised Weapons d8

"Lefty" Mulligan

Agi d6, Str d10, Vit d10, Ale d6, Int d4, Wil d6

Life Points: 20

Initiative: d6 + d6.

Traits: Tough as Nails (Major), Mean Left Hook (Minor)

Skills: Athletics d4, Guns d4, Melee Weapon Combat d6

"Short Eye's" Dull Sense represents the fact that the man is nearly deaf as a post. Allow a Alertness + Perception check of some sort to anyone who takes the time to size up the two bullies before engaging to realize they can use this to take him by surprise, even if they confront the two before it comes to blows. In such a case, allow whoever does this a free shot at Short Eye before Initiative is rolled.

A Hard Influence/Persuasion,

Influence/Intimidation or something similar is all that is required to force the Mulligans to back down and leave the bar grumbling.

An **Extraordinary Success** in

accomplishing this will make it much easier to bargain with J.J. and push his offer as high as 400 credits, too (see below).

Likewise if the PC's went head to head with Mulligans and won the fight without being injured beyond a couple of bruises (especially if they don't outnumber the Mulligans by more than two to one), J.J. will likewise be more agreeable in negotiations.

Resolving the Mulligan situation:

(Hard Willpower + Influence/Persuasion, Influence/Intimidation, etc.)

Success: The Mulligans realize they may have bitten off more than they can "chaw" and back down, leaving the bar if they're able to.

Extraordinary Success: The Mulligans back off and J.J. is impressed enough that he bumps his offer as high as 400 credits with little or no haggling.

Whatever the PC's are up to it won't take the Mulligans longer than it takes them to buy a couple of beers from the bartender to pick out one of the weaker looking PC's to pick on. If any of them are female and attractive, all the better. Attractive females almost always have someone on hand to defend

their honor and that's the Mulligans' favorite pass time of all...disparagin' a young lady's honor by beating up her boyfriend. Nevertheless anyone who appears weak will do and, even if no one steps up to stop them, then simply escalating the confrontation to the point that their target gets a bloody nose will satisfy them. As all this suggests though, the Mulligans aren't as especially brave as they are sadistic so a solid bit of intimidation will usually cause them to back down. But that shouldn't suggest they mind a bit of a brawl with those that don't manage to scare them off. That's what they came to the Lucky Lady looking for after all.

If there isn't anyone amongst the PC's to fit the bill then J.J. himself could serve as the Mulligans' target. As he's not especially brave himself to begin with the Mulligans will soon have him blubbering until even the most hard-hearted PC will feel compelled to intervene. Regardless, once everything has shaken out (with the Mulligans either unconscious or run off) J.J. approaches the PC's to offer them a job.

The job itself is pretty simple. J.J. isn't a devious sort and lays out all the details right up front, including all the foolishness that led to the situation. But as he has some 1000 credits on hand to pay of the 2000 he owes, he's confident the sizable payment will convince Gonzo to ease up and make a reasonable arrangement for paying off the rest. Which would normally be true if Gonzo hadn't already made his decision and his current dealings didn't offer much larger profits to be concerned with. The PC's need only come along for the ride, look formidable and earn a quick and easy 300 credits. It's a pretty simple job with little actual risk. Or so it should seem.

Haggling with J.J. won't accomplish much. He's already offer pretty much what he can afford to and hasn't held anything back to deal over. As previously stated, he's not the sharpest guy around. Nevertheless an Extraordinary Success in negotiations will bump this up to 350 credits, 400 credits if they've managed to impress him with their dealing with the Mulligans.

Haggling with J.J.:
(Willpower + Influence/Negotiation, Influence/Persuasion, etc.)

Success: J.J. agrees to 350 credits in exchange for providing protection during the exchange, 400 credits if the PC's impressed him with their handling of the Mulligans.

Extraordinary Success: J.J. agrees to 400 credits for the PC's services regardless of their handling of the Mulligan situation.

Act I, Scene I: Taking the Job

J.J.'s meeting with Gonzo is scheduled to take place that day, just a couple of hours hence (J.J. isn't all that big on planning ahead either). This will give the PC's time to gear up but they can forget about shopping or any prolonged research into Gonzo and his dealings. They have time to get word on the street if they hustle about it, though.

Word on the street concerning Gonzo:
(Hard Alertness or Intelligence + Influence/Streetwise)

Success: Gonzo is typically reasonable when it comes to collecting his debts, being primarily concerned with profit. While he's been known to deal violently with those that consistently fail to pay on time (a few busted kneecaps here and there) he's rarely ordered anything worse. Though there are a couple of long walks off rooftops attributed to him, this is the rare exception. The current word on the street is that Gonzo is something of the up-and-coming sort, as he's beginning to make deals in areas beyond mere loan sharking and prostitution.

Extraordinary Success: Gonzo currently has a major deal in the works. Though details are sketchy it involves some sort of smuggling job that will likely move him up onto the fringes of the local "big time" scene if he pulls it off.

Looking into J.J. won't reveal much besides his ownership of a small shipping company. The company isn't particularly lucrative but does well enough. Confirming the disappearance of J.J.'s partner with his loan payment is easy too as public records exist detailing J.J. reporting the matter to the authorities already. J.J. has recently hit it big, scoring a jackpot at one of the local gambling houses (as covered in a small news story to that effect), representing the

recent windfall with which he's currently paying his debt to Gonzo.

