

STAR WARS[®]

ROLEPLAYING GAME

Masquerade

A Free *Star Wars* Mini-Adventure
for the Rise of the Empire Era

By Morrie Mullins



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“Masquerade” is a *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* mini-adventure for four heroes of 7th to 9th level. The adventure is set during the Rise of the Empire era, but it can be modified to work in any time period.

The scenario can be modified for heroes of higher level by increasing the number of underlings in Scenes 2 and 4, and by giving Zascha extra vitality points. In addition, raise the DCs of any skill checks by 1 point for each level the average character level in the party exceeds nine.

The scenario can be modified for characters of lower level by reducing the number of underlings in the combats, lowering Zascha’s vitality points to inhibit her use of Force skills (she will have already used Heal Self today by the time the heroes encounter her), and reducing skill check DCs.

Background

Two weeks ago, the daughter of Elwis Bontraar, a prominent Bothan, was kidnapped and taken (if reports are to be believed) to Hutt Space. The Hutts, who would normally claim gleeful responsibility for such an act, deny any knowledge of the whereabouts of Jennalyn Bontraar. They have even gone so far as to say that when and if a bounty is offered for her return, they wish to be notified so they can send their own teams out to find her. While Elwis is ready to hire anyone and everyone who might possibly be able to find his daughter, he is loathe to deal with the Hutts. They have interfered in his business too many times, and he would prefer not to owe them for the return of his daughter.

A message came to the Bontraar residence on Coruscant last week stating that the kidnapers were ready to make an exchange—Jennalyn Bontraar for a case of 1,000 credsticks, each worth 2,000 dataries. The exchange would take place aboard Bontraar’s luxury yacht, the *Masquerade*, which was scheduled to be in orbit above the swirling gas-giant Yoribuunt, a planet located just outside the borders of Hutt Space. The *Masquerade* makes this trip once a year for Bontraar’s “Galactic Costume Extravaganza,” a social event in which business leaders, military personnel, and anyone else with anything interesting to share dons a costume and spends a day and a night sharing secrets. Bontraar has, for the last decade, made this an open-invitation event, so there is not even a guest list to check for likely suspects. Anyone could make an appearance, in costume, and their identities might never be learned.

Until he received the kidnapers’ message, Bontraar had planned on canceling the *Masquerade*’s trip this year. Instead, he is going to bring his own agents along to assist in the recovery of his daughter and, if possible, to keep her kidnapers from escaping with two million of his credits.

The actual kidnapper is Zascha, a Cerean Force-user whose sister, Anoura, was an information broker for Bontraar up until a year ago. On a routine assignment, Anoura was killed, and Zascha is determined to have revenge for her sister’s death. She has not only contacted Bontraar but also notified the Hutts that the kidnapers will be aboard the *Masquerade*. Using connections within

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Bontraar's organization, she has learned of Bontraar's plans and has provided the Hutt bounty hunters with descriptions of the heroes as the kidnapers.

Getting the Characters Involved

Elwis Bontraar is a businessman, and while only a small part of his business deals with information, he is a Bothan, and he happens to have a certain datachip the heroes need. The contents of this chip may be anything the heroes in your game need, either individually or as a group. Bontraar is someone the heroes have heard of, probably. Scoundrel heroes may have interacted with or worked for him in the past, and noble heroes may have attended the gatherings on the *Masquerade*. Force-using heroes may have been troubled by recent dreams of a young female Bothan in danger, dreams that caused them to seek out Bontraar even as he was looking for help. You may also substitute a Gamemaster character specific to your campaign for Bontraar, so long as the GM character is one who would be willing to trade a datachip for assistance in saving the life of his/her child.

Any of these means, or one of your own devising, eventually brings the heroes to the *Masquerade* on the morning that the costume gala begins. By this point, they should have chosen their respective costumes and made any other preparations necessary for the event. Weapons are allowed on the ship, but Bontraar would very much prefer that the heroes recover his daughter (and, ideally, capture her kidnapers) without putting the anonymity of his guests (or their lives) in jeopardy. The heroes are given earpieces through which they can receive information from their employer. The communication, however, is one way—Bontraar does not provide a means for them to get in touch with him once they are costumed and among the party-goers.

