

LAST FLEET



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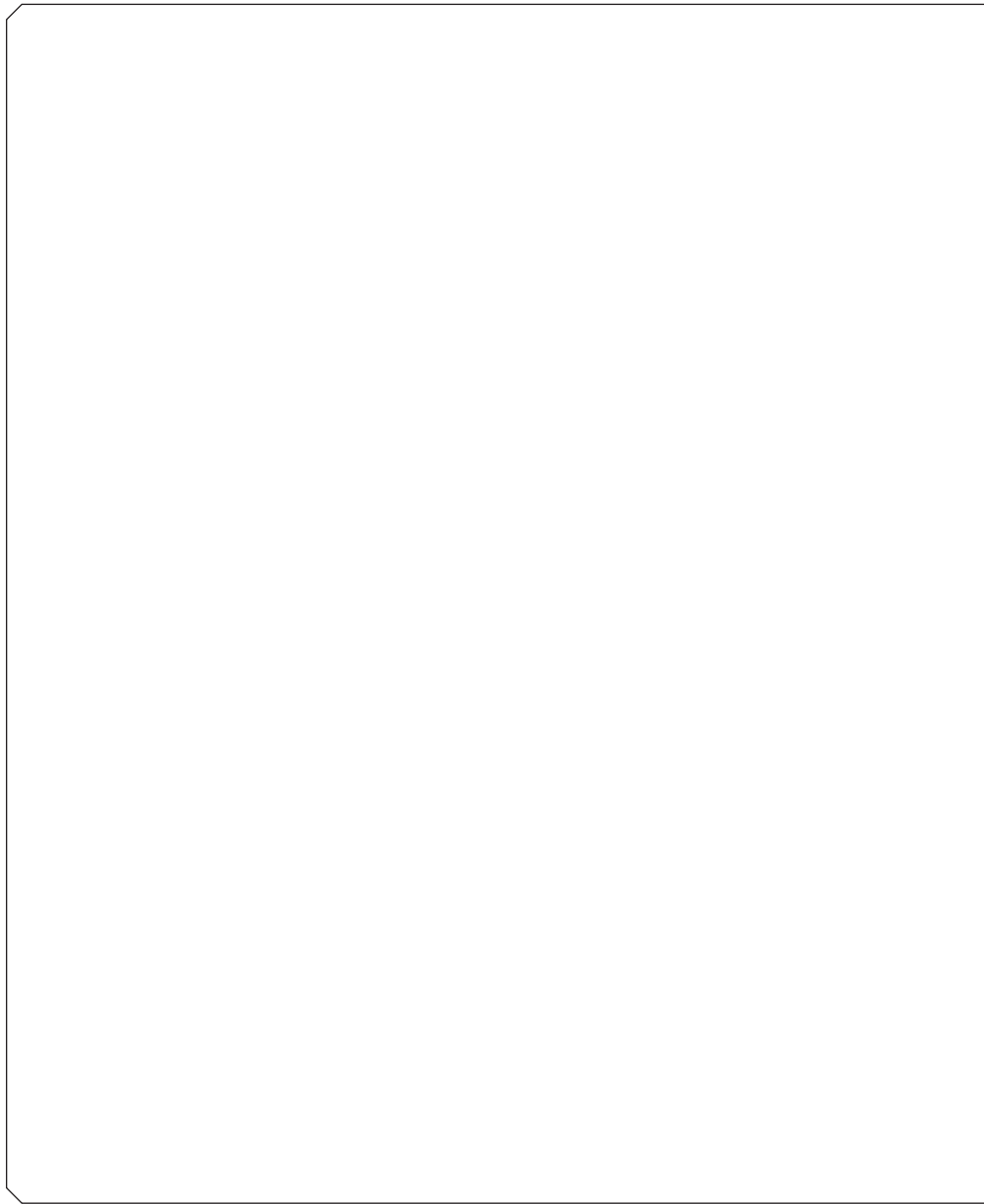
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Last Fleet is Powered by the Apocalypse. If you don't know what that means, don't worry about it – but do yourself a favour and google it when you get a moment.

