

THE EXPANSE TRADES OF THE EXPANSE



BOUNTY
HUNTER



TRADES OF THE EXPANSE

BOUNTY HUNTER

“Okay,” Miller said. “What’s my contract?”
“Find Julie Mao, detain her, and ship her home.”
“A kidnap job, then,” he said.
“Yes.”

— *Leviathan Wakes*

Throughout human history, there have been people who posed problems for other people and those willing and able to deal with such problems—for a price. It may be someone who needs to be found, apprehended, given a message or a warning, or simply eliminated. This basic fact of human interaction hasn’t changed since humanity left the cradle of Earth’s gravity well and expanded out into the solar system and colonized and settled Mars, the Belt, and the Outer Planets, and even when they rushed through the Ring to the distant stars beyond. People still have problems involving other people, and as a result, there are still those willing to deal with those problems for a price: bounty hunters.

Of course, not all of them still call themselves that. Some do, but others are “freelance operatives” and “investigators” or “security specialists” and “pirate hunters,” among all the various euphemisms for what amounts to the same thing. Whatever they call themselves, bounty hunters offer the service of tracking someone down—no small feat in a human civilization of trillions now spanning hundreds of star systems—and taking care of whatever needs to be done once their target is found. Some of them are quite good at it, particularly since the ones who aren’t usually don’t last long.

BOUNTY HUNTING AND THE LAW

Bounty hunting—and placing bounties on individuals—is legal under Earth and Martian law, to a point. A lot depends on the target, why they’re wanted, who they’re wanted by, and what is expected of the bounty hunter. Generally speaking, it’s legal to place a bounty on someone who has committed a crime in order to see they are brought to justice, which essentially means posting a reward for action “leading to their arrest.” That can range from tips and information to actively tracking down the target and bringing them in. It’s likewise legal to investigate people so long as no crimes are committed in the process, such as breaking-and-entering, theft, or violation of personal data. Both of these things are, after all, what private security corps like Star Helix do: pay people to investigate, track, and arrest criminals.

Bounty hunting goes over the line when hiring someone to break the law, either committing breaking-and-entering or theft for purposes of investigation, or outright kidnapping, assault, or murder. Of course, while these things are technically against the law, oftentimes the people doing the bounty hunting are either the police or working for the government. So rather than “don’t break the law” the rule tends to be “don’t get caught doing anything your client can’t get you out of.” Clients are quick to repudiate bounty hunters with no discretion, leaving them at the mercy of local authorities, while they pass the job on to someone more competent. There’s always competition in the field for a good bounty.

Some bounties come from outside legal channels as well. There are any number of criminals who need people found and dealt with in various ways who are willing to pay well for the service. Sometimes, criminal bounties pose as legit cases, such as claiming to be looking for a missing friend or loved one. Other times, they’re up-front about the nature of the client, if not entirely forthcoming about the case. Bounty hunters must vet their clients carefully and decide if the money is good enough to take on potentially shady jobs. Some—like security officers who need to keep their bosses happy—don’t have much choice in the matter.



TYPES OF BOUNTIES

“Bounty hunting” is an extremely wide field of finding people and doing things, from missing persons cases (which often become kidnapping jobs) to hunting down (and sometimes executing) hardened criminals and more. The following are the most common kinds of bounties employers offer. Some bounty hunters specialize in particular kinds of assignments while carefully avoiding others. Some are less choosy, especially if the money is good and they’re in need.

TRACKING

All bounties are essentially tracking jobs, since finding the target is the first thing that needs to happen. If just anyone could find them, then there wouldn’t be much need for a bounty (or, at least, there won’t be much need for a bounty for very long). Sometimes, all a client wants is to find someone, although there’s usually something that comes after that. Tracking bounties involves substantial legwork and investigation, along with knowledge and knowhow of ways someone might disappear if they don’t want to be found. It can be slow and painstaking work, and the bounty hunter is not just working against the clock of their profit margin—the point at which the job is costing them more than they’re making. They’re also often working against their quarry noticing that someone is on their tail, or against other bounty hunters who might be after the same target.

DELIVERY

Once a target is located, the client may want something delivered to them other than a bullet to the head. Often, it’s a message of some sort, ranging from “come home, we miss you” to “I know where you are and if you value your miserable life...” Messages tend to be of the sort that must be delivered in person and are usually private. Otherwise, the client would simply broadcast them in hopes that the recipient would get them. It may also be important to get a response of some sort, whether the recipient is interested in giving one or not.

Of course, deliveries aren’t limited to messages or information. They include all kinds of things, from handing someone a family heirloom to the key to a strongbox, a legal summons, or even a warrant. The latter sort of thing tends to be accompanied by a fairly insistent invitation (see **Recovery and Arrest**, following). Oftentimes, the bounty hunter doesn’t know the contents of a delivery. For example, it might be in a sealed container with a biometric lock keyed solely to the target. Hopefully, if the contents turn out to be a surprise, it’s a pleasant one, or at least one that’s only fatal to the target and not everyone in a substantial blast radius around them.

RECOVERY

Some bounty hunting jobs are “find them and bring this back”—recovery jobs. “This” might be something the target has, which can be almost any portable thing of value. It could be information (kept in the target’s head or on a storage medium), almost any sort of object from a sentimental keepsake to a dangerous cutting-edge prototype, or even another person. Plenty of bounty hunting jobs involve tracking down someone’s child or other loved one who has been taken (sometimes by an estranged family member) and returning them.

The recovery job may also involve simply bringing the target back to the client. Unless the target is willing, of course, this amounts to what is commonly called a “kidnap job” of capturing the target and bringing them to the client against their will, ideally unharmed, although different bounties will offer more or less leeway on that score. There’s also the question of exactly why the client wants the target brought to them and what they plan to do afterwards, but many bounty hunters don’t concern themselves with either. Still, there’s a difference between a crime boss who wants a former underling handed over and concerned parents who want their adult child returned safely, even if both targets are likely unwilling.