**Cortex research into J.J. and/or his shipping company:
(Average Intelligence +
Knowledge/Research, Technical
Engineering/Cortex or anything similar)**

Success: All the aforementioned dealings that J.J. has already been forthcoming with. Nothing new here and this should merely confirm to the PC's that J.J. is the honest sort. Perhaps too honest but nevertheless.

Extraordinary Success: In the event the PC's score an extraordinary success you might want to consider allowing them to come across a nice tidbit concerning J.J.'s erstwhile partner Arthur Mulligan. This could open up the possibility of future adventures with the PC's hired out to recover the cash he's stolen, pick up a possibly bounty on the man or simply aid them in scoring points with J.J. to make negotiations easier.

Act I, Scene II: Strictly Business

Once the deal has been struck and the PC's have geared up, conducting any research they might choose to, getting to the meeting won't pose any difficulties. If they haven't any conveyance of their own J.J. has a personal transport they can all use. If you don't want to bother with possible vehicle combat (PC's do tend to make use of whatever you leave laying around) public transportation is always an option as J.J.'s personal preference.

When everyone involved arrives at the warehouse where J.J. runs his operations, getting past the guards and into the building will be simple as well. They are already expecting J.J. and won't blink an eye at his bringing along some muscle. The two guards at the door will insist on patting them down for weapons and the PC's absolutely won't be allowed to bring any such thing into the warehouse. If they had dealt with Gonzo in the past and he'd already developed some trust with them this might be a

different matter. But as he doesn't, it's not a point that's open for negotiation.

Getting weapons past the guards requires a Covert/Camouflage or similar check against their Alertness + Perception. Small handguns, knives and such shouldn't effect the check but larger handguns and explosives should provide a penalty of up to +6 or even +8 depending. Rifles and such...simply don't allow it. Even the dumb thugs in Gonzo's employ aren't that dense.

Once past the guards J.J. and the PC's will be expected to wait just inside while a thug hustles over from Gonzo's office to escort them. By then Gonzo and his men will be in position already. Though Gonzo isn't really expecting trouble from a bunch of unarmed folks he's smart enough to have all six of the thugs on hand with submachine guns to make sure of that.

When the meeting goes down Gonzo chastises J.J. for all the trouble he's caused him but collects the payment without any further fuss. Once that's done however, he informs J.J. that he's unfortunately decided he needs to make a strong statement. As his upcoming deal (something Gonzo waxes on about for a bit) will likely put him in the "big time" he feels he needs to shore up his reputation as someone not to be trifled with. To that end J.J. is to serve as that example and his thugs will be escorting him to an alleyway far from here to do just that. J.J.'s bodyguards (the PC's) aren't of any particular concern for him and it should be clear up front that they're simply to be beaten a bit and let go. Gonzo respects simple business arrangements such as theirs and hasn't any reason to believe they'll be a problem in the future...unless the PC's give him a reason to suspect this. In which case he'll ordered them killed as well. How the PC's react to all this is naturally important. If they decide not to react and let J.J. suffer whatever fate Gonzo has in mind for them then four of the armed thugs keep them in their sights until the other two begin to depart with J.J. If they cause a fuss, then Gonzo will decide to deal with them right away. Regardless, either the thugs are aiming weapons at the PC's or two of them have J.J. in hand to escort him off when the call comes in. This is a dicey situation and the GM should be sure the matter doesn't

come to blows before the call comes in. But just in case it does, the standard "King of the Dung Heap" stats from the rulebook fit Gonzo very well. Likewise his thugs are all "Bully Boys" armed with submachine guns (which they haven't much skill in using but will still present them as a formidable group of opponents against the unarmed PC's).

When the call comes in, interrupting the already tense situation, Gonzo is naturally annoyed at having his attention diverted. But since this is clearly the smuggler's calling in he feels compelled to put everyone else on hold to answer it. He also doesn't notice the smugglers are broadcasting in the open and everyone listening in on the open channels is hearing every word being said.

From the frantic shouting on the other end of the radio it's clear Gonzo is speaking with the panicked captain of some ship or other currently breaking atmo and heading in. Someone or something is wrecking havoc on board and all Gonzo has time to learn before the call goes dead is that the ship is going down about twenty miles to the northwest outside of town. It should be clear that all other matters are completely put out of his mind when he hears this and if the PC's have learned about Gonzo "big time deal" then it should be pointed out that this is probably it. This shouldn't suggest the thugs are distracted and the PC's should be encouraged to hold off on any plans to seize the opportunity to get themselves shot.

Detecting clues from the background noise of Gonzo's radio call:
(Formidable Alertness + Perception/Hearing)

Failure: The background noise of the short, frantic radio call is unidentifiable and chaotic but it's clear that total mayhem has erupted aboard the ship.

Success: Scores of thumps and bumps, as a small mob beating at the door of the cockpit with bare hands and assorted implements, is heard. The distinct "spitting" sound of exposed wiring sparking nearby and the muffled drone of the ship's automatic warning system informing the crew of a hull breach can be detected as well. Could it be Reavers?!

Extraordinary Success: In addition to the above the unmistakable sound of at least a dozen chimpanzees screeching wildly can

be heard from beyond a bulkhead somewhere near the source of the transmission.