Last Fleet is inspired by the wonderful stories of *Battlestar Galactica*, by some of my favourite PBTA games: *Night Witches* and *The Watch*, and of course it owes a huge debt to *Apocalypse World*. This game most likely wouldn't exist without them.

I also owe thanks to Mark Diaz Truman for helpful feedback and encouragement, and to the wonderful folk at the UK Indie RPG League, Gauntlet Forums, A Rose by Any Other Game, and The Indie RPG Reading Club for being sounding-boards and advice-givers on various aspects of the project.

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For Becky.

“What do you hear Starbuck?”

“Nothing but the rain.”

“Then grab your gun and bring in the cat.”

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overview of the game

introduction

The human race is fleeing through space from an implacable inhuman foe which seeks nothing less than the complete destruction of humanity. Even now, the enemy are hiding among us, biding their time. You play the brave survivors of a terrible holocaust that has all but wiped out humanity, fleeing on board a handful of surviving ships, searching for a safe haven.

Your characters are officers, pilots, engineers, politicians, and journalists, striving to keep the flame of humanity alight. You will contend with an inhuman adversary, you will fight to keep the fleet from falling apart, and you will struggle to overcome your own fears and doubts.

Welcome to the *Last Fleet*.

The focus of this game is pressure. Pressure on the characters. Pressure on resources. Pressure on the fleet as a whole. The most visible manifestation of this is that your characters gradually build up mechanical *Pressure* as they go into action to fight the enemy, to root out infiltrators, or to search for resources to keep the fleet going. You'll have to work, between missions, to reduce that Pressure through social interactions with the other characters.

The pressure theme is also represented through resource *Shortages*; through the gradual build-up of *Attrition* that chips away at the fleet in battle damage and casualties and threatens to set the people against each other; and through the fear of infiltration and treachery. Your characters will work to keep these problems from getting out of control.

overview of the game

Of course, another focus is battling against your inhuman adversaries. When the enemy's ships jump in and launch their fighters, you have to be ready to fight. Humanity is outnumbered and outgunned, and the best you can hope for, most of the time, is to hold them off long enough to flee. But you chalk up some wins along the way.

Last Fleet is about humanity's desperate battle for survival, and in that sense you're all on the same side. But it's also about your characters as human beings – their flaws, their relationships, and how they react to pressure. The game is engineered to produce conflict between the characters – not (or not necessarily) actual fighting, but certainly tension, friction, arguments, and boiling-over emotions. Throw yourself into that stuff, because it's the heart of the game.

You can play the game straight out of the box, by playing the denizens of the Interplanetary Commonwealth fleet – a group of survivors consisting of a small civilian fleet and the massive battleship *Agamemnon*, divided on their best way to fight and stay alive. They are opposed by the Corax, an extradimensional fungus network that attacks out of spatial rifts and turns the fleet against itself by dragging its people off and cloning them. This setting is described on page 199–209. There's also an alternative setting about cities teleporting between dimensions to escape the vengeful god of death, on page 232–243. Finally, if you prefer to create your own setting, the game talks you through how to do it on page 81–83.

Roles and objectives

Roleplaying games come in many varieties, and it's helpful if we're all clear on what kind of game we're playing, and what we're trying to do when we sit down to play.

Last Fleet has players, most of whom are responsible for controlling one character (their player character or PC). Their role is to describe their character and say what that character is saying and doing. One player, the Game Master or GM, takes the lead in playing the other characters in the game and pushing forward the various threats that the players have to contend with.

When playing *Last Fleet*, there are four objectives that apply to both the GM and the players equally. Everything you say and do in the game should fulfil one or more of these objectives.

- ♦ **Bring the characters, the fleet, and the war to life.** Treat your characters as though they were real people. Commit to the logic of the game world. Seize every opportunity to describe them in vivid detail.
- ♦ **Focus the game on action, intrigue, and drama.** Try to weave a story that is exciting. Adrenaline-soaked action scenes. Tense politics and intrigue. Gripping interpersonal drama. Lean towards those themes and you'll get the best from the game.
- ♦ **Engage the people around the table.** This is a cooperative game. Your characters may be rivals or even enemies, but as players you should be fans of each other's characters. Focus the game on the player characters, and drive the game towards what interests and excites your group.
- ♦ **Play to find out what happens.** Decide what happens in the game moment-by-moment, responding to and building on what the other people around the table say, what the rules say, and what the dice say. Let yourself be surprised and delighted by what all these unpredictable elements bring to the table.

