A leaf on the Wind – GM Notes

Contents

A leaf on the Wind – GM Notes 1
… a leaf on the wind … 2
Game files: 4
Vague Pre Game Timeline for GM (only) 5
Default Game Path 6
Plots 9
(0) Contracts at the start of the game from Fanty and Mingo 9
(1) Competition – The independent Mercury Class *Crisis* + The Alliance *Motive Force* 10
(2) Reavers hunting the Captain using psychic connection – Captain's brother. 11
(3) Fuel issue 12
(4) Miranda mission completion episode: 13
(5) Bio weapons – the Pax and the Reaver Syndrome 14

… a leaf on the wind …

Teacher: Earth that was could no longer sustain our numbers, we were so many. We found a new solar system, dozens of planets and hundreds of moons. Each one terraformed, a process taking decades, to support human life, to be new Earths. The Central Planets formed the Alliance. Ruled by an interplanetary parliament, the Alliance was a beacon of civilization. The savage outer planets were not so enlightened and refused Alliance control. The war was devastating, but the Alliance's victory over the Independents ensured a safer universe. And now everyone can enjoy the comfort and enlightenment of our civilization.

….

Dr. Caron: These are just a few of the images we've recorded. And you can see, it wasn't what we thought. There's been no war here and no terraforming event. The environment is stable. It's the Pax. The G-23 Paxilon Hydrochlorate that we added to the air processors. It was supposed to calm the population, weed out aggression. Well, it works. The people here stopped fighting. And then they stopped everything else. They stopped going to work, they stopped breeding, talking, eating. There's 30 million people here, and they all just let themselves die.

….

River: Run-tse duh shang-dee, ching dai-wuhtzo... make them stop! They're everywhere. Every city, every... every house, every room; they're all inside me! I can hear them all and they're saying... NOTHING! GET UP! Please, get up! Wuo-shang mayer, maysheen byen shr-to. Please God, make me a stone.

….

Jayne: How come they ain't blowin' us out the air?

Mal: They wanna run us down. The up-close kill.

River: They want us alive when they eat us**.**

….

Jayne: Ain't logical. Cuttin' on his own face, rapin' and murderin' - Hell, I'll kill a man in a fair fight... or if I think he's gonna start a fair fight, or if he bothers me, or if there's a woman, or if I'm gettin' paid - mostly only when I'm gettin' paid. But these Reavers... last ten years they show up like the bogeyman from stories. Eating people alive? Where's that get fun?

….

Mr. Universe: There is no news. There is only the truth of the signal. What I see. And, there's the puppet theatre the Parliament jesters foist on the somnambulant public.

….

A scant few days since, some real news came a tumbling along the 'waves. Courtesy of the deceased Mr Universe, the signal jumped and jittered, spreading out pond ripples of truth to the far corners of a once placid 'verse. Some folks were a mite disgruntled to hear it, while others became all a panic. Oh, to hear the yelling, and watch at the pointing of fingers, and tremble at the rattling of sabres and loading of guns. Entire worlds became abuzz with a whole mess of overt and covert activity, all focussed on the nigh forgotten, but now remembered world of Haven.

They came. Some with hopes and dreams for humanity. Some to take advantage of the flux in power. Some with dollar signs in their eyes. Some with pay already in their pockets. Some with faith in their hearts of something larger than themselves. Some to do what others would not.

None thought it would go smooth and shiny. But none came expecting the kind of dung storm they would kick up.

A one session game for five in the 'verse, set after the movie Serenity. None of the main cast members have a showing, but plenty of the same shenanigans will be amuck.

….

Wash: It's okay, I'm a leaf on the wind!

Mal: What does that mean?

Game files:

GM Notes (this file) – pre-game timeline, plot notes and event sequence

Character Sheets and Choice Sheet – Character backgrounds. Also includes a primer on the Serenity system.