Scene 1: Get the Party Started

All of the guests on the *Masquerade* arrive separately and are escorted from the airlock to private quarters by an astromech droid. Some of them arrive already in costume. The first scene of the event takes place at the opening dance, an early-morning affair in the stateroom. A massive viewscreen shows the swirling clouds of Yoribuunt below.

Your arrival at the stateroom is cause for only minor concern among those already present. All of the attendees seem to be milling about, speaking in hushed voices, sometimes slipping datapads from one hand to another. The far wall of the stateroom is an enormous viewscreen that is nearly filled with an image of Yoribuunt. Red and yellow clouds swirl in the upper

layers of the gas giant's atmosphere, and every so often, a white explosion from somewhere deeper sends a bubble of color twisting its way to the top, dissipating in blues and greens like a sheen of oil atop water.

Then, a voice fills the air.

"Welcome, friends. I am pleased to have you here once more, on the *Masquerade*. As ever, I am among you, but I remain as anonymous as the rest of you. I will not speak for long, as there is much sharing to be done, and many deals to be struck. Enjoy the safety of this place, and the security of knowing that your identity is yours to reveal, and yours alone."

The heroes can circulate through the party, interacting with the others present. If they elect not to do so, the party comes to them, since someone who seems reserved in this environment must have exceptionally valuable information to trade!

Here are some specific encounters, ideas, and tips for running this part of the adventure:

A Masked Wookiee

An individual who appears to be a Wookiee in an elaborate mask, but who speaks Basic perfectly, offers to barter information about spice lanes and delivery schedules. He (or perhaps she; a Listen check against DC 12 reveals that a voice modulator is being used) seeks information about Jedi strongholds aside from Coruscant and is not interested in explaining why. ("Why?" is a question that is generally not well received on the *Masquerade*.)

Faux Jedi

A number of individuals in Jedi robes are present, carrying what might be lightsabers (none of which are functional, save for those carried by Jedi heroes). Jedi heroes may have elected to dress as Jedi, on the assumption that no one would believe that a Jedi would come to such a place openly. Those who do so end up having their costumes and performances critiqued, rather harshly, by the other individuals dressed as Jedi. ("No, no. Jedi don't talk like that. You have to keep your upper lip stiff, like this . . ." "The way your lightsaber is attached to your belt is all wrong. See the angle?" "There's an art to wearing these robes. They have to be folded just so . . .") Note that the critiques may be even more outlandish if you are running this mini-adventure in a later era of play.

Mysterious Guards

A Gather Information check (DC 20) allows the heroes to learn that one thing that seems different to attendees this year is that there are more individuals present with bodyguards than in years past. A number of guests are making circuits of the ship with a pair of large individuals (perhaps Wookiees, Trandoshans, or Gamorreans, though in almost all cases, it becomes difficult to tell one from the other when the elaborate—and expensive—costumes are worn) at their heels.



Force-Sensitives

A half-dozen Force-sensitive beings are present, if See Force is used enough to detect them. None of the patrons flanked by burly costumed individuals are Force-sensitive.

I Spy

The Spot DC to determine the actual species of any given individual who is in costume varies based on their species. Identifying a disguised Wookiee, Gamorrean, or Ithorian requires a Spot check against DC 20 (the DC would be lower for Ithorians in particular, but so many other “large” species use the body shape of Ithorians as a means of concealing their own forms that the Ithorians actually blend in rather nicely). Identifying a disguised Trandoshan, Cerean, Bothan, Gungan, Kel Dor, Quarren, or Twi’lek requires a Spot check against DC 25. Identifying a disguised Human, Rodian, Sullustan, Tarasin (see the *Living Force Campaign Guide* for a description), Zabrak, or Duros require a Spot check against DC 30. Representatives of all these species are present, and all of them have included voice modulators as part of their costumes. Before a hero can make a Spot check to determine a guest’s species, the hero must interact with the disguised individual for at least 5 rounds.

