

SAM'S SMUGGLERS EMPORIUM

It's taken a while to find the store, hidden away from the main strip as it is. You're somewhat surprised to find it to be little more than a battered metal door set into a grubby wall, with little to identify it beyond a crudely painted sign nailed above it. The sign has only a single word, painted in bright red letters: "Sam's."

Despite your doubts, everything you were told confirms this is the place, so you push open the door and cautiously step into the gloom. Somewhere, a bell rings, announcing your arrival.

The lighting is dim and a sprawling clutter takes up almost every available space, aside from the confined walkways that someone has gone to a special effort to keep clear. Standing there, wondering what to do next, you're surprised by a grey-haired old man appearing from behind a large pile of mechanical parts. A wide grin stretches across his face.

"So you're the new faces asking after my store," he states in the raspy voice of a man with a lifetime of smoking and drinking behind him. "Well, don't be looking so worried now ... just 'cause I'm old don't mean I isn't still connected. I still has me eyes and ears on the street, y'know?"

He steps out of the shadows, one alert blue eye taking in everything with a well-trained glance. His other eye is lost to a scar that cuts across the right side of his face. No doubt there's an interesting story to go with it.

"But where's me manners? The name's Sam, and this here's me goods emporium ... no better place in the 'Verse to get what you're after and the most likely place to be having it on the shelves ... just so long as you know where to look." His sweeping gesture draws attention to the many shelves and stacked tables of the store.

"Surviving as a freelancer ain't an easy thing out in the Black. While it may be true that a head full of smarts, a charming manner, and a winning smile goes a long way, it's havin' the right tools for the job that'll make the difference between a full belly and a belly full of lead." He laughs at his remark before composing himself and straightening up his stained coveralls.

"So, what'll it be then, youngsters? Maybe you're jus' not sure ... I'm guessin' you'll be in a hurry, as you young folk always seem to be. Out

of the kindness of me old heart, I'll just show you around and you can pick out anything that takes your fancy."

PART ONE

Sam pulls a heavy cover from one of the many tables scattered around the store to reveal a pile of assorted items.

"This here's what I like to think of as part of my Whole-'Verse survival collection. Now I know what you're thinking: maybe some of this stuff don't rightly look like survival gear, but let me tell you, havin' it could make the difference between surviving and bein' worm food." Sam lets out a hearty laugh, and starts rummaging through the items.

"First up, an old faithful, a piece that most any folk traveling the 'Verse can find a use for—a coil of Nylex rope. Good ol' Nylex, a wonder of modern synthetics. Stuff will hold when it needs to, and it ain't easily cut or snagged."

Nylex Rope (50')

Cost: 1¢ / 2p

Weight: 2

Availability: E

Nylex is a man-made synthetic material that is incredibly flexible, while at the same time particularly strong and remarkably light. Nylex rope is often referred to as being "flexible as leather, strong as steel and light as silk." The standard coil length is fifty feet, but it can be purchased in any ten-foot increment from ten to five hundred feet to length. Nylex rope can be used for climbing, towing, holding down heavy loads or even tying folk up as to keep them safe from hurting others.

"Here's a companion to the Nylex rope, the Winderman & Cole complete climbers pack. Yep, it's pretty much everything a professional climber could need in one handy backpack. Most you'll need to be sortin' out for yourself is some boots and as much rope as you think you'll be needin'."

Winderman & Cole Complete Climbers Pack

Cost: 15¢ / 40p

Weight: 10

Availability: C

This all-in-one pack contains almost everything a body needs to go mountain climbing or even rappel down the side of a building. It includes a full Nylex climbing harness, ascenders, carabineers, crampons, pitons, pulleys, pads, rappelling gloves, adjustable helmet and a small climbing hammer. The backpack is durable and waterproof, and

comes with extra side pockets and clips for anything else. The only climbing essentials not included in the pack are climbing boots and rope, which must be purchased separately.

"Now, just 'cause you have a hundred foot of Nylex rope and a climbing harness, it don't mean you have to be using it for just climbing mountains you know. It can work for all manner of things from scaling buildings to goin' out of the bomb-bay doors of your Mid-Bulk Transport and down onto a movin' vehicle, like a train. Mind you, if you're thinkin' to be hanging around under a fast movin' boat, you might be wanting the next couple o' items too, unless you want to be chilled down to your nethers." Sam shows a toothy grin before digging through the pile of gear again.

"These may be a pretty standard pair of protective goggles, for keepin' your eyes safe from the elements, but look around a bit and you can find these things with all sort o' extras from flash protectors to image intensifiers."

Protective Goggles

Standard Cost: 0.50 / 1p
Weight: - **Availability:** E
Flash Protectors Cost: 100 / 20p
Weight: 1 **Availability:** E
Light Intensifier Cost: 250 / 80p
Weight: 2 **Availability:** C

Standard protective goggles are little more than durable scratch resistant lenses that protect the wearer's eyes from high winds, dust or dirt. Generally used by most folk who work outside where airborne grit may be an issue or by miners just in case any stone chips fly back their way.