A frantic call to his own ship and crew at the docks sends Gonzo into a rage when he discovers the ship is down for repairs and he hasn't anyone to rush out and secure the crash site. Being as distracted and frantic as he is, he curses about this a good bit, pointing out to his ship's crew that the crashed ship holds extremely valuable cargo that just anyone can rush out there and pick up, ruining him financially. At which point one of the thugs points out to Gonzo that he's still broadcasting in the open and probably everyone with a shortwave radio just heard him say that. In his shock Gonzo goes silent for a moment...long enough for everyone in the warehouse to hear two or three other conversations break out on the open channels when captains begin hastily calling in their crews and ordering their ships to prepare to dust off.

Now is the moment for the PC's to seize the initiative and offer their services in securing the crash site. If they do so they'll find Gonzo extremely agreeable in his desperation and they can easily land a very nice deal in the process. Getting J.J. completely freed from his debt, especially considering he's paid most of it off already, is a no brainer and Gonzo won't so much as quibble about it.

If they don't think to offer their services and Gonzo is aware they have a ship (he can always ask if there's any doubt that he does) then there's nothing stopping him from pressing them into service. He won't bat an eyelash at doing just that, even offering a nice paying job if the PC's don't think to angle for it themselves.

In the end the PC's should wrap up Act One by either offering their services, taking the deal Gonzo offers when they don't or going head to head with Gonzo and his men. If they do manage to get themselves in a fight despite your discouraging it they still have to survive it. Should they somehow manage to pull all that off, make it clear to them Gonzo's crashed smuggler ship is still outside of town full of whatever extremely valuable cargo he's pinned all his future enterprises on. This should be enough to

get them on track again. Barring that, if J.J. has survived he can always encourage them to go after it, offering to help broker whatever the cargo is through his own shipping company and a few meager underworld contacts.

Act II, Scene I: Dust Off

Again, depending on how long you want to drag out the session, getting to their ship and taking off might present a slight obstacle when the local customs agents decide there's something fishy with the PC's ship. If they've come to Paquin to deliver cargo they may find that cargo has been impounded for inspection before they got it off the ship. Perhaps there's a certain import tax they were unaware of or maybe even a custom agent looking to line his pockets by being difficult and expecting to have his wheel greased. This can present the opportunity to delay the PC's by up to fifteen minutes or more in order to drive home the short time they have to get out and secure the crash site. Nevertheless even without any artificial delays they should be made aware that any competitors were likely in a better position to respond than they were and someone is bound to have gotten ahead of them.

As GM you should play up the rapid deployment angle, though it shouldn't really matter unless the PC's are simply horrible at taking to the air quickly. At the least the PC's have to deal with paying any docking fees they haven't already covered, rental fees, disconnecting power from the ship and generally resolving any dealings they have with the dock officials before being allowed to depart. The dock officials aren't interested in whether the PC's are simply making a quick jaunt outside of town or not. Breaking dock is breaking dock and that requires all the formalities to be dealt with. Make sure to toss them a couple of Influence checks that can result in delays should they manage to irritate the dock workers. If they make any botches things could get very interesting very quickly.

Some obstacles to torture your group with:

* If your group arrived on Paquin (or wherever you choose to set this adventure) with a load of live cargo or took on such cargo while they were here...well, you've just got to have the PC's walk into the scene of dock officials being overrun by those three or four critters that escaped while they were away. The PC's having to wrangle a couple of angry cows/horses/ostriches just to get to their ship is an opportunity best not allowed to pass by.

* Mechanical difficulty is always a nice monkey wrench to toss into the works. Assuming your PC's didn't perform preventative maintenance when they arrived and scored an Extraordinary Success on it, this is a pretty tried and true method for making your group feel they're running late for the party. Playing out a nice **Average Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering/Mechanical Repair complex action** (pretending all the while that the result is a matter of life and death) to fix that collapsed grav vent, bent hydraulic stabilizer housing or other techno babble component is always lots of fun.

* If you really want to be nasty you can always allow for a random air traffic incident when the PC's take off. It would seem Joe Schmoe, the air traffic controller for the local docks, had one too many on his lunch break and has the PC's taking off right underneath another ship. Time for your pilot PC to show their stuff with a **Formidable Alertness + Pilot** check to avoid crashing...which, should he flub it, will result in knocking them right back down on the pad. Followed by that **Average Intelligence + Mechanical Engineering/Mechanical Repair complex action** that you really should have dropped on them in the first place, you big meanie.

* Naturally there's the aforementioned dock official looking to line his pockets and requiring a **Willpower + Influence** roll of some sort to put him off quickly. Or a hefty bribe, of course. If your group are pretty good at handling this sort of thing without too much trouble (i.e. there aren't any Leaky Brainpan or Chip on your Shoulder complications gumming up the works) you can easily drop this one on their heads at the same time as any other delay.

Act II, Scene II: The Inevitable Chase Scene

Once the PC's dust off and get moving the first bit of trouble they run into in midair is the obvious fact that another vessel is taking off nearby and heading in the same direction they are. Before they're even clear of the city the fact that the rival ship is moving horizontally rather than vertically will make their role as competitor in getting out to the crash site pretty obvious. If the PC's don't specifically say that they're keeping an eye out for anyone else moving out in that direction you might require an Alertness check of some sort for them to even notice right way. Or, if you want to be nasty, just give the rival ship a bump ahead (a nice 15 point bonus to the coming race) and let the PC's notice them as they pull out in front of them.

If anyone not involved in the actual piloting wants to utilize this time to hit the cortex and check on the rival ship they'll first have to identify the vessel. Once identified, calling up any available info on the ship or it's crew is a matter of another cortex search.

