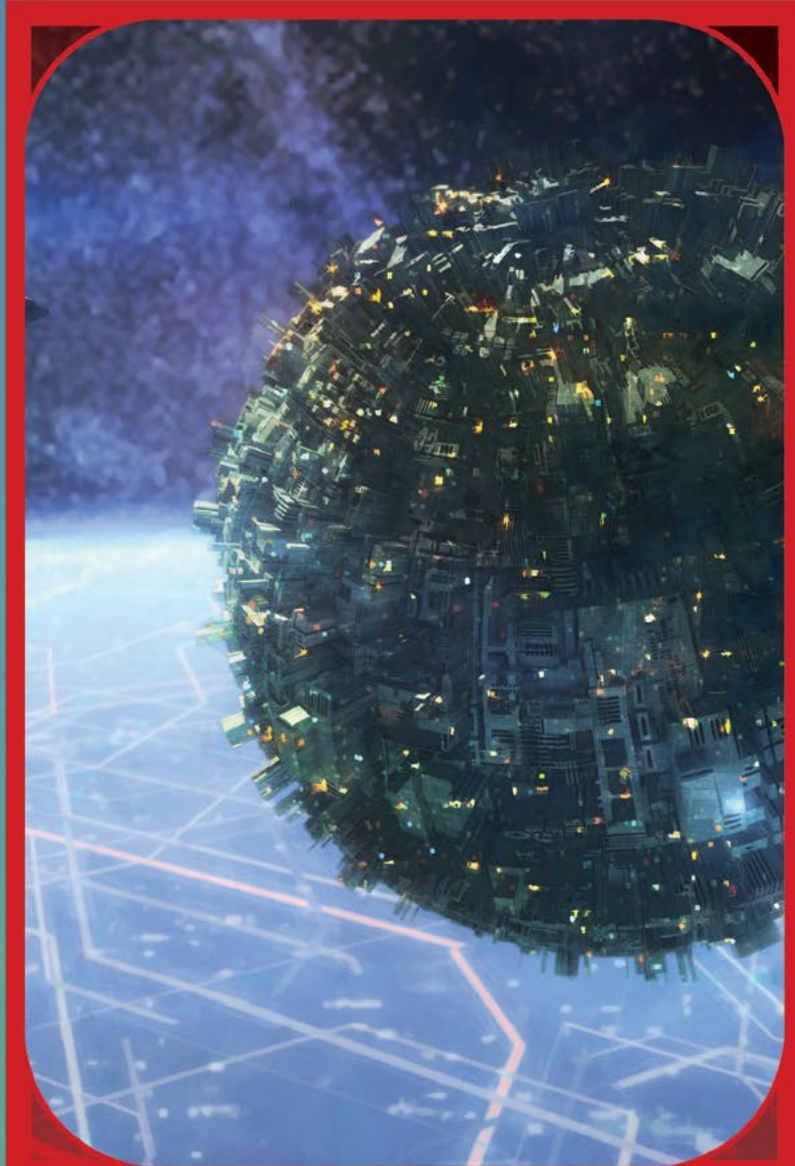


# CASTAWAY



By Charles M. Ryan

# CASTAWAY

In this adventure, a group of player characters (PCs) find themselves marooned on a strange and dangerous planet without supplies, equipment, weapons—or even their own identities or memories. Over the course of the adventure they will not simply escape their predicament—at least one of them will be radically transformed.

## OVERVIEW

This adventure was written for convention use; as such, it's designed to be played in a four-hour block. Several features facilitate this style of play:

- The adventure is fairly linear, and most events critical to the storyline will occur regardless of the PCs' actions. For example, they'll be attacked by the governmentals after they explore their lifeboat, regardless of whether they leave the area and what direction they go. That's OK. This doesn't have to be obvious to the players, and besides, the heft of this adventure derives from the PCs' journey of self-discovery rather than the specific plot points of the storyline.
- Throughout the text, a lot of information is provided in bullet point format (like this section). This is to make it easy to find and interpret information on the fly. Descriptions in particular are often bullet-pointed. You can read these bullets to the players, but the real intention is for you to easily glean the key concepts, then put them into your own words.
- Timing guidance is provided in the callouts near the start of each section, with a target time suggested for completing the scene. This helps you keep the adventure on track for completion in a four-hour time slot, but it's advice rather than a requirement. If you're running *Castaways* at home, or otherwise have more time freedom, feel free to ignore this advice. The time given is in hours and minutes from the start of the adventure.
- Several handouts provide information to the PCs in a quick, efficient format.

Print (and in some cases cut out) these handouts before play.

- As this adventure can be considered a little dark at points, and even ventures into horror, guidelines are provided here and there to make the adventure lighter in tone if that's desirable. That's one of the strengths of the Cypher System. You can easily alter any part of it to make it more suitable for your desired tone, genre, or group.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

It is a not-so-distant future. Humanity has found its path to the stars and has staked claims upon hundreds of them. The worlds we have discovered are most often barren, but occasionally teem with life, primitive or complex. None have been home to another sapient race. Sometimes, though, the worlds we have colonized have been visited, and those visitations seldom leave human survivors. We share our galaxy with something else, something intelligent. We don't know where it comes from, but it clearly does not like us.

Fear is as great a motivator—and divider—as it has ever been. In the past generation, faced with the threat of these alien “shriekers,” humanity's governing body has shifted from loose and representative to angry, warlike, and oppressive. This in turn has driven the birth of an underground that, among other priorities, seeks alternate protections from the alien attacks.

Among the worlds humanity has discovered is one great oddity: Pearl (sometimes called *the Pearl*). More technically known as CA040 [944321-060], Pearl is the lone body orbiting a sun much like Earth's own, and it positively seethes with life. It is covered almost uniformly with a tropical-style biosphere, but has no oceans. Its magnetosphere has a number of anomalous traits. Most enigmatically, it is similar to Earth gravitationally, despite being a fraction of Earth's size.

Pearl's system is one of hundreds that have been surveyed, but to which no jump

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portal was ever built. The system was never settled, but a number of scientific facilities were constructed on the planet. These thrived for several decades, but were abandoned with the rise of the alien threat. The threat was never publicly well-known, nor was the principal discovery made about Pearl: It is not a planet, but rather a sphere that surrounds a tiny, dense power source—a neutron star. And it is almost certainly not natural in origin. Who made it, and how many millions of years ago did they do so? Why? Are they related to the shriekers—the hostile aliens that have wiped out entire human worlds?

The scientists are decades gone, but there are people on Pearl. Two factions. The landers are a contingent of insurgents that seek to reactivate certain scientific facilities and programs. The governmentals are a small military force tasked with hunting them down.

Into this milieu come the PCs.

The government has a super-soldier program: criminals (often political criminals) condemned to death are instead rendered brain-dead, then reprogrammed with superior combat skill and physical augmentations. The governmental force on Pearl includes a squad of these “prog troopers.”

The landers believe that Pearl was built as a trans-dimensional communications station, and theorize that they can harness it to gain superhuman knowledge and abilities. A fully developed human mind could never withstand the process—but a brain-wiped individual, perhaps, could.

Insurgents off-world have managed to steal a number of “raw bodies”—humans whose minds have been wiped, but who have not yet gone into the prog-trooper programming. (These are the PCs.) An insurgent pathfinder ship opened a portal to Pearl and came through, but, fearing pursuit, did not have time to land a shuttle with the raw-body cargo. Instead, the bodies were ejected in a lifeboat. The insurgent ship then jumped outsystem.

The PCs landed, insensate and still packed in their transport cases. The governmentals on Pearl did not know the

identity or mission of the illicit ship that transited the system, but tracked both it and the lifeboat—and fired a missile at the latter as it entered the atmosphere. They are keen to find the lifeboat before the landers do, and will kill (they would say “destroy”) the PCs aboard if they do so.

The landers are also looking for the lifeboat’s cargo. They expect to find transport-packed raw bodies, not sentient human beings. They intend to transport the raw bodies to an abandoned research station to conduct their experiments. The startling discovery that the PCs are awake and self-aware complicates—but does not change—their plan.

## HOW THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDS

- The PCs awaken. Under pressure from the dangerous environment, they come to terms with their lack of identity, and gather what gear they are able.
- Following clues about the lifeboat’s path, they set out for possible human aid. (Alternatively, they may remain at the lifeboat—the adventure unfolds more or less the same either way.) They encounter several of Pearl’s dangers, and probably become injured, fatigued, and increasingly desperate for help.
- Governmental forces intercept the PCs, giving them a chance to witness prog troopers and get a sense of the fate that was intended for them. They escape the governmentals with the help of the landers.
- The landers take the PCs to Core Node, to engage them in a bizarre science experiment. Things go terribly wrong, and the landers are killed. But one of the PCs regains their identity along with some newfound powers.
- Other PCs may also have the opportunity to undergo the transformation, or they may all flee the scene. But aided by their new powers, the PCs have the chance to leave Pearl aboard an orbital shuttle.
- Before they can do so, though, the governmentals show up again. The PCs must overcome them to escape Pearl and find their freedom.

*In a less horrific version of this adventure, the adventure is more open-ended and focused on exploration.*

*The PCs can just hide from the governmentals and you can skip the encounter with the landers. Instead, the PCs spend their time finding adequate food, water, and shelter while surviving the dangers of this strange world. Eventually, they can find Core Node, and perhaps find a way to regain their memories, or maybe just a way to get off Pearl, probably in a desperate battle with the governmental soldiers hot on their trail.*

## A FEW KEY FACTS ABOUT PEARL

- The terrain is uniformly rugged, though not mountainous. It's covered in alien jungle, occasionally crossed by wide, very deep crevasses that flow with magma.
- The weather is hot and humid. Sunny skies are sometimes interrupted by torrential downpours.
- Pearl enjoys a roughly eight-hour day, divided into four hours of daylight and four hours of dark. The sun moves across the sky so quickly that its motion is almost visible to the casual observer.
- Pearl has no moon, so the night is very dark, particularly under the canopy of the jungle. (It's also especially dangerous.)
- Radios and most other long-range communication devices function erratically or only at short distance—if at all.
- Other than the ruined lab complexes and related structures, there are no settlements on Pearl. The total contingent of landers is fewer than two dozen, and the governmentals don't number much higher.

## MEMORY INTRUSIONS

At various points in this adventure, one or more PCs may regain a snippet of random memory from their life before they were mind-wiped. These “memory intrusions” are GM intrusions that may be triggered according to GM whim, or by specific story points. Like a dream remembered after sleep, the vision experienced by the PC seems distant and hard to fully conjure, and yet its effect is profound, emotional, and momentarily overwhelming.

For best results, plan on giving the players about a half-dozen memory intrusions throughout the adventure. Several will be triggered by predefined story points, but throw in a few as GM intrusions at moments that add complication or interest to a scene.

