Robot Hamlet

vs

Richard III

a shameless Lady Blackbird ripoff

by Jim Ryan

Robot Hamlet and his companions have been abandoned on the terrifying Ghost Asteroid by the villainous robot Richard III. Furthermore, Richard and his vile sidekick Iago have captured the Lady Ophelia and are holding her prisoner somewhere among the many asteroids of Bardworld. What's worse, the Ghost Asteroid's inhabitants have been alerted to their presence!

WILL THEY ESCAPE THE DANGEROUS GHOST ASTEROID?

WILL THEY FIND AND RESCUE THE FAIR ROBOT OPHELIA?

WILL THERE BE A SEQUEL?

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The Setup

It is the year 300,000. The human race is long gone, but their creations remain. In an asteroid belt in deep space, humanity created Bardworld, a huge theme park dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. They populated it with robot replicas of characters from Shakespeare's much loved classic works such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Revenge of the Sith.*

But after the human race passed into oblivion, Bardworld continued. In time, the robots became sentient and overcame their programming. To adapt, many of these Shakespearian characters had to learn deep space survival skills they'd never have dreamed of knowing otherwise. But many were ambitious. A great power struggle began.
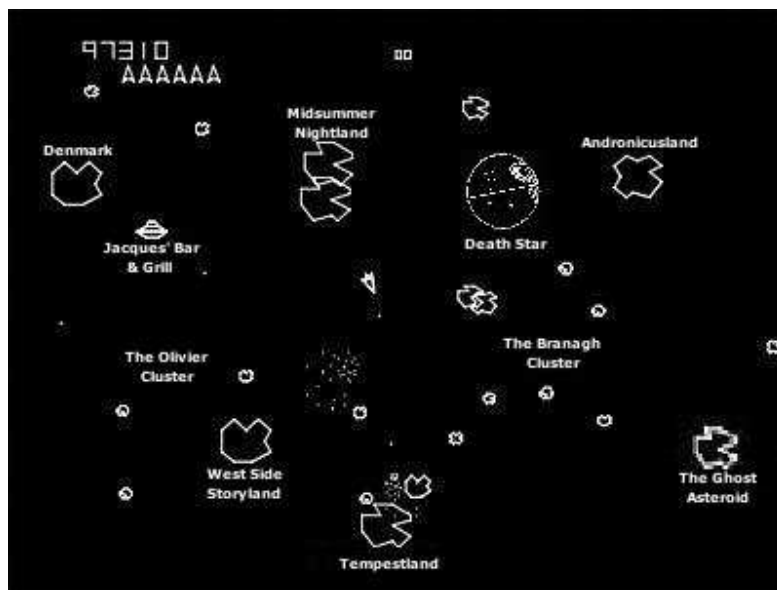
Robot-operated ships, some personal vessels, some repurposed amusement park space trolleys, flit back and forth between the asteroids of Bardworld. The robots have carved a society out for themselves kept in check by its various self-appointed lords and ladies.

Here are some of the places one might find, though there are many more beyond what's listed below.

Midsummer Nightland

A dual asteroid representing the world of the fae. One side is ruled by King Oberon, the other by Queen Titania. The faeries believe themselves to be better designed than the regular humanoid robots and often prove it by transforming them into anthropomorphic donkeys and the like.

Andronicusland

An asteroid with a society modeled on Ancient Rome, ruled with iron fist – and only one iron fist – by the mad, one-handed general and head chef Titus Andronicus. It is said Mark Antony and his bride Cleopatra fled here after the destruction of Caesarland by the forces of the Ghost Asteroid.

The Ghost Asteroid

An asteroid that was seized in a coup a few hundred years back by Shakespeare's ghost characters. Ever haunted by the ghost of Julius Caesar and his fellow undead, its electric citizens live in terror and rarely, if ever, go out at night (even though, granted, it's a simulated day and night cycle). The ghost robots have been designed with strange powers like flight and the ability to turn intangible. Formerly called the Plantageplanet, the asteroid had been split up into various kingdoms ruled by the robotic nobles of House Plantagenet until the many ghosts in the kingdom of Richard III arose and seized power, turning the asteroid into a nightmarish haven for all manner of Shakespearian specters. The asteroid's ghost ships occasionally clash with the forces of Andronicusland and the slightly more distant Scottish Asteroid.