Faces in the Crowd

Among the attendees: A Trandoshan disguised as Jedi Master Mace Windu; a Duros whose costume appears to be based off old images of Count Dooku; a Human who bears a striking resemblance to Bail Organa (but is not; it’s only a costume); at least three individuals of various species dressed as Yoda (and none less than 2 feet too tall); a trio of Ithorians, dressed in shabby Ithorian costumes in order to appear as though they are other than what they appear to be; a Trandoshan in a shabby Ithorian costume, who seems to be trying to look like an Ithorian who is trying to look like an Ithorian; a Force-sensitive Tarasin female who is assisting in the costuming of her patron, a rather short-statured Bothan, by occasionally creating subtle illusions to augment or modify his appearance (Will save against DC 20 to recognize the illusions for what they are upon interacting with the Bothan); and anyone else you would like to drop into the mix.

Information, Please

No one present has heard anything about a missing girl (although a number of individuals present offer to sell the heroes a girl, if they’re in the market). The heroes should roll Sense Motive checks every time they ask a question related to this. Roll Bluff checks against their Sense Motive checks, but the only time it matters is when they’re interacting with the Trandoshan dressed as an Ithorian. This is Krass, one of the bounty hunters sent by the Hutt. His Bluff is at +15. If he is asked about a missing girl, he pegs the heroes as the kidnappers he’s looking for. (Zascha told him that part of the “costume” of the kidnappers would be the questioning, in order to find anyone who might have been told about the problem.) Krass has a droid deliver a note to the heroes that reads “Girl at Docking Bay 11. Come soon.”

Scene 2: A Little Competition

Krass and his Hutt-bought ruffians have set up an ambush for the heroes in Docking Bay 11. Believing the heroes to be the kidnappers, Krass plans to capture them and torture them into telling him the location of the girl so that the Hutts can use her as leverage against her father. The one aspect of Krass’s plan that he didn’t quite convey well enough to his ruffians was to set their weapons on stun. Krass is firing on stun, but his underlings are shooting to kill.

The docking bay is circular, 10 meters in diameter, and piled with boxes of foodstuffs for the celebration. An airlock is directly opposite the only door into the docking bay. All the security cameras in this docking bay have been disconnected—the wires cut from inside the docking bay—so standard means of checking out what waits for the heroes are not fruitful. Other means may still be available to creative groups. Krass has had one of his technicians tap into the security cameras outside the docking bay, so he knows exactly when the heroes are coming and is ready for them.

Krass’s two ruffians are run-of-the-mill bad guys. For them, use the stats for Low-Level Outlaws in Chapter 14 of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook.

Krass: Male Trandoshan Scout 4/Scoundrel 2/Bounty Hunter 2; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 17 (+1 natural, +1 Dex, +5 class); DR 3; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 47/12; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6+1, baton) or +7/+2 ranged (3d8 or DC 18 stun, heavy blaster pistol); SQ Darkvision, trailblazing, heart +1, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to Defense), illicit barter, lucky (1/day), target bonus +1, sneak attack +1d6; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +6; SZ M; DSP 4; Rep +3; Face/Reach 2 m by 2 m/2 m; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 10. Challenge Code D.

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol, baton, encrypted datapad (DC 30), guild membership badge, combat jumpsuit.

Skills: Computer Use +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +11, Intimidate +4, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Pilot +10, Repair +4, Search +8, Spot +10.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Track, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons).

Scene 3: Remote Control

The Hutt backup plan is more straightforward: Take the *Masquerade* and all of its passengers hostage. Yes, it’s brute force. Yes, it’s likely to make people angry. But someone other than a Hutt is being lawless and using the Hutts for cover—and they want to know who it is.