ARREST

A variation on recovery is when the bounty hunter is expected to hand their target over to the authorities to answer to criminal charges. In that case, the bounty hunter is effectively arresting their target, and is expected to follow certain guidelines in apprehending them, containing them, and returning them. Most police and military authorities tend to overlook a criminal who is a little roughed-up “while attempting to evade capture” (or whatever) but unless the bounty calls for their delivery “dead or alive” (see **Elimination**, following) they won’t be happy if they get a corpse rather than a live prisoner and may have some pressing questions for the bounty hunters involved.

That said, many arrest bounties afford hunters latitude when it comes to bringing in their catch alive, especially if they catch someone during a crime (or fleeing from the scene of one). Pirate-hunting in the Belt and Outer Planets, for example,

is based on the assumption that pirate vessels are often not going to surrender. Nor is it always possible (or even preferable) to disable a pirate ship and try to take its crew alive. Things happen in the heat of the moment, but the bounty hunters had best have sensor readings or even visual recordings if they intend to claim a bounty on a target reduced to a radioactive dust cloud by a reactor explosion.

Unless they are bonded security agents, bounty hunters are not required to follow the same niceties of arresting criminals: They're not expected to read someone their legal rights, for example, or provide them with legal representation. That all comes once they've been handed off to the authorities. All the bounty hunter needs to do is keep the target in reasonable shape until they can be turned over. Of course, bounty hunters also need to make sure the handoff is properly set up and documented so security personnel don't simply claim they made the arrest themselves. Getting a receipt for a successful handoff—if not money up-front—is key.

ELIMINATION

Finally, there are “bounties” that are more “wanted dead” than even bothering to include an “or alive” option. These jobs are pretty much outright assassinations and are technically illegal, but money talks, and sometimes even security personnel take on elimination jobs. Typically, the client wants some kind of proof of elimination. It's not usually practical to ask for the literal delivery of the target's head, so this is most often some sort of video footage. Of course, that can be faked, and some targets of an elimination bounty may try to do so in order to abandon their previous lives and start over somewhere else far, far away.

There's a pretty fine line between “capture” and “elimination” for some bounty hunting jobs, and some employers deliberately blur that line in hopes of scoring a kill rather than a capture without having to outright put a price on their target's life. Of course, in the worst-case scenario, a handoff to the client just means the employer can arrange a suitable “accident” for the target or for them to disappear with the body never found. Organic recyclers are good for that sort of thing. So are airlocks.

CLIENTS

Bounty hunting clients range from planetary governments to individuals with enough wealth and influence to put out a bounty worth pursuing.

GOVERNMENTS

Governments like the UN and the MCR employ bounties “to involve interested and capable citizens in the law-enforcement process,” or so goes the official line. In reality, bounties occupy the thin strata of things important enough for a government to spend some money, but not so important that they can devote their own time or personnel to it—often because of a lack of either or both. So, for example, in peacetime, while there's a standard bounty on known pirates within the system, Earth and Martian naval forces have enough time on their hands to go pirate-hunting themselves; indeed, it is sometimes the only action peacetime troops may see. Military assets have more important things to do during times of high-tension, much less outright conflict, and hunting down pirates is left to whoever is interested in claiming the reward.

Most government bounties are standing bounties (see **Finding Work**, following), rewards for dealing with certain kinds of criminals or providing the government with important information. Governments also usually have a “most wanted” list of criminals with posted rewards for their capture (or information leading to their capture). The authorities are already pursuing these criminals, but the bounty helps ensure anyone in the know will also be looking out for them, ensuring fewer places to hide. Nearly all government bounties are arrest jobs, or at least tracking jobs wherein information is handed off to the government in hopes of an arrest, since there's usually no reward for a tip that doesn't pay off. Other sorts of government jobs are more likely handled directly by government operatives—or deniable black-ops.

Government bounties often raise questions of jurisdiction. While Earth and Mars typically honor each other's “most wanted” lists and extradition treaties, government officials on both sides sometimes play games with offering asylum to those hunted by the other side, especially if they think they have something of value. The Belt is known as a place to hide out if you have an Earth or Martian bounty on your head, given Belters' disdain for the Inners. Likewise, the bounties offered by Belter authorities tend to have little more force than individual bounties (following) depending on who wields the most influence with the OPA and different Belter communities at the time. Pursuing a government bounty outside of that government's immediate jurisdiction usually requires discretion.

CORPORATIONS

Corporations sometimes employ bounty hunters to deal with criminal matters “internally” rather than having to go to the authorities, especially when the authorities are often represented by a rival corporation or one of their subsidiaries. Corporations able to operate on an interplanetary scale like to play their cards close, and bounty hunters provide some discretion and deniability. As with governments, corporate bounties tend to fall into the space between important enough to spend money, but not something the corporation has the time and resources to do themselves.

The most common corporate case is a catch-and-retrieval: Typically, the target has absconded with something, from company secrets to a new prototype. The corporation wants their property back and wants the perpetrator to ensure they are punished. In some cases, the “missing asset” is the target themselves, usually, someone looking to escape an onerous work contract or spooked by corporate misdeeds. In the former case, the company wants their erstwhile employee hauled in front of a legal authority. In the latter case, they often prefer their missing asset to stay missing—and quiet—for good.

The joke was that Ceres didn’t have laws—it had police.

— *Leviathan Wakes*

SECURITY CONTRACTORS

A subset of corporate clients is security contractors, corporations like Star Helix, that provide police and security services. They are in the unique situation of being the “authorities” others report to, at least in their jurisdictions. Security contractors sometimes “farm out” certain investigative or even policing work by posting rewards for information or even the arrest of certain suspects. Security bounties for arrests tend to be limited to “most wanted” criminals, since the public sometimes sees bounties as encouraging vigilantism, and a sign the company can’t or won’t do the job it’s being paid to do.

