

Hackjammer Adventure HJA1

Adrift

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An Adventure for Character Levels 1-2

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Introduction

Adrift is a Hackmaster adventure set in the Known Spheres of the Hackjammer setting. It is an introductory adventure for players new to the Hackjammer game. It is designed for 4-6 characters of 1st or 2nd level. It includes a map of the Squid-class Caravel, the Voidscuttle. Although it is set in the city of Bilgeport, it can easily be used in any asteroid-based city in an asteroid field, such as the Rock of Bral or Dragon's Rock in the Tears of Selune in Realmspace.

Bilgeport

Bilgeport is a foul, dirty, run-down port of about five or six thousand souls. It does have the distinction of being the only place for several days' journey to get repairs. It is a backwater with little to offer beyond a dry dock and cheap labor. Repairs are adequate, but nothing special. There is very little law and order in these parts; press gangs are common and pirates openly walk the streets. The town is run by a mayor and a town council, although these are known to be corrupted, and the real power lies with a handful of wealthy merchants that run the city to suit their purposes. In short, it's a dump.

Bilgeport sits near the center of the Bilgebreaker Rocks, a cluster of about two hundred major asteroids and thousands of smaller rocks. The major asteroids are fairly small, only about five to eight miles across. The smaller asteroids drift between the major ones, and are typically anywhere from the size of a good-sized ship to about a mile across. There are many small pishing villages and farming thorps on the major asteroids. Bilgeport is of course the largest of these communities. Piracy, slavery, and banditry are all constant nuisances.

Background

Roughly six months ago, the Rusty Crowbars company, a salvage operation run by Rotun Irontoe, was hired to scrap the Voidscuttle. The Voidscuttle is an old Squid-class Caravel, and is well over two hundred years old. Although well-maintained, dry rot and age have taken their toll. The ship was finally deemed not spaceworthy and consigned to the scrap heap. The Rusty Crowbars took possession of the ship, and paid to have it towed to their scrapyard. Rotun expected to make a tidy profit salvaging iron, wood, and brass fittings, all of which were valuable in Bilgeport.

Things did not go quite to plan, however. While the Voidscuttle was being towed to the Crowbars' scrap yard, a sudden space storm broke it loose and sent it drifting into the void, carrying a half-dozen hapless wreckers aboard her. That was the last anyone saw of the old craft for six months.

Yesterday, Captain Josyn Black of the Amethyst Rose, spotted the Voidscuttle while on a routine run from the town of Edge. A friend of Rotun, Captain Black notified his friend of the position of the Voidscuttle when he pulled into port. Eager to recover the wreck, and salvage his reputation, Rotun is now looking for a group of hired swords to recover the craft and guide it to his salvage yard.

Any Job that Pays...

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Your stomachs grumble as the waitress brings you your meals of thin stew and hard bread. All around you, sailors and other spacefairers dine on their meals and retell tales of sailing the Void over watered down ale. The establishment, the Busty Barnacle, is dark, dirty, and smoky. The air is quite refined with the stench of burnt food, ale, smoke, and vomit. In other words, it's a dive. But as you are currently unemployed, and almost penniless, this is probably the best place to find work. Maybe even get a position aboard a ship and you can get off this dump of a rock that is aptly named "Bilgeport".

As you finish your meals, you notice a stout-looking Halfling walking around talking to people. A couple of rough-looking men seem interested in what he is say, but many rebuff whatever he is offer. Eventually, he steps up to your table.

Now that he is closer, you can see that this Halfling is quite rough-looking. He looks more like a dwarf, given how muscular he looks. He has tattoos on his bare arms, a reddish beard, and smoking a pipe. His left leg has been replaced by a peg-leg.

"You lads and ladies interested in a job?" he asks bluntly. "Simple job. Need some sword arms to get aboard an old derelict. Clean 'er out. Make sure not'ton is still breath'n aboard her. Or not breath'n and still mov'n, if you catch me drift. Should'n take more than a few hours of yer time. Pay yea 10 silver each to clean the ship and get her ready to be towed. And I'll spring for a nice hot dinner after yer successful. Not bad pay for a few hours' work, eh?"

Rotun needs men, but is not desperate. After all, he has an entire bar of out-of-work sailors and muscle to ask. If the PCs accept his offer, he'll hurry them to the docks where a small skiff he has rented for the day awaits. Along the way, read or paraphrase the following:

The Halfling leads you through town down towards the docks at a brisk pace. "Gotta hurry, lads. She won't be there long. The name's Rotun Ironroe. I be the owner of the Rusty Crowbars Wrecking Company. You've heard of us, right? No? That's a shame. We do good work. We usually tear down old buildings, but every so often we get a ship to dismantle. Normally I'd use my boys for this assignment, but they all be on the other side of town working another job. Ah, here's our ride."

