

ALIEN SURVIVOR

NARRATOR'S GUIDE

The ship is fueled. The cargo is loaded. The crew of the automated Company cargo hauler *Fortune* goes back to the corporate compound to say its goodbyes...

...and walks right into an ambush.

Bombs explode in the Company offices and in the streets outside. Alien monsters escape—or are let loose—from the R&D lab. A city in turmoil stands between the crew and escape. The streets are prowled by gunmen and aliens. The crew must board the ship in the nearby starport and tell its computer to take off for Earth.

No road is safe.

No backup is coming.

They are not trained for this.

AND ONLY ONE WILL SURVIVE.

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Based on *Lady Blackbird*

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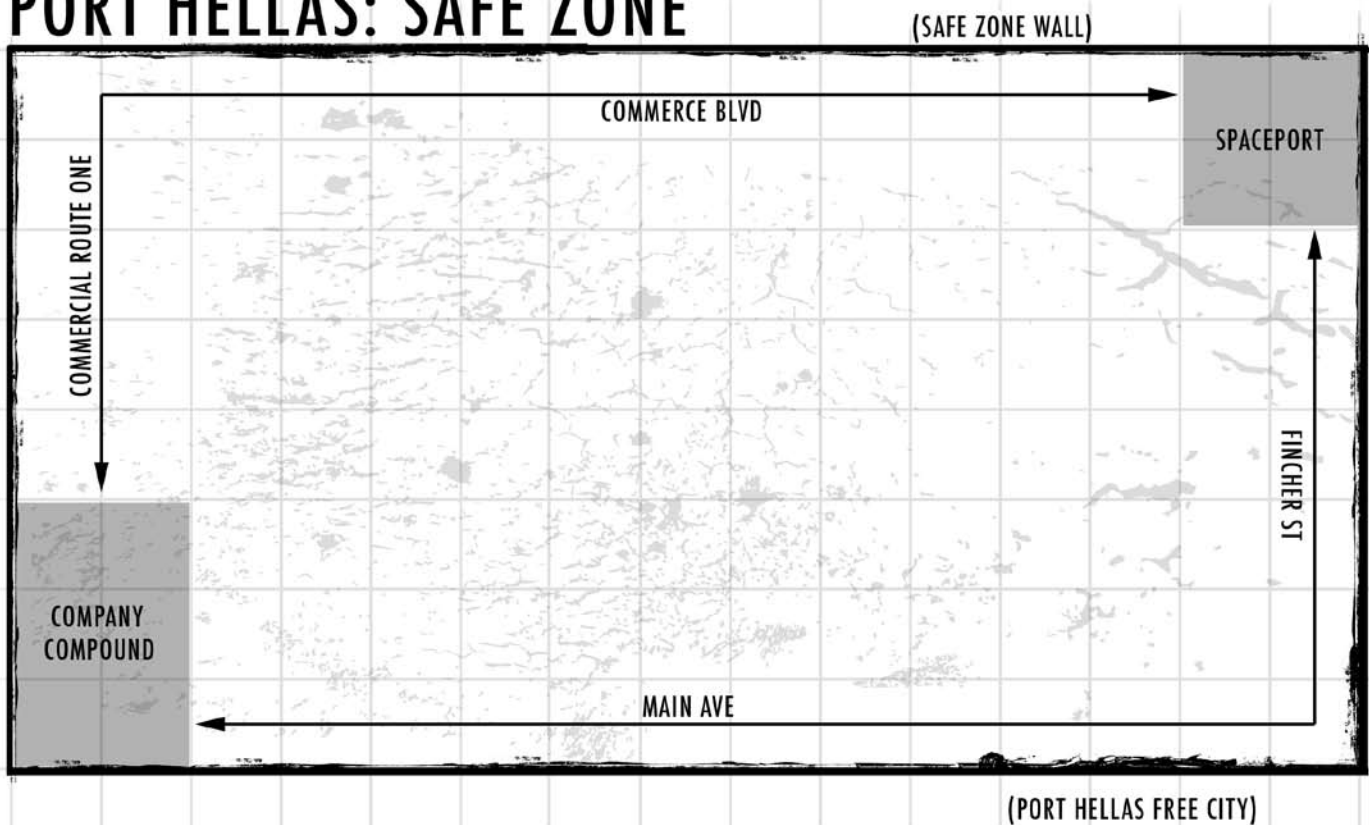
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PORT HELLAS: SAFE ZONE