Handouts folder:

> **Character Choice Sheets** – Handouts to help character selection
>
> **Character Sheets** – Serenity system character sheets.
>
> **Ship Record Sheet** – Serenity system sheet for the *Black Snake*, Harry's ship
>
> **Handout: Contracts** – the list of contracts at the start of game (**Plot 0**)

Supplementary material folder:

This folder contains illustrations and game illustrations for other ships that may be encountered:

> **Mercury** *(Crisis)*
>
> **Osprey** (*Motive Force)*
>
> **Dragonfly** *(Gregarious)*
>
> **Hornet** (possibly *Desolation*)

Vague Pre Game Timeline for GM (only)

READ THE CHARACTER SHEETS FIRST – you will get a sense of the over-the-top backgrounds.

Pre-War – Kay works in Otto's family's mines and loses his eyes. He joins the Independents and is discovered as a natural pilot. Becomes a ship's captain.

Pre-War – RU4986's family are on Miranda. RU4986 is taken to the Parliament secret psychic research and development laboratory before the Pax hits. The Pax converts all members of his family to Reavers. He goes berserk in the lab when this happens, and is pulled out of the class (with River Tam). He is investigated as a bioweapon with Reavers as his trigger mechanism.

War – Fergie infiltrates Dr Ravi's Parliament-sponsored medical facility as a spy for the Parliament. She passes information on to her superiors that gets Dr Ravi fired, leaving before this happens.

War – Kay fights for the Browncoats and achieves a number of successes, gaining renown as an excellent pilot. His crew agree to take advantage of the amnesty at the end of the war and surrender their ship, which gets scrapped.

War – Tony infiltrates the Alliance on behalf of the Browncoats. She gets the position of an Officer with key information passed back to the Browncoats about Alliance maneuvers. She is never discovered. The Independents lose the war.

End War – RU4986 rescued by Tony from the Alliance; they escape on the *Black Snake*. Tony kills the Alliance Captain Harry Reel, and convinces RU4986 that *he* is Harry Reel.

War +2 months - Kay joins the *Black Snake* as pilot.

War +2 years - Kay saves the *Black Snake* from the Reavers, nearly destroying the ship and killing the previous engineer. The ship crashes on Otto's Moon. Otto organizes to get a cheap loan to the ship, and joins up under false pretenses as the engineer. Since then the Snake has been struggling under the debt.

War +3 years - Fergie joins the *Black Snake* under false pretenses to hunt down RU4986.

War +4 years 11 months – Parliament operatives send out the subliminal activation codes on the signal to bring any active RU series bioweapons under cover into the fore. RU4986 in his self-medicated (semi-inebriated) state has some bad dreams but wasn't tagged, but River Tam and another failed experiment (RU3996) was. River's events are covered in Serenity. RU3996 had been an early subject that had been smuggled out of the RU Program by a sympathetic nurse, who was later interrogated and killed. RU3996 had been living a normal life on a terraforming world (Yuri Hollocroft), but had spun out and murdered his family when the signal kicked in. He was shot by neighbors, and exposure to the environment killed him. Due to the unusual circumstances his body is being sent back to a medical facility for an autopsy and has been brought to Haven for pick up. There is a contract available to take his body back to the medical facility at the start of the game.

War +5 years – Present day. News about Miranda and the Pax and the Reavers becomes public knowledge.

Default Game Path

Vague schedule (The game is aimed at being more 'sandbox', but this is the 'default path'. Note that while *Leaf on the Wind* is statted up as a *Serenity* system game, it functions just fine as a Australian Con Systemless or system-lite game.)

If you have it available at the start of the session play a clip from the movie SERENITY: the announcement that is published to the Verse about Miranda (a Youtube clip is called "Serenity, Origin of the Reavers".)

Part 1: Gathering Storm: *You cannot see the air, but you can observe the coming wind*.

Setup on Beaumont – Space Port – *Black Snake* is not completely refueled, and the captain and crew are reviewing the available contracts in the break room. The Captain and/or back up go to the port to meet Fanty and Mingo to sign up on contract(s). **Plot 0, links to Plots 4 and 5**.

They are burned by the *Crisis,* the captain of which is attempting to get the jump on the Contract to Miranda while the crew is separated. The group must overtake the *Crisis* en route, dealing with them as they overtake. **Plot 1a.**

They head to Miranda, potentially stopping at a refueling depot en route. They avoid a Reaver encounter thanks to a mysterious child who destructively ensures the ship doesn't encounter the reavers. **Plot 2a.**

Fuel is an ongoing concern throughout the game, whenever you want to ramp up tension. **Plot 3.**

Part 2: Planet Miranda: *Here is everything advantageous to life, save means to live*.