He leads you to a small skiff. Shaped vaguely like a mosquito, the craft looks like it can hold about eight people comfortably. Three more people are aboard, preparing the craft for travel.

"Get yer gear stowed and let's get underway. Captain Horte, ye should have the coordinates Captain Black provided yah? Good. Let's go!"

At the docks, a pair of dock workers cast off the lines, and the ship drifts for a moment in the asteroid's gravity plane. Captain Horte shouts out a few orders, and then his crew of two stout sailors raise the sails and the craft is underway.

Once the little mosquito is away from the docks, Rotun lights up a pipe and starts to smoke. “Alright, lads, here be the job. Six months ago, some of my crew lost an old Squid-class craft, the Voidscuttle. She was a merchant ship, an old one at that. Pretty much scrap when ole the Waylun-Yutin Cartel sold her to me. She wasn’t space-worthy, so we were having her towed to my scrapyard to be salvaged. Wood, nails, fixtures, that sort of thing. Hard way to earn a coin, but we get by. On the way, she broke loose from the towline during a sudden space-storm. Damned thing cost me a pretty penny, and a few good men, to boot. That said, I got word from a friend of mine this morning that he spotted the ‘scuttle on the way in to Bilgeport. The ‘Rose was late and couldn’t take time to check her out, nor did she have sail to tow her back.”

He takes a long puff on his pipe. “That’s where you lads come in. Need yea to go aboard, check her out, clear out any critters that might still be aboard. Not sure what might be hiding in her hull, so there be some risk. Might be just a few hungry rats. If we’re lucky. Once she’s cleared out, we’ll rig some sail to her and fly her back to my scrapyard.”

He motions you over to a small crate. He pulls aside the cover, revealing a few crowbars, two large mallets, several pairs of heavy gloves, and some carefully folded cloth and rope that is without a doubt a set of Splendid Sails, the magical sail-cloths that many ships use to fly through the empty void. “Tools of the trade,” he says, smiling.

The rest of the trip is relatively uneventful. It takes about an hour to reach the Voidscuttle’s position. It has settled into a decaying orbit around a small asteroid at the outskirts of the asteroid field. Boarding will not be a problem. The Voidscuttle will eventually crash if no intervention is made, but such an event will take roughly four days.

The Voidscuttle

The craft is completely unlit. Starlight and sunlight is enough to render light equivalent of twilight. Below decks is completely dark unless otherwise noted. The masts are damaged and the booms are missing, but enough clips remain on the masts to allow for the ship to be crudely rigged. She will not be very maneuverable nor very fast, but once she’s rigged, the PCs and Rotun can get her to the scrapyard in roughly three hours’ time. Once docked, she’ll never fly again.

Forecastle

This area is entirely deserted. There once was a catapult located here, but was removed long ago. Now there’s nothing here save the ammo locker bolted to the deck behind the now inoperable turret. Rat bones are scattered about everywhere. If the locker is opened (there is no lock), a tiny school of pish bursts out of the locker and flees into the void (eight total pish; they appear to be brightly colored trout with feathery wings). Characters who can get off an attack within 10 seconds of opening the chest can attack a pish (any hit kills it) and possibly score a nice meal for later on.

Sterncastle

The ballistae have been removed; the deck is relatively clear and empty. The railing shows signs of damage; any weight (such as a person leaning on them) will cause them to give way, possibly dumping that person into the gravity plane or the deck below (causing 1d6p points of damage) unless they make a successful dexterity check.

Main Deck

1. **Captain's Quarters:** Before the Voidscuttle was sold, this room was stripped of valuables. At that remains is the hollow remnants of a mattress (the rats have devoured anything edible), a badly damaged nightstand, a broken chair (once ornate), and a caved-in chest. At the center of the room is a ceramic pot, about a foot and a half-tall and resembles an egg with the top peeled open, like a flower. It is painted a dark green. The chamber pot bears the marking of the Waylun-Yutin cartel on its bottom.

Hiding throughout the room are several giant rats. A cautious party can make an easy listen check (+60% to rolls) to determine there is scratching and squeeking noises are originating from several spots throughout the room. A swarm of the largest giant rats are hidden in the wreckage, with the largest rat hiding in the chamber pot. Should the pot be disturbed in any way, or if someone peers into it, the rats will attack! They will clamor out from behind debris and fall from the ceiling, dropping onto PCs within the room.