» PLANET AGM-299 "AGAMEMNON" «

Declared an emergency state by the Interstellar Colonial Commission, Agamemnon is regarded by the Company as a failed colony, a renegade backwater, and an investment in need of liquidation.

A mix of indentured colonial workers and Company representatives made the place, once, a stable and prosperous factory city and starport. When the Company pulled out its hardware factories following the reduced Marine presence on-planet, the economy buckled. A brief attempt by the Company to prop up the colony with a biotech R&D lab failed. The Company, finding the planet too far off of modern space lanes, began the process of shutting down the world, leaving countless colonists without jobs or livelihoods. Many of them turned to growing illegal hybridized narcotics crops and trading with black-market ships, which lead to sanctions and a revocation of the planet's official Interstellar Commission insurance coverage. The Marines pulled out rather than fight an aimless ground war with desperate colonists over a planet that nobody wanted anyway.

Now the Company is pulling out the last of its biotech staff and abandoning its urban fortress at the heart of the colony city's walled-in so-called Safe Zone.

It does so not amidst the angry protests they expected, but amidst an armed backlash from the abandoned colonists who, unable to obtain expensive passage off planet, obtained guns.

The city of Port Hellas is now rife with violence. Armed colonists prowl the streets looking for Company targets or hostages. The Safe Zone has become a war zone.

» ON THE GROUND «

Agamemnon is a bright planet, terraformed into snowy steppes lit by a cool sun almost too brilliant for human eyes to handle. At night, the planet sinks into star-lit gloom beneath a moonless sky. It's warm in the sun, cold in the dark, and comfortable only with practice.

Each square represents about a city block of the Safe Zone. Each square may also contain either an obstacle or a rest area, as the Narrator deems fit. Most squares should contain obstacles. Characters may be able to scout a square, identifying the next obstacle without triggering it outright, depending on the obstacle.

The main thoroughfares are clear and open enough to allow players to spot obstacles two spaces away, but are subject to frequent ambushes by militia patrols. Rest areas are rare there. The heart of the Safe Zone is a warren of narrow streets, difficult to scout but easier to hide in.

Somewhere underground, beneath the sprawl north-east of the Company compound, is the R&D lab, where the aliens were freed.

» REST AREAS

Rest areas are squares without any obstacles in them. The Narrator should reveal rest areas when characters are adjacent to them, before the current square's obstacle is overcome. Rest areas are safe ground for refreshment scenes, or simply an opportunity to move forward without an obstacle to overcome.

Examples of rest areas include: An abandoned apartment, a veterinary clinic, an out-of-business cinema, an empty garage, a sealed-up storefront, spillover Company offices.

» DETAILS «

Use the following details in virtually any scene to bring planet Agamemnon to life.

- » Signage: WATCH YOUR HEAD, DANGER: ELECTRICITY, NO CLIMBING, VEHICLE WEIGHT LIMIT, HOSPITAL ZONE
- » Snowmelt in ribbons on the pavement; ice lingering in the shadows between buildings; steam rising off melting snow, uncoiling through street-level vents; the smell of wet concrete and motor oil
- » Spiked iron grilles argue against climbing; black bullet holes in the sides of pre-fab buildings; barred windows; busted glass scattered across concrete; street skies crowded with power lines and clothes lines; the burnt smell of ozone
- » The hiss and buzz of a particle beam firing; the electrical smell of the impact; the distant popping of small-arms fire; the dust of exploded stucco in the air; the ping of a spent casing
- » Hands sticky with blood; nails clogged with mud and dirt; a metal taste in the mouth; that one-note ringing that follows a blast

» OBSTACLES «

Use any of these obstacles, and others you create, to populate the spaces between the characters and their escape. An obstacle might include multiple challenges (e.g., more than one foe) or a single hurdle to overcome.