Start a memory intrusion by giving the player a random memory card (see the handouts section). The specifics of the memory have no bearing on this adventure (although that's not necessarily obvious to the players), but each intrusion provides a potential asset to PCs in The Chair late in

the game. If the player chooses to share the memory with the other players, encourage them to make up more detail to bring the memory to life—but they don't recall any meaningful facts beyond what's described on the card. Have the player keep the card (each card gives the PC an asset when they get to The Chair).

## GETTING READY

Before starting the adventure:

- Prepare the table tents. Fold each one in half to form a tent, with the text visible from each side.
- Shuffle the memory cards and set them someplace handy.
- Let the players choose their characters. Some players may assume they're supposed to “fill in the blanks” on the character sheet, choosing a name and background, but tell them not to.
- Ask the players what sort of adventure they're most comfortable with: a sci-fi adventure with aspects of horror, or a more straight-up sci-fi action adventure.

## AWAKENING

The game begins with a group GM intrusion. Give each player 1 XP, then pick one player and give them the serial number table tent that has a large number 1. Then read the following:

*In your dream, you are trapped under ice. Drowning. Freezing. Confused and tangled. A dim line splits the blackness, flickering like distant lightning, and you struggle for it. But the cloying darkness grasps at you, pulling you back, and you are weak. What little fight you had is fading, and with it, the pale light.*

*You are almost lost to the blackness when suddenly you are released. You tumble, sliding, sheathed in slimy layers, the icy fluid spilling around you—but still there is no air. Choking and gagging, your hand finds a thick rubber tube and you pull, seemingly without end, until you cough the last of it from your throat and can draw a breath. You are cold and wet, and you are alone in the flickering white room.*

Give the player the table tent with the large 1 on it.

**Timing tip:** *This scene should take about 15 minutes. End this scene about fifteen minutes into the adventure.*



```

00:00:00: Cont Ev AKS Kabir Sagar lifeboat 04 launch sequence initiated by
external control.
00:00:12: Man Ev Maneuvering thrusters deployed.
00:00:18: Man Ev Primary drive engaged at acceleration rate of 0.077496.
03:49:31: Man Ev Primary drive disengaged.
04:17:10: Man Ev Parachutes deployed.
04:17:41: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:17:58: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:04: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:07: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:09: Err Code P230218 Primary VHF antenna array offline.
04:18:09: Err Code P929002 Transponder antenna array offline.
04:18:09: Err Code A208560 Secondary water pump offline.
04:18:10: Err Code E478830 Aft primary environment sensor offline.
04:18:11: Err Code P000841 Catastrophic cabin pressure loss registered.
...[Dozens of additional error messages.]...
04:22:51: Man Ev Hard landing emergency alert sounded.
04:24:32: Cond Ev Out of parameter deceleration registered.
04:24:35: Cond Ev Out of parameter cabin load shift registered.
04:24:36: Man Ev Lifeboat landed.
04:24:36: Err Code P399781 Secondary external atmospheric pressure sensor
offline.
04:24:36: Err Code L588205 Primary hydraulic manifold sensor offline.
04:24:36: Err Code R793885 Heat plate temperature sensor offline.
...[Dozens of error messages, with additional errors being logged.]...

```

The PC begins the game knowing nothing more than the experience above and what they can gather at a glance. Not their name or background, or how they came to be where they are—or where or what “where they are” is. It is in fact a lifeboat, ejected from an insurgent pathfinder ship and landed on Pearl. The impact of the rough landing jarred the PC’s transport case open, and they emerged, alone.

Here’s what the lifeboat interior looks like at a glance:

- The space is cylindrical, about four meters (13 feet) across and eight meters (26 feet) tall, and it leans at a significant angle. Above, several layers of grating separate the space into decks, with a ladder up the center connecting them. The walls, decks, and floor are all bright white.
- There is a heavy, acrid, burning smell. Strip LEDs along the wall provide flickering light.

- The air is humid and warm—although the PC, being wet and wearing only the simplest of garments, may feel a little chilled.
- There is no ceiling; instead, high above, the walls give way to a distant overhead of green and blue.
- The walls are lined with large folding seats, with three sets of three on each of the decks. Most of them are gray, but one of them, on the lowest level, is red.
- Half a dozen large ruggedized plastic cases, a meter on a side and half a meter thick (3.3 feet by 1.6 feet), are in a tumbled pile on the floor. Each has a number of symbols and lights. The case from which the PC emerged is open (as is any other from which PCs have been released), with fluid-covered tubes and membrane hanging from it. The same clear, cold, slimy liquid runs down the slope of the floor, pooling along the base of the folding seats on the downhill side.

**Timing tip:** *This scene should take about 15 minutes. End this scene about **thirty minutes** into the adventure.*

*If the first PC to emerge doesn't awaken any others quickly, offer a GM intrusion to another player. Their case emits alert tones, flashing lights, and an acrid burning scent, then pops open, awakening the PC.*

*If you or the players have opted to make this adventure lighter, replace the forehead tattoo with a very sturdy metal bracelet with the characters. The bracelet is very difficult to remove, but with time and tools it could be accomplished.*

- There are large black letters on the white floor. They're partially obscured by the jumble of cases, but the words, half a meter (1.6 feet) tall, can be easily made out: CAPACITY 36 DO NOT OVERLOAD.

The first PC will likely investigate the other cases. Each case has a serial number (the number on the first PC's open case matches the number on the player's table tent) and a control panel. It's a difficulty 3 Intellect task to determine that the panel displays life support status. Although all the displays indicate green status, each also flashes a warning: CONNECT TO POWER SOURCE. LOW BATT. (There is no obvious way to connect the cases to a power source in the lifeboat.)

Opening a case is easy enough. Inside is another PC, huddled in a fetal position, swathed in a fluid-filled membrane, and intubated. Each PC awakens when their case is opened, as ignorant and confused as the first.

## AS EACH PC AWAKENS

As each PC is awakened, give the player a table tent. Follow the tent numbering; give the number 2 table tent to the player of the second PC awakening, and so on.

Although, lacking a mirror, it wasn't obvious to the first PC, by looking at one another, the PCs can see that each has an alphanumeric serial number tattooed, in sizable machine-readable letters, on their forehead. The number is the same as that on the player's table tent (and the serial number on the case they came out of).

As the PCs awaken, ask each player to briefly detail the physical (and *only* physical) characteristic of their character: gender presentation, skin tone, build, etc. The PCs are all able-bodied, reasonably fit, completely hairless, and dressed in a simple white one-piece undergarment. Each has the alphanumeric code tattooed on their forehead (and no other tattoos or markings). Other than that, the details are up to each player.

## CONSOLIDATING

The PCs' first impulse will likely be exploring the lifeboat and gathering what supplies are available. Give them a few minutes to do so, but then move quickly to encounters with the local wildlife. Here are some more details on the lifeboat:

- The entire thing leans at about a 30-degree angle. This can make it tricky to navigate the ladders and decks, though not enough to require a roll from careful PCs. The floor on the lowermost deck (where the PCs woke up) is slick with the fluid from the cases.
- The ceiling has been ripped away. The walls end in jagged tears of plastic and ceramic. Visible above is a blue sky mostly occluded by dense green foliage. The foliage extends far, far above—probably the better part of 100 meters (330 feet) overhead.
- On most decks, three lockers are set between the clusters of folding seats. Details on their contents are below.
- On the second deck there are instead three round hatch-like doors, set equidistantly around the space. Each door is labeled with copious warnings: WARNING DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY MAY OCCUR and so on. Lengthy instructions discuss how to tell if the exterior atmosphere is safe, and how to open the door. (Given the roof is missing, the environmental concerns are moot.)
- Each door has a small window. One appears to be blocked by earth and vegetation (and that door, in fact, can't be opened). The others look out into dense jungle-like forest.
- The folding seats are actually deceleration couches, shaped somewhat like dentist chairs. When opened a character can lie in a semi-fetal position. Each features a rugged, padded five-point harness.
- On the lowest deck, one of the folding seats is red instead of gray. It's marked BOAT MASTER.



- Three comp panels offer access to the lifeboat's systems: One on the wall of deck 4, one on the wall of deck 1, and one that folds out from a unit on deck 1, to be accessed from the red boat master's couch.

PCs salvaging the lifeboat may find the following on the walls and in the lockers:

- 36 bright orange one-piece, one-size jumpsuits.
- 3 first aid kits.
- 3 **multi-tools** (folding hand-tool with a built-in knife, pliers, and similar functions).
- A **flare gun** with six flares.
- 3 compact flashlights.
- 12 silvered mylar blankets.
- A compact water-maker. When set up, it produces water from the air sufficient to supply one person for one day every hour that it runs. Or it can filter liquid water in a matter of minutes.
- A combination **crowbar/axe**.
- Industrious PCs may disassemble parts of the lifeboat to salvage lengths of wire or tubing, metal bars that can be used as weapons (light or medium), lengths of webbing straps, plastic panels up to a meter (3.3 feet) on a side, and similar items.
- 3 **fire extinguishers**.

PCs investigating the comp panels can navigate the lifeboat's rather limited network with a difficulty 3 Intellect task, to uncover the following information:

- Communications, environmental control, docking and flight control, and external sensors are all offline. (They cannot be brought back up, due to the destruction of the upper portion of the lifeboat.)
- The log displays a lengthy (and still growing) list of system errors, but a patient PC can scroll or sort through to discover useful information. Give the player the Lifeboat Log handout.
- The navigation system logged the lifeboat's flight path, showing that it circled a small planet three times in a rapidly decaying orbit before landing.

The navigation system has no details of the planet's geography, but does indicate that the lifeboat approached the landing site from the northeast. It made a significant course change just a few dozen kilometers before impact.

Clever PCs may correctly ascertain that the course change coincided with the catastrophic errors in the log—and that both things happened when the top of the lifeboat was ripped away.

## OUTSIDE

When the PCs venture from the confines of the lifeboat, they find themselves in a lush primordial landscape of gigantic proportions.

- Enormous trees, their trunks meters thick, soar skyward through layers of dense canopy. Huge, twisted branches thick enough to walk upon are wreathed in draping vines.
- The movement of animal life—some bright and colorful, some dark—is everywhere. High overhead a large spider-like creature moves slowly between tree limbs, its gangly, jointed arms hooking the branches to pull a small body along. Elsewhere, bright birdlike things flit among the foliage.
- Closer to the ground, dense, alien vegetation makes it difficult to see more than ten or fifteen meters (33 to 50 feet). Some plants feature huge fronds the size of a person; others are grassy, and others spread snakelike vines across a forest floor strewn deeply with mulch and dead leaves.
- The terrain slopes to the south, quickly becoming marshy. Northward, a few boulders emerge from the forest floor, draped in vines and moss-like vegetation.
- The air is hot, humid, and noisy with the shrill cries, calls, and buzzes of life.
- There's an acrid smell and a haze of smoke in the immediate area.