Identify the rival vessel as *Angel Sunset*:
(Average Intelligence + Technical Engineering/Ship Sensors or Pilot/Ship Sensors; anything similar should be allowed.)

Calling up information on *Angel Sunset* and/or her crew:
(Formidable Intelligence + Knowledge/Research, Technical Engineering/Cortex or anything similar.)

Success: *Angel Sunset* is a Firefly class transport first registered as a privately owned commercial vessel on Angel in 2512, six years ago. Her registration and licenses appear to be up to date. Her captain is Bartholomew Valdez and the ship has a prescribed crew complement of four.

Extraordinary Success: *Angel Sunset* and Captain Bartholomew Valdez are both referenced in an obscure news article concerning an act of piracy near

Beaumonde three years ago. The ship and crew were held for questioning but eventually released (with heavy fines for possession of automatic weapons, which were confiscated). No arrests were made and the matter remains a bit of a mystery.

Resolving the race between the PC's and the rival ship can be as simple as an opposed complex action between the two pilots to determine in what order the ships arrives at the area where the *Achilles* (the smuggler's ship) has crashed. If you have "chase scene" rules you'd like to use then this would be a good situation to apply them to, with the chaser and the chasee changing depending on who is winning perhaps. If not, consult the following for results depending on the outcome of the complex action. The results of this action are somewhat simplified but since the crew of *Angel Sunset* intends to act aggressively toward anyone standing between them and their illegal salvage, it's important to determine who has time to prepare and who doesn't.

** Both ships fail or both succeed:* Since it's assumed the complex action resolves who gets to the site first and not actually finding it in the first place (a given in this case), if both ship pilot's succeed or both fail then both ships arrive in the area at roughly the same time.

** If one ship succeed and the other fails:* The triumphant vessel arrives well ahead of it's rival and has time to touch down. The crew then can exit the ship with as much as a minute or two (depending on how generous or mean you want to be) before the rival vessel has touched down and disembarked.

Angel Sunset herself is assumed to be a Firefly class transport but you can naturally make her whatever you wish. Likewise the crew is presented as a five member team of Veterans but you can (and should) adjust this to fit your party. Only three of the crew (as noted) will leave the ship to deal with their rivals (the PC's). The other two, Harold and Matilda, aren't exactly the fightin' type and will stay on board, leaving the ship only to rescue their fallen comrades if at all possible. (See the npc section for stats on

the *Angel Sunset* crew.)

Act III, Scene I: Bad Tactics

Harold Jefferson, pilot for *Angel Sunset*, has worked with the crew long enough to anticipate their needs and (should the PC's beat them to the crash site) will set down about 700 feet or so from the PC's ship so that Vance Connors can make good use of his rifle in picking them off from a safe distance. If *Angel Sunset* arrived on the scene first, he'll touch down within one hundred feet of the *Achilles*.

If *Angel Sunset* did indeed arrive on the scene first, Capt. Valdez and Terry Kamphouse will spend 5 turns prepping their large mule to rush for the *Achilles*. This will give the PC's time to touch down and begin making whatever moves they intend to. The action then begins with Capt. Valdez and Kamphouse driving for the *Achilles* to take up position while Vance covers them with his rifle. If the PC's advance on the *Achilles*, Vance will begin sniping at the PC's in earnest in the hopes of driving them back. If not, he abandons his position and rushes to join the others at the *Achilles* before they do, sniping at them from there when he arrives. If the PC's have arrived first and don't immediately secure the *Achilles* the rival crew follows much the same tactic. If they have however, Valdez and Kamphouse spend five turns prepping their large mule while Vance focuses on keeping the PC's from leaving the wreck with any salvage. Once the mule is ready, he covers Valdez and Kamphouse as they drive in toward the *Achilles* to flank it, exit the vehicle and move in to engage the PC's. Once they approach within firing range (or sight) of the PC's, Vance rushes forward on foot (likely arriving too late to back them up).

If it's clear the PC's outnumber or outgun the crew of *Angel Sunset* (or this becomes apparent later), they abandon their assault on the *Achilles* altogether. Harold and Matilda then take off in *Angel Sunset* to a safe distance and the other three crew members assault the PC's ship instead. Should they gain control of the PC's ship their bargaining position is strong enough that they'll push for the PC's to turn over the

salvage to them altogether. Barring that, there's nothing to prevent them from simply stealing the PC's ship.

The lowdown here is that though *Angel Sunset's* crew are veterans there are only three that pose a direct threat and even they aren't an especially big threat. Their tactics aren't all that sound and an experienced group of players (or player characters who are outfitted well enough) will probably eat them for breakfast. The real crunch comes in the middle of the struggle between these two groups...from the group already hiding inside the *Achilles*.

Act III, Scene II: Where the Heck Did *These* Guys Come From?

Marco Sanchez and his group of banditos just happened to be in the area when the ship went down, even witnessing the crash from a distance. At the same time they overheard Gonzo's radio conversation with the crew of the *Achilles* and realized the opportunity that had just been handed to them on a big ole silver platter. While the group hasn't a ship of their own and were moving through the area on a couple of all-terrain vehicles they don't have anything big enough to haul off all those monkey cages before anyone else arrives.