Failing to overcome an obstacle should never keep the characters from proceeding on their way. Either another route presents itself (like a journey into another space) or a failing character picks up a condition as a cost for passing the obstacle without overcoming it.

Not every space needs an obstacle—use events like “Drive!” and “Secure Tunnels” to let the players get moving again. When in doubt, move them forward to the next obstacle and call this one a close call.

Remember that battles don’t have to involve actual fighting—they can be chases, mines, or close calls. They simply indicate a cost in Health comes from partial success. Characters can leave a battle unfinished and keep moving, if the Narrator says so, unless they have the Hunted condition. What’s important is that the characters are, overall, closer to determining the survivor.

» ALIEN BATTLE

Monsters loosed from the R&D lab prowl the area, seeking food or nesting grounds. Difficulty 3 to 5, one or more foes.

» MILITIA BATTLE

Colonists with guns spring an ambush on the characters, firing rifles and tossing grenades from third-floor rooftops. Difficulty 2 to 4, one or more foes.

» ALIEN HORRORS

The aliens loosed from the R&D lab can be anything, so long as they are horrific and vicious. Consider:

- » The alien is a serpentine predator with biomimetic camouflage, capable of vanishing into the terrain. It strikes from close range with the speed of a rattlesnake, but can grow to the size of a car. **Counterattack:** three-inch fangs and razor-sharp scales.
- » The alien is a swollen balloon of organic gasses and sulfur, decorated with grasping, choking tentacles. **Counterattack:** nodules explode in caustic gas.
- » The alien infests and manipulates human hosts, turning them into murderous zombies. **Counterattack:** body erupts in barbed, shooting quills.
- » The alien is a mass of acidic spores, traveling as tendrils of gooey slime, dripping down from vents and pipes or reaching out as a prehensile strand. **Counterattack:** splatters of burning gel.
- » The alien is a leaping beast with horns like iron and incredible jaws tipped with glassy teeth, goring targets and dragging them away to lay eggs in. **Counterattack:** gouging death throes.

» AUTOMATED TURRET BATTLE

Robotic gun turrets cover the street here. They’re all but impossible to pass (Difficulty 5) but easy enough to avoid triggering (Difficulty 2) just by staying out of range or behind cover.

» SECURE TUNNELS

Area includes Company tunnels that, with proper security access, allow the characters to move ahead two (Difficulty 3) or three (Difficulty 4) spaces, bypassing obstacles.

» HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

The street is on fire from a recent explosion or the ground is torn up and must be clambered over (Difficulty 3).

» DRIVE!

A vehicle big enough for everyone is found empty and running, and can be driven for a number of spaces equal to the hits on a roll before a militia grenade or alien attack takes out the tires.

» ALIENS-VS-MILITIA

The militia battles the loose aliens here. Characters can either dash through the fighting (Difficulty 4) or battle already weakened foes (Difficulty 3, at least three foes).

» SCOUT BATTLE

A character scouts ahead (Difficulty 2), seeing the next space’s obstacle without actually triggering it.

» ROLLING THE DICE «

Obstacles are overcome by describing an action and rolling a number of dice based on the one trait used, plus any tags under that trait that apply to the particular attempt. Traits and tags appear on the character sheet like this:

TRAIT

Tag | Another Tag | Another Tag
[Advancement Tag] | [Advancement Tag]

Advancement tags can't be used until they're unlocked with an advancement. See the Rules Summary on the character sheet for details.

Knowing when to roll the dice and when not to is part of the Narrator's job—a good Narrator doesn't call for any roll of the dice unless success or failure will make the game better, usually by revealing not whether the crew moves forward, but *how*.

» NARRATING THE GAME «

Listen to the players and incorporate their actions into a single, sensible vision of the events their characters are undertaking.