Hamlet was here seeking advice from his deceased father when the trouble began. He and several of his fellow Shakespearian robots soon found themselves stranded when the conniving hunchback Richard III kidnapped Hamlet's girlfriend and stole the power core from his ship!

Tempestland

An asteroid ruled by the robot wizard Prospero, whose electronic spells are terrifying to behold. The smaller asteroids in rapid orbit around it make it a very dangerous part of space to visit, though it is one of the few areas one can go to avoid the treacherous Branagh Cluster.

The Death Star

It's no asteroid - it's a space station ruled by Darth Vader, one of Shakespeare's most tragic villains. Lord Vader has seized control of the Branagh Cluster and his Imperial Tie Fighters are often seen patrolling it. The robot Vader has yet to move against his next closest neighbors, but many feel it is only a matter of time.

West Side Storyland

At the heart of the Olivier Cluster is an asteroid modeled after Shakespeare's classic love story, *West Side Story*. It is warred over constantly by its two noble houses, House Jet and House Shark. Hardly a day goes by that members of the houses don't face each other in their traditional form of single combat – song and dance.

Jacques' Bar and Grill

A small space station held as a commonwealth by characters from some of Shakespeare's lesser-known plays such as *Two Gentlemen of Verona, Twelfth Night, The Cherry Orchard, Waiting for Godot* and *As You Like It*. Also known as a wretched hive of scum and villainy.

Denmark

An asteroid ruled from Elsinore Castle by King Claudius, with whom Prince Hamlet has been in a prolonged power struggle. It seems they've been fighting for ages now. That's the trouble with robots – poison doesn't work on them very well. Could Claudius be in league with Richard III? Has he been tempted by the subtle words of Iago? Or is he but a smaller player in the current struggle?

Hamlet

Prince of Denmark and Space Ship Pilot

Traits

Noble
Command, Etiquette, Tactics, Negotiation, Wealth, Prince, [Connections], [Crew]

Pilot
Maneuvering, Evasion, Caution, Tricks, Obstacles, Daredevil, [Tractor Beams], [Concealment]

Fighter
Rapier, Fists, Gun, Dodge, Swashbuckler, Fancy Bladework, Disarming, [Grappling], [Feint]

Well-Read
Educated, History, Psychology, Plays, [Science], [Geography]

Cunning
Actor, Deception, Mad Schemes, Subtlety, [Misdirection], [Insanity]

Keys/Secrets

Key of Authority – As Prince, you are used to having important responsibilities. Hit your Key whenever you take charge of a situation. **BUYOFF:** Relinquish your authority and follow someone else's lead.

Key of Sanity – You maintain a very careful guard on your emotions to be able to maintain the impression of control. Hit your Key whenever you resisting the temptation to vent your emotions. **BUYOFF:** Give in to the madness, venting your emotions and perhaps effecting to be crazy.

Key of Suspicion – You are very careful to verify facts, considering things before acting. Hit your key whenever you substantiate information you receive through a second source. **BUYOFF:** Go off half-cocked and act immediately upon hearing news of something.

Secret of Disarming – Once per session, if you engage in close combat with someone you may switch weapons with your opponent.

Secret of Confusion – Once per session, you can re-roll a failure when trying to convince someone of something.

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Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows **4 or higher** is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty **level** (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

Levels: 2 easy—3 difficult—4 challenging—5 extreme

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If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. But, you get to keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die to your pool.** The GM will escalate the situation in some way and you might be able to try again.

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Helping

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, your die is lost.

