DARING TALES OF THE SPACE LANES

06

THE STEALER OF LIGHT

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SPECIAL THANKS: MARTA CASTELLANO (MY WIFE) FOR SUPPORTING ME ALL THE WAY AND FRANCESCA VIARENGO FOR SHE KNOWS EVEN MORE STUFF

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THE STEALER OF LIGHT

This book contains an adventure based around the exploits of four pregenerated, spacefaring heroes.

You can find the character sheets and details of their spaceship, the *Blazing Star*, on the Triple Ace Games website: www.tripleacegames.com. The heroes have no defined gender, thus the players can assign it as they wish.

The characters have all their leveling opportunities mapped out in advance from Seasoned (from which they start) to Legendary. Each adventure in this series earns the heroes a fixed five Experience Points, granting them advancement after every mission. The players only need to tick the appropriate box on the sheet to start making use of their advancements.

This means you can use the character sheets at conventions and run adventures of any Rank without having to create your own characters from scratch. It also means you can run these tales as pick-up games without any preparation!

Better yet, you will know that when you buy one of our adventures, you can guarantee the adventurers will have all the skills and abilities they need to win the day!

You will also need some gaming stone counters or other markers and a copy of the Space Rules Supplement, which you can download free from the www.tripleacegames.com website.

Finally, you will find it useful to have some extra copies of the standard Savage Worlds Burst templates to represent obstacles and terrain elements.

BACKGROUND

The planet Khoras was once the home of two races: the Khors and the Rannites. Despite being very similar, the two peoples were bitter enemies. The Khors had bronze colored skin, while the Rannites were silvery, but that was the only true difference.

The symbols of this rivalry were their two royal families, both gifted with peculiar psionic powers — the Khors royal family was able to control and bend light while the Rannites rulers mastered the power of shaping the dark.

An endless, cyclical war raged between the two races, but neither side was strong enough to utterly defeat the other.

This status quo was maintained until the rise of Salandra Sash, heir princess of the Khors. A beautiful girl and a skilled fighter, she left the planet in her youth to join the Mercenary Guild. Many stories were told of her deeds of bravery (some true, others patently false), making her a legend throughout the sector and a popular hero even to this day.

In the end, Salandra returned home to be crowned queen of the Khors.

The experience in the Mercenary Guild taught her many dirty tricks to win a war — and she used the foulest of these to destroy the Rannites.

The warrior queen discovered that the powers of the two royal families depended on a particular radiation produced by Gweo, the local sun. She ordered an ultra-powerful radiation cannon be built in total secret and fired against the sun, permanently changing its radiation pattern in a way that was harmless for the Khors royals, but deadly for the Rannites rulers.

Within a decade, all the Rannites rulers perished and their subjects had no choice but to pay homage to the Khors.

Finally, Khoras became a unified planet.

Ultimately, this was not a good thing: Salandra's descendants proved to be totally inept leaders – in only fifty years, the royal family ran up so much debt that it was forced to sell the entire planet to the Terraformers Guild.

The Guild used Khoras for their experiments and almost destroyed it.

Eventually, both races evacuated the planet, spreading throughout the galaxy and ceasing to exist as a distinct cultural entity.

Now, a century after Salandra Sash's reign, only a sin-

gle member of the Khors royal family survives: a young woman named Salandra Sash (after her grandmother). She is quite popular, being a holomovie star.

She knows very little of the dark secrets of her family, but an ominous menace looms over her. Unknown to all, Hast, master scientist and last prince of the Rannites dynasty, survived the radiation change.

Thanks to a genetic mutation, Hast escaped with his life, but he was seriously disfigured. As a nice side effect, though, his lifespan was dramatically lengthened.

Via his scientific investigations, the prince discovered his family did not die by natural causes; they were murdered! He has spent many years in isolation, searching for a way to take revenge on Salandra's descendants and now that his life is finally coming to an end, he has found the means.

Hast has returned to Khoras, now an abandoned rock, and in the old Khorite royal palace, he has discovered Salandra's super cannon.