**Timing tip:** *This scene should take 30 to 60 minutes. End this scene about one hour and thirty minutes into the adventure. If it runs short, add encounters from the Wilderness Encounters scene to take it to the 1:30 mark.*

**Multi-tool:** *Light weapon when used as a knife.*

**Flare gun:** *Medium weapon; flare continues to burn for three rounds, dealing 2 points of damage each round to a struck foe or possibly starting a fire if it missed the target.*

**Crowbar/axe:** *Medium weapon.*

**Fire extinguisher:** *Light weapon when used as a bludgeon. Can also be fired at a foe's eyes to confuse or blind them for one round.*



**Dire Rhino:** level 4; can charge a short distance and also make an attack; does 5 points of damage by ramming with head; health 18; Armor 2

**Memory intrusion:** The first PC targeted by the dire rhino has a sudden flash of memory from their prior life. The experience is so jarring that the PC suffers a momentary setback, perhaps missing a turn, falling prone, or being hindered in their next action. Give the player a memory card.

**GM intrusion:** The dire rhino's charge strikes the lifeboat, putting a 2-meter (6.6 feet) gouge in the side and knocking it further into its lean. It might not be stable anymore.

**GM intrusion:** Vegetation near the base of the lifeboat springs into flame, lit by the smoldering fire near the tree.

Outside the hatch, it's a three-meter (10-foot) drop to mounded, disturbed earth around the base of the cylinder. Jumping down from the hatch without taking 1 point of damage is a difficulty 1 Speed task. Climbing back up is a difficulty 3 Speed task.

- The exterior of the cylinder is scorched and marred, but that doesn't completely obscure the bright orange coloration or the word RESCUE in two-meter (6.6-foot) letters down the side. The cylinder leans at a significant angle.
- The lower end is embedded in what is clearly a crater extending several meters around the base. Vegetation around it is ripped and scorched.
- At the upper end of the cylinder, the metal and ceramic of the upper edge is torn and jagged.
- Above it, and to the northwest, there's a substantial gap in the tree canopy, and several large branches, up to a meter (3.3 feet) thick, hang down, broken and split.
- The nearest tree, at the edge of the crater, is on fire. The flames aren't large, and might even be dying down, but nearby lower vegetation is starting to catch.

As the PCs begin to disembark from the lifeboat, they have their first encounter with the local wildlife. Two **dire rhino** calves enter the area, followed by a parent. Like grizzly bears, dire rhinos are fanatically overprotective of their young, and the creature attacks immediately. It is large and violent enough to threaten not just the PCs, but even the lifeboat itself.

- A heavily built, four-legged creature about the size of a dining room table wanders into the grassy area outside the lifeboat. It is squat and has thick, glistening skin. The front of its head tapers into a bony, hatchet-like structure half a meter (1.6 feet) tall. It ignores the PCs, and snuffles around nearby vegetation, apparently looking for preferred foods.
- After a few seconds, another one emerges from the surrounding jungle. It too seems unconcerned by the PCs.
- Then the nearby jungle shakes, and a third one pushes through into the clearing. This one is huge—well over two meters (6.6 feet) at the shoulder and four or five meters (13.2 to 16.5 feet)



long. It narrows its six small eyes and shakes its giant, jagged, axe-like head—and then charges.

The dire rhino attacks aggressively. It's a difficult opponent, and the lightly armed (or unarmed) PCs will likely have a hard time dealing with it. The offspring quickly disappear, and after five or six rounds of havoc the parent breaks off the fight and leaves.

## WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

Following the dire rhino encounter (and possibly a fire, the collapse of the lifeboat, or other calamities), the PCs may choose to leave the lifeboat in search of aid. The jungles of Pearl teem with dangerous life, and they'll discover—or be discovered by—some of it in their travels. Depending on the time available and the state of the party, give them one or two encounters.

The story goal, in addition to simply showcasing the dangers of this planet, is to motivate the PCs to seek aid and civilization. If they are hungry, injured, and fatigued by the time they meet the governmentals and landers, so much the better.

Mix and match some of the following encounter locations with creatures of Pearl as you see fit:

- The PCs stumble upon a wrecked flyer. Lying in a small clearing choked with leafy vines and tall grasses, it's probably been there for years if not decades. It appears to be a utility model, about 10 meters (33 feet) long. There's a faded, unfamiliar "EA" logo on the side. Within, two flight-suit-dressed skeletons sit in the cockpit area. The skulls are missing. Little is salvageable from the wreck, but a faded map seems to mark the location of a lab complex to the northeast.
- A concrete tower sits at the crest of a modest rise. Four legs, each nearly a meter in thickness, rise perhaps 80 meters (260 feet), putting the flat platform at the top above the forest canopy. Several other platforms sit between the legs, interspersed every 20 meters (66 feet) or so up. A rusty (and possibly unreliable) ladder climbs one of the legs. From the top, observant

PCs can see two or three similar towers, kilometers away, rising out of the jungle. To the northeast, nearly at the horizon, some other, larger structure is just visible.

- As the PCs' route takes them up a rugged hill, the surrounding terrain has narrowed into a rocky gorge. A creek—narrow enough to be jumpable—gurgles and rushes to their right. It seems like the crest isn't far ahead, but a dense thicket—almost too thick to push through—blocks their path.
- The PCs emerge from the jungle into a wide, open, rocky area. A deep crevasse splits the terrain, running roughly north-south as far as the PCs can see. It's 30 meters (100 feet) wide and twice that in depth, and the bottom flows with glowing magma. The heat near the lip of the gorge is nearly unbearable, and little vegetation grows within 10 or 15 meters (33 or 50 feet) of the edge.

To mix things up, or if you don't have time for a full-fledged encounter, here are some fun GM intrusions:

**GM intrusion:** An unsuspecting PC has activated a sticky-trap plant (level 2). A fleshy tendril whips forth to strike and stick to the PC. The tendril can be cut or broken, but the sticky material contains a venom that causes 2 Intellect damage per turn, unless resisted by a Might task, until the sticky stuff is washed off. The sticky-trap plant blends into the dense jungle foliage; it takes a level 3 Intellect task to identify the source of the attack and recognize the low-lying fronds that set it off. Until that happens, other nearby PCs, perhaps trying to help, may set off additional nearby plants.

**GM intrusion:** The ground near a boulder suddenly gives way under a PC, opening into a hole just big enough to swallow the PC's leg up to the thigh. The hole is lined with fingerlike cilia of soft, mosslike material that at first caresses, and then quickly grasps, the PC's leg. The PC must succeed in a difficulty 4 Might task to free themselves; if failed the PC takes 4 points of damage as their leg is pulled downward with crushing force and the difficulty of the next attempt is increased by one step (to a maximum difficulty of 6).

**Timing tip:** *This scene should take no more than 15 to 30 minutes. End this scene about one hour and thirty minutes into the adventure. Skip it if the previous encounters have already taken you to the 1:30 mark.*

**Crocamander:** level 3; hiding as level 5 if it has water or undergrowth to give it cover; bite has venom that moves victim one step down the damage track per turn until dead (Might task to stop the venom)

**Bone Gluer:** level 3; notices prey as level 6; can shoot a stream of glue that combines stickiness with a mild paralytic to hinder all physical tasks and slow the victim's movement by half for six rounds (this is cumulative; multiple hits can eventually paralyze a victim)

**Toucan Sam:** level 2; movement long when flying; defends as level 4 when in flight; can make a stabbing attack for 4 points of damage when landed

**Timing tip:** This scene should take about 45 minutes. End this scene about **two hours and fifteen minutes** into the adventure.

If you want to keep the adventure less dark, allow the PCs to avoid the governmentals searching for them if they hide.

## CREATURES OF THE PEARL JUNGLES

### CROCAMANDER

This ambush predator lurks in swampy areas. It has a flat body up to three meters (10 feet) long and a large, triangular head, and is covered in slimy, wet skin. It lies still in water or undergrowth, lunging forward to strike when potential prey gets within immediate range. It continues to strike helpless victims or those that don't fight back, but backs away whenever it takes 2 or more points of damage, content to let its venom do the work.

**GM intrusion:** Two additional crocamanders lurk nearby. Attracted by the commotion, they lunge at an unsuspecting PC.

### BONE GLUER

Looking like bloated ticks half a meter (1.6 feet) in length, bone gluers hang from the branches of trees, three or four meters (10 to 13.3 feet) from the ground, in groups of three to five individuals. They squirt passing prey with their sticky glue, typically ganging up on a single target, attempting to immobilize it near their colony nest so they can descend to feast at their leisure. The nest, a cluster of urn-like clay structures about a meter (3.3 feet) tall, is often surrounded by the glue-encrusted bones of prior victims.

**GM intrusion:** Following a successful glue attack, the bone gluer adheres the other end of the strand to a branch or tree trunk. Breaking the strand is a difficulty 4 Might task. Subsequent bone gluer attacks target the same victim in the same way, with each additional anchored attack increasing the difficulty by one step.

### TOUCAN SAM

Colorful birdlike creatures with long striped beaks seem to watch and follow the PCs with curiosity and interest. They seem clever and almost friendly, but are actually waiting for a moment of weakness. Four to six of them attack when the PCs stop to rest, or when a single PC is separated from the group. They typically rely on flyby attacks, but when a victim is nearly helpless they'll land to deliver more punishing blows with their large beaks.

## GOVERNMENTALS ATTACK

An hour or two after the PCs crash on Pearl, they are discovered by a small governmental contingent sent to investigate the lifeboat. This may occur at the lifeboat, if the PCs remain there for too long, but it's more likely to happen as they travel cross-country. This scenario assumes the latter, but is easily transplanted to the lifeboat location if the PCs haven't left.

- A large clearing in the jungle, perhaps 100 meters (330 feet) across, gives way to thick, shoulder-height, grass-like vegetation.
- The terrain slopes upward ahead of the PCs. Several irregular boulders rise up through the grass.

- Toward the far side of the clearing, a concrete cylinder rises five meters (16.3 feet) from the surrounding grasses. It's swathed in leafy vines, and some sort of ruined equipment sits at the top.

The boulders and grasses can provide a degree of cover. (Remember that the coveralls from the lifeboat are bright orange, intended to aid rescuers in finding lifeboat survivors. They hinder attempts at hiding and stealth.)

The governmental commander doesn't know the nature of the lifeboat or its occupants, but assumes it is an insurgent force or resupply. The governmentals attempt to capture the PCs—but only if it's



fairly convenient. If not, they move quickly to lethal force, content to destroy the PCs and investigate their purpose after the fact.