Giant Rats (8): HP 10; Init 0; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att +0; Dmg 1d4p+1 Def -1; DR 1; Top 10; EPV 12

2. **Open Deck:** The hatch that is used to reach the Cargo Deck is currently covered by debris, including the ruined splinters of the sail booms. It takes roughly ten minutes to clear the debris to gain access to the lower deck. The hatch itself is banged up but otherwise in good condition. There are no monsters or other dangers here, aside from splinters.
3. **Saloon/Galley:** A busted lantern hangs from a chain from the ceiling over a large, much damaged table. The gutted remnants of kitchen are all that remains. Scurrying around the ruins is a swarm of giant, VERY hungry rats that will attack without hesitation!

Giant Rats (20): HP 6; Init 0; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att +0; Dmg 1d4p+1 Def -1; DR 1; Top 10; EPV 12

There are several small rat-holes in the walls that lead down to the cargo deck. There are several rat nests along the walls and in the corners of the room.

4. **Pantry:** The ship's provisions were once kept here. Nothing is left; the pantry has been stripped bare. All that remains is a few shelves and broken wood on the floor. There are several rat nests on the floor and on the remnants of the shelves. Shifting through this debris will yield 23 trade coins and 16 copper coins.
5. **Head:** This was the ship's head. It is completely empty, save for the broken fragments of a chamber pot. The walls are covered with crude graffiti and phallic imagery.
6. **Ship Mage's Quarters:** The door to this room is missing. Inside, the room is filled with cobwebs, intermixed with the spider webs of a nest of large spiders! The spiders survive on a diet of giant

rats, but they are quite hungry and would like tastier fair. They will not hesitate to attack, and will pursue prey.

Large Spiders (6): HP 9; Init -4; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att -1; Dmg 1; Def +3; DR 2; Top NA; EPV 45

Poison: VF6, -1 to Attack, Defense, and Damage rolls for 2d12 hours on a failed save

- 7. First Officer's Quarters:** This room has been stripped almost bare. Some broken lumber had been tossed here just to get it out of the way. The eye-window is still intact, but is filthy, so it lets in almost no light. Hanging on one wall is a large dartboard with four throwing knives embedded in it. The knives have good balance (+1 to attack rolls when thrown); they were used in knife throwing competitions between the wreckers and were forgotten about once the ship became adrift. The PCs can claim these weapons if they want; Rotun certainly does not want them (too many bad memories). Hiding in the lumber is a very large spider. It lurks in the lumber until it is either disturbed, or the PCs leave, at which time it will stalk the PCs until it gets an opportune moment to strike.

Very Large Spider: HP 18; Init -4; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att +1; Dmg 1d3p; Def +2; DR 3; Top NA;

EPV 100

Poison: VF7, -2 to Attack, Defense, and Damage rolls for 2d12 hours on a failed save; natural 1 indicates death.

Cargo Deck

- 1. Cargo Hold:** The moment the hatch to the cargo hold is opened, a dust scavver bursts out of the hold! It is extremely hungry, and will attack anyone without hesitation! If reduced to fewer than 10 hp, it will attempt to fly away, and seek a meal elsewhere.

A few weeks ago, the scavver began nosing around the wreck, looking for morsels to eat. During one foray into the wreck, its tail snagged a line while it was investigating the cargo hold. This caused a chain-reaction that resulted in debris collapsing on the hatch, trapping it in the cargo hold. The creature has been trapped ever since, and has become extremely hungry as all it has to subsist on is radiation and the occasional rat.

The cargo hold is mostly empty save for a few dozen old, broken crates and barrels. Hiding in the debris is a swarm of giant rats. Anyone entering the cargo hold will face immediate attack as the hungry rats seek an easy meal!

Dust Scavver: HP 31; Init 0; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att +3; Dmg 2d3p+2 Def +3; DR 3; Top N/A; EPV 100

Giant Rats (12): HP 5; Init 0; Spd 10; Rch 2'; Att +0; Dmg 1d4p+1 Def -1; DR 1; Top 10; EPV 12

- 2. Crew Quarters:** What's left of Rotun's wrecking crew is here, in the form of six undead skeletons. Unlike normal skeletons, these creatures were created by malevolent, alien radiations of the deep void. The radiation has seeped deep into their bones. The skeletons softly

glow with an unnatural, sickly green light as a result. The light radiating from their bodies is toxic, causing a temporary weakness in anyone that gets too close (see below for details). The skeletons are armed with crowbars and a few cutlasses. On the walls are scrawled the words “Abandon All Hope!” and “There is no Escape!” in blood, as if written by a blood-covered hand.