They get to Miranda, and initiate the program to retrieve the Pax data. They notice something weird about the program: it seems to be inserting data rather than retrieving it. They also have the opportunity to learn of the research into the Pax done by the doctors on Miranda, indicating they were on the way to understanding the mechanism by which it triggered the Passive/Reaver syndrome. **Plot 4.**

They encounter the Alliance – a Medical ship with an old associate of Fergie (**Plot 5**), and a military ship sent to retrieve the Pax data for further weapons development (**Plot 1b**). They also encounter competition who are after the same contracts as them. These encounters can be negotiated with, avoided, shot at, etc.

Part 3: Storm's getting worse: *It's okay, I'm a leaf on the wind!*

They learn they may be able to develop a cure for the Pax, and that the mission they were sent on is a blind by an Alliance Senator to cover his own involvement in the Pax, and blame a number of his rivals for it. They have the opportunity to act upon this information.

Finally, they are tracked down by a Reaver ship that has been hunting the Captain, and engage it (**Plot 2c**). The results of this are dependent upon character actions to date. There is a good chance they will be able to manufacture a cure for Reaver syndrome and weaponise it, to subdue and rescue the ship's crew and the Captain's brother.

The next pages have details about NPCs, the challenges and events in broad categories.

Important NPCs

Fanty and Mingo – Twins, arrangers, fixers. They are the captain's contacts for getting the contracts at the start of the game. They mention a fight with River Tam a month ago.

Crisis – Mercury class mercenary ship. Rival to the Black Snake

Captain Rayne Kurn – captain of the rival ship, *Crisis*, who wants to collect on the big contract. Basically an asshole who can be negotiated with if the deal is right. Crew is universally slightly less skilled than the Snake – Use the character sheet stats if need be, but lower each by one die side in all checks.

Triage – Alliance hospital ship.

Doctor Ravi Chandanam – Ex-associate of Fergie, and person who she was to spy on. Was sent to woop woop to work on the Hospital Ship the *Triage* because of the information that Fergie handed back to her handler. Loyal but slightly disillusioned Alliance. Has been working towards the possibility of a cure for the Reavers for the past three years, without the knowledge that they originated with the Pax on Miranda. Now that she has found out, she has convinced her captain (Rob Yen) to detour to Miranda to obtain any data about the Pax she can find. Somewhat bitter about being cast out and slightly suspicious of Fergie.

Captain Rob Yen – Captain of the *Triage*. Jaded and bitter to be working in the middle of nowhere under constant threat. Humanist, but practical.

Motive Force – Alliance fast scout.

Captain Ander Rapanui of the Alliance Osprey class fast scout *Motive Force* is on a mission to Miranda to retrieve the Pax data/materiel for the Parliament. Military.

Janus Cane – Fergie's Alliance handler and contact. Working for Parliament, and in part Senator Lux Eternis. Ruthless, cold and entirely faking any concern for Fergie. Will take information she feeds back and use it to the benefit of the Senator and self, sacrificing Fergie as required. Initiated Fergie's mission to hunt down RU4986, and has organized the cover mission to clear out the Senator's Pax history. Communicates by with Fergie by encrypted signal – roll 10 Alert + Covert to notice, 18 Int + Hacking to crack.

Senator Lux Eternis – member of Parliament who was one of the people with key responsibility for development of the Pax that wiped out Miranda and created the Reavers. Is trying to cover her own butt now that Miranda has come out into the open. Will not get involved unless approached, and even then will do so though aides and Janus.

Eddie & the ***Desolation*** – Reaver ship hunting RU4986 – the Captain's brother is aboard and they share a psychic connection. The ship has been hunting RU4986 since he was awakened by Tony. The young boy in Harry's visions is sometimes this brother (Eddie Masterton). Harry does not remember this name at the start of the game.

RU4986 – Bio-weapon created by the Alliance. Also currently known as Harry Reel. Original name James Masterton.