To enable this alternate plan to be implemented, Krass was given a failsafe switch, surgically implanted at the back of his jaw. He can trigger the switch manually with a flick of his tongue, but it also will trigger automatically in the event of his death or incapacitation.

Once the failsafe switch is triggered, a transceiver hidden in the bowels of the *Masquerade* switches control of the ship to autopilot, and then reassigns the autopilot controls to a small shuttle hidden in the upper layers of the atmosphere of Yoribuunt. The heroes can make their way to the bridge and attempt opposed Pilot checks (the pilot controlling the *Masquerade* remotely has +10 to his Pilot checks; the heroes must beat his rolls by at least five in order to wrest control of the ship from him). They also can worm their way into the ship's computer system (Computer Use check against DC 15) and disable the transceiver to keep the other pilot from being able to send and receive information to the *Masquerade* (Disable Device against DC 20).

Scene 4: A Precious Cargo

Once the heroes have dealt with the issues arising in Scenes 2 and 3 (and really, order isn't important; if it makes more sense to run Scene 3 prior to Scene 2, do so), the endgame begins.

Realizing that the two forces she has conspired to put against each another may now both have reason to come after her in a most unpleasant fashion, Zascha has (quite reasonably) concluded that discretion—or, in this case, running away—is the better part of valor. It is her intention to take Jennalyn Bontraar with her. This is one contingency that the *Masquerade* is well prepared for, though. Because of the nature of the information frequently traded on board, alarms are set to alert the crew whenever anyone attempts to leave.

The sound of a keening alarm interrupts your activities. Everyone looks up, startled, but the alarm cuts off as suddenly as it began.

Then, for the first time, your earpiece hisses. "Subdeck three. Small cargo shuttle attempting to depart without clearance. Go!"

The shuttle is taking some time to load. Zascha's two Gamorrean assistants are having significant trouble performing fine motor tasks without removing their costumes, and she is not about to allow them to reveal themselves before their shuttle has disembarked. To make matters worse, she's decided that the best way to speed things along is to yell at them. She also hasn't bothered to have any of the security cameras disengaged.

As the heroes rush to subdeck three, the earpiece again crackles, telling them that there are two individuals—both Twi'leks, apparently—loading the shuttle.

One of the crates being loaded contains Jennalyn, who is alive, awake, and very frightened. Her crate is the one the Gamorreans are trying to push up the ramp when the heroes enter the hangar.

A small shuttle with green and black markings sits on the far side of the hangar from you. Two rather large individuals—both of whom bear striking resemblances to Twi'lek Senator Orn Free Ta—are hauling a crate up the ramp and into the cargo hold. A muffled voice cries out

as one of the Twi'leks drops his end of the crate, and he and the other bearer grunt at each other in a much more guttural tongue than you might have expected.

Heroes who speak Gamorrean recognize the language—and the rather insulting words being flung back and forth—immediately.

Zascha is inside the ship, and she makes her appearance only after her guards are stopped from bringing Jennalyn's crate aboard. Before engaging the heroes, she takes a round and uses Improved Force Mind (Strength) for herself and her Gamorreans, then uses Heroic Surge to heal the vitality cost to herself. Her costume—which is very good—is that of a Twi'lek dancing girl, with her lekku wound atop her head.

Urg and Burg: Male Gamorrean Thug 3/Soldier 2; Init +0; Defense 14 (+4 class); DR 3; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 20/14; Atk +10 melee (2d6+4, vibroblade) or +1 ranged (3d6 or DC 15 stun, blaster pistol); SQ Primitive, +2 species bonus to Fortitude saves, bonus feat (Power Attack); SV Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2; SZ M; DSP 2; Rep +1; Face/Reach 2 m by 2 m/2 m; Str 18, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8. Challenge Code B.

Equipment: Vibroblade, blaster pistol, combat jumpsuit, Orn Free Ta costume.

Skills: Intimidate +6, Profession (Thug) +2; Speak Gamorrean.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (vibroblade), Weapon Group Proficiencies (primitive weapons, simple weapons, vibroweapons).