But Marco doesn't even care about that. Once he saw the cargo consisted of a bunch of screaming monkeys he decided someone was off their nut and was unable to imagine a bunch of monkeys being worth all the fuss. He and his crew have since decided to pirate whoever's ship arrives on the scene first, make off with it and leave the crew at the crash site behind with the monkeys. As soon as gunfire erupts between the PC's and *Angel Sunset's* crew he and his group of bandits watch from the wreckage for a while until they can determine how big a threat the two groups pose. If he decides he and his men can take them with little fuss, Marco has no problem with attempting just that. Especially from the cover of the

wreckage. If not, he and his bandits exit out the rear and make their way around to whichever ship is closest (the PC's ship, if you can manage it) to assault that ship themselves.

PC's taking cover near the *Achilles* should be given a **Formidable Alertness + Perception** check of some sort to spot the banditos hunkered down in the wreck, even with the distraction of dealing with the *Angel Sunset* crew. PC's that actually take cover inside the ship wreckage or otherwise enter it will naturally spot them right away. Marco and his thugs will probably get surprise in that case but regardless they'll start throwing lead right away.

How many thugs Marco has should be tailored to the size of the PC party and how well they handle themselves in a fight (keeping in mind they'll already probably be in a fight with the *Angel Sunset* crew). As a general rule of thumb I'd say one per two PC's and Marco himself should be enough to give the PC group a nice enough challenge. Note also Marco's D8 Tactics specialty skill. Though he's not formally trained, he's not a shabby tactician and is well aware of the proper use of cover and concealment, as well as forcing your opponent to assault *your* position rather than the other way around.

If he and his men open fire from the *Achilles* they'll do so from at least medium cover (if not heavy cover) and they'll focus their fire if Marco's around to tell them to do so. If they've abandoned the *Achilles* to assault one of the other ships, they'll enter through any unlocked entrance and drive straight for the cockpit first, lock all the entrances down from there, then head for the engine room before finally clearing the ship room by room in teams of two or three.

Marco also knows better than to toss hand grenades around willy-nilly and will hold it in reserve as a last resort, most likely either to prevent his position from being overrun or to cover his or his group's retreat. He also doesn't mind retreating at all and will do so if a third of his men are killed or incapacitated. Marco and his group have parked their ATV's over a nearby hill and will flee in a total rout in that direction the moment he gives the word.

Marco Sanchez

Agi d6, Str d10, Vit d6, Ale d8, Int d6, Wil d6

Life Points: 16

Initiative: D6+D8

Traits: Fightin' type (minor), Tough as Nails (major), Athlete (minor) / Ego Signature (minor).

Skills: Survival D6 (Navigation D8, Nature D8, Space D10), Unarmed Combat D6 (Brawling D8), Guns D6 (Pistols D8, Grenade Launchers D8), Perception D6 (Tactics d8), Scientific Expertise D4, Ranged Weapons D6 (Grenades D8), Mechanical Engineering D4, Melee Weapon Combat D6, Linguist D6

Weapons: SMG (*newtech*: +1 damage step), Pistol. 1 Fragmentation grenade.

Armor: Mesh armor.

Marco's Banditos

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

Life Points: 14

Initiative: D8 + D6.

Traits: Greedy (Minor Complication).

Skills: Athletics D6, Discipline D4, Guns D6 (Pistol D8, Rifles D8), Perception D4, Survival D4.

Weapons: Half with Pistols, half with Rifles.

Armor: None.

Once Marco, his thugs and the crew of *Angel Sunset* have been dealt with the PC's will finally be free to check out the wreckage. They'll also probably be beaten up and need a moment to address some serious first aid. No other ships are inbound and if you want to add a little flavor you can even make note of a couple of ships make flyby's during the gunfight, dashing off when they see all the violence going on below. Regardless you should afford them time to catch their breath if they need it before they tackle the wreckage itself or deal with any forthcoming problems.

Act IV: Scene I: Monkeys? Are You Kidding?

Now the PC's can get a good leisurely look at the wreckage, either moving in to explore what's left of the ship or picking through the

debris for clues or possible threats.

Investigating the wreckage

The wreck of the Achilles actually covers nearly a half-mile stretch and is littered with bits and pieces of the ship that broke off as the vessel bounced along the ground. The majority of it is mostly in the same area and the rear cargo area is still relatively intact. The cockpit and both wing-mounted engines have broken completely off and the cockpit and neck of the ship are scattered in bits along the path leading up to the main crash site. Along this 200 yard corridor of wreckage, should the PC's take the time to look, they'll find most of the crew's remains. Interestingly enough they'll find quite a few dead chimpanzees as well. If the PC's actually take the time to search the wreckage for any reason they might notice some of the chimpanzees still grasping tools and assorted blunt objects as weapons and may get the general impression these guys might have caused all the trouble. If you prefer making checks to resolve this then I suggest the following.

Searching the wreckage surrounding the Achilles

(Average Alertness + Perception/Search)

Success: The PC's should see that most of crew seem to be scattered amongst the wreckage quite dead. Most likely no one survived the crash at all. The two dozen chimpanzee corpses are hard to miss as well. A couple of the monkeys actually seem to be still grasping wrenches (pardon the pun) and pipes as weapons. Bullet wounds on some of them also seem to suggest the crew took a particular dislike to the monkeys sometimes prior to the Achilles crashing.