RULES OVERVIEW

Last Fleet is Powered by the Apocalypse (PBTA), which simply means it's inspired by the roleplaying game *Apocalypse World* and uses a lot of the mechanical framework of that game. Don't worry, you don't need *Apocalypse World* to play.

If you're not familiar with PBTA games, some key concepts to be aware of are:

- ✦ **The game is a conversation.** We each contribute to that conversation, describing what happens in the game's fiction, going back and forth. If you've played almost any other roleplaying game that's going to be pretty familiar. If you haven't, pay attention to the examples in this book and you'll get the idea.
- ✦ **The GM's actions are broken down into Moves.** They can only make their Moves when the rules say so, but when they do, those Moves happen automatically without rolling any dice.
- ✦ **The GM doesn't push a story or plot of their own.** They help make the world feel real and drive it forward, but they're playing to find out what happens next, just like the other players.
- ✦ **Players each create a character using a *Playbook*** which contains abilities and traits for a particular character archetype. You select the options you want and tailor your character to your preferences. Only one person can choose a given *Playbook*.
- ✦ **The players' actions may also trigger Moves.** Player Moves happen whenever a specific trigger is hit, such as "when you engage in battle". As soon as a trigger is hit, we stop the conversation and follow the rules in that Move. Player Moves don't apply to the GM's characters, unless specifically noted in the text.

- ✦ **Player Moves are broken down into *Basic Moves*, *Playbook Moves*, and *Role Moves*.** Everyone can use *Basic Moves*. *Playbook Moves* and *Role Moves* are only available if you chose them when you created your character, or if you take them as an advance later on.
- ✦ **A player Move will typically tell you to roll 2d6 (i.e. two six sided dice) and add a Stat**, which usually varies from -2 to +3. You might add other modifiers too. The *Move* then tells you what to do in three cases:
 - If the total is 10+, that's a *Strong Hit* and you usually get most or all of what you wanted.
 - If the total is 7-9 that's a *Weak Hit* and you get some of what you wanted, or maybe all of what you wanted but at a cost.
 - If the total is 6 or less that's a *Miss*, and you're in the GM's hands.

Of course, *Last Fleet* has its own specific rules, aimed at focusing the action on a particular genre and style of play. Some key things to note include:

- ✦ **Player characters have a *Pressure* track consisting of five boxes.** Every time something bad happens to your character, you might *Mark* one of your *Pressure* boxes. Physical harm is a common trigger, but *Marking Pressure* can also be triggered by other circumstances, such as losing a loved one.
- ✦ **You can voluntarily *Mark Pressure* to gain a bonus to a roll**, after you roll the dice. *Marking* one *Pressure* gets you +1, up to a maximum of +3. As long as you can afford to *Mark Pressure*, you can succeed at most rolls if you wish.
- ✦ **There are also *Moves* which enable you to *Erase Pressure*.** You generally do this by taking social or emotional risks with your character. This generates interesting, dramatic relationships between the characters.
- ✦ **If your *Pressure* track fills up, you'll hit *Breaking Point*.** You can then only reduce your *Pressure* again by taking one of the *Breaking Point* actions listed on your *Playbook*. These irrational or risky actions create even more drama. You can only take each *Breaking Point* action once. Eventually you'll have no

overview of the game

choice but to choose a *Breaking Point* action that takes you out of play altogether.

- ✦ **The fleet as a whole tracks *Attrition* in a similar way to *Pressure*.** *Attrition* represents the collective pressure and resource shortages affecting the fleet. When the *Attrition* track fills up, there's a literal or metaphorical explosion as things fall apart or the people reach their limit.
- ✦ **Characters earn *Experience Points (XP)* when they make any *Move* marked with an asterisk (*), which are called *Cardinal Moves*.** *XP* can be used to buy new *Moves* and other improvements, for every five *XP* earned.
- ✦ **Play tends to go back and forth between action-oriented scenes and social scenes.** In the action scenes, your life or the safety of the fleet is on the line, and *Pressure* is building up. In the social scenes, your heart is on the line, and *Pressure* is reducing. That's the core loop of the game: action, drama, action, drama.