Keys

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You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle!
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Kate Minola

Professional Shrew and Ship's Gunner

Traits

Temper
Stubborn, Contrary, Angry, Iron Will, Formidable, Intimidate, [Hatred]

Paingiving
Brawl, Throw, Carry, Wrestle, Trip, Restrain, Break, [Grab], [Fists]

Gunnery
Aim, Firearm, Moving Target, Space Battle, [Under Fire], [Tricky Shot]

Sharpness
Reaction, Speed, Aware, Flaws, Detail, [Anticipate]

Keys/Secrets

Key of the Shrew – You are fundamentally disagreeable. Hit your key whenever you refuse to go along with someone else's plan. **BUYOFF:** Behave in an agreeable or subservient fashion, going along without argument.

Key of the Brave – You laugh in the face of danger. Hit your key whenever you enter a dangerous situation without hesitation. **BUYOFF:** Avoid a dangerous situation, placing caution before valor.

Key of Solitude – You are a solitary creature and need no one's affection. Hit your key whenever you spurn someone's advances. **BUYOFF:** Give in to someone's overtures of affection or actively flirt with someone.

Secret of Rage – The angrier you get, the stronger you get! Your programming allows you to perform great feats of strength in moments of stress.

Secret of Argument – Once per session, you can re-roll a failure when trying to prove someone wrong.

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Sir John Falstaff

Ex-soldier, Trusted Cohort

Traits

Counselor
Sympathetic, Listening, Angles, Psychology, Lies, Persuasion, [Tricks]

Charm
Hedonism, Wine, Women, Song, Boasting, Corruption, Socializing, [Jokes]

Combat
Tactics, Leadership, Sword, Defending, Concealment, [Endurance], [Loyalty], [Escape]

Robotics
Repair, Programming, Modification, Deactivation, Diagnosis, [Construction], [Computers]

Keys/Secrets

Key of the Buffoon – You are a fellow of infinite jest. Hit your key whenever you make other characters – or other players – laugh with your antics. **BUYOFF:** Tell a horrible joke that the others groan at.

Key of the Hedonist – You want to sample all of life's pleasures. Hit your key whenever you perform an act of debauchery. **BUYOFF:** Actively reject an opportunity for excess.

Key of the Craven – It's not that you're a coward – it's just that you have a very low pain threshold and prefer not to fight if it's avoidable. Hit your key whenever you manage to avoid the thick of battle. **BUYOFF:** Charge headlong into a battle or dangerous situation.

Secret of the Glutton – You have the ability to eat anything – ANYTHING – without damaging your internal systems.

Secret of Hiding – Despite your prodigious bulk, you're very good at hiding when you need to – even in plain sight. Once per session, you can reroll a failure when attempting to hide.

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Puck / Robin Goodfellow

Faerie Navigator

Traits

Lightfooted
Quick, Stealthy, Agile, Reflexes, Fast-Acting, Running, Escape, [Tumbling]

Trickery
Mimicry, Crafty, Sneaky, Bluff, Slight of Hand, Cunning, [Lies], [Improvise]

Astronavigation
Pathfinding, Directions, Asteroid Maps, Ship Systems, Communications, [Stellar Cartography], [Short Cuts]

Faerie
Shape Change, Speed, Tricks, Secrets, Enchanting, Hex, [Unearthly Beauty], [Court of Oberon]

Keys/Secrets

Key of Impatience – Everyone else always seems to move more slowly than you. Hit your key whenever you rush ahead into danger. **BUYOFF:** Counsel someone to wait patiently and willingly wait along with them.

Key of the Critic – You've been said to have a silver tongue, but you don't often hold it, not even with your master. Hit your key whenever your big mouth makes a situation more difficult. **BUYOFF:** Remain silent when you would otherwise make commentary.

Key of the Servant – You are a faithful companion, serving your Lord and your allies as well as you can. Hit your key when you successfully perform an assigned task. **BUYOFF:** Stop taking orders.

Secret of Speed – You are much faster than most robots, able to run at near-sonic speed. When on land you can travel between fairly distant locations within seconds.