The governmentals arrive in the general area in a troop flyer accompanied by a drone. Their strategy is to scout with the drone, which is harder to detect than the full-sized flyer. Once they have confidence in the size and location of their quarry, the flyer lands a couple hundred meters away and disgorges four troopers and two prog troopers. The conventional troopers approach the PCs directly, while the prog troopers move in stealthfully from the flank.

The troopers don't know what to expect from the PCs, but quickly recognize their tattoos and hairless features as potential prog troopers. (They have never experienced mind-wiped individuals who have not yet been reprogrammed as prog troopers.) There are no such thing as insurgent prog troopers, so their first assumption is that

The PCs may have the opportunity to interact with one or more troopers, perhaps by capturing them. Generally, the troopers aren't talkative—they see the PCs as horrific monstrosities, traitorous insurgents, or both. Should the PCs convince the troopers to talk, these are the sorts of things they can learn:

- They have names such as PFC Rita McDonnell, Sgt. Bian Zhao, and PFC Marcos Castillo.
- They serve in the IHNA marine corps. There is a small contingent here on Pearl, based in an abandoned lab complex.
- They thought the PCs were insurgents, because they landed from a ship that entered the system without authorization. The insurgents are a bunch of scumbags trying to overthrow the government.
- Their unit commander will be looking for them soon, and has the ability to track their whereabouts. (This would be true in most locations, but that capability is unreliable on Pearl.)

the PCs are a friendly force. Accordingly, their goal is to restrain and recover these errant prog troopers, return them to the flyer and then back to base, then later investigate their appearance on Pearl. Their immediate strategy is likely to be:

- One or two troopers reveal themselves to the PCs, order them to stand down, and, if they comply, restrain them.
- Chase down any PCs that flee.
- Use lethal force only against PCs who fight back. Prog troopers are very dangerous, so the governmentals treat them accordingly.
- The governmental prog troopers close in only to cut off fleeing PCs, to help defeat attacking PCs, or if they're spotted by the PCs.
- If absolutely necessary, the governmentals call in the drone, which provides additional firepower.

The troopers will be surprised to see the PCs exhibit normal human-like behavior—such as being able to carry on a conversation. Until they see the PCs behave in such a manner, they'll treat them like domestic animals: not harshly, but impersonally. If they do see the PCs exhibit such behavior (perhaps starting a conversation, coordinating their actions, or exhibiting emotion), they'll treat the PCs like especially horrifying and *dangerous* animals. They will kill these abominations rather than let them escape.

Given their limited weapons and capabilities going into this encounter, it isn't likely to go well for the PCs. The governmentals are all armed with military equipment, and the prog troopers are especially dangerous foes. And that's before they call in the drone. Just when things look especially dire, move on to the next encounter: Intervention.

## GOVERNMENTAL TROOPER

The **governmental troopers** are typical human soldiers. Each is equipped with gray-patterned camouflage and light armor (body plate and helmet), an assault rifle with four magazines (a heavy weapon if salvaged by the PCs), tactical communications that are unreliable on

**Governmental Trooper:**  
level 2; damage 4; health 6;  
Armor 1

**Prog Trooper:** level 5; resists persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and pain as level 8; perception tasks as level 6; damage 6; health 18; Armor 2

**Timing tip:** This scene should take about 15 minutes. End this scene by about **two hours and thirty minutes** into the adventure.

Pearl at distances over a few hundred meters, a canteen, and possibly a first-aid kit, knife, disposable restraint, or pistol.

## PROG TROOPER

Prog troopers look, at a glance, like elite human soldiers. In addition to slightly more wicked-looking uniforms and equipment, they move with a strange precision and efficiency—individually, and in coordination. When still, they are eerily still, and when their faces are visible, they're eerily expressionless. Their helmets include dark visors that cover their upper face; when exposed, the face shows the distinctive serial number tattoo and hairless features of a mind-wiped individual.

Prog troopers working in tandem display almost super-human coordination. Prog troopers are not mindless robots—and in fact can be quite cunning—but lack all emotion, empathy, and interest in activities outside their mission requirements. Each prog trooper is equipped with medium armor, an assault rifle with four magazines (a heavy weapon if salvaged by the PCs), tactical communications that are unreliable on Pearl at distances over a few hundred meters, night-vision HUD (allows vision in low-light situations and provides an asset to perception tasks if salvaged by the PCs), and a knife.

**Memory intrusion:** The first PC to see a prog trooper's face, and the familiar tattoo on the forehead, has a sudden flash of memory from their prior life. The experience is so jarring that the PC suffers a momentary setback, perhaps missing a turn, falling prone, or being hindered in their next action. Give the player a memory card.

## GOVERNMENTAL DRONE

About a meter (3.3 feet) across, this four-bladed drone is gray in color and features a sensor cluster and a light autocannon. It makes a low buzzing noise in flight. It can operate in scouting mode, in which it patrols a predetermined area, then returns to base to report findings, or under the control of a remote operator, in which case it can make attacks. On Pearl, due to unreliable communications, it must

remain within a kilometer (.6 miles) or so of its operator. (There is an operator on the governmental flyer.)

## INTERVENTION

The governmentals aren't the only ones looking for the PCs. Expecting a delivery of raw bodies for use in their experiments, a group of landers is also searching for the lifeboat. En route, they've been attracted to the sounds of battle, and arrive just in time to turn the tide in the PCs' favor.

How this unfolds is up the GM. One dramatic option might be to have a rocket, fired out of the nearby jungle, destroy the governmental drone just as it takes aim at a PC. Or for a lander sniper to end a trooper about to deliver a killing blow to a wounded PC.

For best results, don't simply end the battle with the arrival of the landers. Instead, have them occupy or eliminate enough of the governmental contingent that the PCs can finish off the remaining threat within another two or three rounds.

The governmental flyer, a couple hundred meters (660 feet) away, doesn't have sufficient reinforcements to join the battle. Once the fight is clearly lost, the flyer takes off for the governmental base. The PCs may see it, briefly, through the trees as it turns away and retreats.

The lander force consists of Garcia, Thomas, Connor, and two to four additional landers (depending on the size of the PC party). Like the governmentals, the landers didn't expect to find the PCs conscious and ambulatory, and they've never experienced raw bodies capable of talking and acting like normal human beings. They're concerned by the discovery—it's not clear that using humans with thoughts and consciousness will succeed, and it's unlikely the PCs would survive the process (at least mentally). Nevertheless, their goal is to bring the PCs to Core Node. Accordingly, following the defeat of the governmentals, the landers' strategy is likely to be:

- Make friendly contact with the PCs.
- Attempt to persuade the PCs to come with them, with promises that they

**Governmental Drone:** level 3; Armor 2



can help get the PCs off of Pearl and/or help return their memories. Among their arguments: The PCs were once insurgents like themselves, and were rescued by the insurgency and sent to Pearl for restoration.

- If the PCs seem to be trusting, they will likely let them keep weapons and other gear.

Reaction to the PCs is mixed.

- Garcia is standoffish. Although she conceals it, she believes the PCs aren't truly conscious, and that their apparent personalities aren't authentic—they're just echos of past experiences rattling around in what's left of their brains. Like some sort of clever AI, the PCs might even think they're sentient, but really aren't.
- Thomas is undecided, and curious. He's more willing to engage the PCs, and could be convinced of their true humanity.
- The other landers have differing opinions, but mostly lean toward Garcia's perspective. Knowing (as all of them do) that the PCs are headed toward a fate that will likely demolish their personalities if not actually kill them, the landers are wary of getting too close, personally, to the PCs.

The landers aren't particularly forthcoming about the nature of Pearl, but as the PCs talk with them, here are the sorts of things they might learn. The sub-bullets are snippets that might come from an especially good social interaction roll, but aren't otherwise freely offered.

- They have names such as Phil, Nguyen, and Boniface.
- They'd like to keep up the pace—darkness is closing in.
  - ◊ If you think Pearl is dangerous in daylight, you don't want to see it at night.
- Although they fight the governmentals, they are first and foremost scientists.
  - ◊ They're mostly physicists, informaticists, neuroscientists, and some mathematicians. Why no biologists? They aren't here for Pearl's lifeforms.

- This planet is Pearl. Don't worry, even when you were alive you probably never heard of it. The governmentals kept it a secret.
  - ◊ It wasn't super secret. It was discovered a couple of years before the Fargo colony incident. After that the government was focused on the shriekers.
- The IHNA is a bunch of fascists. We're the resistance. You are too. That's why they did—that—to you.
  - ◊ They weren't always fascist. The fascists took power after the shriekers showed up.
- The landers are more or less trapped on Pearl, but the governmentals have an escape pathfinder. If they need to leave, they can just take their shuttle up, board the orbiter, and open a gate to wherever they want to go. The landers rely on insurgent ships for transport, supplies, and outside news.
  - ◊ The last resupply was months ago. It's not a worrying amount of time—yet.
- We're headed to the Core Node. There was a bunch of weird research done on Pearl before the government abandoned it. You've also got the Farm, Zoology, the Greater Node, and the port. There are others, too. It's all empty now; nobody lives on Pearl except the small number of landers and governmentals.
  - ◊ The landers sorta live at the Greater Node, while the governmentals hold the port and operate out of Zoology.

**Memory intrusion:** A PC talking with a lander has a sudden flash of memory from their prior life, triggered perhaps by some turn of phrase or facial expression. The experience is so jarring that the PC suffers a momentary setback, perhaps missing a turn, falling prone, or being hindered in their next action. Give the player a memory card.

Assuming the PCs agree to go with the landers, the group travels on foot for several kilometers. The landers skillfully avoid dangerous fauna and terrain. Ultimately they come to a flyer, camouflaged in a thick shroud of vegetation and netting. It would

*If you want to avoid the horror elements of this adventure entirely, you can skip the encounter with the landers. This allows the PCs to escape from or avoid the governmentals and continue to explore the planet. In this case, focus more on the wilderness encounters presented earlier, probably using them all. Further, the PCs' attention can be consumed with issues like fresh water, food, and shelter. They'll also want to continue to steer clear of the governmental soldiers, but perhaps can find a way to find out who they are (generally speaking) and make plans to either make a home for themselves here or try to escape Pearl.*

*Perhaps, though exploration, they could find Core Node on their own and investigate it, with or without the landers there. It's up to you.*

**Garcia:** level 6; social interaction as level 7; health 24; Armor 1

**Thomas:** level 4; piloting and science tasks as level 5; Armor 1

**Connor:** level 4; science tasks as level 7

**Lander:** level 3; stealth, navigation, perception, and science tasks as level 5; health 12; damage 3

**Timing tip:** This scene should take just a few minutes. End this scene about **two hours and forty minutes** into the adventure.

be easy to mistake it for a derelict, but the landers quickly uncover it, board, and fire up the engines. They take off, with the PCs, for Core Node.