Flash protectors offer the same benefits as standard goggles, but they have fancy lenses that darken considerably should there be a sudden flash of ultra-bright light. Thus, they protect the wearer's eyes from temporary blindness and negate step penalties caused by these effects.

Light intensifier goggles provide the wearer with night vision, allowing them to see clearly in all but total darkness. The intensifier needs a minimal light source to function, though stars in a night sky are more than enough. Most versions also include a small infrared torch built in, just in case of total darkness, but this only provides vision out to about thirty feet. A flash protector may be added to these goggles for only 5 credits more. Light intensifier goggles are powered by a small power cell, which provides up to 8 hours of continuous use before needing a recharge.

"Here we have the McKinney Cold Weather Survival Suit that keeps that chill away. It's great in arctic conditions or harsh winters and like I said, it's what you need when hangin' at high speeds from the bottom of your transport."

McKinney Cold Weather Survival Suit

Cost: 200 / 50p **Weight:** 5
Availability: E

This outfit consists of a pair of padded trousers and jacket with hood and gloves. The padding is made up of layers of insulating material, including a special coolant layer linked to a heat regulator. This prevents the wearer from overheating, especially in wildly dynamic environments. The suit is designed to provide significant warmth and protection in arctic conditions for extended durations. It provides little or no protection against the deep cold of vacuum, but that's what vacuum suits are for. The suit protects the wearer for a time from the extreme cold of the Black should a ship's environmental controls cease function, assuming that there is still breathable air of course.

While the suit looks somewhat bulky when worn, it doesn't significantly restrict movement, though the gloves can hamper fine manipulation tasks due to their padding.

"Now this is another mighty useful pack, something we spacers refer to as a 'Crash Pack.' It's the Merrill & Gibbs Spacer Survival Kit. This handy backpack is hardy and waterproof, and full of all sorts of shiny extras that'll make the difference between life and death, 'specially when you've had to drop down on some inhospitable backwater rock due to engine failure. It even comes with a pack of cards to help pass the time."

Merrill & Gibbs Spacer Survival Kit

Cost: 100 / 22p **Weight:** 10
Availability: E

Any good Captain makes sure that they have at least one or two of these on their boat, normally stashed in a shuttle or escape pod. Spacer survival kits are referred to as Crash Packs due to the most likely time they see use.

The Spacer Survival Kit comes in a durable and waterproof backpack containing the following items when new: a 2-man expanding tent; a canteen with 10 packets of purification crystals; a sealed bottle of drinking water; 2 protein bars (each can last one week if thinly sliced); 1 large blanket; 1 basic first aid kit; 1 flash light (the battery pack is good for one

month of use); 1 standard battery pack; 1 box of waterproof matches; 1 can of fire jelly; 1 survival knife (as combat knife, but includes small compass, needle, nylon thread and piece of flint in handle); 3 thermal flares; 1 pack of playing cards.

"Course, there is always room to add a few choice items of your own and most any good spacer soon adds a loaded firearm, a portable distress beacon and a radio, just in case.

"Last up for this selection, we've got the Blue Sun survival tent, which is surprisingly good for somethin' that rolls out of mass production. This thing comes in two, four, or six occupant varieties and pops up into a solid shape just as soon as you pull this here cord."

Blue Sun Survival Tent

2-Occupant **Cost:** 75¢ / 180p
Weight: 12 **Availability:** C
4-Occupant **Cost:** 100¢ / 260p
Weight: 14 **Availability:** C
6-Occupant **Cost:** 150¢ / 400p
Weight: 18 **Availability:** C

The Extreme Survival line has been a great success for the Blue Sun Corporation. It has found popularity across a wide range of sectors, from the Military to Core World extreme sports enthusiasts. The survival tent is one of that line's best sellers, not only due to great advertising, but also because of the quality of the product.

No matter the size of tent purchased, they all include the exact same features and there is little difference in the size of the pack, only in the overall weight.

To erect the tent, the pack is placed on the ground and a cord on the side is pulled, at which point it will burst out from the pack, pop into shape and then go rigid. Along the bottom of the tent are a number of spikes that will lock down into most any natural surface to secure the tent in place, just by pressing a button on the tent control panel just inside the door. Once erected, the tent is completely watertight, which allows for limited use as a life raft. Blue Sun discourages this, however, except in emergencies.

The tent includes a thermal inner skin to provide warmth, and cooling vents should the environment be overly hot or humid, all linked to an environmental regulator built into the control panel.

Lastly, the outer skin of the tent has the same protective qualities as a ballistic mesh suit, making it durable and offering reasonable protection to the occupants.

The military version of the survival tent also includes a built in short range commpack, a chameleon coating, and a toughed outer skin that provides twice as much protection, though it is also twice as expensive and illegal outside of the Alliance Military.

"This thing's watertight as my hip flask, which means that if you're smart enough to combine this with the M&G crash pack, you'll be surviving in all manner of comfort until help happens by."

With that, Sam puts the pack back down among the pile of goods and throws the cover back over the table. He gives you a moment to make any decisions on purchases before leading you off to another part of the store and more interesting items ...

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