Secret of Transformation – You have the ability to change your voice and appearance. Once per session you can reroll a failure when trying to trick someone using shape changing or mimicry.

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Rosalind Senior

Cross-dressing Noblewoman and Mechanic

Traits

Actor
Disguise, Voices, Bluff, Deception, Infiltration, Details, Improvise, [Quick Change], [Memory]

Courtier
Etiquette, Secrets, Negotiation, Nobility, Favors, Wealth, [Carouse], [Friends in High Places]

Engineer
Maintenance, Repair, Enhancement, Dextrous, Efficiency, Tools, [Quick Power Boost]

Survivor
Fists, Blade, Iron Will, Bravery, Cunning, [Tough], [Keen]

Keys/Secrets

Key of Disguise – You've become quite good at pretending to be other robots. Hit your key whenever you pass yourself off as someone you're not. **BUYOFF:** Reveal your true identity to someone while in disguise.

Key of the Competitor – You can function just as well as any other robot, male or female. Hit your key whenever you have the opportunity to show off your skill to someone. **BUYOFF:** Ask someone for help.

Key of the Wit – You're very good at improvising and thinking on your feet. Hit your key whenever you outwit someone. **BUYOFF:** Be caught tongue-tied.

Secret of Preparation – You always have whatever props and costume pieces you need to fit any role you may need to play when disguising yourself. Even if you are searched, you will always be able to hold onto at least some small item that you can use to make yourself appear different.

Secret of Repair – Once per session you can reroll a failure when attempting to fix something.

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Obi-wan Kenobi

Jedi Master

Traits

Jedi Training
Lightsaber, Jumping, Evasion, Parry, Duel, Deflect, Endurance, [Speed], [Disarm], [Reflexes]

Wisdom
Awareness, Inspiration, Mentor, Educated, Tactics, Insight, [Assess], [Common Sense]

The Force
Visions, Telekinesis, Stretch Out With Your Feelings, Mind Trick, Force Push, Telepathy, [Force Concealment], [Force Repair]

Peacekeeper
Jedi Knight, Apprehend, Protect, Watchful, Diplomacy, Empathy, [Resolute], [Calm]

Keys/Secrets

Key of the Jedi – You live by the Jedi code of honor. Hit your key whenever you make a decision heavily influenced by the Jedi code. **BUYOFF:** Join the Dark Side! Or at least take an action that breaks the Jedi code.

Key of the Mentor – You have long been an advisor to younger, more hotheaded robots. Hit your key whenever you dispense wise advice to others. **BUYOFF:** Have the result of someone following your advice turn out badly.

Key of the Protector – You do what you must to defend others regardless of the cost. Hit your key when you protect others from harm. **BUYOFF:** Abandon someone in need of protection to their own devices.

Secret of the Force – Your design allows you to affect reality as though there were an energy field that surrounds everything and binds the galaxy together. While this is not necessarily the case, your designer gave you the kinds of powers you have listed under the trait, "The Force."

Secret of the Bad Feeling About This – You can sometimes tell when things will go badly. Once per session you can reroll a failure in a dangerous situation if you'd previously declared that you have a bad feeling about it.

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❖ Learn a **Secret** (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle!
Each key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the *option* of removing the Key and earning two advances.

Refresh

You can refresh your pool back to 7 dice by having a **refreshment scene** with another character. You may also remove a condition *or* regain the use of a Secret, depending on the details of the scene. A refreshment scene is a good time to ask questions (in character) so the other player can show off aspects of his or her PC—"Why did you choose this life?"—"What do you think of Shakespeare?"—"Why did you take this job?" etc. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