Extraordinary Success: The PC's discover the Achilles' "black box" recording of their last transmission (the one to Gonzo earlier). If they take the time to review this they don't hear anything more than what they overheard at Gonzo's warehouse but they do get a second, easier check to make out the background noise:

*** Detecting clues from the background noise**

(Hard Alertness + Perception/Hearing)

Failure: The background noise of the short, frantic radio call is unidentifiable and chaotic but it's clear that total mayhem has erupted aboard the ship. Nothing new.

Success: Scores of thumps and bumps, as a small mob beating at the door of the cockpit with bare hands and assorted implements, is heard. The distinct "spitting" sound of exposed wiring sparking nearby and the muffled drone of the ship's automated warning system informing the crew of a hull breach can be detected as well.

Extraordinary Success: In addition to the above the unmistakable sound of at least a dozen chimpanzees screeching wildly can barely be heard from beyond a bulkhead somewhere near the source of the transmission. The voice of one crew member in the background can be heard yelling, "They shot Jake! One of them wu toh wu now [mixed up, confused] monkeys shot Jake! Dongwu ta made niao! [You goddamned animal!]"

If the PC's take a look at the monkeys themselves and state their intention to try and figure out what the heck they were up to, allow the following check:

Intuiting the behavior of the chimpanzees prior to the wreck

(Hard Alertness + Perception/Intuition or Perception/Investigation)

Success: Many of the monkeys were clearly running loose on the ship prior to the crash and a few of them seem to have been fighting the ship's crew. One chimp has even stolen a tool belt and is still wearing it like a bandolier, with a couple of vital engine components tucked into some of the pockets. This seems to indicate that little bugger may have played a unintentionally role in sabotaging the ship.

Extraordinary Success: One chimp has died with a pistol still firmly in his hand, with one little chimpanzee finger still on the trigger. Though there aren't any live rounds left in the pistol the empty shell casings sure make it seem like he emptied the revolver at some point. Another chimp is laying near a length of pipe with a kitchen knife crudely lashed to one end. There's blood on the knife as well.

If you want to be nasty and cheesy (and of course you do):

Test subject TK-421 actually managed to survive the wreckage of the Achilles, even though he was running buck wild down the

gangway to the cockpit at the time. He's managed to retrieve the rifle he was using before and is more than a little confused after all the trauma of wrecking in a spaceship. Naturally, he responds aggressively to the PC's while they're picking through the debris for clues. He has only one round left in the rifle and is no more skilled in its use than any of the other chimps but that doesn't stop him from clamoring up onto the nearest hunk of wreckage to shriek at the PC's for a bit. When they don't instantly run away from his loud, intimidating manner he opens fire on a random PC then charges in close enough to throw the rifle at them as well. If the PC's haven't filled him full of lead by then he physically attacks the same PC or any other that attempts to close in on him. He's confused and terrified enough that he can't be calmed or placated until the PC's leave the area. Even then he'll occupy himself with strutting about the wreckage, hurling chimpanzee insults, rude gestures and general ridicule (not to mention whatever he can get his hands on to throw) in their direction for as long as they remain in sight. He won't allow any PC to approach the ship without a challenge, either.

If you want to be just plain nasty:

Have TK-421 pop up in the middle of the gunfight with Marco, the bandits and the crew of *Angel Sunrise*. Maybe with more than one round of ammo in the rifle. He probably won't even have to hit anything to throw everyone off.

The Achilles

The bulk of the remains of the ship consists of the engine room, rear cargo area and the galley/lounge area above them. The passengers rooms situated above the main engine were crushed in the wreck and are inaccessible. The cockpit and the neck leading up to it are scattered about in pieces across the 200 yard stretch to the west.

The engine room

Though the chimps never intentionally sabotaged the ship (having no idea what the engine room represented in the first place) the room was right off the cargo area so was naturally the next place they hit. The various

components and electronics they accidentally broke when scrounging around in the engine room provided so much entertainment (and confusion) with the bright sparks, electric shocks and extremely interesting noises that they just couldn't help themselves from tearing the whole place to bits. Naturally when the crew attempted to storm the area and retake it the chimps needed something to throw at the interlopers, requiring more bits and pieces to be broken off, torn loose and pulled free. It was only a matter of (very short) time before the *Achilles* dropped like a rock out of the sky.

In the end the engine room is an incredible mess. I'd be tempted to require a Willpower check of any mechanic character than stepped foot into it to avoid post-traumatic stress. Wires dangle from every conceivable crack and crevice, some jammed roughly where they clearly don't belong and others tied up into meaningless knots (from which one unlucky and very dead chimpanzee still dangles). The engine itself has long since tore itself to pieces after having several vital components torn loose, then throw back into the mix just to see what happened.

Among the various piles of smoking debris nearly a dozen unlucky chimps lie, half of them shot to death by the ship's crew and the other half either mangled, electrocuted or burned in the course of their explorations of the engine. No checks should be required to figure out what happened here, as it's fairly obvious.

Galley/lounge

Here the main fighting took place between the crew and the chimpanzee horde. Once it became apparent that food magically appeared if your broke enough objects open the chimps laid claim to the place and started fashioning weapons from various kitchen implements. When a trio of crew members attempted to take the kitchen back to allow them to flank the engine room, the chimps ended up with a couple of revolvers and a rifle, snatching two right out of the hands of the crew and picking the other off the floor when the crew panicked and ran away. They'd seen enough of their use by then to only need waste a half dozen rounds of ammo before figuring out how to make the scary noises come out and break things. Once they figured that much out it wasn't

long before taking the fight down the hallway to the cockpit seemed like a fun idea, so that's exactly what they did.

