ONI'S CATCH

a

DARK MATTER

adventure

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This adventure is a collaboration between Dark Matter by Mage Hand Press and Hyperdrive Fleet by CzePeku

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Oni's Catch is a mini-adventure for 1st- and 2nd-level characters in which the party explores an offline relay ship in hopes of discovering the source of its garbled transmissions. This is the first in a series of collaborations between Dark Matter and Hyperdrive Fleet, exploring the far reaches of the universe, one ship at a time!

DARK MATTER

Dark Matter is a complete science fiction conversion for 5th Edition that unlocks a universe of adventure for your table, without leaving your favorite fantasy staples behind. The monsters in this adventure can be found in *Dark Matter:* Chapter 5, Monsters or use an abbreviated stat block.

HYPERDRIVE FLEET

Hyperdrive Fleet is a battlemap project by Czepeku focusing on all shapes and sizes of spaceships. These detailed sci-fi maps are the perfect companion for any game of Starfinder, Star Wars RPG, or (of course) Dark Matter.

BACKGROUND

The following background details might be useful to players and GMs.

MAKOTO, THE BOUNTY HUNTER

The 'Verse has no shortage of infamous bounty hunters, but among the most feared among the is Makoto. Formerly an oni—a rank of Lakshayan battleframe pilot with a staggering number of confirmed kills—Makoto has made it her mission to hunt the worst of the worst and bring them to justice. This crusade has brought her from the Sepulcher Star to the far reaches of the Frontier in her ship the *Hawkeye* as she carves a swath through the criminal underworld.

Aboard her ship is a cutting edge carbonite chamber, capable of freezing any living being into a solid carbonite for storage in mere moments, along with dozens of captured bounties. Rumor has it that Makoto has been working her way up the ranks to capture the leadership of the Firm, but if that were true, Makoto would possess a deathwish to rival her considerable lethality.

GRAX AND HIS GUYS FOR CHEAP

Grax's Guys for Cheap is the most affordable mercenary company in the 'verse, and boasts a wide net of job postings. Prospective clients can ask almost anything of Grax's Guys, from shipping Rosvalian star pigs across the galaxy, to asking as a short order cook in the restaurant those pigs are served at. The tagline "You can trust Grax!" can be seen advertised in almost every port in the 'verse, and is practically a cliché at this point.

Moreover, the founder and owner, Grax Grraxe, will hire just about anyone to a crew, and makes a point to offer regular contracts to orcs, half-orcs, and other distrusted races. This means that a Grax's Crew is the easiest starting position for anyone breaking into the mercenary business, if not the most prestigious or lucrative.

SET UP

The adventure begins as the characters receive a transmission—from the illustrious Grax himself! Read or paraphrase the following to detail the transmission:

> Shattering an otherwise calm day aboard your ship, you receive an urgent transmission. The household face of Grax, titular owner of Grax's Guys for Cheap,, appears on your comms screen, though a swollen eye and missing tooth indicates he may have received a beating. "I need your help—quickly! A bounty hunter, the Oni, has captured me. I'm aboard the Hawkeye, and I'm willing to pay–." The transmission cuts off abruptly with a whining hum, like that of a laser sword.

A **DC 11 Intelligence (History) check** recalls that **Grax Grraxe** (he/him) is the proprietor and founder of Grax's Guys for Cheap, one of the most prolific mercenary services in the 'Verse. Grax could certainly offer a hefty reward of credits, or failing that, a lucrative job.

The Hawkeye can be tracked by following the transmission's signal with a **DC 10 Intelligence (Technology) check**. The source of the transmission is within three void jumps of the party's current location but requires another hour of sublight travel before coming into view.

THE HAWKEYE

When the party's ship comes within visual range of the Hawkeye, read or paraphrase the following:

> Following the signal of Grax's transmission brings you to a sleek, orange transport-class vessel idling in orbit around a Hegemony planet. Two forward-facing guns dominate the ship's structure, and bright paint on its side labels it as the "Hawkeye."