Security contractors are also uniquely placed to “sub-contract” certain bounty hunting jobs. Virtually every cop in the Belt has worked the occasional “side case” for their superior officer, handed down from somewhere above them. It’s not an official complaint or criminal investigation, but something someone with influence wants done. The same sort of thing happens on Earth and Mars, although private security contractors there are more likely to run up against other jurisdictions and must be exceedingly discrete. Indeed, on Mars, it’s the police who are running most of the bounty hunting racket themselves.

INDIVIDUALS

Finally, there are individual clients who hire bounty hunters to handle their cases. Unless the matter is local, an individual client must have real wealth and influence to put out a bounty anyone is going to notice, much less pursue. However, those with means can pull strings from millions of kilometers away to ensure someone suddenly has a substantial price on their head.

Individual bounties are as varied as the clients themselves, but usually involve more personal matters than tracking criminals and lawbreakers. An individual bounty is far more likely to be a missing persons case of some sort, trying to find someone who has gone into hiding or disappeared. Individual bounties are also more likely to involve vendettas or outright revenge, so professional bounty hunters are often leery of them. They can be profitable, especially with the right client, but also potentially messy. Plus, any client with the means and inclination to put a bounty out on someone could just as easily do the same to any bounty hunter who happens to disappoint them.

A twist on “individual” bounties is the occasional crowd-funded bounty, where some cause célèbre attracts enough attention in people’s feeds for them to contribute to it. It might be a desperate plea to help find a missing child, for example, or a dramatic vendetta against a supposedly abusive ex that captures the public’s interest (and money). While these cases attract a lot of attention, they’re usually more trouble than they’re worth, and it can be difficult to get paid, depending on who is managing the money. They attract amateur or would-be bounty hunters, but the pros tend to avoid them.

FINDING WORK

Bounty hunters find potential cases in several different ways. Sometimes they seek out existing opportunities, while other times clients approach them, particularly if they have a well-established reputation. If a bounty hunter is looking for work, the GM can play out the process or, if it is easier, ask for a quick test to see what kind of work is available. This is typically an advanced TN 11 Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Technology) test with a time increment of one day. The final TN

and success threshold are determined from the **Finding Bounties** table, based on the type of contract, with the type of bounty determined by the Drama Die of the final successful test.

STANDING BOUNTIES

If nothing else, a bounty hunter looking for work can scan through various “standing bounties” offered by various clients—usually governments and corporations. This is essentially a “most wanted” board with posted rewards “leading to the arrest and capture” of particular targets. Most standing bounties are for known or suspected criminals, which can make them at least somewhat dangerous, especially since said criminals have managed to evade capture thus far.

In some cases, standing bounties are for certain classes of criminal; the most common is a bounty on pirates threatening ships within the system. This is a kind of “standing reward” encouraging enterprising citizens to take action against those criminals and putting a price on the criminals’ heads to discourage their activities. Of course, something like pirate hunting takes considerable resources, so it’s not an option open to just anyone.

FREELANCE CONTACTS

Many bounties are freelance contracts; jobs clients offer to particular bounty hunters. Unlike standing bounties, freelance contracts tend to be more discreet. The client approaches the bounty hunter with the offer, discloses whatever details they want, and the two parties negotiate an agreement. Depending on the nature of the work, a freelance contract may be an actual, legal, enforceable contract, or just an understanding between two parties.

In the case of illegal bounties, the client’s sole reason to uphold the “contract” is to ensure the bounty hunter gets the job done—and then keeping quiet about it afterwards. This is particularly true if the bounty hunter has potentially incriminating information as a result. Some clients may try to eliminate the agents and their target to ensure no loose ends, but that’s a dangerous choice when dealing with professionals who know how to track people down.

JOB FIXERS

In the bounty hunting business, there are job fixers or agents who specialize in matching clients and bounty hunters in exchange for a cut of the fees involved. Job fixers generally have many connections and are able negotiators, both on behalf of their clients and themselves. Some fixers have a “stable” of bounty hunters they set up with work, others work for clients who regularly hire bounty hunters, and some are freelancers who work the middle. Bounty hunters are well-advised to figure out exactly who the job fixer is working for and to remember that all of them ultimately work for themselves first.

Job fixers are useful in that they often provide connections and skills their clients lack. Being a capable bounty hunter doesn’t necessarily make you a good negotiator, business manager, or networker, for example. Like professional bounty hunters themselves, job fixers live and die (sometimes literally) by their reputation, so they take care with the jobs and clients they take on, and the ones who intend to stay in the business are careful not to burn bridges unless there’s no other choice.

AGENCY ASSIGNMENT

Bounty hunters may work for an agency or other employer who assigns jobs. The common example is security personnel who receive “side jobs” from their employer, but there are also “security consultants” and “private investigation firms” and the like who take on assignments. In these cases, the agency acts like a job fixer, seeking out or fielding job offers. The key difference is that low-ranking employees of an agency may have limited options when it comes to what assignments they accept...at least if they want to keep their jobs.

FINDING BOUNTIES

JOB TYPE	TN MODIFIER	THRESHOLD
Freelance Contract	+2	25
Job Fixer	+1	20
Agency Contract	+0	15
Standing Bounty	−1	5

BOUNTIES AVAILABLE

DRAMA DIE	BOUNTY	INCOME MODIFIER
1	Sensitive	+3 temporary Income bonus or +1 Income
2	Individual	+1–3 temporary Income bonus
3–4	Government	+1–2 temporary Income bonus
5	Corporate	+1–3 temporary Income bonus
6	Security Contractor	+1–2 temporary Income bonus



ON THE HUNT

Once a hunter has a bounty, the process basically breaks down to the following: gathering information on the target; tracking and locating them; and finally making contact in some fashion, either to complete the job with a delivery, acquire the target for recovery or arrest, or eliminate them. In some cases, simply locating the target is enough; the hunter passes that information on to the client and that's that. Usually, however, the client wants something else beyond just finding the target.