Momentum is important. Keep play moving.

Create obstacles that give the characters a chance to shine, that challenge them to improvise or dramatize. Good obstacles don't stymie, they provoke the characters to action. Every space the characters traverse on the map should either represent an important decision to make or be a reward for decision-making and roleplaying in previous scenes.

Obstacles are bare-bones versions of scenes. Each one should involve an important choice, whether that means choosing to turn back, choosing which player will attempt to overcome the obstacle for the group, choosing which trait and tags to apply to the roll, or something else. Health and movement exist to give those decisions meaning—if things go well, the characters keep their Health and move in the direction they wanted, if not they lose some Health or may be forced in an unwanted direction.

Ask questions of the players that provoke them into making important decisions, like, "Which one of you gets in front to take the brunt of the alien attack?" or "Is someone going to grab him and pull him away from the alien?"

Questions also help the players elaborate and dramatize their actions. "What do you look like, crawling through all that gore?" you might ask. Or: "How do you phrase it? Is it a question, an order, or a plea?" Or: "Who do you help first? What do they see you doing?"

The map is there to give the players something to point at and project their vision of the situation onto. Ideally, they'll say things like "We'll be safer sticking to the side streets," or "Those aliens will be sure to spot us if we get up to the rooftops," or "At least on the rooftops we'll have the advantage of height." Listen as the players vocalize their hopes and fears for what may come next, and use those to inspire additional obstacles.

» USING OBSTACLES «

Actions come in two basic types: straight-up obstacles and battles. Use a mix of the two to dramatize the events of play and put important questions into game terms.

Obstacles ask the question: What does it cost to succeed? The answer is usually a degree of creativity and, sometimes, the application of a condition.

Battles ask the question: How much Health does it cost to succeed—and *whose Health is it?* Avoid circumstances in which everyone needs to succeed at a battle to proceed. Instead, attack the character in the front or the back or the one who responds to a provocative question in a way that makes them obviously vulnerable. For example, "Does anyone want to look inside?" Avoid the temptation to make every question the search for a target, though, or else no one will ever volunteer.

A condition may also make someone an obvious target.

» CONDITIONS «

Conditions provide inspiration for roleplaying descriptions and potential obstacles to overcome. When a player fails a roll to overcome an obstacle, the Narrator can choose to apply a condition instead of halting the character's progress through the space. A condition either constrains the character's actions ("No ammo—I'm Tapped!") or inspires new actions to take to get rid of the condition ("I need to get centered, I'm Crazy by the death of my friend.")

Conditions may require an obstacle to be overcome to shake them off, and players are free to suggest obstacles to play out based on their conditions. When in doubt, set a condition obstacle's difficulty level at 3.

Don't be too literal—conditions can mean a lot of things.

- » A Lost character might be in a different space on the map until she rejoins the team, or she might lead the whole crew one space in the wrong direction.
- » A Cornered character may be stuck in a space until an obstacle is overcome, or he might simply be defensive until a new obstacle is overcome.
- » A Crazy character needs to find her center or be talked down from her crazy state by another character. Crazy characters make tactically questionable (but dramatically satisfying) decisions.
- » A Hunted character may need to escape a pursuing foe that follows from space to space. Maybe the character is being tracked by his RFID implant and needs to cut it out to shake pursuit.
- » A Tapped character needs to find a resource like ammunition, water, or medicine. Maybe the character is asthmatic and needs his inhaler (which has fallen into the sewer), or maybe she's out of ammo until she can get a new gun.

» THE DIRTY TRUTH «

The truth about Agamemnon is easy to guess, but is meant to be revealed gradually as secrets are revealed by the players' and the Narrator's characters. These little revelations inspire players to reveal each other's secrets, to try new approaches to dealing with the militia, and to make different choices about who lives and who dies.

The Company has been conducting experiments involving alien lifeforms and the people of Agamemnon for months. They've been using alien DNA to transform human subjects into killing machines. When necessary, families are bought off and told that their loved ones died in service to the Company.