Space Ships

There many different kinds of ships in Bardworld. According to the ancient records, it appears as though, in his later work, Shakespeare used several different varieties of space ships, some of which appeared in narratives lasting several decades. Literary critics continue to debate the reason why space ships make almost no appearances in his earlier plays, but for now their absence in them remains a mystery.
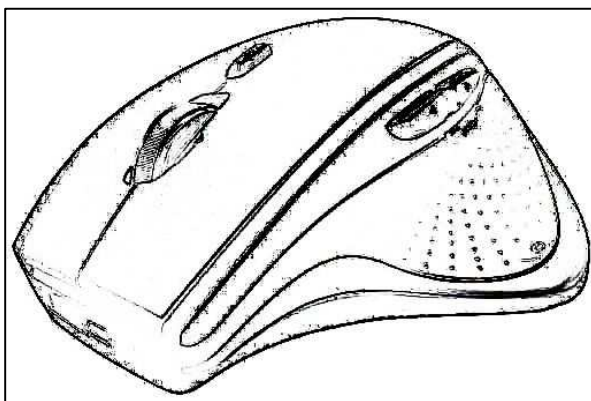
Little Ships (fighters, shuttles)

Medium-sized Ships (passenger, cargo)
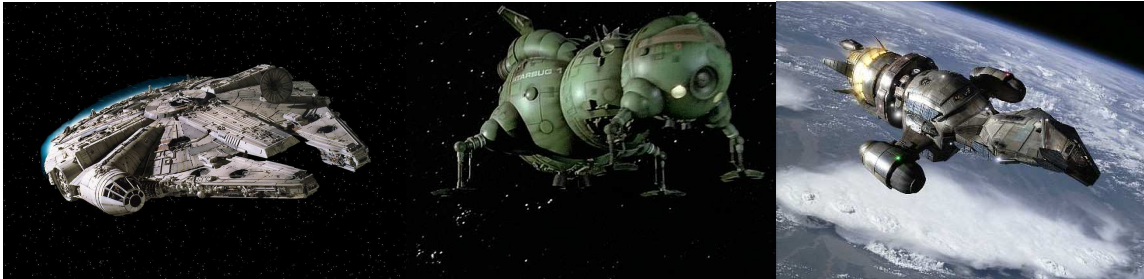
Big Ships (luxury, command)

Hamlet's ship – *The Burbage*

The Burbage is a medium-sized ship. It has two gun turrets and a number of hidden compartments. Hamlet took this ship when he and his girlfriend Ophelia went into a self-imposed exile from Denmark and began doing odd shipping jobs for various denizens of Bardworld. He picked up a new crew when his previous crewmates Rosencrantz and Guildenstern betrayed him YET AGAIN. King Claudius of Denmark has issued a sizeable bounty for the ship's return.

The GM may inflict conditions on *The Burbage* as needed. It starts play with the condition **Need Power** marked.

	Need Power		Need Supplies		Hull Damage		Slowed		Crippled

Running the Game: Tips, tricks, and advice for the GM

Listen & Ask Questions, Don't Plan
When you're the GM, don't try to plan what will happen. Instead, ask questions—lots and lots and make them pointed toward the things you're interested in.

Questions like:

"Does anything break when you do this crazy maneuver?"
"The fire probably spreads out of control doesn't it?"
"That sounds like a bold plan. What's the first step?"
"Do the two of you end up somewhere quiet together? Does something
happen between you?"
"Each of you tell me one thing you know about Tempestland."

Part of the job of the GM is *listening* to what the players say, catching it, turning it around and looking at it, and seeing if there's anything else to be done with it.
The GM's jobs: listen and reincorporate, play the NPCs with gusto, create interesting obstacles, and impose conditions as events warrant (especially when rolls fail).

Say Yes, Look For the Obstacles
By default, characters can accomplish anything covered by their traits. They're competent and effective people, in other words. It's no fun to ask for a roll when there's no cool obstacle in the way. Just say yes to the action, listen, and ask questions as usual. But also, be on the lookout for the opportunity to create obstacles as the action develops. Because you're asking leading questions and listening closely, they'll be all over the place, so it won't be too hard to spot them. Obstacles can be people (space pirates, Imperial Storm Troopers, theme park citizens, aliens, Bardland nobles), small asteroids, monsters (hostile aliens, giant robots, space eels), situations (fires, falling, being shot at, chases, escapes) or anything else you can imagine. If a character tries something not covered by their traits, that's an obstacle right there: lack of experience and training. Lots of fun things can go wrong when you don't know what you're doing! Also, players will sometimes try things they're bad at so they can fail and add dice to their pool. It's a fine move for them and it gives you the chance to create more trouble, so everyone wins.