PROFILING

The bounty hunter usually starts out by compiling a profile on the target: key information like known aliases, addresses, family and associates, and other information useful in tracking them down. Some assignments come with a prepared profile or “jacket” on the target, provided by the client, although a good bounty hunter doesn't just take the given information at face-value, doing their own research as well. A profile also focuses on the reasons why the target is now a target and what they are likely to do next, based on known information.

TRACKING

Once the bounty hunter has a good picture of who the target is, they can begin tracking the target's movements and assessing their likely location. Some tracking can be done remotely, using surveillance techniques, digital records and “foot-print,” and interviews conducted remotely via messages. Often, remote tracking can localize the target's location, leading to in-person investigation: examining clues, interviewing witnesses, and staking out locations in hopes of spotting the target or someone who might lead to them.

The tracking portion of the work is usually the longest and most involved. Oftentimes, it can be a lot of grunt-work, but sometimes, especially when the target is dangerous or involved with dangerous people, things can heat up. Targets sometimes take measures to dissuade people from finding them, including setting traps or sending thugs to warn off pursuers, and other parties interested in the target may do the same to ensure someone else doesn't find them first—and possibly to obtain their tracking information as well.

MAKING CONTACT

Once the target has been located, the bounty hunter decides how to make contact. That depends on the parameters of the job. If they're simply supposed to provide the target's location to the client, they're done—assuming they decide to turn the information over. If the bounty hunter is supposed to deliver something, they need to decide where and when to make contact. If it's a kidnap job or an elimination, things get more complicated, as the bounty hunter needs to carefully plan out their next move to ensure success.

In some cases, it's better to get the target alone, but there's always the potential for a target rabbiting and trying to run or turning and pulling a weapon on the bounty hunter, who needs to be prepared for both. Having allies to cover exits and watch your back can be helpful for these sorts of contacts. In other cases, bounty hunters prefer to make initial contact in a public area, in hopes the target won't want to attract attention by making a scene. Even then, experienced bounty hunters know that bystanders are often sluggish and uncertain when it comes to reacting to unexpected situations. Unless there is security present or someone decides to be a hero, odds are good they can take action to secure or deal with their target before any witnesses muster up the determination to do anything about it.

Often, acquiring the target can be the easy part compared to transporting them. Unless the bounty hunter has a ship of their own (see **Ships** under **Tools of the Trade**), they have to rely on booking passage on a ship, which may raise questions if they want to bring a trussed-up prisoner on board. In some cases, simply demonstrating they are fulfilling a legitimate bounty can be enough, but lots of bounties, especially kidnap jobs, skirt the edges of legality, and plenty of ship captains don't want to get tangled up in those situations. So, options for transportation are often low-class, to say the least.

THE HUNTING CHALLENGE

Most of the bounty hunting process described previously is effectively a detailed investigation challenge (see **Detailed Investigations** on p. 101 of *The Expanse* RPG). Profiling provides the initial lead or leads for the investigation and often outlines the focuses needed to pursue them. The tracking portion is the process of going through the leads, one by one, to get to the next, bringing the bounty hunter closer and closer to zeroing in on their target. Finally, the reveal provides the bounty hunter with the opportunity to make contact, which is typically when the hunt shifts from an investigation challenge to a social or an action encounter, depending on how initial contact with the target goes.

BOUNTY HUNTING STUNTS

Bounty hunters going through an investigation challenge to track their target can make use of the various Investigation Stunts on p. 103 of *The Expanse* RPG, any may also want to use the following stunts specifically associated with bounty hunting. Each of these can be used only once during the hunting challenge and making contact encounter, regardless of the number of tests or SP rolled.

GETTING PAID

Once the job is completed, the bounty hunter then turns over whatever evidence or receipts the client requires—including handing over the target—and collects their reward. Ideally. Sometimes, however, there are double-crosses, attempts to avoid payment, or clients who consider even a professional bounty hunter a potential loose end they'd prefer was cut off, permanently. Needless to say, cheating someone who has a bounty hunter's particular set of skills is not the smartest move, but many clients feel sufficiently untouchable—or desperate—to try it, so it is always best to be prepared.

All of this means experienced bounty hunters tend to arrange delivery contingent on getting paid, with a tense in-person trade-off, or a carefully arranged drop, where the client receives the location of the target once

HEADER

SP COST

STUNT

1–4

The Upper Hand: During the making contact encounter, you gain a bonus to your initiative test against your target equal to the SP spent (up to +4). This is a version of The Upper Hand exploration stunt unique to bounty hunting.

2–6

What Makes Them Tick: You get a real sense for your target and what motivates them; for your next social encounter with the target, you gain a bonus to all interaction tests equal to half the SP spent (up to +3 for 6 SP).

5

Saw That Coming: When you make contact with your target, you can choose one thing that they do in response to you, when it happens, and retroactively declare you had previously prepared for it. So, for example, if the target ducks out the back exit, you can use this stunt to declare you have an ally waiting there for them. The GM approves your choice, and it can only involve resources reasonably at your disposal during the hunt.

payment is deposited in the bounty hunter’s account. Some clients rely on escrow services to hold the payment in trust until both parties are satisfied. Security is also paramount for the handoff, since that may be where the bounty’s friends, or the client’s rivals, show up to cause trouble.