The colonists are rising up because they want the galaxy to know what's been going on here. They've taken to the streets with guns and cameras to document their uprising. They figure the Company can't keep their alien monsters secret once they're loose in the Safe Zone and in video feeds on the interstellar information network.

Not everyone is on board with this plan, but the gun-toting colonists are desperate and trapped on this planet without help unless they can get their voice heard. Thus, some of the colonial militia actually want the characters to escape and take word back to the Company suits about what's happening here. Other colonists are just insane with rage and cannot be reasoned with. They set the aliens loose just to get revenge.

» OPTION: PVP «

Should the characters turn on each other outright, use this optional rule. A roll made to hurt another character deals damage equal to its hits, but characters act simultaneously, so if a targeted character chooses to counterattack, both characters may take damage. A character can only target one other character at a time.

This rule favors characters who gang up on a single character, for better or worse.

This rule supercedes the rule that there must be a sole survivor—it's possible that the last two characters standing kill each other.

» OPTION: SECRETS «

With this optional rule, every character has secrets, communicated privately to the player, which might change the dynamic of play if revealed. The purpose of secrets is to give players more information, over time, that informs their decisions and helps them decide which character survives.

Players may reveal their secrets at any time. A secret, when revealed, may add a die to a single relevant dice pool.

Each secret is considered a bullet point for purposes of advancement. When a character dies, the player may choose to reveal his secret during his death scene, earning an advance for *one* character implicated in the secret, if applicable. Here are examples:

» SUCCESS, DEATH, AND NARRATION «

Beware. Play groups with latent trust issues or lingering spite can take things too far—make sure your players can appreciate that part of play is determining which character survives... and why. Playing kingmaker is a big part of the scenario. The question is, do the players reward a lucky player, a great roleplaying job, or a dramatically satisfying storyline with the role of survivor? Or will it just be luck?

Avoid letting any character die too early. Once everyone is down to five or less Health, characters should start to perish at a regular pace. Maybe keep Johansson in reserve as a backup character, in case a character dies too early. Start him off with 3-5 damage to keep things even.

The more players playing, the more and the fiercer the battles must be.

It's fine for the characters to turn on each other. Players must be mature enough to separate character rivalries from personal rivalries. Every player has input as to which character lives—**picking the survivor is a form of victory**. Playing the survivor is just luck.

Remember: The scenario is over when one character is left. That character makes it to the ship and escapes alive, regardless of how much of the Safe Zone they have to cross. One scene of dramatic description is all it takes once that last character is left.

If more than one character reaches the starport alive, aliens infiltrate the ship and play continues until only one character is left alive.

» BRACE

Brace is a cyborg in deep cover. If Brace "dies," his head can be detached and carried, giving the carrying character access to one of Brace's traits and its unlocked tags. The trait must be chosen when Brace "dies." Or, Brace can self-destruct, dealing 2 damage to each other character.

» BRAUGHER

Saito took a bribe from Markham to falsify the ship's manifest and smuggle out some special cargo for Markham. Braugher saw this go down. Braugher's turning state's evidence when his contract is up.

» COSTICH

Costich knows that Knightsbridge Military Contracting has been quietly selling guns to backwater colonies, including Agamemnon, for years. What's more, Costich only gets paid if Markham survives—no one else matters to the Company.

» MARKHAM

Markham bribed Saito to falsify the ship's manifest. One of the cargo containers holds aliens in cryosleep. Markham's expecting a fat bonus from the biotech division.

» SAITO

Saito took a bribe from Markham to falsify the cargo manifest—who knows what is in that container, but it's not "administrative supplies." Saito thinks Braugher's wise to this.

» JOHANESSON

The Company created the alien threat in the R&D lab and has been paying to keep colonists quiet. Markham's smuggling out alien contraband for the company. Brace is a cyborg—Johansson has seen his model before.

» RULES SUMMARY «

» ROLLING THE DICE

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a trait that can help you. If that trait has any tags that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal pool of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice).

Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows an even number is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty level (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

When the roll is complete, discard the pool dice you used. Don't worry, you can get them back.

If the roll was a success, you can proceed. If not, conditions may ease or escalate, and the obstacle continues to block your path. Either go around or try again.

» DIFFICULTY LEVELS

2 = easy, 3 = difficult, 4 = challenging, 5 = extreme

» HELPING

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, your die is lost.

» BATTLE

A battle is a special kind of obstacle in which your character is subject to damage. In a battle, your character suffers damage equal to the difference between his hits and the difficulty level of the obstacle. This diminishes the difficulty

level of the obstacle by the number of hits as well. So, a level-5 alien monster requires five hits to overcome, and a three-hit roll against such a beast would deal 2 points of damage to your character in a counterattack. Deal with the beast with one decisive five-hit roll and your character would suffer no damage.

Damage subtracts from Health. When your character runs out of Health, describe a fittingly gruesome (and heroic?) demise.

» ADVANCEMENT

When one of your character's three bullet points comes into play to the satisfaction of the Narrator, you earn an Advancement. Circle one of your character's bracketed tags—it is now available for use. Once all three of your bullet points have been suitably dramatized, you can begin using them again to earn additional advancements.

» REFRESH

Refresh your pool back to 7 dice by playing a refreshment scene with another character. This is a good time to dramatize your character's bullet points. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

» DEATH

When your character dies, your player pool immediately refreshes. You may still help living characters using the Helping rule. Add a detail or benefit to the scene description and roll your die.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE SURVIVOR.

BRACE

HEALTH

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

FLIGHT OFFICER

- EMPLOYED BY COMPANY FOR 2 YEARS
- NO LIFE OUTSIDE OF SPACE TRAVEL
- PACIFIST (UP TO TODAY)

PILOT

Evasion | Steady | Alert | Drive
[Maneuvering] | [Repair]

COMPANY AGENT

Loyal | Proper | Medium Clearance | Make it Work
[High-Level Clearance] | [Computer Mastery]

UNFLAPPABLE

Fast | Reliable | Good Eye | Clear-Thinking
[Shit, That's Fast] | [Serene]

BRAINY

Think It Through | Informed | Anticipate
Portable Terminal | [Surmise] | [Quick]

CONDITIONS

- LOST
- CORNERED
- CRAZED
- HUNTED
- TAPPED
- DEAD

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 BRAUGHER 		
HEALTH <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	DECK OFFICER <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SIX WEEKS LEFT ON EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT• PARENT TO TWO BACK ON EARTH• DIVORCED AND GLAD EX-TROUBLEMAKER <p>Run Grab B&E Dirty Fighting [Gunplay] [Dodge]</p> COMPANY EMPLOYEE <p>Access Routes Communications Bullshit Artist Tough Clamber [Drive] [Politics]</p> MECHANIC <p>Improvise Tool Repair Good w/Machines Perceptive Toolkit [Dextrous] [Sabotage]</p> TRICKY <p>Quick Agile Escape Sneaky [Knife] [Unexpected Strike]</p>	CONDITIONS <input type="radio"/> LOST <input type="radio"/> CORNERED <input type="radio"/> CRAZED <input type="radio"/> HUNTED <input type="radio"/> TAPPED <input type="radio"/> DEAD

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COSTICH

HEALTH



SECURITY AGENT

- KNIGHTSBRIDGE MILITARY CONTRACTOR
- SAW COMBAT ON ANOTHER FAILED COLONY
- TECHNICALLY STILL MARRIED

MERCENARY

Opportunistic | Fast | Disloyal | Tough | Callous
[Overkill] | [Careful]

EX-COLONIAL MARINE

SOP | Shooting | Body Armor | Battle-hardened
[Hail of Lead] | [Great Poise]

KEEN

Sense Motive | Spot Liar | Quick | Perceptive
[Sense Danger] | [Traps]

PHILOSOPHER

Grim Determination | Big Picture | Calm | Supportive
[Quote Philosophy] | [Perfect Clarity]