## GARCIA

Compact and dark-skinned, Garcia has a no-nonsense demeanor. She is one of the landers' top leaders. She carries a sniper rifle and two magazines, a hand stunner, light armor, a knife, a flashlight, a tactical radio, and a hand tablet with a map of Pearl.

## THOMAS

Slender and topped with an unruly mop of blonde dreadlocks, Thomas is gregarious and talkative. He's the lander group's pilot. He carries a pistol and two magazines, a stun rod, light armor, a knife, a flashlight, a tactical radio, and a hand tablet with a map of Pearl.

## CONNOR

Connor is the lander group's top neuroscientist. He's thin, with pink-pale skin and eyebrows and hair that's even lighter. He regards the PCs with distinct interest, but also a distinct distance. He carries a hand stunner, a tactical radio, and a hand tablet with a map of Pearl.

## TYPICAL LANDER

The landers are, for the most part, scientist-revolutionaries. They've been living on Pearl for many months—in some cases years—where they've been isolated from the rest of humanity without access to frequent resupply. Their gear is worn often to the point of being ragged, and they're typically wiry and suntanned. Each carries an assault rifle with two magazines or a pistol with two magazines plus a stun rod, a knife, and possibly binoculars, a first-aid kit, a tactical radio, or a flashlight.

## AT CORE NODE

Core Node is an abandoned lab complex set mostly underground. It was originally built to conduct science related to Pearl's strange electromagnetic properties; the labs are generally physics-oriented, although the

nature of the experimentation would make them seem strange even to most physicists. The complex was built to house, feed, and occupy roughly 50 personnel, and has all the facilities to do so.

Approaching Core Node from the outside, some impressions include:

- A cliff rises 50 or 60 meters (165 to 213 feet) from the jungle. Several huge doors—like those on aircraft hangars—are set into the cliff-face.
- A large concrete apron, 100 meters (33 feet) on a side at least, spreads out before the doors. It's cracked and weed-choked. Old markings are barely discernible.
- The jungle has begun to encroach upon the tarmac, having nearly overwhelmed a now-ruined concrete wall that surrounds it.
- A handful of possible openings or windows, mostly obscured by vines and growth hanging down over the cliff-face, suggest even more man-made construction within the rock above the giant doors.

The flyer settles on the apron, and Garcia and the other landers disembark with the PCs. The flyer, piloted by Thomas, then departs. The landers lead the way to a smaller door set between two of the hangar entrances. A short passage leads through more doors into a cavernous space. Someone tinkers with a junction box, and after a moment lights start to flicker on.

- A giant space, easily 30 meters (100 feet) high and who knows how wide, is dimly lit by flickering emergency LEDs. It's dominated by several huge industrial vehicles, with smaller vehicles and other equipment scattered between them. All are rusted and derelict.
- To the side, parked just in front of one of the hangar doors, sits an orbital shuttle. Unlike the hulks of the other vehicles, the shuttle, at a glance, seems to be maintained and functional.
- Somewhere up ahead, a corridor is visible leading deeper into the mountain, its doorway framed by the brighter light beyond.



**Memory intrusion:** The first PC to enter the garage space has a sudden flash of memory from their prior life. The experience is so jarring that the PC suffers a momentary setback, perhaps missing a turn, falling prone, or being hindered in their next action. Give the player a memory card.

The shuttle is indeed functional; it belongs to the landers (unlike the rest of the equipment here, which has been decaying in the garage since the lab was abandoned). This type of vessel can reach orbit and even travel elsewhere in the system, but it cannot open gates to reach other stars. (A PC can recognize that fact with a difficulty 2 Intellect task.) That said, if the PCs are to leave Pearl by the end of this adventure, that's how they'll do it.

Garcia leads the group into the corridor, around a corner or two, and to a stairwell. Here and throughout Core Node, the PCs might note:

- The place is in a state of decay. Water stains streak the gray walls, and here and there ceiling tiles, insulation, or lighting fixtures have fallen. Furnishings, where visible, are mildewed and warped. Old debris is scattered around.
- The corridors are lit by dim, bluish emergency lights. Many rooms, and some lengths of passage, are completely unlit, and even where the light is working it sometimes flickers or fades intermittently.
- The air is still, warm, and heavy. The place smells of mildew.

Before descending, Garcia and the landers pause in a disused storage room. They stash all weapons (except one—Garcia surreptitiously keeps her hand stunner), and other gear with significant metal content, in a couple of old lockers—and they ask (and if necessary demand) the PCs do the same. Bringing too much metal into the lower levels seems to increase the odds of encountering the intruding darkness (see the next encounter)—but that's not a fear they want to share with the PCs. Instead, they explain to the PCs that metal can interfere with lab processes, and that, “they'll be here if we need them.”

Then they head down the stairwell to The Chair.

## CORE NODE

Core Node is a complex of physics labs, along with some living space, support areas, and a big planning and control sector. The “core” in “Core Node” references the core of Pearl: The labs tap into the effects of the neutron star situated within Pearl's Dyson sphere. Core Node is not mapped in full, and most of it is probably irrelevant to this adventure, but the basic layout is as follows:

- Top levels (above the garages): Planning and control. One of the stairwells leads further up to an exit in the jungle above the cliff-face.
- Garage level (the primary entrance): Utility, maintenance, and vehicle storage, mostly in the huge hangar-like spaces. A variety of storage rooms and machine shops adjoin the garages.
- First two levels down: Living, medical, food, and recreation spaces for a staff of roughly 50.
- Next five levels or so: A variety of labs, along with ancillary spaces such as storerooms. Some of the labs are fairly small, while others have large footprints and are two or more stories deep (with entrances via multiple levels).
- Very bottom: Power station.

## THE CHAIR

Garcia and the landers lead the way down the stairwell, descending five levels. From the stairwell they navigate a few passageways to their destination.

- The corridor runs between two labs, with large plex windows looking into the spaces on each side. The rooms are filled with strange equipment, workbenches, and terminals, all long derelict.
- The air is heavy and dank. Almost none of the lighting is working this far down.

The landers enter an office adjoining a modest-sized lab. If Garcia had complete control over the PCs, she would restrain

**Timing tip:** *This scene should take 30 minutes or so. End this scene by about **three hours and fifteen minutes** into the adventure.*

them individually and lock them in the office. Then she'd pick one and put them in The Chair. She probably does not have that freedom, though—her force is unarmed and too small to easily overcome the PCs. She has to instead rely on persuading them to cooperate.

For this adventure to conclude in favor of the PCs, it's essential for at least one of them to undergo The Chair. But the players, like the PCs, are likely to be suspicious of the landers' intentions (and rightfully so). As the GM, convincing the PCs to cooperate is a balancing act. Here's what Garcia is willing to tell the PCs about the process:

- The adjoining lab was used to study neurophysics, and how to amplify Pearl's unusual effects on the human mind. (This is essentially true.)
- The landers believe Pearl—the entire planet—is an alien artifact, and it was used for transdimensional, and maybe even transtemporal, communication. The equipment in the lab allows the human mind to tap into this function, which has the power to rewire human perception in profound ways. (True.) They believe it can eliminate the effects of the mind-wipe and release the latent memories and identity that have been covered up by that process. (Less true.)
- The PCs were political prisoners “executed” by the government to be turned into prog troopers. (True.)
- The landers expected to receive the PCs still packed in transport cases. (True.) The landers have never seen—or even heard of—raw bodies that walked and talked. (All true.) That's the only reason the landers haven't given them a warmer reception. (Not true.)
- Getting the PCs here to restore their identities is the whole reason insurgent forces rescued the PCs from the prog trooper factory and sent them here. (Not true.)
- The process is risky. It might not work. It might even have negative effects. (True.) But they've done it before, and it's usually successful. (Not true.) The fact that the PCs are awake makes the procedure riskier (true), but still worth it.

Garcia is a good liar, but the PCs might see through her anyway. If pinned down, she'll admit that they haven't actually ever used this process to return memories to mind-wiped people. And point out that there simply isn't a Plan B. Get in The Chair and hope it works, or live forever without their own minds. Assuming the PCs ultimately cooperate, Garcia looks them all over. Her suggestion for first choice leans toward the healthiest PCs, but, thinking that the stronger the personality, the lower the chance of success, she'll also lean toward PCs who have been the quietest throughout the adventure. But she won't force her candidate; it's ultimately up to the PCs who goes first.

The chosen PC is taken through a side door into the adjoining lab. A large plex window looks into it from the office, and the others can see landers powering up equipment. In the center of the crowded, irregularly shaped room is a large chair covered in sensors, wiring, electronics, and straps.

The chosen PC is strapped into the chair. Garcia and any remaining landers leave the office and, with an audible click, lock the door. The procedure begins, and two things happen.

## THE DARKNESS INTRUDES

The procedure begins. Screens around the room cascade with data; lights and devices flash and chime. The landers watch the equipment carefully, making adjustments and calibrating input. The pace seems to quicken, and their attention focuses. Just as it appears that things are coming to a conclusion, everything suddenly changes. The procedure has called into being an intruding darkness, which has formed in the corridor near the stairwell (out of sight of the lab and office). It moves toward the lab.

- The overhead lights begin to flicker. The landers look up. After a second, Garcia sends two of them out into the corridor. They disappear in the direction of the stairwell.
- A few seconds later come the screams. Brief, high-pitched, and horrifying.



- The lights flicker again, then go out to leave only the dim emergency lighting and the glow of instruments.
- Garcia and the remaining landers head out into the corridor—Garcia takes a moment to look for an improvised weapon. Just as they disappear from sight, a purple-black bolt of lightning flashes down the hallway. There are the sounds of a scuffle, some screams, and a body is thrown against the wall. Then silence, and the approach of a dark flickering.
- Additionally, the PC can also sense the flow of energy not just nearby, but for hundreds of thousands of kilometers in all directions. Like observing eddies in a flowing stream, they can feel Pearl's electromagnetic field, sense the flow of solar radiation, and even see the cosmic rays passing through the system from deep space.
- Give the player the Shifts handout. Let them pick one category on the list; the PC gains three shifts in that category. Unless otherwise noted, a shift is like permanent Effort to all rolls in the category; it doesn't count against the PC's regular use of Effort or the normal asset limit.

One PC is strapped to The Chair (see below); the others are locked in the office. The door to the lab on level 3; the door to the corridor, and the plex windows, are level 5. The intruding darkness moves slowly into view, reaches the lab door, and moves inside toward the PC in The Chair.