Kicking around the debris in the galley will show a few hastily and crudely fashioned weapons here and there, some making not much sense (such as several knives bundled together with string) and meant for throwing rather than melee combat.

A successful **Average Intelligence + Perception/Intuition**, **Perception/Investigation** or even **Survival/Tracking** will give the PC's the gist of what went on here.

Rear cargo area

Here's where the PC's find the cargo they've gone through all the trouble of salvaging: two hundred individual chimpanzee cages (half now unoccupied) with chimpanzees in attendance. When they enter the cargo area the chimps are all fairly quiet (still banged up a good bit from the crash and emotionally overwhelmed from it all). Anyone with any kind of **Animal Handling** skill can tell easily that the poor critters are practically numb and thoroughly exhausted from it all. This won't stop them from escalating into a solid round of shrieking and poop-throwing if the PC's do anything that appears especially threatening or frightening, though. Otherwise they're lethargic and only mildly curious.

The entire west side of the cargo area is open to the outside and it's here that Marco and his banditos will have hidden to ambush the PC's and the crew of *Angel Sunrise*.

This of course contributed a lot to the chimp's stress levels, what with all the gunplay going on. The doorway to the neck of the ship is thrown wide and opens to the outside as well, as everything from here forward is completely gone.

Terrifying Space Monkeys

What the PC's won't have any way of knowing (without checking specifically) is that most of these chimps retreated back to their cages after the wreck to recover from the shock of crashing. Hence most of the cage doors are firmly closed but certainly not locked. Eventually one of the more curious or rambunctious chimps will decide to step out for some fun and that's all the encouragement the others will require to do likewise, leading to the chimps staging

another impromptu hijacking...this time aboard the PC's own ship. Even should the PC's discover that the cages aren't locked and decide to lock them before hauling the lot of them off, that won't stop the chimps from picking the locks again when the time comes, as they did before.

In the end, if the PC's don't manage to figure out the threat the chimps pose and take extraordinary measures to keep them locked up, all hell will eventually break loose. But that's another story...

Assuming the PC's don't simply decide, as Marco did, that a bunch of monkeys just ain't worth all the fuss.

Act IV: Scene II: Sorry, Wrong Number

Once the wreck has been secured, they'll presumably contact Gonzo to inform him they've completed their job and seek further instructions on what to do with the monkeys. At which point Gonzo responds personally to their radio/cortex/cell phone call to claim he hasn't any idea who they are or what they're talking about. No matter how the PC's respond to that Gonzo will interrupt them angrily and accuse the PC's of being agents for his rival, Ling Chao, trying to set him up. He then breaks off communications and the PC's won't be able to make contact with him again.

If the PC's don't immediately abandon the wreck and simply leave, a group of five hover cars blow in from the direction of town, each sporting two or three tough-looking oriental men with assault rifles. They're wise enough to come to a halt when they see any indication that someone else has laid claim to the salvage or spot any sign of a recent battle. Barring that the sight of PC's ship nearby will bring them to a halt. After this the middle-aged gentlemen leading the group of heavily armed men will express polite interest in speaking with whomever is laying claim to the salvage. Unless the PC's outright refuse to speak with him or do anything especially threatening they should soon end up in

negations with Ling Chevy, Ling Chao's own son. Once it is clear to Ling Chevy what the cargo is composed of he'll nevertheless express interest in securing it for the White Swan Tong, for reasons he's not inclined to discuss. Any suggestion that the PC's might be able to deny him access to it will be met with the polite laughter it deserves and he'll simply skip past the matter directly to the issue of hiring on the PC's and their ship to transport the chimps off world for him. Immediately, if not sooner.

Should the PC's do anything other than jump at the glorious opportunity to provide this service for the White Swan Tong it will be made clear in short order why this is a foolish mistake. Probably by one of the tong shooting a PC in the leg.

Once the PC's are convinced of the wisdom of the proposed course of action a generous offer is made of 300 credits to deliver the remaining caged monkeys off world to a transport in orbit. All expenses including fuel, docking fees, etcetera are included, of course.

The Crew of *Angel Sunset*

Captain Bartholomew Valdez

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

Life Points: 20

Initiative: d8 + d8.

Traits: Mechanical Empathy (minor), Leadership (minor) / Deadly Enemy (minor), Superstitious (minor), Memorable (minor).

Skills: Artistry d4, Athletics d4, Covert d6 (Stealth d8), Craft d4, Discipline d6, Guns d4, Influence d4, Linguistics d4, Mechanical Engineering d4, Perception d4, Pilot d4, Planetary Vehicles d6, Scientific Expertise d6, Survival d6.

Weapons: Pistol (newtech: +1 damage step, +50% range increment).

Armor: None.

Vance Conners (*"public relations"*)

Agi d10, Str d8, Vit d12, Ale d4, Int d6, Wil d8

Life Points: 20

Initiative: D8+D4

Traits: Good Name (minor), Intimidating Manner (minor) / Filcher (minor), Phobia [claustrophobia] (minor)

Skills: Athletics D6 (Dodge D8), Technical Engineering D4, Unarmed Combat D6 (Kung Fu D8), Discipline D6 (Concentration D8), Knowledge D6 (Law D8), Guns D6 (Rifles D10), Perception D6 (Smell D8), Heavy Weapons D6, Melee Weapon Combat D4, Linguist D4

Weapons: Pistol, rifle (newtech: +50% range increment), submachine gun.