YOUR STATS

Player characters have five stats that determine how good they are at stuff. A high stat means you tend to succeed at the relevant *Moves* and keep the situation more under control. A low stat doesn't necessarily mean you're bad at it, but it does mean that using the relevant *Moves* tends to lead to trouble or drama of some kind. The stats are:

- ✦ **Raw**, as in raw skill, talent, or emotion, used for fighting (*Engage In Battle*) and reducing pressure by *Letting Loose*.
- ✦ **Hard**, as in "she is one hard woman", used for resisting threats and harm (*Shake Off, Weather Serious Harm*), and putting social/emotional pressure on others (*Call Someone On Their Shit*).
- ✦ **Sharp**, as in smart or perceptive, used for investigation (*Seek Out*) and *Interfering* with other characters' *Moves*.

I mark what now?

- ✦ **Smooth**, as in charming or socially skilled, used for deception (*Cover Up*) and politicking (*Pull Strings*).
- ✦ **Warm**, as in loving and supportive, used for reducing pressure by making human connections (*Reach Out*) and helping other characters' Moves (*Support*).

I mark what now?

There's a few technical terms used in this book that you need to know:

- ✦ "The Fiction" means the stuff happening in the story. It doesn't include the rules or the dice, or the people sat around the game table. It includes your characters, what they're saying and doing, where they are, and so on.
- ✦ *Mark* just means "check a box", usually on a track of some kind. So, if the game says to *Mark Pressure*, you check one of the boxes on your *Pressure* track.
- ✦ Conversely, *Erase* means "remove a check from a box".
- ✦ Tracks run from left to right, so you check the leftmost box first, and the rightmost box isn't checked until all the others are *Marked*. And conversely you *Erase* from right to left, so the leftmost box is always the last one to be *Erased*.
- ✦ Sometimes you'll be given *Hold*, which just means "some points you can spend later on something nice". *Hold* is specific to the *Move* that gave it: you can't spend *Hold* from one *Move* on benefits from another.
- ✦ Sometimes you'll get +1 *Forward*, which means "add 1 to your next dice roll"; or if it says +1 *Forward* to a specific thing, then the bonus only applies to that thing.
- ✦ Sometimes you'll get +1 *Ongoing*, usually with a condition attached, which means you get to add one to all your dice rolls when the condition applies.

The basic moves

There are twelve Basic Moves that can be used by all player characters. They are described in full on pages 89–112. You don't need to memorize them: there's a printable two-sided reference sheet at <http://blackarmada.com/last-fleet-downloads/> that includes the full text whenever you need it in play. It is helpful to know roughly how they work though, so here is a summary.

Perhaps the most important Move is **Raise The Pressure**. You can use it after any roll to Mark up to three Pressure and gain +1 to the roll for each box so Marked. It means you can nearly always succeed at a roll, if you want to badly enough.

There's three other Moves that are particularly important. These are the holy trinity of Last Fleet, and deserve to be explained in detail here:

- ✦ **Reach Out** uses *Warm*. It is used to make a real human connection with another person. To trigger it, you have to open up to them and make yourself vulnerable by sharing your deepest thoughts and feelings. **Reaching Out** reduces Pressure for both of you, if you roll well, and also increases the strength of your *Relationship*.
- ✦ **Let Loose** uses *Raw*. It is used when you indulge in a vice, potentially to excess. It could be anything that releases tension: drugs, booze, gambling, sex, fighting. Whatever it is, you're doing it in a fairly uncontrolled way – not just a quick drink, but *drinking* – and it could go wrong as a result. **Let Loose** is easier to trigger than **Reach Out**, but also tends to have worse consequences when you roll badly.
- ✦ **Call Someone On Their Shit** uses *Hard*. It is used when you forthrightly demand that someone change their behaviour. When you roll well, it forces the target to do what you want, or forcefully refuse and suffer mechanical and social consequences.