With the help of his robotic minions, Hast has transformed the device into an artifact capable of extracting the power of light from the body of a Khors through a terrible process that causes an agonizing death.

Transferring the stolen power to himself, Hast will be young again.

By doing so, with a single blow, he will destroy his enemies and lay the foundations of a new Rannites dynasty.

The madman plans to kidnap Salandra from the set of her latest holomovie — she is now shooting a film depicting the deeds of her popular ancestor.

Hast has sent one of his most faithful robotic minions (disguised as a clumsy assistant director) to join the movie crew. The droid is there to make kidnapping the girl possible. The plan cannot fail, but at this point, the heroes enter…

Characters: 50 XP

Important Note: To avoid confusion in the text, Salandra (the space heroine) is referred to as "old Salandra," while her granddaughter (the holomovie star) is called "young Salandra." The "Khors" are the race both Salandras belong to, while the "Rannites" are Host's race. The expression "Khorasite" refers to both races from the planet - Both Khors and Rannites together.

ACT 1: ACTION!

SCENE 1: A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS… OR NOT?

Read or paraphrase the following passage to the players:

The life of a spacefarer is not always dodging blaster fire and piloting starships through asteroid fields. Sometimes, even heroes like you need a little R&R, so this evening you enjoyed a lavish dinner to celebrate the lucrative outcome of a recent smuggling operation.

You are now leaving Phul Zho, the best restaurant in the sector, strangely placed on Wayland, a very polluted industrial world. The good wine and the delicious food make you wish for one thing only — your comfortable bunks on the Blazing Star.

However, tonight will end differently.

While you are waiting for a robotaxi on one of the high-level streets of the city, lazily looking at the chaotic traffic on the levels below, an incredible scene catches your attention.

Far below you, on the edge of a street platform, a beautiful girl is fighting for her life! She is wearing scant armor, and a sword made of pure light shimmers in her hands. She is surrounded by a group of ugly aliens of some unknown saurian race. To make things worse, a towering monster, as big as an Urk giant, emerges from the shadows and bellows in rage at her! There are too many opponents – if you don't do something, the girl is doomed!

Just then, the robotaxi arrives.

"Robotaxi X-231 at your service. What is your destination, please?"

The party must save the girl, and must do it quickly. Before starting the combat, they have to reach her on the level below. There are two ways to accomplish this: either persuade the taxi driver to bring the party to the scene, or use the gravitic conducts nearby. The two solutions are detailed below.

THE SHY TAXI DRIVER

The robotaxi is a standard hovertaxi piloted by a droid. Using its car is the safer solution, but Robotaxi X-231 is not at all happy about taking its precious vehicle into the middle of a fight! The heroes must accomplish a tight series of actions to reach Salandra with this vehicle. They have only six rounds of time, because the battle below is becoming more difficult with each passing minute. Each step requires a round and counts as an action.

* **Persuade X-231 to Let Them Board the Taxi.** The droid is not too happy to have a group of danger seeking heroes in its taxi. It must be convinced with either good manners or bad ones. The heroes must accomplish a Persuasion or Intimidation roll. This roll can be cooperative.

* **Taking the Driver's Seat.** The droid will not drive into peril, so control of the vehicle must be wrested from it and a hero must drive the hovertaxi in its place.

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In order to remove the droid, the heroes must win an opposed Strength roll versus the droid's Strength (d6). It is necessary to win the roll with a raise to drag the droid into the back seat; otherwise, the party must spend another action wrestling with it. Once removed, X-231 complains a lot, but remains calm. In addition, this roll can be cooperative.

* Understanding the Controls. The heroes only have a few moments to become familiar with the hovertaxi's controls. This requires a Smarts roll. If a hero (in DTSL #1) has already piloted a Wayland hovertaxi, he does not need to roll, but a full round is still spent remembering the basics.

* Rushing to the Girl. With seating positions taken and controls understood, now the heroes must rush to save the girl! This requires a Piloting roll.

If at the start of the seventh round the heroes have not yet reached Salandra, the girl suffers a Wound. She takes an additional Wound at both the ninth and eleventh round. At the thirteenth, she is Incapacitated. The droids' weapons are set to stun, so the damage is only temporary and she will be fit again at the start of the next scene, but in this case, she will be VERY enraged!