INCOME REWARDS

Bounty hunters get paid a fair amount for their work, usually commensurate with how dangerous and wanted their target is. Of course, bounty hunting is not exactly “steady” work, either, so the income often must last a bounty hunter until they can complete their next job.

Generally speaking, bounty hunter Income matches their abilities and the kinds of targets and cases they take on, roughly equated to the threat level of adversaries (*The Expanse* RPG, p. 208) as shown on the **Bounty Income** table, at left.

BOUNTY INCOME			
INCOME RANGE	LIFESTYLE	THREAT LEVEL	CHARACTER LEVEL
1–2	Struggling	Minor	1–4
3–5	Middle class	Moderate	5–8
6–8	Affluent	Major	9–12
9–10	Wealthy	Dire	13–17
11–13+	Rich	Legendary	18–20

A bounty hunter who has a steady number of jobs at their character level can expect to maintain the given Income range, using Working interludes to reflect the investment of time and effort. A failed job results in Income being depleted by 1. Success on a job one threat level higher than the bounty hunter’s level is a temporary +1 Income bonus, good to replenish depleted Income or provide a +1 bonus to one Income test. Each additional threat level is an additional temporary +1 Income bonus.

SOLIDIFYING GAINS

Characters can attempt to turn temporary Income bonuses into permanent Income by making an Intelligence (Business) test against TN 14. If the test is successful, and the drama die is lower than the current temporary Income bonus, the bonus income is lost and becomes a permanent +1 to Income. If the test fails or the drama die is too high, then all temporary Income is lost.

GOING OFF-SCRIPT

Some jobs are simple and by-the-numbers, but there are plenty of times when a bounty hunter is operating off incomplete or outright false information, or a job turns out to be something other than advertised. That’s when they need to decide if they are going to go off-script and improvise or cut their losses and walk away. The most common example is the kidnap job where the client tells the bounty hunter one thing—like the target owes them or is in danger—and it turns out to be something else. Some bounty hunters don’t care; a job’s a job, and it’s not like targets don’t lie, too. Others don’t like being set on a target under false pretenses and may choose to walk away from the job—or even help out their former target against their client.

While clients who mislead bounty hunters risk getting a bad reputation (or a pointed visit from said bounty hunter), it is the bounty hunters themselves who most need to worry about their professional reputations. A maverick bounty hunter known for consistently going off-script is going to have a hard time attracting clients—other than those looking for a loose-cannon, which is never good. How the bounty hunter deals with their clients impacts their reputation (see **Reputation**, following).

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Bounty hunters make use of various items of equipment useful to their trade, particularly for furthering investigations and capturing and restraining their targets. Bounty hunters with means often acquire equipment with one or more of the Durable, Effective, Fast, or Fine item qualities (*The Expanse* RPG, p. 66).

BYPASS

This is an “electronic lockpick” that can sometimes bypass locks and overrides on doors. It’s usually installed on a hand terminal, part software for cracking the lock’s access codes, often coupled with a key card or other device that can be inserted into a reader. More secure entries have higher target numbers and are more likely to set off alerts on failed attempts. A bypass can roll a test with a default +0

bonus against the TN of the lock’s sophistication, typically 11, with success opening the lock. Failure returns an error, and multiple failed attempts may set off security measures.

RESTRAINT

Simple restraints are useful for keeping a prisoner under control. At the low end are plastic zip ties able to bind a target’s wrists or ankles, requiring a TN 15 Strength (Might)

test to break them, and resulting in 1d6 impact damage to the character per attempt. More advanced restraints are metal hand- and ankle-cuffs with mechanical or electronic locks. Breaking them is nearly impossible (a TN 21 Strength (Might) test, if the GM allows on at all) and the target generally needs the key or to pick the locks to get out of them. Some looser restraints may allow for a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) advanced test to slip out of them, with a TN of 15 or more and a success threshold of 10 or more.

SEDATIVES

A bounty hunter might dose a captive target with a sedative to keep them unconscious—or at least groggy and compliant. Most such sedatives activate within a minute's time, four action rounds, and the target must make a TN 13 Constitution (Tolerance) test or fall unconscious. Success means the character is only fatigued. Otherwise, the target remains unconscious for 1d6 hours, unless they receive another dose or are further sedated. An auto-doc on board a ship or station can keep a subject sedated indefinitely.

Some bounty hunters make use of various other pharmaceuticals, including focus drugs (see *The Expanse* RPG, p. 82) but most professionals disdain them for regular use, preferring not to be overly reliant on them and feeling they can dull their edge.

DRONES

Small, light drones, typically with rotors for atmospheric operation and a gas cartridge for flying “teakettle” in microgravity, make useful surveillance devices. The drone is synched to and operated from the user's hand terminal and generally requires Dexterity (Piloting) tests for complex maneuvers. A drone is small and maneuverable enough to go places where people can't and is usually equipped with video cameras and microphones, at least. Better quality drones may have things like night vision, infrared, or other sensor capabilities, all transmitting back to the user. This type of drone may even be equipped with a pistol-equivalent weapon, although armed drones are restricted in most areas. Any attack that damages such a light drone essentially destroys it.

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE

Bounty hunters may make use of small electronic surveillance devices, commonly known as “bugs,” to monitor areas and targets of interest. A typical such surveillance device is a tiny wireless camera and microphone, about the size of a small coin, with an adhesive backing allowing it to be placed on most surfaces. A bug might transmit continuously or store its data and upload it in short “burst” transmissions to reduce the potential for it being discovered. It

BOUNTY HUNTING EQUIPMENT

ITEM	COST
Bypass	11
Restraints	6–7
Sedatives	9
Drone	10
Electronic Surveillance	9

is typically a TN 15 or more Perception (Intuition or Seeing) test to notice a surveillance device, but a TN 13 Perception (Searching) test is used to locate one if searching a given area. A more concealed form of electronic surveillance is to compromise an existing terminal or similar audio-visual device in the area by having it send its sensor data to a partition specified by the new user. This type of surveillance is only detectable with a TN 15 Intelligence (Computers) test examining the compromised device.