Harry Reel – name of the Alliance officer that helped Tony get RU4986 away from the alliance. Tony killed him while escaping, then convinced RU4986 that he was Harry Reel.

Plot Point Notes – Challenges + Character specific bonuses

Plot Points: Any time something is listed as a **Challenge**, if the relevant player(s) get involved and resolve or surpass it in some achievement-type way, give the involved player a Plot Point. This is highlighted in the Events sheets as a reminder.

Character-specific non-event triggered Plot Point summary:

Captain: The Captain is a Massive Plot Device. They have the combat psychic powers of River, and memory loss, a lost twin who has the same abilities who became a Reaver and is trying to both save and kill them and is key to the other characters.

You can Hose the Captain twice per game by making the player reroll any success – give him a plot point each time you do this. Also if the player goes for the drink to avoid issues give the player a point.

Fergie: Total pacifist doctor who is also a secret alliance agent.

If conflict occurs and Fergie takes the non-violent option to her detriment, give her player a plot point.

Tony: Total Jayne, but with gratuitous love triangle.

If a situation has potentially peaceful resolution and Tony goes for the violence, give her player a plot point.

Kay: Part of the love triangle, and carries a lot of baggage.'

Gets a point for being blunt and honest when lying is a viable or more wise way out. Also gets a point if he discovers about Tony, the Captain or Fergie's Alliance history and deals with his anti-Alliance prejudice, or if he finds out that Otto owns the mining company that he worked for in his youth and reacts appropriately. Gets a point for declaring or demonstrating his feelings for Tony.

Otto: Space Pirate wannabe secret billionaire who owns a mining moon. Never wants to be found out.

Gets a point for trying to be heroic or for emulating the captain.

Plots

(0) Contracts at the start of the game from Fanty and Mingo

Handout: Contracts.

Game Start is aboard the *Black Snake* with a list of contracts available to take up. The crew get a few minutes to discuss options, before the Captain has to go meet Fanty and Mingo in the dock's bar. Fanty and Mingo are a little on edge, on account of a month ago River Tam going nuts when they met with Captain Reynolds of the Serenity, so they are careful.

- **Miranda contract (main plot; Plot 4).** Sent to Miranda by Blue Sun Corp to retrieve some information on the Pax – cover for the real plot on behalf of Alliance Parliament Senator Lux Eternis.
- **Search for Alliance Medical ship the *Triage* (Plot 5a)**
- **Low paying courier job taking two crates to a rendezvous on Haven.** Needed within 1 week. (dummy job – no plot in particular)
- **Medium paying courier job to pick up Coffin on Haven and deliver to medical facility on Beaumont. (Plot 5b)**
- **Miranda contract to obtain Pax materials for a Parliament source (Plot 1b).** Fanty and Mingo will only mention this potential contract if the Captain or negotiator demonstrates pro-Alliance/parliament tendencies, or demonstrates extreme mercenary attitudes (willingness to sell out principles for cash).

(1) Competition – The independent Mercury Class *Crisis* + The Alliance *Motive Force*

(1a) Captain Rayne Kurn wants the contract. They will take off ahead of Black Snake having had the jump on the contracts, and will use their thrusters to do major damage and burn the Black Snake as they take off, so give themselves a head start. The *Crisis* is slower, heavier, and more heavily armed and armoured than the Black Snake, with a Harpoon gun, a mine layer, four ion drive torpedoes in storage (require work to set up), and a forward mass driver and 12 people aboard.

Challenge: Entire ship, situational. They want what the *Black Snake* wants, and will try to get there first. They are universally less skilled than the *Snake* crew (-1 dice step from all challenges when compared to the crew. In other words, if the players are rolling d10 + d4 with their main character for any challenge, the *Crisis* crew will be d8 + d4. Thus if the top person on the *Crisis* matches against anyone other than the top notch person on the *Black Snake* they will most likely win, but will most likely lose against main.)

Challenge: Caleb – offer better job. After the first encounter with the *Crisis* on take off, Kurn will be impressed with Caleb's piloting skills and will send him a covert message (8+ to detect, 12+ to decrypt for other than Caleb) to offer him twice his current rate to sign on with the *Crisis*. If Caleb is interested, second message to increase offer to sabotage the Snake so the ships can hook up and Kay can jump over. Let this play out how the players want it to. If Caleb jumps ship, he can play out running the *Crisis* from now on as an in game rival.