Armor: Mesh armor.

Terry "T.K." Kamphouse (*ship's mechanic*)

Agi d8, Str d6, Vit d6, Ale d6, Int d12, Wil d4

Life Points: 10

Initiative: D8+D6

Traits: Nose for Trouble (major), Steady Calm (minor), Two-Fisted (major) / Combat Paralysis (minor), Dead Broke (minor)

Skills: Technical Engineering D4, Survival D6, Unarmed Combat D4, Knowledge D6, Planetary Vehicle D6 (Submarines D8), Pilot D4, Animal Handling D2, Guns D4, Perception D6, Craft D4, Mechanical Engineering D6 (Machinery Maintenance

D8, Mechanical Repairs D10), Sabotage D8), Melee Weapon Combat D4, Artistry D2

Weapons: Pistol, Shotgun.

Armor: None.

Harold Jefferson (*pilot*)

Agi d12, Str d8, Vit d6, Ale d12, Int d4, Wil d6

Life Points: 12

Initiative: D12+D12

Traits: Nature Lover (minor), Leadership (major) / Loyal [Capt. Valdez] (minor), Overconfident (minor), Superstitious (minor)

Skills: Technical Engineering D6 (Computer Systems D8, Technical Security Systems D10), Pilot D6 (Astrogation D8, Astronomy D8, Patrol Vessels D8, Aerial Navigation D8), Influence D4, Animal Handling D6 (Veterinary D8, Riding D8), Perception D6 (Sight D8, Smell D8, Tracking D8, Gambling D8), Ranged Weapons D6 (Bow D8, Ranged Weaponsmithing D10, Blowguns D8)

Weapons: Typically none but he has bow and arrows in his cabin.

Armor: None.

Matilda Reese (*ship's medic*)

Agi d12, Str d8, Vit d6, Ale d12, Int d6, Wil d4

Life Points: 10

Initiative: D12+D12

Traits: Intimidating Manner (minor), Sharp Sense (minor), Good Name (major) / Traumatic Flashes (major), Hooked (major)

Skills: Technical Engineering D4, Discipline D4, Knowledge D6 (Religion D8, Philosophy D8), Medical Expertise D6 (General Practice D10, Surgery D8), Perception D2, Craft D6, Scientific Expertise D6, Guns D6 (Pistols D8), Covert D2, Linguist D6, Artistry D6 (Appraisal D8)

Weapons: Derringer (concealed).

Armor: None.

Terrifying Space Monkeys

Unless you're of the nasty variety and threw TK-421 at them already, the PC's shouldn't come into conflict with the Terrifying Space Monkeys during this session. Nevertheless here's the stats on the little bundles of mayhem because you never know:

Agi d10, Str d10, Vit d6, Ale d4, Int d6, Wil d4

Life Points: 12

Initiative: d10+d4

Traits: Let Me See That (minor), Intimidating Manner (minor), Tough as Nails (minor) / Curious (minor), Filcher (minor), Overconfident (minor).

Skills: Climb d10, Hearing d10, Stealth, d8, Brawling d8, Lockpicking d10.

New Trait: Let Me See That (minor)

[Terrifying Space Monkeys only]

Chimpanzees have a pull strength as much as five or six times stronger than humans. Any time a Terrifying Space Monkey takes a mind to yank what you're holding (which will be pretty much every time that something is at all interesting), they get a +2 Attribute step increase to do so. This bonus applies to combat rolls for wrestling as well, though not for brawling.

New Trait: Curious (minor)

Whenever you come across an unknown or a novelty you just have to stop and figure it out. Even if it's dangerous you feel compelled to examine new things and investigate mysteries. A person with the Curious complication will want to examine a new creature even if it's dangerous or figure out who murdered the local sheriff even if the person responsible is likely to come after them. Figuring out or studying a new thing will almost always trump any danger inherent to it. Primarily a role-playing trait.

Background:

The Terrifying Space Monkeys are the result of Blue Sun's recent breakthroughs in mind altering drugs, specifically those designed to enhance cognitive abilities. The TSM's are

the test animals used to gauge the effectiveness of these drugs and the effects have long since become permanent. While this means the chimps have more or less been elevated to a human level of problem solving, cognition and general awareness...they're still chimps. So the effects aren't quite as profound and far-reaching as one might assume.

For example: While the chimps are able to figure out the use of firearms very quickly by simple observation and experimentation, they're just as likely to throw a pistol at you than shoot at you with it. In fact, they're more likely to bang in on the floor in the attempt to show you how fearsome they are. Even if they do shoot they aren't inclined to make much of an attempt to aim anyway, since the loud noise and something randomly shattering is usually their aim in firing the thing off in the first place.

Likewise every other tool or techno-gadget they get their hands on. Terrifying Space Monkeys find their new level of intelligence and self-awareness has only enhanced their natural curiosity and they're compelled to tear apart just about everything they can get their hands on to see how it works. Or see what interesting things happen when you tear it apart. Or throw it at something. Or sit on it really hard a few dozen times in a row. It also means a Terrifying Space Monkey set loose in a spaceship with a screwdriver and wrench will have the whole ship disassembled in less than a day if they aren't stopped or the inevitable hull breach doesn't suck them out into space. The exploration of this phenomenon being the main thrust of the second in this trilogy of adventures, Monkey Wrench.