SHIPS

Having a ship is the ultimate freedom for a bounty hunter, allowing them to follow jobs and leads anywhere so long as it remains financially viable. At the least, a bounty hunter wants a ship sufficient for themselves along with a space for holding captured targets, and possibly freezer space for bodies—if that is all that's going back to a client. Regular crew quarters with an override installed on the terminal and door locks can do, but a proper secure brig is better. Bounty hunters tend to prefer small ships with minimal crew requirements unless the whole crew is involved in the business, or bounty hunting is just one of various gigs a freelance crew takes on.

TRANSPORTATION

For most jobs, a ship is just transportation for a bounty hunter, getting them to and from wherever a job takes them. Having your own ship makes it far easier to transport prisoners without having to answer a lot of awkward questions from the ship's owner or crew. A bounty hunter's ship doesn't necessarily have to be armed, but it's wise to do so, both to deal with any problems enroute and to widen the range of potential jobs.

LABREA-CLASS SHUTTLE

This modified shuttle replaces cargo capacity with space for up to eight small (even by ship standards) cells for transporting prisoners, up to 16 cells, if both cargo decks are given over to it, but that's rare, since LaBrea's will also be used to transport cargo or materials to their destination as well as prisoners. They're not in wide use, since the trans-



portation of prisoners off-world is relatively rare, but some bounty-hunters find second-hand or refitted LeBrea shuttles ideal for holding their targets in facilities more secure than simply locking them in crew quarters.

PIRATE HUNTING

When it comes to pirate-hunting, a ship is essential, of course, and what's more, the ship must be capable of putting up a fight or sustaining pursuit against a pirate vessel that decides to fight or make a run for it. Usually this means PDCs, at a minimum, along with torpedo launchers. Heavier weapons like rail guns are rare unless the pirate-hunter is both successful and loaded for bear. The Inner Planet militaries that tolerate armed pirate-hunting vessels in times of need can just as easily crack-down on them when they're not needed, or simply when they happen to cross the wrong patrol ship or commander.

MAYNARD-CLASS MODIFIED FREIGHTER

While pirate-hunters are grateful for a cashiered and retired military vessel when they can get their hands on one, most make do with modifying and arming small freighters, capable of going up against the similarly modified freighters and mining ships used by Belter pirates. The so-called Maynard class is a common set of such modifications, so much so that it is considered a sort of ship class in its own right.

LABREA - CLASS SHUTTLE

FACTION	Any	CATEGORY	Small
DRIVES	Thrusters	LENGTH	15m
CREW (MINIMUM)	1	HULL	1d3+2
CREW (STANDARD)	2 (8)	SENSORS	1
COMPETENCE	Average	FAVORED RANGE	Long

ARMAMENT

WEAPON TYPE	RANGE	DAMAGE	ARC
Typically none, although some bounty hunters add after-market armaments, usually grapplers or PDCs.			

FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

Evasive Action, Sensor Scrambling

QUALITIES

Atmosphere Capable, Brig (provides secure cells in place of some quarters), Sturdy

FLAWS

Poor Amenities

MAYNARD - CLASS MODIFIED FREIGHTER

FACTION	Any	CATEGORY	Large
DRIVES	Epstein, Thrusters	LENGTH	50m
CREW (MINIMUM)	2	HULL	2d6+1
CREW (STANDARD)	4 (16)	SENSORS	1
COMPETENCE	Average	FAVORED RANGE	Close

ARMAMENT

WEAPON TYPE	RANGE	DAMAGE	ARC
Torpedo Tubes (2)	Long	4d6	Fore
Point Defense Network	Close	2d6	Fore
Grappler	Close	—	Fore

FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

On-Target, Perceived Weakness

QUALITIES

Advanced Sensor Package, Hull Plating, Maneuverable, Weapon Systems

FLAWS

High Maintenance, plus one other, usually Faulty System or Vulnerable Systems

DOING THE WORK

The following optional additions to the *AGE System* rules for *The Expanse* focus on bounty hunters and their work.

BOUNTY HUNTER (SPECIALIZATION)

There are those who take on the occasional bounty, and then there are bounty hunters who know the work inside and out. You know how to find the right jobs, how to track down your target and get the job done with a minimum of fuss, and how to ensure you get paid before moving on to the next bounty. You're a professional, and that's what draws a distinction between you and the part-timers who call themselves "bounty hunters."

SYNERGIES A Bounty Hunter-Hacker specializes in tracking targets by their digital footprint, gathering information by cracking terminals and online accounts. A Bounty Hunter-Investigator, on the other hand, is better at legwork, gathering information and following trails in the field. A Bounty Hunter-Sniper, well, they specialize in the "dead or..." part of most bounties, usually skipping the "or."

BOUNTY HUNTER TALENT

REQUIREMENT: Perception 2 or higher and at least one Perception focus.

You're a dogged tracker and bounty hunter.

NOVICE You can designate someone or something as your "quarry" after spending at least an hour on the job investigating them, including reading a prepared brief or dossier. You can only have one active quarry at a time but can substitute a new quarry for a previous one with an additional time investment. Usually, your quarry is the focus of the bounty you're currently pursuing. You're considered to always have the tangential focus necessary to investigate your quarry, and if you have the primary or tangential focus, you gain a +1 bonus on your tests to investigate them. You also gain the benefits of the Dexterity (Initiative) and Perception (Intuition) focuses

with regard to your designated quarry (and only them). If you already have these focuses, you gain an additional +1 bonus from them regarding your quarry.