Challenge: any other player – whenever the *Crisis* crew meets up with them in the course of trying to complete the mission, make sure one of the baddies offers the *Black Snake* crew more cash to swap sides.

(1b) Captain Ander Rapanui of the Alliance Osprey class fast scout *Motive Force* is on a mission to Miranda to retrieve the Pax data/materiel for the Parliament Military. They will not hesitate to bully their way through situations, or shoot first and ask questions later. Their ship has a rear turret railgun and a fore particle cannon. They depend on people being frightened of the consequence of facing down the Parliament Military. They are only a light ship, with crew of 10 however, and will be quick to take a different tack if they face people willing to stand up to them. They outgun and outman the *Black Snake* and have better fuel reserves, and dice rolls should be evens against this crew. **Challenge: Fergie, Tony** – resist using Alliance credentials to get out of the mess.

(1c) If the players decide to/manage to destroy the *Crisis* – a small group of mercenary ships will show up to add the challenge factor – here are some ship and captain names as needed. These are the default other ships in Miranda orbit on various individual missions that might be negotiated with or raced against as needs be.

Captain Yui Namora – the Independent *Decimator* is a heavy corvette converted to transport and cargo hauler. It retains its alliance weaponry with four heavy particle cannons. Slow, heavy, big, very dangerous.

Captain George Pilau – the Independent *Forthright* is a converted Alliance medical ship, with detachable cargo section for conflict or escape situations. Light armament but fast and agile when it drops the cargo section.

Captain Lucy Montebank – the Independent *Gregarious* is a medium freighter of the Dragonfly class (slightly heavier, slower).

(2) Reavers hunting the Captain using psychic connection – Captain's brother.

Each part earns the Captain a plot point.

Part 2a – Foreshadowing. The first time there is a potential Reaver contact, the Captain sees a young boy doing something destructive or distracting to protect the ship from encountering them. Others can see the boy, but less clearly. The boy is familiar to the captain, but without any detail. The consequence of the boy's actions are only understood afterwards when the ship spots the presence of the Reavers that they missed. In this instance the projection is Harry (RU4986) subconscious protecting everyone.

Part 2b – Confusion. Schedule according to pace and tone: Optional encounter. Second time the players might come across the Reavers the boy reappears, this time clearly seen by multiple people. Again there is a sense of Familiarity from the captain, but this time it frightens him instead of feeling familiar and safe. It looks enough like the Captain (RU4986) that people might assume it is a young version of him. It will, this time, lead the characters *into* danger with the Reavers, or draw the reavers to them. In this instance the projection is actually coming from his Reaver brother who is hunting for him.

Part 2c – Final Confrontation and use of the Cure against the Reavers. This confrontation is the end of the game. Whatever the players are doing 20 minutes or so before the end of the game, the Reaver ship *Desolation* catches up with them: if necessary RU4986 (Captain) will sabotage the ship or send out a signal to call them, as his subconscious wants the confrontation to happen either to rescue or eliminate his brother. If they have discovered the Cure, they can attempt to weaponise and use it, or they might be in for a nasty, nasty fight.

(3) Fuel issue

The *Black Snake* is not completely fuelled up at the start, having 150 tons of fuel aboard out of max capacity of 200.

Challenge – variable: Each player that puts themselves on the spot to deal with this issue should be up for a reward of a point if the specific challenge is dealt with.

This plot/event is used as a limited resource to aid pacing and add to the threat level of situations. Feel free to use hand-waving to make it more or less of a threat as time goes on: leaks, sabotage by the Captain's subconscious, etc can all be used as excuses if you need fuel to be more of a problem.

If the players delay at the start they will lose the advantage in getting to Miranda first. They are in a faster ship, so they can bet on playing catch up. However, the Reaver encounter will either cost them more fuel as they try to burn fast or more time if they play it cautious.

If you need to apply numbers, consider the fuel reserves in units of 50 tons: maximum capacity is 200 tons, so from 0 to 4 in the firefly game system scale (50 tonnes per unit). At the start the tanks are at 3 (150 tonnes).