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MARKHAM

HEALTH

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

COMPANY OFFICER

- RECOVERING FROM A BAD COLD
- TRYING TO SCORE POINTS WITH BIOTECH EXECS
- ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED

CORPORATE OPERATIVE

Backbone | Cold-hearted | Cutting Stare | Negotiator
[Sportsman's Physique] | [Programming]

TECHNOCRAT

Satellite Phone | Company Passkey | Computer Savvy
RFID Tag | [Emergency Beacon] | [Authorize]

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

That Smile | That Haircut | Designer Suit | Wealth
High-Level Clearance | [Connections] |
[Combat Simulator Experience]

CUNNING

Deception | Codes | Misdirection | Eavesdrop
[Sneak] | [Hide]

CONDITIONS

- LOST
- CORNERED
- CRAZED
- HUNTED
- TAPPED
- DEAD

» RULES SUMMARY «

» ROLLING THE DICE

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a trait that can help you. If that trait has any tags that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal pool of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice).

Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows an even number is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty level (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

When the roll is complete, discard the pool dice you used. Don't worry, you can get them back.

If the roll was a success, you can proceed. If not, conditions may ease or escalate, and the obstacle continues to block your path. Either go around or try again.

» DIFFICULTY LEVELS

2 = easy, 3 = difficult, 4 = challenging, 5 = extreme

» HELPING

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, your die is lost.

» BATTLE

A battle is a special kind of obstacle in which your character is subject to damage. In a battle, your character suffers damage equal to the difference between his hits and the difficulty level of the obstacle. This diminishes the difficulty

level of the obstacle by the number of hits as well. So, a level-5 alien monster requires five hits to overcome, and a three-hit roll against such a beast would deal 2 points of damage to your character in a counterattack. Deal with the beast with one decisive five-hit roll and your character would suffer no damage.

Damage subtracts from Health. When your character runs out of Health, describe a fittingly gruesome (and heroic?) demise.

» ADVANCEMENT

When one of your character's three bullet points comes into play to the satisfaction of the Narrator, you earn an Advancement. Circle one of your character's bracketed tags—it is now available for use. Once all three of your bullet points have been suitably dramatized, you can begin using them again to earn additional advancements.

» REFRESH

Refresh your pool back to 7 dice by playing a refreshment scene with another character. This is a good time to dramatize your character's bullet points. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

» DEATH

When your character dies, your player pool immediately refreshes. You may still help living characters using the Helping rule. Add a detail or benefit to the scene description and roll your die.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE SURVIVOR.

SAITO

HEALTH

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

FREIGHT OFFICER

- JUST RENEWED A 6-YEAR DUTY CONTRACT
- VISITED MORE THAN 24 WORLDS
- ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE AN ALIEN

DEBAUCHEE

Iron Stomach | Fraternizer | Witty | Persuasive
[Fast Friends] | [Unfazed]

COMPANY MAN

Resolute | Gallows Humor | Medium Clearance
RFID Tag | [Communications] | [Scanner]

STRONGBACK

Heave | Steady Hands | High Pain Threshold | Brawl
Grip | [Crush] | [Unshakeable]

STARSHIP OFFICER

Drive | Ship Systems | Power Loader | Repair
[Clamber] | [Pilot]

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THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE SURVIVOR.

JOHANESSON

HEALTH



COMPANY SCI-TECH

- ESCAPED CAPTURE BY COLONIAL MILITIA
- DID BIOTECH EXPERIMENTS WITH COLONISTS
- SPOUSE IS FROZEN ON SHIP FOR TRANSPORT

SCIENTIST

Rational | Computer Savvy | Systematic | Selfless |
[Cool Detachment] | [Programming]

COLONIST

Hearty | Resolved | Patient | Charitable | RFID Tag |
[Firearms] | [Tough As Leather]

TARGET

Flee | Hide | Notice | Perseverance |
[Dash] | [Shake It Off]

VICTIM

Resigned | Angry | Tough | Vengeful | Brash |
[Brutal] | [Fearless]

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