Irradiated Skeletons (6): HP 31; Init 0; Spd 9; Rch 3’ or 6’; Att +1; Dmg 2d8p-1 or 2d6-2; Def +7; DR 3; Top N/A; EPV 100

Radiation: 5’ Area of Effect; characters in melee must make a Con save (d20p+5) every 10 seconds or lose d4p con. Characters that reach 0 con are overcome with pain and fall to the ground. Constitution returns at a rate of 1 point per minute. There are (fortunately) no long-lasting effects of this radiation.

3. **Locker:** The door to the crew’s storage locker has been left ajar, and is now the lair of a rare and dangerous creature known as a xodent. How the creature got aboard the Voidscuttle is unknown. It lurks in the rafters, waiting for someone to investigate. At this point, it will leap out and attack. Due to its skill, it has a Hiding score of 45%. The xodent has the appearance of a very large rodent, about as big as a kobold, with an elongated skull, unusually long and bone-like limbs, and a long, boney, prehensile tail with a dagger-like tip.

The nest has the xodent’s collected treasure, which consist of 23 trade coins, 9 copper coins, 5 silver coins, and 15 silver coins worth of silver and brass jewelry. Tucked in a corner is a metal scroll tube with 2 random 1st level spells and 1 2nd level spell.

Xodent: HP 40; Init -2; Spd 9; Rch 2’; Att +4; Dmg 1d4p+2 (bite), 1d3p (claw), 1d3p (claw), 2d4p+2 (tail); Def +5; DR 3; Top N/A; EPV 120

Concluding the Adventure

Once the Voidscuttle has been cleared, Rotun can safely take possession. To secure the ship, the PCs must explore all of the rooms and slay or drive off the undead, giant rats, the giant spider, the scavver, and the xodent. Once this is done, the ship can be safely rigged for travel.

The journey to Rotun’s scrapyard takes about three hours. Once the ship docks, Rotun pays the PCs and orders his chef, “Meatball”, to prepare a feast for the PCs. About an hour later Meatball chimes the dinner bell, and serves them a delicious meal of roast chicken, hearty potatoes, cooked vegetables, and sweet-bread. Rotun makes sure to pay the PCs in full, and tells that that he might be able to land them a job working for a friend of his. If they are interested, he can see if Captain Black, owner of the Amethyst Rose trading vessel, would be willing to hire them on as sailors. Currently Rotun cannot afford to hire on extra hands on a permanent basis, but if another job comes up, he promises to keep the PCs on his short list of people to ask.

It is entirely possible that the PCs may seek to steal the Voidscuttle for themselves. While Rotun would be unable to prevent such an act, unless the PCs slay him, he will certainly make their lives miserable by

spreading the tale of their piracy. Even if they slay Rotun, his friends will know that was last seen with the party, and rumors will be raised about his disappearance. The PCs will be unable to get work on any legitimate ship, and will attract the attention of other pirates. Worse still, the Voidscuttle is in terrible condition. She has been stripped of anything really valuable and largely gutted. She has no weapons to defend herself with. Age has made her hull particularly thin and vulnerable to attack (she is considered to have a thin wooden hull instead of the normal thick wood). She has only 5 hull points left; a good shot to her hull will reduce her to flotsam. Getting her space-worthy would be very expensive, more than the cost of building a new ship from the keel up. The craft is good only for the scrapyard.

Voidscuttle

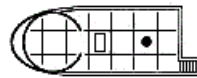
One Square = 5 Feet

Main Deck

1. Captain's Quarters
2. Open Deck
3. Saloon/Galley
4. Pantry
5. Privy
6. Ship's Mage Quarters
7. First Officer's Quarters

Cargo Deck

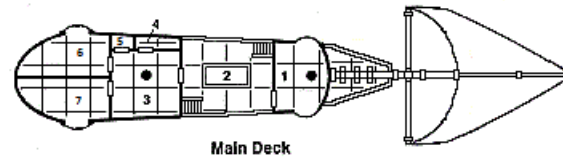
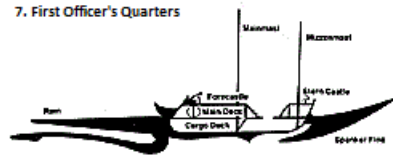
1. Cargo Hold
2. Crew Quarters
3. Lockers



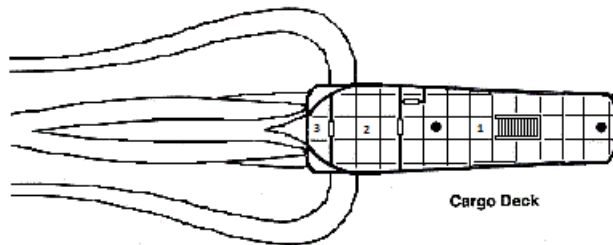
Forecastle



Stern Castle



Main Deck



Cargo Deck