Conditions
A condition constrains what the player should say about their character. It's a cue to tell the GM and players to pay attention to that thing and use it as material for the developing fiction. Sometimes a condition will become an Obstacle in its own right, calling for a roll to deal with it.

Obstacles & Difficulties

Escaping the Ghost Asteroid – *Who knows what dangers lurk on the haunted asteroid?*
Obstacles: Evade the ghost robots: 3. Get help from the asteroid's non-ghost inhabitants: 4. Locate a new power core: 4. Find the ghost of Hamlet's father: 4. Sneak back to *the Burbage*: 4. Fight off ghost robots: 4. Fight off LOTS of ghost robots: 5+.
Escalation: The group is discovered. The group is captured and brought before Caesar. The power core breaks. A ghost or citizen stows away on *the Burbage*.

Navigating the Branagh Cluster – *Not only does the Branagh Cluster have the most dangerously close grouping of smaller asteroids, but it is patrolled by the forces of Lord Vader.*
Obstacles: Getting through denser parts of the asteroid field: 3. Hiding from Imperial Tie Fighters: 4. Dogfight with Imperial Tie Fighters: 4. Getting through denser parts of the asteroid field WHILE in a dogfight with Imperial Tie Fighters: 5.
Escalation: The ship is damaged and stranded. All escape routes are cut off by enemy fighters. *The Burbage* comes too close to the Death Star and falls into its tractor beam.

Gathering Information – *To find Ophelia, Hamlet's crew will need to talk to robots of varying honesty and temperament.*
Obstacles: Locating an information source: 3. Negotiating a trade of some kind: 4. Negotiating a trade in your favor: 5. Avoiding Iago's spy network: 4.
Escalation: Being sold out. Being followed. They want *the Burbage* in trade. Losing *the Burbage* in a card game.

Faerie Attack – *Sometimes Titania's fey ships patrol the Olivier Cluster, seeking to confound and destroy "lesser" robots.*
Obstacles: Avoiding the hypnotic lights of the fae ships: 3. Hiding from the fae ships: 4. Outmaneuvering the fae ships: 5. Fighting the fae ships: 4-5.
Escalation: Getting lost in the Olivier Cluster. Being trapped and led to Titania's half of Midsummer Nightland. Losing control of the ship to the fae. Being transformed into robot donkeys.

Ambush by Iago – *Richard's ally Iago (who long ago left the small asteroid Venice to find greater opportunities) has established a vast network of spies and cutpurses for hire who will stop at nothing to accomplish their goals.*
Obstacles: Fighting back against the highly-trained assailants: 5. Attempting to escape: 3. Negotiation: 4. Negotiation with Iago, himself: 5+. Staging a distraction: 3.
Escalation: Someone is captured. All routes of escape are cut off. It turns out Iago has hired Boba Fett.

Fighting Richard III – *The old hunchback has had time to learn from his mistakes and has become a master tactician. He's also now equipped with multiple blasters.*
Obstacles: Defeat Richard's troops: 4-5. Turn Richard's troops against him: 4. Chase Richard down: 5. Dodge blaster bolts: 3. Unhorse Richard: 5. Locate Ophelia: 4-5.
Escalation: Richard threatens to destroy Ophelia. More of Richard's support troops arrive. It turns out Richard has allied with Claudius or one of the other Bardworld Lords. It turns out Richard has reprogrammed Ophelia.