THE GRAVITIC CONDUITS

The heroes are standing next to a gravitic conduit. It is a circular area with levitating platforms powered by an antigravitic force. No platform is available at the moment, so the heroes must jump into the area and enjoy a low gravity fall if they want to land near the spot where the fight is.

Any hero who chooses this path must make three Agility rolls, one for each round, which represent his ability to move in low gravity. If a hero fails a roll, give the player a gaming stone to represent a bad move in antigravity. At the third round, he suffers 1d6 damage for each gaming stone he has. The damage is considered dealt by an Extra. If a critical failure is rolled, it means the hero has moved so badly that he has been thrown out of the low gravity area! Thanks to his quick reflexes, he clings to a metal pillar, avoiding a terrible death. He needs a Strength (-4) roll to regain balance and a Climbing (–2) roll to reach the spot where the combat is taking place. A single roll can be tried each round.

SAVING THE GIRL

You finally reach the fight and are able to better assess the situation. The enemies are small but very quick bipedal reptiloids, armed with nasty metal whips charged with crackling energy. However, the biggest problem is their leader: A huge saurian, twice the size of a man and completely naked except for a full helm and a durasteel shield. He is also holding a very nasty looking weapon in his claws - an energy trident!

The girl is so focused on the combat that she does not seem to notice your arrival.

The fighting area is a circular platform, 18" wide, used as an emergency landing pad for hovervehicles.

Looking at the area clockwise, there are four passageways, each 3" wide, at hour twelve, three, six, and nine.

Place Salandra Sash (the girl) in the center of the area. The enemies have surrounded her, and are 6" away.

Heroes arriving on the spot using the gravitic conduits are placed within 3" of a passageway of their choice (it must be the same for all the heroes).

Heroes in the hovertaxi are not placed in the combat area. Instead, during his turn, the driver moves the vehicle into the combat area from a side of his choice, using the taxi's Pace (20"). Clever heroes can directly ram into the aliens (see below)!

The tactic of the opponents is simple; they want to render Salandra unconscious.

Salandra simply uses Full Defense or Tricks until an enemy is taken out. She is still convinced she is shooting a movie scene!

When the first enemy is dispatched (put out of action, not simply Shaken), read the following passage.

Your blow is a solid one, killing the enemy on the spot. He falls apart revealing mechanical parts inside. It is not a living being, it is a droid!

"You fool!" The blonde girl shouts at you, "You've ruined it all!"

Just then, a stray enemy blow hits her, leaving a red mark on her bare legs.

"For all the galaxies!" She swears, with an astonished look in her eyes: "They are armed with real weapons!"

From this point on, Salandra uses her Powers and tries to defend herself as best she can. The battle ends when all the enemies are eliminated. At this point, move on to the next scene. Salandra is on the party's side, so hand the players her stats and let them use her in the fight.

⭐ **Salandra Sash, holomovie actress:** See page 30.

⭐ **Kandaroon Centurion, stage droid:** See page 29.

⭐ **Kandaroon Raptors, stage droids (2 per hero):** See page 29.

HOVERTAXI

Hovertaxis are small and nimble, capable of weaving through traffic at breakneck speed.

Acc/Top Speed: 15/60; **Toughness:** 12 (2); **Handling:** 0; **Crew:** 1+4

Notes: Max height 100".

TERRAIN AND PROPS

* Platform Edges: The edge of the platform is slippery due the terrible pollution of the planet. Any character hit by a blow and standing within 3" of the edge (excluding the areas in front of the passageways) must make an Agility roll. With a failure, he falls! An Extra failing the roll is doomed to a tragic death after a minute long fall. A Wild Card manages somehow to cling to the edge of the platform. He needs a Strength (-4) roll to climb back up. This roll can be cooperative.