The Hawkeye's sensors and exterior lights are active, so Grax's captors are clearly aboard. Accessing the ship will require some finesse. The characters can try any of the following approaches:

Guile. If the characters hail the Hawkeye, they hear a terse voice with a Lakshayan accent. This is the voice of Makoto, who is understandably suspicious of anyone who contacts her ship mid-job. A **DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check** convinces Makoto that the party represents Hegemony inspectors, clients arriving early to pick up a bounty she has collected, or another suitably convincing cover. A failure **alerts** the crew on the bottom level of the ship.

A success allows the party to dock with the Hawkeye and enter via its airlock into the middle level of the ship, at the *Engine Room*. The crew and metallic skeleton aren't alerted until the party is discovered. Maktoto refuses to speak with the party directly, and doesn't give access to the top level of the ship.

Stealth. The characters can accomplish a spacewalk to the Hawkeye without much difficulty. There are two ways to approach the Hawkeye: a locked airlock, which requires a **DC 16 Intelligence (Data or Technology) check** to open or a cargo hatch on the bottom of the ship, which requires a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check** to open. A failed Intelligence check alerts the crew on the bottom level of the ship.

The airlock leads to the middle level of the ship, in the *Engine Room*. The cargo hatch leads to the bottom level of the ship, in the *Cargo Bay*.

Teleportation. The *dimension door* spell or similar magic teleports the party to the bottom level of the ship in the *Cargo Bay*.

BOTTOM LEVEL

The characters arrive on the bottom level of the *Hawkeye* in the *Cargo Bay* through a cargo elevator. The space brightly lit and filled with various provisions and spare components.

The *Hawkeye*'s crew on the bottom level of the ship are either **alerted** or **unalerted** as the party explores this area. If anyone fires a blaster, the crew is **alerted** and will take appropriate precautions. Otherwise, they will be caught by surprise.

When **alerted**:

- **Lexa Skye**, usually sleeping in the crew quarters (using the statistics of a **coalition marine**) will remain in her bunk, ready to shoot the first creature entering the crew quarters.
- **Bithk Frago**, usually taking a shower in the bathroom (using the statistics of a **redshirt**), will travel to the party's location and attack (wearing nothing at all).
- **Nox Hilde,** usually sleeping in the crew quarters (using the statistics of a **Hegemony trooper**) will travel to the party's location and attack.

CARGO BAY

However the characters reach the cargo bay, read or paraphrase the following when they enter:

> The Hawkeye's bottommost level contains a spacious cargo bay dominated by a rusting, yellow cargo crane that is falteringly organizing crates into messy piles and shuttling them across the room. Its mechanical whirring may have masked your entry.

Three doors connect the cargo bay to the other rooms on the bottom level and a staircase leads up to the middle level.

A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** confirms that the party isn't alone on the Hawkeye's bottom level. Sounds of movement can be detected through the doors, as well as up the staircase. A further **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds a set of 1d4 concussion grenades (see *Dark Matter*: Chapter 5: Gear) in one of the crates. Other crates simply contain provisions, spare components, and arcane batteries.

MESS HALL

When the characters enter the mess hall, read or paraphrase the following:

> The moment the door opens, an urgent alarm blares and your nostrils are filled with the smell of smoke. A gnome wearing a red jumpsuit races across the room to don a pair of oven mitts and pulls a tray from an oven. Burnt cookies—a shame. Several moments pass before the redshirt notices you walk in.

The mess hall contains a compact kitchenette and a comfortable dining table. A gnomish spacer named **Jobi Butterfinger** (he/him) (using the statistics of a **redshirt**) has just burned a batch of gnomish buttercookies in the oven as the party walks in. Because Jobi is a new hire, he doesn't immediately suspect the party to be intruders and is preoccupied with turning off the fire alarm. A **DC 11 Dexterity check** helps Jobi fan the fire sensor. Without assistance, Jobi takes three rounds to disable the alarm, which **alerts** the rest of the crew.