EXPERT You can prepare a major action (see **Prepare** on p. 85 of *The Expanse* RPG) in relation to your quarry. Whenever you roll initiative against your quarry, you can perform your prepared action first before your quarry acts regardless of the initiative order; you then take your normal actions on your turn. Prepared actions may include things like a Run or Charge towards your quarry, an Attack against them, and attempt to hide from them, or a Stunt Attack directed at them. You can choose your prepared action up to when initiative is rolled. Once action time begins, however, it can't be changed; you can either take the prepared action or choose not to—if circumstances allow.

MASTER When you surprise your quarry, you are automatically considered to have them dead-to-rights (see **Surprise** and **Option: Dead-to-Rights** on p. 191 of *The Expanse*). You have a +2 bonus for any tests to see if you surprise your quarry. This is in addition to any bonuses from ability focuses or your Novice ability for this specialization. Also, if you fail an ability test to unlock a clue related to your quarry, you can re-roll the test and use the result of the second roll instead.

REPUTATION

A good reputation (see p. 217 of *The Expanse* RPG) is important to a bounty hunter. It is their calling-card, their resume, and their guarantee, rolled up into one. Bounty hunters with sterling reputations have more job offers than they can handle, while bounty hunters with bad reputations only attract the most desperate or underhanded clients who have no options or are looking for a disposable asset. Some of the most common honorifics (*The Expanse* RPG, pp. 218–220) for bounty hunters include the following:

ABSOLUTE PROFESSIONAL

The classic bounty hunter version of The Absolute honorific is a reputation as an absolute professional: making and sticking to agreements, working a job until it gets done, keeping personal feelings out of it, and maintaining discretion about the client and the work.

EXPERT BOUNTY HUNTER

A version of the Expert in the Field honorific, this applies to bounty hunters who know their business and get results, whether or not their methods are particularly orthodox. Like the bounty hunter or not, there's no denying they deliver for their clients, which is all that matters to many of them.

PROTECTOR OF THE UNDERDOG

This version of the Protector of Innocents honorific belongs to bounty hunters with a reputed soft-spot for hard-luck cases and underdogs. They're known for taking jobs for clients in need, or negotiating reduced rates—or even working pro bono—for the right cause. This reputation doesn't make for the most financially successful bounty hunter, but for some, there are things more important than just money.

BAD REPUTATION

Bounty hunters have the potential for suffering “damage” to their reputation, if things don't go well. A bad reputation functions similarly to a good one, except that it works against the character rather than for them. Essentially, usual reputation benefits are reversed, as listed following. Eliminating a bad reputation may be a reward for a successful adventure or the work of one or more Reputation interlude activities (*The Expanse* RPG, p. 110).

PERSONAL

When an opponent knows the character's bad reputation or invokes it in a conflict, they gain a +1 bonus on an

opposed test against the character, particularly in a social encounter.

SUPPORTIVE

When a group of people know about the character's bad reputation and spread that around during an encounter, the character suffers a +2 increase in the target numbers of related tests, essentially making things one category more difficult.

INSPIRED

Tests involving areas where the character has a bad reputation suffer a –1 penalty to the number of stunt points generated on the Drama Die, which can potentially change a roll that generates 1 SP to a roll that generates none.

PASSIVE

Lastly, the character's bad reputation tends to worsen attitudes and generally make some people automatically dislike or mistrust them. It might lead to increased scrutiny from security, for example, who might pay the character a visit to remind them that they don't want any trouble in their jurisdiction while the bounty hunter is there.

THE CHURN

As any experienced bounty hunter will tell you, there is always the potential for a job to go badly—sometimes very badly. This is where the Churn comes into play. The following are some complications the Churn might introduce into a bounty hunting adventure:

MINOR COMPLICATIONS

- The bounty hunter fails the first test they roll when making contact with the target, which can include initiative or a social interaction test, as well as Perception.
- An NPC's attitude towards the bounty hunter worsens by one step, which may influence the chances they will cooperate in an investigation.
- An additional minor obstacle gets in the bounty hunter's way, possibly requiring an extra successful test to progress with an investigation.

MAJOR COMPLICATIONS

- Another party, equal in capability to the bounty hunter(s), also turns out to be after the same target, and about as close to finding them.
- An NPC is actively trying to block the bounty hunter's investigation.

- Somehow the target is tipped-off to the bounty hunter's involvement, allowing them to run or begin actively avoiding them.
- The job is more involved or not entirely what it seemed. Increase the overall threat level by one.

EPIC COMPLICATIONS

- The target turns out to be involved in something much bigger and more dangerous, and the bounty hunter needs to decide if they will continue with the job at all. Increase the threat level of the overall job by two.
- When the bounty hunter arrives on scene, the target is already dead. Even worse, the real killer may have framed the hunter and plans to escape scot free while they take the fall.
- The bounty hunter's employer has betrayed them or set them up in some fashion. The job they were supposedly hired for might even be a complete blind or cover for something else.

THE JOBS BOARD

The following are examples of potential bounties that hunters working in the Sol system might come across, or be offered by a client or job fixer. Each is tagged with a threat level for measuring the Income characters get from the job, not including potential escalations from the Churn. Game Masters should adjust the particular jobs to suit their own *Expanses* series and the time period when it is set.

LUNA: HIMURA DAICHI

THREAT LEVEL: MINOR (ACTUALLY MODERATE)

Seventeen-year-old Himura Daichi is originally from Kyoto on Earth. He is the scion of the Himura family that owns Himura Trading, a mid-level finance corporation active primarily in the Asian Shared Interest Zones. Daichi disappeared from his home on Earth months ago. A few weeks ago, he was spotted on Luna, traveling using false identification as “Hyashi Jiro,” an ostensive adult. His trail goes somewhat cold on Luna. Daichi may have gone to ground there or sought passage from Luna to elsewhere. His family claims to have no idea why Daichi left home and have posted a reward for his return or information leading to it. Daichi believes he is traveling out to the Belt to meet Connor, a Belter around his age Daichi met online. The two of them have been corresponding for months and Daichi is in love with Connor, but “Connor” is actually a catfishing scheme by an OPA group intended to kidnap the Himura Trading heir and ransom him off to his family. Daichi carefully erased his digital tracks in partitions accessible from Earth or online—he’s fairly talented with technology—but an investigator might be able to reconstruct something.