These three *Moves* – **Reach Out**, **Let Loose**, and **Call Someone On Their Shit** – sometimes have similar triggers. A sex scene could trigger **Reach Out**, if it matters to you both, or **Let Loose**, if it's purely physical. Giving someone advice could be **Reaching Out**, if it's mostly done to reach out to them, or **Calling Someone On Their Shit**, if it's about demanding they change their ways. Pay close attention to the intent behind the action to work out which *Move* you should use.

Here's a brief summary of the remaining *Basic Moves*:

- ✦ **Engage In Battle** uses *Raw*, and is used when you're fighting someone with lethal weapons, whether on the attack or defence.
- ✦ **Shake Off** uses *Hard*, and is used any time you're trying to avoid or resist a threat – an enemy fighter on your tail, soldiers who are hunting for you, the psychic influence of the Corax intelligence. Only used when no other *Move* applies.
- ✦ **Weather Serious Harm** is used when you've taken the brunt of an attack or other harmful effect, to see how badly it hurts you.
- ✦ **Seek Out** uses *Sharp*, and is used when you're trying to find something or get to the bottom of a mystery.
- ✦ **Pull Strings** uses *Smooth*, and is used when you're trying to get help from an NPC or faction somewhere on the fleet. You need to do it ahead of time, so it's less useful when a situation comes up out of left field.
- ✦ **Cover Up** uses *Smooth*, and is used when you're trying to hide something serious – from specific people, or from a larger group, perhaps the entire fleet. It isn't used for stealth: use *Shake Off* where it's important to know if you can stay hidden.

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- ✦ **Support** uses *Warm* and **Interfere** uses *Sharp* – or if you have a *Relationship* you can use that instead. They are used when you're trying to help someone else (**Support**) or hinder them (**Interfere**). You can also use **Support** when an NPC helps you.
- ✦ **Wait Helplessly** allows you to give someone else a bonus to their roll when you're not present, by describing what you're doing to cope with the tension.

The Playbooks

Characters are created using *Playbooks*, broad character archetypes with a specific set of *Moves* which only they have access to at the start of the game. As well as these, they give you questions to ask the other players to set up your starting *Relationships*, and one or two unique *Breaking Point* actions that are different from those available to other characters.

Playbooks are more based around personality than a specific occupation, and indeed, anyone can be a pilot, officer, engineer, politician, or civilian regardless of which *Playbook* they choose – though some do lean in a particular direction.

The *Playbooks* are:

- ✦ **Aries**, a hot-headed character who rushes in where angels fear to tread, and is unafraid to speak their mind.
- ✦ **Taurus**, a tough, selfless, and principled character who does what's needed no matter how much punishment is thrown at them.
- ✦ **Gemini**, a cunning manipulator who pursues an agenda that might not be completely in line with the fleet's interests.
- ✦ **Cancer**, an experienced leader who cares deeply for their comrades, but may be a little too willing to overlook their problems.

- ✦ **Leo**, a charismatic leader who others want to follow. Where will they lead them?
- ✦ **Virgo**, a serious professional who prides themselves on being the best, but may put themselves under too much pressure at time.
- ✦ **Libra**, a skilled diplomat and negotiator who may be looked to for leadership.
- ✦ **Scorpio**, a secretive manipulator whose motives are in doubt – including by themselves.
- ✦ **Sagittarius**, a curious character who is at their best when exploring, meeting new people, or digging into secrets.
- ✦ **Capricorn**, an uncompromising tactician who is willing to take risks to defeat the enemy. Will they take things too far?
- ✦ **Aquarius**, a perceptive investigator who does not shrink from confronting the truth, no matter how painful it might be.
- ✦ **Pisces**, a character with strange powers that allow them to perceive things others can't. These powers may also bring them too close to the enemy, however.

As well as creating your characters, you'll need to make decisions about the fleet, the enemy and the war. All of this is covered in more detail on page 81–83.

Keeping it fun for everyone

In roleplaying games, we can do stuff we could never do in real life, and to narrate all kinds of strange situations. In *Last Fleet*, we use this to create tense events for the people around the table to enjoy. That's the key: we're doing it for our individual and collective enjoyment.