Once the alarm is silenced, a **DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Intimidation) check** placates Jobi for the remainder of the adventure with a lie or threat. On a failure, the spacer will rush for a phaser on the couch and attack the party.

A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds a twelve-pack of Krash and a stash of **24 credits** in the kitchen's cabinets. Jobi's key to the crew quarters and a *Lakshayan coin* made of solid adamantine (worth **15 credits**) has also been left on the dining table in the rush to save his cookies.

If the party has eliminated the threats on the bottom level of the ship, they can take a **short rest** in the mess hall.

BATHROOM

When the characters enter the bathroom, read or paraphrase the following:

> Steam hangs in the air and coats the mirror of this room in fog. The glass door of the shower stall is opaque with beads of hot water. The remainder of the bathroom contains the essentials: a toilet and a few cabinets.

The bathroom of the Hawkeye was recently used; in fact, if the characters haven't disturbed his shower with blaster fire elsewhere on the level, dragonborn spacer **Bithk Frago** (he/him) (using the statistics of a redshirt) is still lathering his scales in the shower! Unlike any other reasonable person, Bithk showers with a phaser and readies it the moment the characters enter the room. This will probably lead to a standoff with a completely naked dragonborn.

A **DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check** allows a character to search the room without alerting Bithk.

Bithk's clothes are messily arrayed next to the shower, containing **12 credits**, a key to the crew quarters, and a *Lakshayan coin* made of solid adamantine (worth **15 credits**).

CREW'S QUARTERS

The door to the *Crew Quarters* is securely locked and can be opened with a **DC 18 Intelligence (Data) or Strength (Athletics) check**, or by finding a key elsewhere on the level. A failed Athletics check **alerts** the crew. When the characters enter the crew's quarters, read or paraphrase the following:

> Narrow bunk beds take up what little space there is in this room, and a wardrobe filled with uniforms and tactical gear stands in the only remaining spot.

Lexa Skye (she/her), a human **coalition marine**, and **Nox Hilde** (he/him), a near-human **Hegemony Trooper**, are still sleeping if the characters haven't alerted them with blaster fire elsewhere on the level or alarms on approach. (Note that Lexa sleeps on the top bunk, and Nox on the bottom.) Appropriately paranoid bounty hunters, these crewmembers sleep with their weapons within reach.

If **alerted**, Lexa readies her blaster to attack the first creature she sees entering the crew's quarters, and then spends her next movement scurrying up into an air duct on the following turn. This duct leads her to the *Medical Bay* on the middle level, where she will patch her wounds and prepare another ambush.

A **DC 12 group Dexterity (Stealth) check** enters the room without waking Lexa and Nox, if they haven't been disturbed already. A **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds **32 credits** and a *Lakshayan coin* made of solid adamantine (worth **15 credits**) hidden in Lexa's bunk drawer among her clothes.

MIDDLE LEVEL

The only way to reach the middle level of the ship is a ladder from the bottom level or a ladder from the top level. When the characters arrive here, they enter the *Engine Room*.

ENGINE ROOM

As the characters come up the staircase to the engine room, read or paraphrase the following:

> A thrumming engine occupies half of this room, partially hidden behind a pillar built into the center of the ship. Beyond the pillar, bounties frozen in carbonite hang from racks like jackets in a closet and a shower of sparks emit from an obscured source.
>
> A ladder leading up to the top level is blocked off by a hardlight wall.

A **bronze skeleton** stands just around the corner busily cutting at a block of carbonite containing another of Makoto's bounties with a plasma cutter. A **DC 10 group Dexterity (Stealth) check** allows the party to spy the skeleton without alerting it first.