High Burn costs 50% more fuel.

Trip to Miranda from Beaumont (start) costs 2 fuel, or 3 if done at high burn.

Miranda to Haven is 1 Fuel.

Haven is the nearest port to Miranda they can buy fuel safely. However the ship is strapped for cash: **Challenge Otto** to avoid using his cash to buy the ship out of trouble.

The engineer can use handwavery to make her run on fumes to a point: use this to get them to where you want them to be as needed at a cost of plot points to the engineer.

There is an old Alliance fuel dump en route to Miranda on the edge of Reaver territory with 3 units of fuel. The Challenge here can be dialed up or down depending on tone and pace:

- Reaver ship in area (see **Plot 2a or 2b** for possible plot points)
- Competition using the Dump (**Plot 1a or 1c**)
- No ships, but some few Reavers squatting at the Dump (again **Plot 2a or 2b**)
- Automated Alliance defenses that have kept the reavers off, need to be disabled
- Some combination of the above or nothing.

There can be fuel dumps on Miranda with many units: however this is a crapshoot and depends entirely on the GM making the fuel available depending on how the players look for it. Depending on tone and pacing they could be being used by competition ships or have automated defenses. The players may need to negotiate with Other Ships in the Miranda system for fuel: **Challenge Otto** to avoid using his cash to buy the ship out of trouble.

(4) Miranda mission completion episode:

Realizing they don't have the complete story – the kit they have gotten from Fanty and Mingo contains a virus that changes the database on planet to remove reference to Senator Lux, and include Waylan-Yutani corporation execs in the blame. This challenge revolves around the players being curious about the job they have been given: if they don't care they won't learn this information.

Challenge: Whoever chooses to become involved.

The potential here is pretty open. They players can choose to act on this information in any way they like. Some ideas are they could attempt to contact the Waylan-Yutani people to let them know what Senator Lux is doing… or contact the Senator to let him know the game is up… or sit on the info till an opportunity arises, or trade it with other freelancers… or anything.

Use the level of success of their intrigue rolls determine how well their plans come about and what the consequences might be. Some outcomes:

The people they contact send someone to kill them.

The people they contact agree to meet and do a double cross.

The people they contact pay sizable cash for the info.

The people they contact offer them a job to counter the original program and do something else entirely with it.

(5) Bio weapons – the Pax and the Reaver Syndrome.

And discovering about RU3996 and potential relationship to the Captain.

5a - Doctor Ravi Chandanam's ship – *The Triage* – looking for medical data from Miranda will arrive in system after the *Snake* crew have had enough time on the surface to get their first wave of investigations or activity done. Ravi is interested in any information that leads to a potential cure for Reavers. She would be against any attempts to use the Pax as a weapon. The ship is a hospital vessel.

Challenge: Fergie – Find out about Fergie's Alliance Past + finding the cure to Reaver Syndrome. Doctor Ravi will attempt to initiate communications if she finds out Fergie is aboard, and will openly talk about their past association. She will be suspicious of Fergie to some extent: She got kicked from her work in the Alliance almost immediately after Fergie left her team, and she put two and two together. She is however driven more by the expediency of trying to get any information about the Pax and will be willing to share her research into the potential Cure. She needs samples of the Pax and the medical records from the end of the Miranda disaster to further her own research. With the information she provides it is possible for Fergie to construct a prototype Reaver Syndrome cure.

Captain Rob Yen – Captain of the *Triage* is a jaded man, and is bitter about working in the middle of nowhere under constant threat. He is a humanist, but practical and willing to talk and listen, and trusts Dr Chandanam.

5b - RU3996 – There is a chance the players pick up the contract to go to Haven and retrieve the body of RU3996. If they get curious they can investigate the body – if the person doing so is aware of the program for the series then **Challenge 11** alert + medical which will reveal relationship to RU4986 and River Tam. If not aware **Challenge 7** alert + medical to note the interesting operation marks similar to the captain's 'war –scars'. **Challenge 11** alert + covert to figure out timing of this guy's mass murder and River Tam's outburst on Beaumont are identical, and thus likely related.