MARS: CAPTAIN KRAIG BAKSHI

THREAT LEVEL: MODERATE

If it's one thing the Martian military looks poorly upon, it's desertion. Capt. Kraig Bakshi, formerly of the MCRN, abandoned his post and his billet and disappeared several weeks ago. The Martian Navy has posted a reward for his capture, or information leading to it, but expects Bakshi to be turned over to them for prosecution. The military police have already interviewed his family, including his ex-wife Karen, who has custody of their daughter, Camina, age 10. Bakshi's mother Priya is widowed, lives alone, and also hasn't had contact with him.

Bakshi is involved in some shady business that necessitated his disappearance. Exactly what depends on the era and events that best suit your *Expanses* game. Prior to the opening of the Ring, Bakshi racked up considerable debts with organized crime on Mars and was forced to disappear to avoid retaliation for his unpaid debts. After the Ring, Bakshi might find opportunities to pay off his debts by providing information or materials from the Martian military to his criminal creditors. He might even be involved in the mass desertion to travel through the Ring to Laconia, giving bounty hunters a potential lead on that conspiracy.

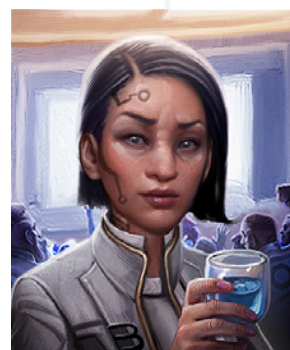


GANYMEDE: YVONNE IMANI

THREAT LEVEL: MINOR

Yvonne Imani is a technician employed by Cornucopia Brands, an agribusiness corporation with subsidiaries on Ganymede and throughout the outer planets. She went missing after a work shift ten days ago, and Cornucopia has posted a bounty for her safe return—or information leading to her whereabouts. Security on Ganymede Station doesn't appear to have any real leads. Ms. Imani is single and lives alone in a modest hole on the station. There's no immediate evidence of foul play or of her fleeing the station in haste.

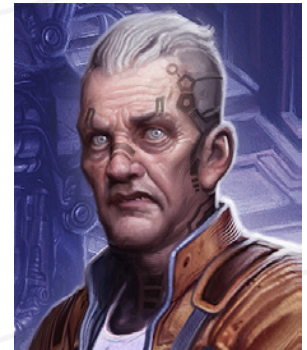
What Imani's employer doesn't say is that there is evidence of a data breach at their Ganymede facility around the time Imani went missing. They suspect she is responsible but can't be sure what data she might have accessed, or if any of it was copied or moved off site. While maintaining a front of kindly concern, the corporation really wants Imani back for questioning. The GM can decide what information, if any, she took and why. It could be to sell to a corporate rival, to benefit a faction like the OPA, or to help a friend (or a blackmailer) who put her up to the task. Imani has gone to ground and is hiding out until she can hand off the purloined data and arrange a way off Ganymede with the payment she's to receive.



THE OUTER PLANETS: ZEV WORLITZ

THREAT LEVEL: MINOR

Worlitz is a Belter petty criminal, initially involved in smuggling, water-theft, sales of contraband, and similar crimes on Europa. He has a rap-sheet going back years to when he was a teenager. More recently, however, Worlitz is wanted for questioning and a prime suspect in the disappearance of Carolyn Klymer, a security officer on Europa, while on-duty. Klymer hasn't been seen for over a month, and investigation of her quarters has turned up no leads. She was known to be following up on a routine check on Worlitz when she disappeared. Colony management has posted a reward for further information or the capture of Worlitz. The Belter criminal got involved in an altercation, accidentally killed Klymer, and subsequently disposed of her body in organic waste recycling. Now he's lying low while trying to arrange passage off Europa through some OPA contacts.



TYCHO STATION: NAT GRANDEE

THREAT LEVEL: MODERATE

Belter Andarev Grissom is wanted on charges of racketeering, assault, and murder in the Jovian system, but he disappeared months ago, and his trail has gone largely cold apart from a posted reward for his capture, supplemented by a small fund raised by the families of some of his victims. With assistance from some underworld contacts, Grissom has abandoned his old identity and become Nat Grandee, a low-level mechanic working on Tycho Station, with the understanding that he still owes his benefactors, providing them with regular reports on the goings-on of the station and access to certain restricted areas, although his own access is still quite limited.

"Nat's" new friends feel he's a "future investment," one they have some interest in protecting, although they'll cut their losses once they become high enough. Although he has a new identity, "Nat Grandee" hasn't turned over a new leaf. He's still a vicious man with a hair-trigger, struggling to keep from tripping-up and drawing the attention of station security. If he knows bounty hunters are on his trail, he will panic and turn to his "patrons" for aid, but he'll also sell them out if cornered.

**The Expanse Created by James S.A. Corey****Design & Writing:** Steve Kenson **Development:** Ian Lemke **Editing:** Skylar Mannen**Graphic Design & Art Direction:** Hal Mangold **Interior Art:** Victor Leza Moreno**Publisher:** Chris Pramas

Team Ronin: Joseph Carriker, Crystal Frasier, Kara Hamilton, Troy Hewitt, Steve Kenson, Ian Lemke, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Chris Pramas, Evan Sass, Malcolm Sheppard, Owen K.C. Stephens, Dylan Templar, and Alexander Thomas

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