Once the skeleton spots the party, it attacks, throwing the carbonite block to catch the party off guard. The carbonite block flies in a 5-foot radius line from the skeleton. Each creature in the line must make a **DC 14 Dexterity saving throw** or take 3d8 bludgeoning damage. **Roll initiative.**

An 8-foot-cube chamber is embedded in the central pillar of the engine room. If a character comes within 10 feet of the chamber's entrance, the skeleton will use its action to attempt to shove a creature into it. If a creature enters the chamber, the door slams shut automatically and begins the process of petrifying them in a carbonite block. The process can't be interrupted and takes one minute.

A creature that is frozen in the carbonite chamber is considered petrified. A frozen creature can later be thawed out in the chamber over the course of one minute. Once a creature is thawed in this way, it gains a level of exhaustion until it completes a long rest.
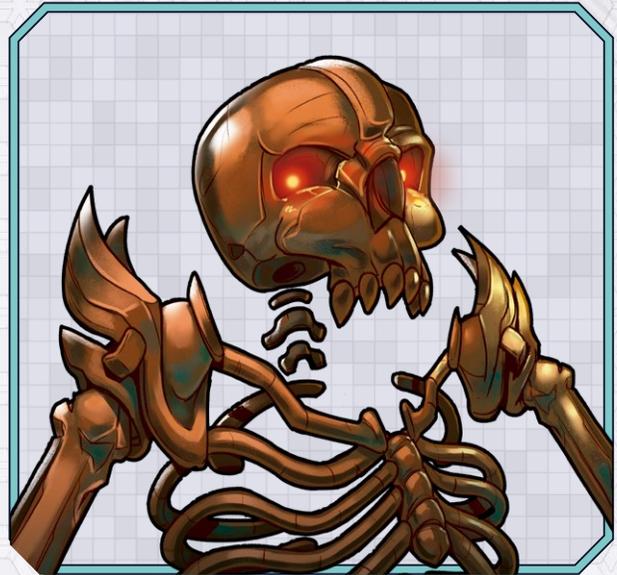
Once the skeleton is defeated and explodes, the characters find a solid adamantine *Lakshayan coin* (worth **15 credits**) embedded into its sternum, above where its heart would be. The bronze-coated bones from the skeleton are worth **100 credits**, if the characters can find the right buyer.

The crates near the carbonite bounties contain their belongings. A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds **5d10 credits**, three swarm pistols, two concussive grenades, and a thwirrel among the belongings (the final crate appears empty unless a character first succeeds on a **DC 12 Wisdom saving throw**).

The engine room connects to the *Medical Bay* and the *Ladder* leading to the top level.

MEDICAL BAY

As the characters enter the medical bay, read or paraphrase the following:

> A medical bed is built into one wall of this room, while an array of screens hover over an operating chair on the opposite side. To the right side of this medical room is a cabinet, containing a series of common drugs, tonics, and cures.

If the characters failed to defeat **Lexa Skye** and she successfully retreated to the medical bay, also read or paraphrase the following, then **roll initiative:**

> Suddenly, blaster fire rings out, scorching toward you! Lexa pops out from behind a steel cabinet and opens fire!

A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds **8 credits** and 1d6 hypodermic needles filled with *potions of healing* in one of the drawers. If Lexa successfully retreated to the medical bay, there is only one hypodermic needle.

LADDER

When the characters inspect the ladder to the top level, read or paraphrase the following:

> The ladder up to the top level is blocked by a thin, yet amazingly solid hardlight wall. Rather than a ten-digit keypad, the hardlight projector has an interface bearing a series of unusual glyphs.

A **DC 15 Intelligence (History) check** recognizes the glyphs as belonging to the ancient Lakshayan language, a dialect of Common that originated on High Terra. If the characters have acquired a *Lakshayan coin*, they will recognize the glyphs embossed on the coins. Furthermore, a **DC 17 Intelligence (History) or Dexterity (Piloting) check** remembers the unique way that battleframes are locked by their pilots: using a series of four unique coins, inserted in the correct order.

An *antimagic glyph* on the hardlight projector renders it impervious to hacking or dispels, like *dispel magic* that could interfere with its inner workings.