## THE PC IN THE CHAIR

As the procedure begins, the PC in The Chair is possessed by a transdimensional being. Here are the effects of this possession:

- The PC gains a sort of “X-ray” vision. It is as though all matter is made of glass—not just the nearby walls, equipment, and people, but the very planet itself. The PC can see the sun, the stars, the blackness of space extending in all directions, and, a thousand kilometers (620 miles) below their feet, the small but blazingly bright orb of the neutron star within Pearl's shell. They can still sense the matter around them, but as transparent shadows, and all normal perception-related tasks are hindered by two steps.
- The PC feels the presence of another being—another consciousness—within their mind. There is no direct communication possible with this being, or even a sense of compatible thoughts, but it has some beneficial influence on the PC. The PC gains a subtle cypher, even if they are at their normal cypher limit. If unused, the cypher disappears when the possession ends.

The PC can end the possession with a difficulty 3 Intellect task, and can recall it, as an action, with another difficulty 3 Intellect task. This is a permanent ability. All of the effects, including the shifts, apply only when possessed.

In addition to the possession, the PC may, as an action, make a difficulty 6 Intellect roll to regain their memories and personality. If the player has any memory cards, each card provides an asset to this task. This roll can only be attempted when the PC is in The Chair and The Chair has been activated. If the PC is successful, the player may decide on the character's name and any background details they would like to come up with.

While possessed, the intruding darkness is visible to the PC as an impossibly black “hole” in existence. Since the possessed PC sees through the surrounding walls, they can see the intruding darkness approaching even before it's visible to the other PCs.

The straps on The Chair are level 5, but can be easily unbuckled by a PC with a free hand.

*Being strapped to a chair can be pretty horrifying as it takes power away from the player. In a less horror-focused game, the process might not be so restrictive. Or, you can skip this part entirely and Core Node can simply be a place for the PCs to get a shuttle and get off Pearl, without their memories.*

## INTRUDING DARKNESS

4 (12)

Roiling darkness floats through the air like a cloud of nightmare, with lightning-like tendrils of blackness. The intruding darkness is an extradimensional creature—or perhaps just an effect—that sometime slips into our reality as a result of the experimentation that has occurred on Pearl.

**Motive:** Devour the life of living creatures; grow in form.

**Health:** 12

**Damage Inflicted:** 4 (tendrils) or 2 Intellect (black lightning)

**Armor:** 0

**Movement:** Long (flying). Cannot enter tight spaces, including much of the jungle.

**Modifications:** Perception tasks as level 7 when looking for living creatures.

**Combat:** The intruding darkness does not inflict damage directly; rather it extends tendrils of darkness to grasp targets and bash them against the ground or nearby walls. A grasped target takes damage and is knocked prone, often in a different location within close range.

In addition to one grasping tendril attack per turn, the intruding darkness can zap up to two targets per turn with its black lightning. A successful hit deals 2 points of Intellect damage (armor doesn't apply). The intruding darkness gains 2 points of health for every successful attack of this type, and health gained this way can exceed 12 (with no limit). Defense is Intellect based.

**Interaction:** The intruding darkness is unintelligent.

**Loot:** None.

**GM intrusion:** If the intruding darkness has fewer than 12 health, its black lightning attack deals double damage and restores it to 12 health.

**Timing tip:** This is the final scene of the adventure, and should take 20 minutes or so. It should end a little shy of the four-hour mark.

## ESCAPE

What constitutes “victory” for the PCs? What must they do to succeed in this adventure? That's up to them—they may want to escape the planet via the pathfinder, or join the landers, or make their own way on Pearl. They may be satisfied with a single PC having experienced The Chair, or they may want all of the PCs to get a shot at regaining their identities. Regardless, they have one additional challenge ahead of them:

- If the PCs prioritize getting everyone through The Chair, the governmentals attack them in the lab just as they are getting started.
- If the PCs prioritize getting off Pearl, the governmentals intercept them as they reach the garage level.

In either event, remember that a character in a possessed state can see through the walls and earth around them. There's a lot to see—overwhelmingly so—and a PC not looking for a specific thing probably won't spot it. But any PC who deliberately looks for danger can see the governmental

flyer on the tarmac and approaching governmental troopers.

## OPERATING THE CHAIR

Figuring out the sophisticated process that activates The Chair is a difficulty 6 Intellect task; any PC that carefully watched the landers do it gains an asset in the attempt. Once figured out, the difficulty of additional attempts drops to 4. Success repeats the experience of the first PC in The Chair: they are possessed by the transdimensional alien, and gain all the features that go with possession; and they may attempt to regain their identity.

## LEAVING PEARL

Leaving Pearl requires the PCs to open the garage door, board the shuttle, and operate the shuttle.

Controls for the door are located in a small booth at the front of the garage. Figuring out how to power up the door and controls is a difficulty 3 Intellect task; once powered, operating the controls is straightforward. It takes three rounds for the door to open, exposing the garage to the tarmac outside.



The shuttle's boarding door is closed but not locked. It's located on the left side of the shuttle, behind the cockpit.

The shuttle's preflight procedure and powerup is a difficulty 4 Intellect task and takes five rounds. Once powered up, the shuttle is ready to fly (assuming the garage door is open).

## THE GOVERNMENTALS

The governmental flyer has landed on the tarmac outside Core Node. It has disgorged a force of two **prog troopers** and three to five (depending on the number of PCs) **governmental troopers**. This time, they have a better sense of what they're up against. They expect the PCs to be alert, dangerous, and possibly lightly armed. Their goal is to destroy the PCs.

How this unfolds depends on where the PCs are: If they're making for the shuttle, the governmentals have just entered the garage as the PCs reach that level of Core Node. If they're still in the lab, the governmentals arrive on the lab level just as the PCs begin to operate The Chair.

The governmentals' general strategy is to have the troopers engage and distract the PCs as the prog troopers move into optimal position. Then the prog troopers move quickly to defeat the PCs.

## DENOUEMENT

The PCs have all the ingredients they need to pursue their own destinies:

- One or more of the PCs have been possessed by the transdimensional aliens accessed through The Chair, and gained superhuman powers as a result.
- One or more of the PCs may have regained their memories and identities.
- There is an insystem shuttle in Core Node's giant garage level. Perhaps the PCs have taken control of it.
- A governmental escape pathfinder waits in orbit. The PCs might have learned about it from the landers, or a possessed PC might actually see it—a bright spot moving steadily against the blackness surrounding Pearl.
- Where will they go from here? That's up to them—and beyond the scope of this adventure.

**Prog Trooper:** level 5; resists persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and pain as level 8; perception tasks as level 6; damage 6; health 18; Armor 2

**Governmental Trooper:** level 2; damage 4; health 6; Armor 1



# HANDOUTS

## TABLE TENTS

Give each player a table tent as they are awakened. The larger single-digit number represents the order in which the PC was released, and the alphanumeric code is the number tattooed on the PC's forehead. Lacking knowledge of their names, some PCs might choose to adopt one or the other as their identifier, while others opt to make up names for themselves.

Cut along dashed lines. Fold along blue lines.

<b>1</b> AE4-40280-TT094	<b>4</b> AA1-05186-TT059
<b>1</b> AE4-40280-TT094	<b>4</b> 65011-98150-1AA
<b>2</b> AL7-92793-TT081	<b>5</b> AE5-87620-TT028
<b>2</b> 18011-66726-77A	<b>5</b> 82011-02978-53A
<b>3</b> AD9-82599-TT013	<b>6</b> AG3-61836-TT062
<b>3</b> E1011-66528-60A	<b>6</b> 29011-93819-63A



## MEMORY CARDS

Over the course of the adventure some PCs may regain snippets of memory. When this happens, give the player one of these memory cards, chosen at random.

Cut along dashed lines.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

You are at a party, or some social gathering. People seem to be having fun. It's casual. Something sudden makes you stagger back—someone bumps into you, or you're startled—and your elbow hits a lamp. It falls to the floor and shatters.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

You are in the corridors of a ship. It must be under thrust, because you are walking with full gravity. Two other people are laughing. They're talking about Julio. That name seems important to you, but you have no idea why.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

You are a child. You and two other kids are playing with a fuzzybear—an animal, about the size of a small dog, native to the colony world New Brazilia. You can't remember if the fuzzybear was your pet, or one of the other kids'.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

A woman lounges on a sofa or large chair. Her robe is open at the neck, and her hair is disheveled. She stares into the sunlight streaming in from the open door. Is she your lover? A family member? A character in a movie? You have no idea.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

You are an officer on the *EAS Singapore*. A senior officer—the Chief Engineer? The Executive Officer? There's tension in the crew: You have to tell the captain about it, but you know he isn't going to like it.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

A child runs up the beach, shrieking with delight as a wave surges up the sand toward her. Her shoulders are sunburned under a big, floppy hat. The vision gives you no clue about your own age, or whether you knew the child.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

You're in a crowd, so dense that you're being buffeted and pushed as it moves. The space is large, but it's indoors, and you feel that lightness of substandard gravity. People are shouting and chanting. Police in riot armor are moving in.

You are briefly overwhelmed by a sudden vision. It's fleeting and distant, but the experience is powerful—is it a memory?

Jenette is giving everyone their orders. You know that Jenette isn't her real name, just like the name she calls you isn't yours. The meeting is in a service corridor. Your job is to start a fire in an electrical substation at exactly 23:15.

```
00:00:00: Cont Ev AKS Kabir Sagar lifeboat 04 launch sequence initiated by
          external control.
00:00:12: Man Ev Maneuvering thrusters deployed.
00:00:18: Man Ev Primary drive engaged at acceleration rate of 0.07749G.
03:49:31: Man Ev Primary drive disengaged.
04:17:10: Man Ev Parachutes deployed.
04:17:41: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:17:58: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:04: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:07: Sens Ev LIDAR ping detected.
04:18:09: Err Code P230218 Primary VHF antenna array offline.
04:18:09: Err Code P929002 Transponder antenna array offline.
04:18:09: Err Code A208560 Secondary water pump offline.
04:18:10: Err Code E478830 Aft primary environment sensor offline.
04:18:11: Err Code P000841 Catastrophic cabin pressure loss registered.
...[Dozens of additional error messages.]...
04:22:51: Man Ev Hard landing emergency alert sounded.
04:24:32: Cond Ev Out of parameter deceleration registered.
04:24:35: Cond Ev Out of parameter cabin load shift registered.
04:24:36: Man Ev Lifeboat landed.
04:24:36: Err Code P399781 Secondary external atmospheric pressure sensor
          offline.
04:24:36: Err Code L588205 Primary hydraulic manifold sensor offline.
04:24:36: Err Code R793885 Heat plate temperature sensor offline.
...[Dozens of error messages, with additional errors being logged.]...
```

# SHIFTS

Pick one of the following categories, and gain three shifts in that category. Unless otherwise noted, a shift is like permanent Effort to all rolls in the category; it doesn't count against your regular use of Effort or the normal asset limit.