New Traits & Tags

Bold
Brave, Daring, Heroic, Rescue, Falling, Fire, Reckless, Explosions, Escapes, Outnumbered, Underdog

Cowardly
Awareness, Beg for Mercy, Bluff, Cry for Help, Duck and Cover, Escape, Excuses, Hide, Sprint, Wary

Crew
Gunnery, Aim, Maintenance, Damage Control, Observation, Signals, The Burbage, Cargo, Supplies, Repair, Boarding Action

Crusading
Charge In, Courage, Headstrong, Intimidate, Intolerant, Lofty Goal, Loyal, No Mercy, Overpower, Rally

Explorer
Curious, Aware, Nimble, Hardy, Ancient Lore, Codes, Ruins, Aliens, Myths, Charts

Gambler
Cards, Dice, Sharp Eye, Hidden Weapons, Betting, Bookie, Distract, Fast-Talk, Infamous, Know the Odds, Loaded Dice, Lucky Streak, Marked Cards, Now You See It, Palming, Place the Blame, Poker Face, Shell Game, Up the Sleeve

Handy
Insightful, Aware, Practical, Assess, Repair, Drive, Vehicles, Jury-Rig, Patch up, Danger, Explosives

Investigator
Search, Deduction, Perceptive, Seduce, Interrogate, Bribe, Coerce, Contacts, Sneak, Deception, Insight, Logic, Fisticuffs, Blaster

Mercenary
Battle-Hardened, Brawl, Casual Killing, Shooting, Pistol, Long Gun, Tactics, Broadsword, Fencing, Opportunistic, Fast, Disloyal, Tough, Callous, Overkill, Careful

Reputation
Trustworthy, Reliable, Fearless, Reckless, Ruthless, Underhanded, Dangerous, Deadly, Cruel, Unpredictable, Heroic, Honorable, Compassionate

Robot
Humanlike, Wiring, Strength, Reflexes, Enhanced Vision, Hearty Construction, Inhuman, Labor, Follow Orders, Rebel, Interface, Encryption,Technology

Traveled
Adventurous, Alert, Been There Done That, Cultures, Curious, Hardy, Improvise, Languages, Open-Minded, Shrewd

New Keys

The Key of the Broker – *You like to make deals and trade favors. Hit your key when you bargain, make a new contact, or exchange a favor.* **BUYOFF:** Cut yourself off from your network of contacts.

The Key of Hidden Longing – *You are completely enthralled by one of your companions but you don't want him to know it. Hit your key when you make a decision based on this secret affection or when you somehow show it indirectly.* **BUYOFF:** Give up on your secret desire or make it public.

The Key of Revenge – *Someone has wronged you and you've never forgiven them for it. Hit your key when you act against them or take action to confront and kill them.* **BUYOFF:** Forgive them face to face.

The Key of the Tinkerer – *You just can't leave it alone. Hit your key when you modify, improve, repair, or patch some tech.* **BUYOFF:** Pass up the opportunity to mess around with technology.

The Key of the Traveler – *You love exploring new places and meeting new people. Hit your key when you share an interesting detail about a person, place, or thing or when you go somewhere exciting and new.* **BUYOFF:** Pass up the opportunity to see something new.

New Secrets

The Secret of Common Sense – *Once per session, you may allow someone else a chance to re-roll a failed roll by giving them advice.* **REQUIRES:** Common sense.

The Secret of Experience – *Once per session, you can use tags from more than one trait when you make a roll.* **REQUIRES:** Experience in a wide variety of dangerous situations.

The Secret of Retribution – *Once per session, you may reroll a failure when giving someone their comeuppance.* **REQUIRES:** Having been wronged.

The Secret of the Shootist – *You're deadly with a blaster (or two). Once per session, you can re-roll a failure when you're shooting.* **REQUIRES:** You've been in a lot of blaster fights or are learning from someone who has.

The Secret of the Lucky Break – *Once per session, you can keep your pool dice when you succeed (so go ahead and use 'em all).* **REQUIRES:** Succeed at something decidedly unlikely.