These glyphs correspond with *Lakshayan coins* carried by each of the crew members (except for Nox, who is a mercenary hired to collect Makoto's most recent bounty). One coin can be found in the mess hall, another in the bathroom, a third in one of the foot lockers in the crew's quarters, and a fourth embedded into the bronze skeleton's sternum. Once all four coins have been collected, the characters can determine the correct code to disable the hardlight barrier and reach the top level of the ship.

TOP LEVEL

To reach this level of the ship, the characters must assemble a set of four *Lakshayan coins* and solve the ladder's code. The ladder leads to the *Bridge*.

THE BRIDGE

As the characters come up the ladder into the Bridge, read or paraphrase the following:

> The Hawkeye's bridge is an open space, dimly lit by the glow of various navigation screens. As you come up through the hatch on the floor, you see Makoto standing over Grax, laser sword drawn. She turns towards you, a mechanical voice echoes out through her painted demon mask:
>
> "So you are the ones this thing contacted. Sadly, you have not been paid enough."
>
> Her sword lashes at a nearby pipe, releasing a flood of steam into the deck.

MAKOTO (Medium Humanoid) CR 4

HP 58	AC 15	Speed 30

Str +0	Dex +3	Con +2	Int +0	Wis +2	Cha +1

Alpha Strike. Adv. on initiative checks when not surprised.

Upgraded Cloaked Armor. Adv. on Stealth checks. Can Hide as a bonus action when lightly obscured.

Multiattack. 2 Katana or 3 Swarm Pistols or 6 Swarm Pistol with disadvantage.

+1 Katana. Melee: +7 to hit, 8 (1d8+4) slash. or Two handed: 9 (1d10 + 4) slash.

Swarm Pistols. Ranged: +6 to hit, range 15/45, 5 (2d4) rad.

Reaction: **Parry.** +3 AC vs a weapon attack against her.

Roll initiative. The bridge is heavily obscured by steam and Grax is tied to a chair in the center of the space. Makoto uses the obscured conditions to her advantage of this, hiding as a bonus action at the end of each of her turns.

A character can use their action to cut Grax loose from the chair. When this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

As Grax pulls himself out of the chair, he slumps forward until his head touches the floor, bending as if he had no spine whatsoever. His back separates along a seam and an awful alien form, standing on three spiderlike legs, steps out of it like a discarded jumpsuit. It snarls and strikes!

A **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Survival) check** recognizes the creature as a **body snatcher**. The body snatcher and Makoto want to kill each other as much as they want to kill the party, but prioritize whichever side is a more immediate threat.

If the characters realize that Grax was an imposter before killing Makoto, they can form a truce until the creature is dead with a successful **Charisma (Persuasion) check**. The DC for this check is **14** if the characters haven't attacked Makoto and **18** otherwise.