**Accuracy:** All attack rolls

---

**Dexterity:** Movement, acrobatics, initiative, and Speed defense

---

**Healing:** One extra recovery roll per shift  
(each one action, all coming before other normal recovery rolls)

---

**Intelligence:** Intellect defense rolls and all knowledge, science,  
and crafting tasks

---

**Power:** Use of a specific power, including damage  
(3 additional points per shift) but not attack rolls

---

**Resilience:** Might defense rolls and Armor (+1 per shift)

---

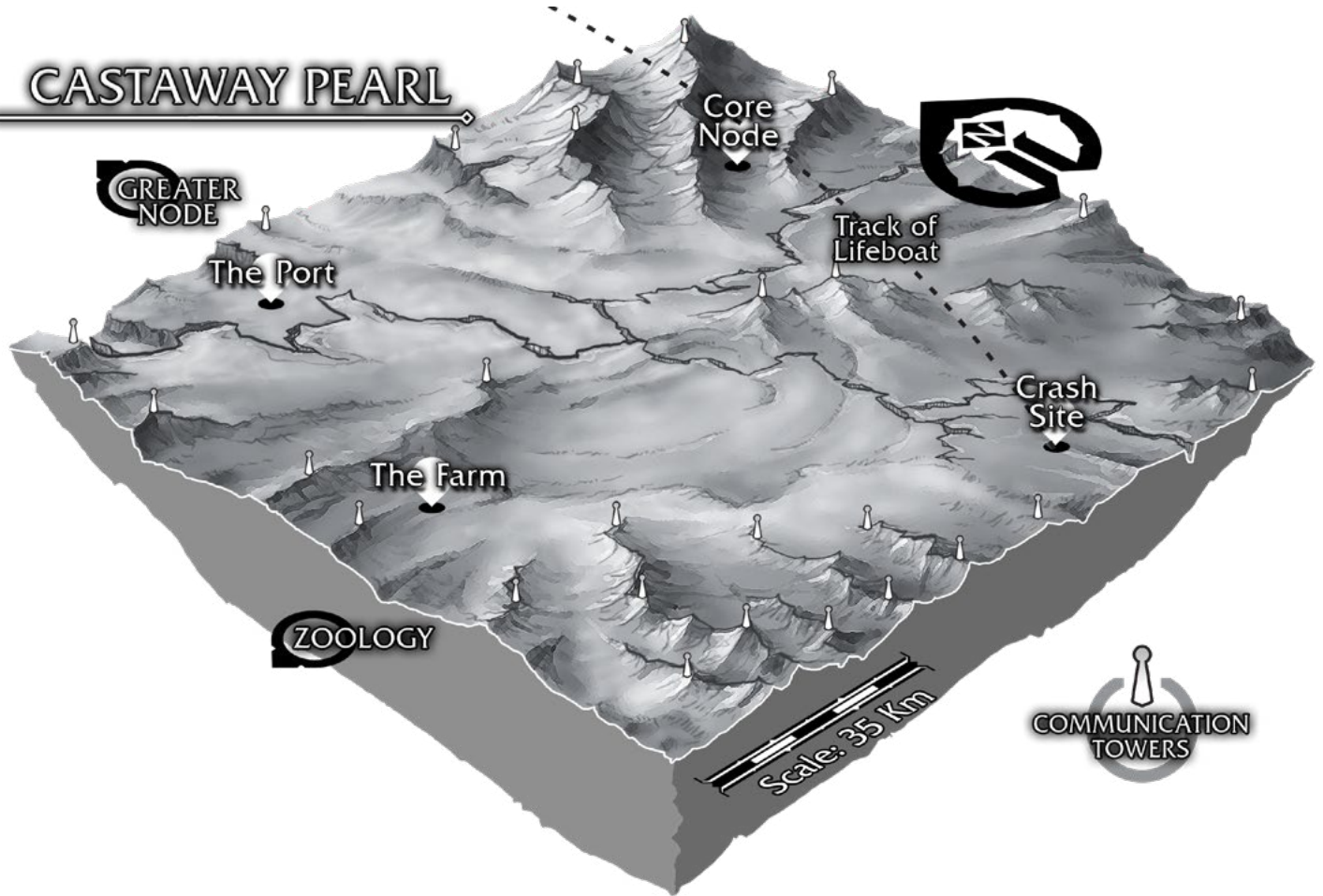
**Single Attack:** Attack rolls and damage (3 additional points per shift)

---

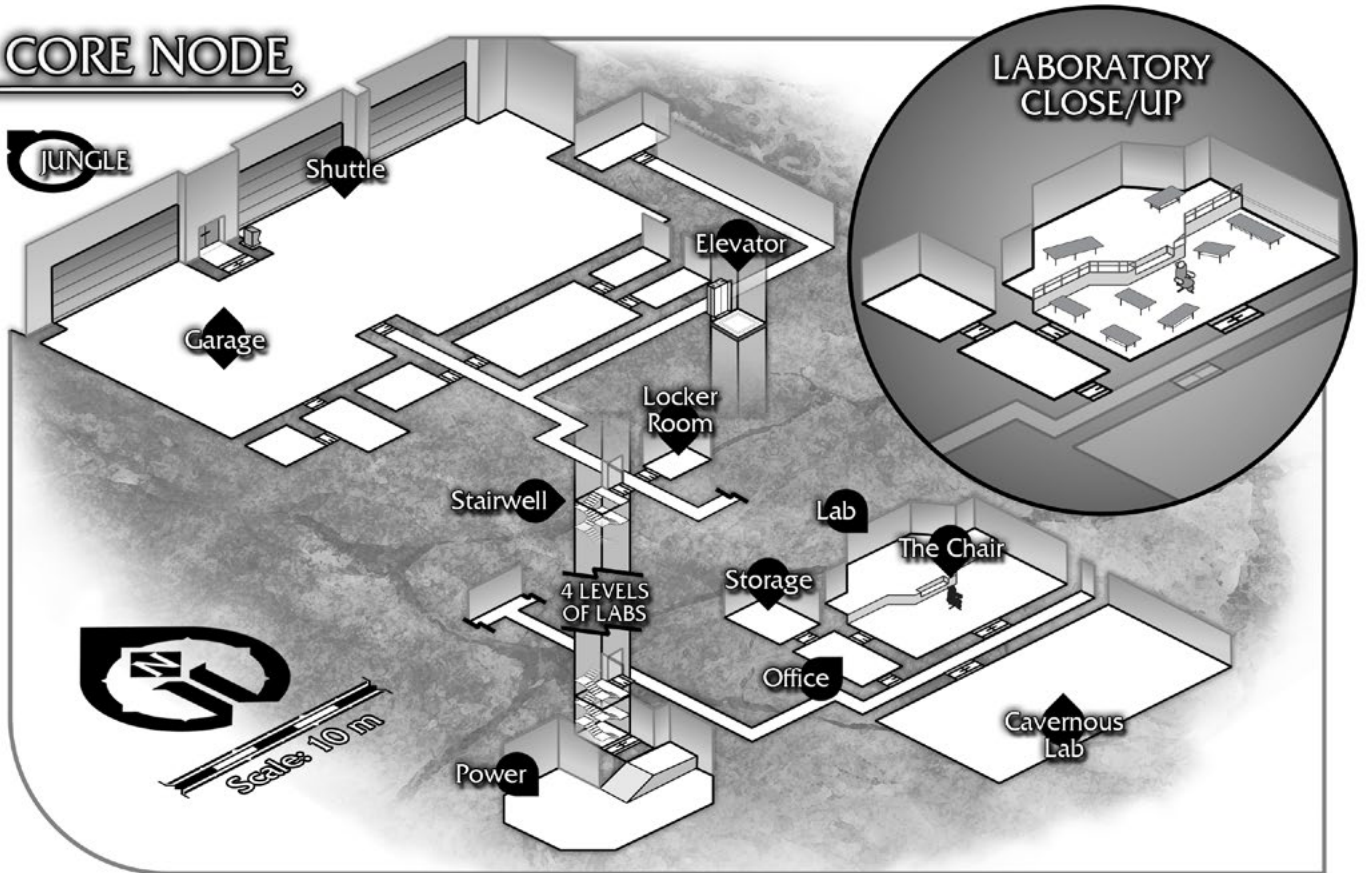
**Strength:** All tasks involving strength, including jumping and dealing damage  
in melee or thrown attacks  
(3 additional points of damage per shift) but not attack rolls



# CASTAWAY PEARL



# CORE NODE





**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Combat Prowess:** +1 damage to melee attacks. Enabler. (Figured into Attacks)

**Danger Sense (1 Speed point):** Your initiative task is eased. You pay the cost each time the ability is used. Enabler.

**Enhanced Speed.**

**Loner:** You gain no benefit when you get help with a task from another character who is trained or specialized in that task.

**No Need for Weapons:** When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a medium weapon instead of a light weapon. Enabler.

**Quick Throw (2 Speed points):** After using a thrown light weapon, you draw another light weapon and make another thrown attack against the same target or a different one. Action.

**Self-Reliant.**

**Trained Without Armor:** You are trained in Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor. Enabler.

**Practiced with light, medium, and heavy weapons**

**ATTACKS**

Unarmed (3 points of damage), attacks eased

Unarmed (using No Need for Weapons) (5 points of damage)

**RECOVERY ROLLS** Id6+ **1**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**

IMPAIRED +1 Effort per level ignore minor and major effect results on rolls Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

DEBILITATED Can move only an immediate distance Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

13	18	1	8
POOL	POOL	EDGE	POOL

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
1	7	XP
TIER	EFFORT	

**SKILLS**

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

Sneaking	Pool	T	S	I
Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor	S	X		
Foraging, hunting, and finding safe places to rest or hide	S	X		
Any task involving social interaction	I	X		X

**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Combat Prowess:** +1 damage to melee attacks. Enabler. (Figured into Attacks)

**Danger Sense (1 Speed point):** Your initiative task is eased. You pay the cost each time the ability is used. Enabler.

**Enhanced Speed.**

**Loner:** You gain no benefit when you get help with a task from another character who is trained or specialized in that task.

**No Need for Weapons:** When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a medium weapon instead of a light weapon. Enabler.

**Quick Throw (2 Speed points):** After using a thrown light weapon, you draw another light weapon and make another thrown attack against the same target or a different one. Action.

**Self-Reliant.**

**Trained Without Armor:** You are trained in Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor. Enabler.

**Practiced with light, medium, and heavy weapons**

**ATTACKS**

Unarmed (3 points of damage), attacks eased

Unarmed (using No Need for Weapons) (5 points of damage)

**CYPHERS**

**Eagleseye:** For the next two hours, you get two assets on tasks involving seeing long distances.

**Effort Enhancer (combat):** For the next hour, you can apply one free level of Effort to any task (including a combat task) without spending points from a Pool. This free level of Effort does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort you can normally apply to one task. Once this free level of Effort is used, the effect of the cypher ends.