Zascha: Female Cerean Tainted Force Adept 5/Dark Force Witch 5; Init +2 (+2 species); Defense 19 (+9 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 60/10; Atk +5/+0 melee (1d4-1, knife) or +5/+0 ranged; SQ +2 species bonus to initiative, Force weapon +1d8, inspire fear -2*, spider walk*; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +12; SZ M; DSP 8; FP 1; Rep +3; Face/Reach 2 m by 2 m/2 m; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 14. Challenge Code E.

Equipment: Knife, Twi'lek dancing girl costume.

Skills: Hide +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Cerean Culture) +7, Listen +13, Sense Motive +11, Spot +11.

Force Skills: Affect Mind +15, Drain Energy +9, Enhance Ability +11, Enhance Senses +9, Fear +19, Force Stealth +9, Heal Self +9, Illusion +13, Move Object +9.

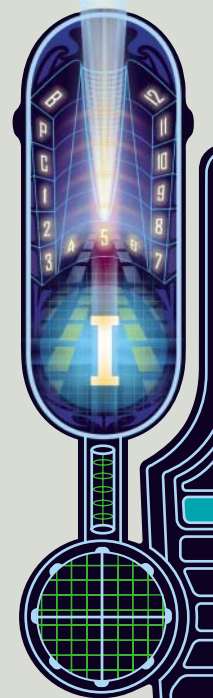
Feats: Force-Sensitive, Heroic Surge (3/day), Weapon Group Proficiencies (primitive weapons, simple weapons).

Force Feats: Alter, Control, Dissipate Energy, Force Mind, Improved Force Mind, Mind Trick, Sense, Summon Storm.

Special Quality: *Inspire Fear -2:* Zascha's underlings (Urg and Burg) are so under her control that they take a penalty of -2 to any attack or skill check they use against her.

Special Quality: *Spider Walk:* As long as her hands and feet are bare (as they are, in this costume), Zascha can climb walls and crawl across ceilings at half her normal movement rate.

* Both the *inspire fear* and *spider walk* abilities are detailed in *The Dark Side Sourcebook*.



Wrapping Up

The most important thing for the heroes to do is rescue Jennalyn. Zascha is not much for combat, and if it looks like her Gamorreans are going to lose in spite of having been enhanced, she slinks back to the front of the ship and activates the pilot droid (+12 to pilot checks) to get her out of here. She's more concerned about escaping with her life than about escaping with Jennalyn. Revenge, after all, is only effective if she's alive to enact it. If necessary, she waits in a smuggling compartment set into the floor below the shuttle's main control panel (Search check against DC 25 to locate) until the heroes have offloaded all of the cargo, including Jennalyn. Zascha is patient and vicious. She's more than willing to leave her Gamorreans to take the fall for her, but she's not likely to forget what the heroes have done to her.

Jennalyn is fine. The case in which she was being transported is not air-tight, and while she's been banged around, she's certainly been safe. She doesn't know what Zascha had in store for her (the Cerean spoke only Gamorrean while she was around the girl, since it was the only language her thugs understood) and is very grateful to have been rescued.

The remainder of the celebration aboard the *Masquerade* passes without incident. If Zascha escaped, she does not return. She has plans to formulate, and new enemies to plot against.

If she was caught along with Urg and Burg, all three of them are quietly spirited away by Bontraar's people. Regardless, as long as Jennalyn was retrieved, the heroes receive the datachip—and perhaps gather a bit more information besides.

And, just like that, their time on the *Masquerade* is at a close . . .

About the Author

Morrie Mullins is a psychology professor who saw *Star Wars* in theaters in 1977 and fell hopelessly in love. He began playing RPGs in elementary school and started writing for the RPGA in 1999, culminating in a two-year stint as Plot Director for the Living Force campaign. He has written over 20 modules for the RPGA and contributed extensively to the *Living Force Campaign Guide*. Currently, he teaches and does research during the day, does freelance and other writing at night, and is firmly convinced that sleep is a crutch.