* Hovertaxi: The heroes can enter the scene ramming the bad guys with the taxi! This makes X-231 complain even more, but it is a good tactic. The vehicle is 3" wide, 6" long, and moves 20" each round. All characters on its path must make an Agility (–2) roll or suffer 3d6 damage. After the ramming, the vehicle stops. The driver must a do Piloting (–2) roll. In case of success he arrests the taxi in a safe place, otherwise the vehicle stops exactly on the Platform Edges (see above)! Any hero that want to leave the car must now cross the slippery terrain. The pilot should receive a Bennie for this cool stunt.

The engine is jammed so the taxi cannot be moved again for the rest of the fight. The vehicle counts as Medium Cover (–2) and has Toughness 12.

* Emergency Energy Tower The platform is equipped with an automated energy tower for vehicles that are out of power. It counts as difficult terrain, offers Light Cover (–1) and has Toughness 10. If the tower is damaged by an energy weapon, it explodes, dealing 2d6 damage from an Extra in a Large Burst Template. Place the tower somewhere on the northern side of the platform, using a Small Burst Template to represent it.

SCENE 2: MOVIE STARS

"Stop!" A voice shouts from outside the scene.

You recharge your weapons — all the droids may be destroyed, but you don't know if other enemies might show up.

A group of hovercars, loaded with people and strange devices, flies toward the platform, while several other people emerge from hiding nearby. They all carry cameras, lights and other movie production equipment. You suddenly realize that you are standing on a holomovie set!

"This joke will cost you dearly, I assure you!" An enraged voice says.

The man speaking is tall, with long hair, and his clothes and glittering jewelry stink of richness a parsec away.

"I am Silon Guy, executive producer on this picture. Your actions were--"

"--simply amazing! Astounding! Marvelous! Your acting is so realistic! So method! Silon, we absolutely must cast these guys in the film!"

The man talking now is short and balding. He has a strange visor over his eyes and he wears wildly eccentric clothing.

"Guys," the short man continues, "you were absolutely fantastic! I'm Rollan Gan, the director of this motion picture and I simply must ask you: who trained you how to fight in such a realistic way?"

In the meantime, Silon Guy, the producer, seems distracted by a technician calling him over to one of the fallen droids. He gives you a cold stare and goes to look at the droid.

"Hello??? Is nobody thinking about me? These damned droids have hurt my leg and nobody cares!!! Holo Both! Holo Both! You stupid, incompetent man! A Braxian pig would be a better assistant than you! Move your fat ass and find me a doctor! A surgeon! Someone! Now!"

It's the girl you saved earlier. You take a better look and finally recognize her! She is Salandra Sash, the famous holomovie actress! All of you have seen at least one of her holomovies. She is clearly more beautiful in person than in her vids.

Just then, a fat, clumsy humanoid comes running in. His face is pig-like and his wet eyes are filled with adoration towards the enraged actress, who, in exchange, constantly complains to him.

A medic arrives and Salandra Sash steps into a hovertaxi. She doesn't even say goodbye.

What a bitch.

After a few moments, Silon Guy comes back to the heroes. He looks a lot less angry, but very worried.

"I must apologize for my rudeness earlier," the producer says, "The technician showed me that there is definitely something wrong with the stage droids. They aren't our droids at all, but a very similar model and they are all equipped with real weapons."

"You saved Salandra, and the movie, of course. Let me explain. We are filming 'The Space Adventures of Salandra Sash.' Yes, it is a holomovie based on the deeds of the popular heroine of a century ago. Our actress, Salandra Sash, is a direct descendant of the heroine, her granddaughter to be precise. She even has the same name."

"The fans will go mad for something like that. Salandra Sash playing Salandra Sash!"

"So, I would be very happy if you didn't tell anyone about this as it would be very bad publicity."

"For now, I'm very worried. It seems someone has made an attempt on Salandra's life. You look like quite worthy types and Silon Guy wants you in the cast. I cannot refuse that man anything; he is a genius in his field."

"So, I'll cast you all in the film, as bit players of course. You're lucky! Some folks would kill for the chance to appear in a film with Salandra Sash!"

"By the way, if, in the meantime you manage to quietly discover who's behind this attack, I'll pay you a generous extra fee."