**2**  
LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

**ARMOR**

**MONEY**

## BACKGROUND

## NOTES

### WARRIOR PLAYER INTRUSIONS

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees:

**Perfect Setup:** You're fighting at least three foes and each one is standing in exactly the right spot for you to use a move you trained in long ago, allowing you to attack all three as a single action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action.

**Weapon Break:** Your foe's weapon has a weak spot. In the course of the combat, it quickly becomes damaged and moves two steps down the object damage track.

## PORTRAIT





**ADVANCEMENT**

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice
- EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER Refer to the Cyphe System Rulebook

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ISA: Intuitive WHO: Warrior

DESCRIPTOR: \_\_\_\_\_ TYPE: \_\_\_\_\_

FOCUS: Is Licensed to Carry

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

1 TIER

1 EFFORT

XP

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
16	10	10
EDGE	POOL	POOL
1	1	10
EDGE	EDGE	EDGE

**RECOVERY ROLLS**  $1d6+1$

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**  IMPAIRED  DEBILIATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

**SKILLS**

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Climbing	S	X		
Balancing	S	X		
Perception	I	X		

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Gunner:** You inflict 1 additional point of damage with guns. Enabler.  
**Improved Edge.**

**Know What to Do:** You can act immediately, even if it's not your turn. Afterward, on your next regular turn, any action you take is hindered. You can do this one time, although the ability is renewed each time you make a recovery roll.

**Overwatch (1 Intellect point):** You use a ranged weapon to target a limited area and make an attack against the next viable target to enter that area. You negate any benefit the target would have from cover, position, surprise, range, illumination, or visibility. Further, you inflict 1 additional point of damage with the attack. You can remain on overwatch as long as you wish, within reason. Action.

**Physical Skills.**

**Practiced in Armor:** You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1.

**Practiced with light, medium, and heavy weapons**

**Practiced with guns**

**CYPHERS**

**Repel:** One NPC of a level lower than 6 within immediate range decides to leave, using their next five rounds to move away quickly.

**Darksight:** You can see in the dark for five hours.

2

LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

ARMOR

MONEY

**ATTACKS**

Unarmed (2 points of damage), attacks eased

## BACKGROUND

## NOTES

### WARRIOR PLAYER INTRUSIONS

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees:

**Perfect Setup:** You're fighting at least three foes and each one is standing in exactly the right spot for you to use a move you trained in long ago, allowing you to attack all three as a single action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action.

**Weapon Break:** Your foe's weapon has a weak spot. In the course of the combat, it quickly becomes damaged and moves two steps down the object damage track.

## PORTRAIT





## BACKGROUND

## NOTES

### WARRIOR PLAYER INTRUSIONS

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees:

**Perfect Setup:** You're fighting at least three foes and each one is standing in exactly the right spot for you to use a move you trained in long ago, allowing you to attack all three as a single action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action.

**Weapon Break:** Your foe's weapon has a weak spot. In the course of the combat, it quickly becomes damaged and moves two steps down the object damage track.

## PORTRAIT



**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Block (3 Speed points):** You automatically block the next melee attack made against you within the next minute. Action to initiate. Find the Way: When you apply Effort to a navigation task because you don't know the way or are lost, you can apply a free level of Effort. Enabler.

**Improved Edge.**

**Mentally Tough.**

**Pilot.**

**Reckless.**

**Surging Confidence (1 Might point):** When you use an action to make your first recovery roll of the day, you immediately gain another action. Enabler.

**Practiced with light and medium weapons**

	MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL	11	15	10
EDGE	1	1	10

**RECOVERY ROLLS** **1d6+1**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR  DEBILIATED Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**

IMPAIRED +1 Effort per level. Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls. Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage.

DEBILIATED Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

**SKILLS** T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	P	T	S	I
Intellect defense	I	X		
All tasks related to piloting starcraft	S	X		
Initiative	S	X		
Speed defense	S	X		
Any task that involves patience, willpower, or discipline is hindered	I			X

NAME

ISA  Impulsive  Explorer  WHO

DESCRIPTOR  TYPE

FOCUS

**Pilots Starcraft**

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER

1 EFFORT

1 XP

	MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL	11	15	10
EDGE	1	1	10

**RECOVERY ROLLS** **1d6+1**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR  DEBILIATED Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**

IMPAIRED +1 Effort per level. Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls. Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage.

DEBILIATED Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

**SKILLS** T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	P	T	S	I
Intellect defense	I	X		
All tasks related to piloting starcraft	S	X		
Initiative	S	X		
Speed defense	S	X		
Any task that involves patience, willpower, or discipline is hindered	I			X

**CYPHERS**

**Skill Boost (climbing):** In the next 24 hours, the next two times you attempt a climbing action, it is eased by three steps.

**Perfection:** Treat your next action as if you had rolled a natural 20.

2 LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

MONEY

**EXPLORER PLAYER INTRUSIONS**

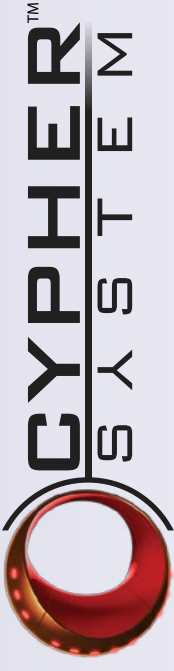
You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

**Fortuitous Malfunction:** A trap or a dangerous device malfunctions before it can affect you.

**Serendipitous Landmark:** Just when it seems like the path is lost (or you are), a trail marker, a landmark, or simply the way the terrain or corridor bends, rises, or falls away suggests to you the best path forward, at least from this point.

**Weak Strain:** The poison or disease turns out not to be as debilitating or deadly as it first seemed, and inflicts only half the damage that it would have otherwise.





**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools  
 MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice  
 EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort  
 SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained Skill  
 OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ISA  WHO  **WHO**

**TYPE**

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Danger Sense (1 Speed point):** Your initiative task is eased. You pay the cost each time the ability is used. Enabler.

**Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed points):** You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.

**Improved Edge.**

**Stealth Skills.**

**Trained Without Armor:** You are trained in Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor. Enabler.

**Practiced with light and medium weapons**

**FOCUS**

**FOCUS**

**TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER**

TIER

EFFORT

XP

**MIGHT**  **POOL**  **EDGE**

**SPEED**  **POOL**  **EDGE**

**INTELLECT**  **POOL**  **EDGE**

**RECOVERY ROLLS**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR  DEBILITATED

10 MINS  10 HOURS  IMPAIRED

+1 Effort per level  
ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

DEBILITATED

**DAMAGE TRACK**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR  DEBILITATED

10 MINS  10 HOURS  IMPAIRED

+1 Effort per level  
ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

DEBILITATED

**SKILLS**

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

SKILLS	Pool	T	S	I
Lockpicking	S	X		
Sleight of Hand	S	X		
Special abilities involving illusions or trickery	S	X		
Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor	S	X		
Stealth	S	X		
All movement-related tasks are hindered	S		X	
All interactions involving lies or trickery	I	X		

**CYPHERS**

**Effort Enhancer (noncombat):** For the next hour, you can apply one free level of Effort to a noncombat task without spending points from a Pool. This free level of Effort does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort you can normally apply to one task. Once this free level of Effort is used, the effect of the cypher ends.

**Analeptic:** Restore 8 points to your Speed Pool.

**2**  
LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

**ARMOR**

**MONEY**

**EXPLORER PLAYER INTRUSIONS**

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

**Fortuitous Malfunction:** A trap or a dangerous device malfunctions before it can affect you.

**Serendipitous Landmark:** Just when it seems like the path is lost (or you are), a trail marker, a landmark, or simply the way the terrain or corridor bends, rises, or falls away suggests to you the best path forward, at least from this point.

**Weak Strain:** The poison or disease turns out not to be as debilitating or deadly as it first seemed, and inflicts only half the damage that it would have otherwise.



### ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Player intrusion (1 XP):** Introduce an unexpected change in circumstances, like a reverse GM intrusion, but only if the GM agrees and allows your suggestion. Enabler.

**Encouragement (1 Intellect point):** While you maintain this ability through ongoing inspiring oration, your allies within short range ease one of the following task types (your choice): defense tasks, attack tasks, or tasks related to any skill that you are trained or specialized in. Action.

**Enthrall (1 Intellect point):** For as long as you do nothing but speak, you grab and keep another creature's attention, even if the creature can't understand you. The creature takes no actions other than to defend itself, even over multiple rounds. If the creature is attacked, the effect ends. Action.

**Find the Flaw:** If an opponent has a straightforward weakness, the GM will tell you what it is.

**Inspire Aggression (2 Intellect points):** Your words affect a character within short range who is able to understand you; they gain an asset on their Might-based attack rolls for one minute. Action to initiate.

**Investigator:** You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task.

Enabler.

**Sleuth.**

**Understanding (1 Intellect point):** You observe or study a creature or object. Your next interaction with that creature or object gains one asset. Action.

**Practiced with light weapons**

### ATTACKS

Unarmed (2 points of damage), attacks eased


NAME: [ ]

ISA: Sharp-Eyed [ ] Speaker [ ] WHO

TYPE: [ ]

FOCUS: Solves Mysteries [ ]

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER: [ ]

TIER: 1

EFFORT: 1

XP: [ ]

8 POOL 9 POOL 17 POOL 1 EDGE EDGE EDGE

MIGHT SPEED INTELLECT

RECOVERY ROLLS Id6+ 1

1 ACTION 1 HOUR

10 MINS 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED +1 Effort per level. Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls. Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage.

DEBILIATED Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0.

SKILLS

	Pool	T	S	I
Initiative	S	X		
Perception	I	X		

T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

CYPHERS

**Strength Boost:** Adds 1 to your Might Edge for two hours.

**Meditation Aid:** Restore 5 points to your Intellect Pool.

2 LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

MONEY



**SPEAKER PLAYER INTRUSIONS**

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees:

**Friendly NPC:** An NPC you don't know, someone you don't know that well, or someone you know but who hasn't been particularly friendly in the past chooses to help you, though doesn't necessarily explain why. Maybe they'll ask you for a favor in return afterward, depending on how much trouble they go to.

**Perfect Suggestion:** A follower or other already-friendly NPC suggests a course of action with regard to an urgent question, problem, or obstacle you're facing.

**Unexpected Gift:** An NPC hands you a physical gift you were not expecting, one that helps put the situation at ease if things seem strained, or provides you with a new insight for understanding the context of the situation if there's something you're failing to understand or grasp.