Part of the bridge is Makoto's personal armory. In addition to a pair of sharpened, antique katanas, a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds a *swarmkeeper* (see *Dark Matter*: Chapter 5: Magic Items) and three antimatter carbines.
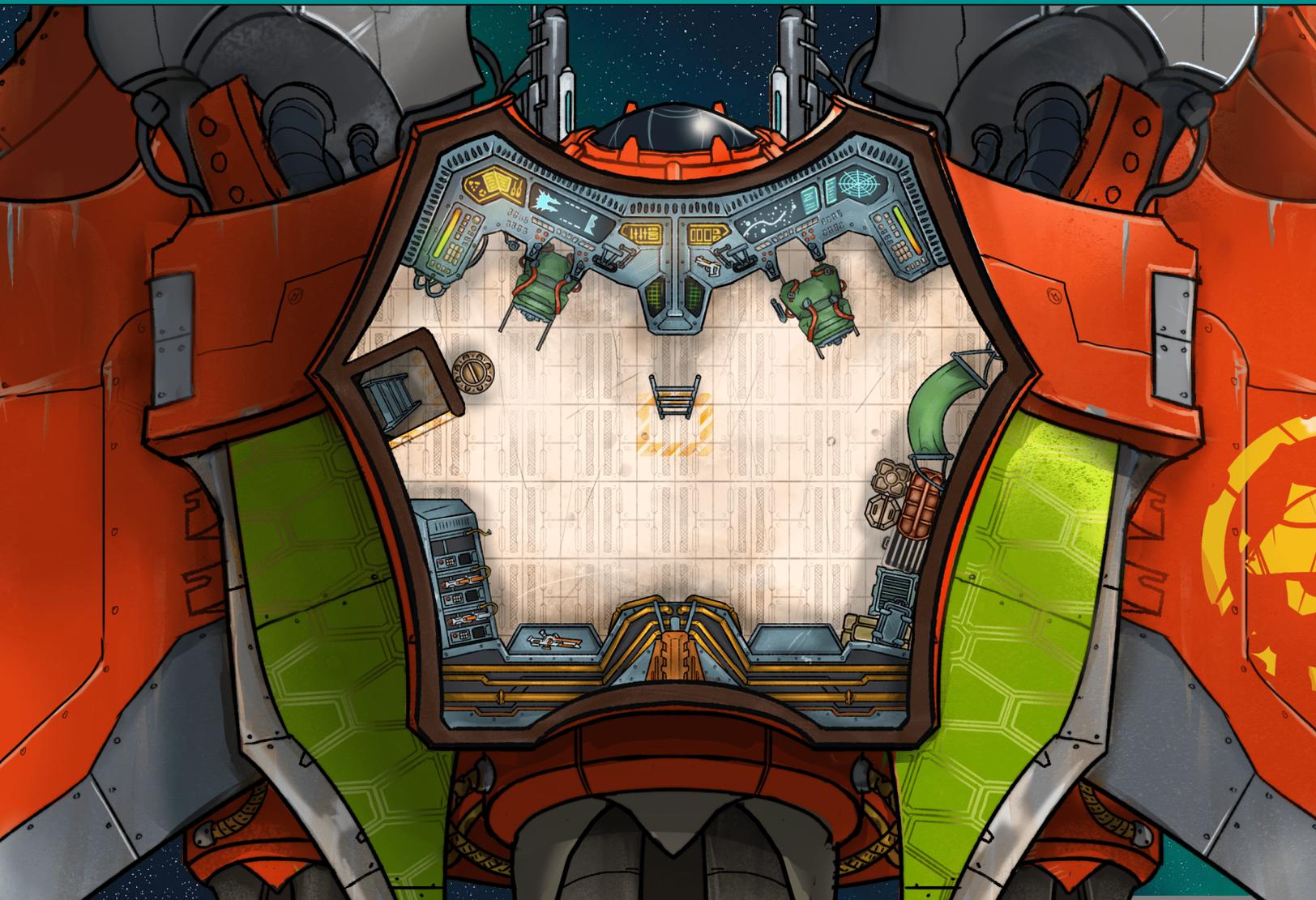
A **DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine or Perception) check** finds that the Grax skin on the ground is a synthetic, a rubbery suit most likely crafted in a laboratory. The real Grax is probably safe and sound. He might even pay good money for a ridiculous suit like this—he loves putting his face on things, after all.

CONCLUSION

Once the characters have slain the body snatcher, the ending of the adventure depends on whether or not the party has slain Makoto.

Makoto Lives. If the party allied with Makoto to take down the body snatcher, she allows the party to leave with their heads. Killing most of her crew didn't sit lightly with the bounty hunter, but she is wise enough not to murder over a glorified case of mistaken identity. Besides, the bounty for this body snatcher was "dead or alive."

Makoto Dies. The Hawkeye and her valuable bounties are left in the party's possession. If the characters can find a black market contact with enough sway, they might be able to pawn these bounties for nearly their agreed-upon prices. However, another Lakshayan bounty hunter lurks in the shadows of Maw stations and frontier worlds bearing a similar painted mask to that of Makoto, waiting for their moment to strike!

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