If the heroes accept, they are aboard! They can begin their investigation on the set. Examining the droids is the first step. A successful Repair roll will reveal that

HOLO KILLS THE VIDEO STARS

The players might ask why, in a future such as this, movies would still be made with real actors, extras, props, locations, and so on. This is the age of super-computers, isn't it?

There are two reasons for doing it the old-fashioned way.

First, it is tradition. Great holomovie makers like Rollan Gan are intrigued by the old media.

Second, holomovies are enjoyed not only by seeing them, but also through neural chips that allow for a first- person perspective. This experience is made possible only thanks to small impression recorders mounted in the heads of the actors during filming. Even in the far future, no known computer is capable of simulating such a rich sensory input.

they were made with a strange technology unknown even to the heroes. They will also find that the droids had built-in security devices in the form of acid injectors that physically destroyed their memory banks when they were terminated. Data retrieval is impossible.

Their weapons were real, but set to stun. Perhaps it was not a murder attempt, but an attempted kidnapping.

Speaking with the droids' technician reveals two important facts: these are not the production crew's droids and the droid master, a man named Kalo Sian, is not on set. He is personally responsible for all the stage droids. Someone in the crew saw him leave the set a few minutes before action was called.

There might be other clues on the set, but the heroes have no time to find them – a new danger is approaching.

"We must get away! Go! They've discovered us!" One of the set security guards is shouting.

All the crewmembers race to their hovercars while a raging horde representing every known race invades the platform.

You find a place in Silon Guy's limousine.

Enemies? Murderers?

"Worse," explains the producer, "fans!"

You cast a startled look at the surging crowd behind you.

"All the crew is lodged at the Poulson Plaza. I have taken the liberty of reserving you a suite. You are in the cast now."

The Poulson Plaza is the best hotel on Wayland. This might well turn into a very interesting adventure!

SCENE 3: A VERY RICH (THOUGH VERY DEAD) DROID MASTER

You reach the hotel after a thirty-minute flight. You

never thought that Wayland could host such a high-class place but, well, money can do many things, even on a rat hole like Wayland.

Kalo Sian, the droid master, has a room in the hotel too. The next logical move is checking if he is there. If no player has this idea, Silon Guy suggests this course of action.

The party is lucky — the receptionist says Kalo Sian arrived at the hotel fifteen minutes ago and seemed to be in a real hurry. Maybe the good man is ready to run!

The characters dash to his room and find the door closed and locked. Before they can knock or do anything else, they hear the distinctive sound of a blaster shot and a low moan of pain coming from within the room.

Something terrible is happening inside! The party must break in as fast as they can!

The door can be forced with a Lockpicking roll, but a full minute is required for each attempt. Alternatively, the party can break down the door with brute force. This requires a successful Strength roll with a raise, which can be cooperative. Each attempt requires a round. Finally, there's the good old option of shooting the lock, which requires a Called Shot (–2). The lock has Toughness 7.

Whichever solution the party chooses is not important, but when they finally break in, they see the following:

The room is swept by Wayland's polluted air. The reason is simple — the floor-to-ceiling windows that take up the entire southern wall are open wide.

A silver-skinned alien of an unknown humanoid race crouches on the windowsill, clutching a still smoking blaster in one hand.

On the floor lies a body, carbonized by a close range shot. It must be Kalo Sian, the droid master, and he is very dead.

The silver alien is holding Sian's wristcomputer – he is stealing important evidence!

Before you can do anything, the killer leaps into the void!

You rush to the windows. The room is on floor six hundred and the traffic of hovervehicles is very dense here. The mysterious assassin has landed safely on a hovercar that was waiting just below the window.

The hovercar dives deep into the traffic at top speed.

You must find a vehicle quickly if you want to catch the assassin.

Luckily, a hovertaxi is passing nearby.

The hovertaxi is the only vehicle the players can find quickly. If they hail the vehicle, it stops at the window providing an amusing interlude.

"Robotaxi X-231 at your service. What is your dest… No! Not you again!"

It's a small galaxy! What luck! It's the same taxi you flagged down earlier!

The droid driver tries to close the door, but you have already slipped inside.

"Please, get out of my taxi!" Pleads the droid.