Part of that enjoyment is deliberately creating events that are scary, or unpleasant for the characters. This can be a lot of fun! But if someone at the table isn't finding it fun or even finding it distressing, and wants it to stop, part of your objective to engage the people at the table is to stop doing it. This practice of paying attention to what people are enjoying and stopping what we're doing when it's no longer enjoyable is often called safety culture.

Sometimes it's obvious when someone is no longer having fun, but sometimes it isn't. You can get a long way by listening, paying attention, and respecting others. However, it's helpful to use certain simple techniques to make it easier to avoid stuff people don't enjoy. These include:

- ✦ Discuss what you enjoy and what you don't – at the start, during the game, and whenever it becomes relevant.
- ✦ Agreeing at the start on any topics you will avoid entirely (“lines”) or keep off-screen and not describe (“veils”).
- ✦ Signalling when someone has introduced something you don't want in the game, by touching a special card (the X Card) or saying a special word (e.g. “rewind”).
- ✦ Letting anyone stop play and/or get up and leave any time they want to.

You can find out all about these techniques on the Black Armada website (<https://blackarmada.com/safety>). We strongly recommend that you take the time to discuss which tools to use with your group. Using these techniques is

easy and if even one person at the table wants to use them, you should, because you don't want even one person to have a bad time in your game if you can help it.

Themes that can come up in *Last Fleet* that you may want to think about and discuss include:

- ♦ **Sex and romance.** The *Let Loose Move* can lead to characters unexpectedly getting it on. Obviously this shouldn't be used for anything non-consensual. You should discuss how comfortable people are with this, and how far you want to take narration of sex. Some people may prefer to keep sex out of the game altogether.
- ♦ **Violence.** This is obviously a major theme of the game. It's not really possible to play *Last Fleet* without the threat of violence, and probably actual violence, but you can discuss and agree whether you want violence outside of actual warfare, and how graphic you want to be in describing violence and/or injuries to characters.
- ♦ **Authoritarianism.** Since the military are a standard component of the game background, there is the possibility of exploring theme of state oppression. It's a good idea to think about whether to centre or avoid this issue, since it may affect some of you in real life.
- ♦ **Interrogation and torture.** As noted elsewhere, I don't recommend centring this in your game. Nevertheless it's an obvious route for a game with themes around intrigue and paranoia. You should discuss how you want to treat interrogation and whether you want it on- or off-screen. I've never met a group that didn't want to ban on-screen torture, if asked.

The above techniques only work if you respect the wishes of the people using them. Respect and listening to others remains your core tool for keeping the game fun for everyone, so always fall back on that when all else fails.

Teaching the game

Someone is going to need to read the game and understand the rules. That's almost certainly you (by definition). Everyone else probably won't have read it, so you'll need to teach them. Let everyone know that you're going to give them an overview so they're not completely at sea, but they don't need to remember everything, because there's excellent reference sheets and you'll help explain each rule when it's first used.

The best way to teach the game is to break it up into chunks and teach them what they need to know, when they need to know it. This means:

- ✦ Before setup and character creation, talk through the "introduction", "role and objectives" and "your stats" sections above.
- ✦ Then go through the setup process – see page 79–88. As part of this you'll go through the *Playbooks*.
- ✦ After setup and character creation, but before playing any scenes, talk through the "rules overview" (skip the PBTA bits if your players are familiar with PBTA), and "*Basic Moves*" sections above.
- ✦ During play, prompt them to use *Moves* when it seems appropriate, especially **Raise The Pressure** and the holy trinity *Moves*. Watch out for players hitting *Move* triggers (whether they meant to or not), and call it out.
- ✦ When each new *Move* is first triggered, take the time to talk through it systematically, for at least the first few *Moves*.
- ✦ Remind them to *Mark XP* when they make *Cardinal Moves*.
- ✦ Pause often to check if anyone has any questions.

When you come to teach the *Basic Moves*, it will help if everyone has a copy of the *Basic Moves* reference sheet in front of them. It's organized in a structured way which you might use when teaching them:

- ✦ Battle and action-oriented *Moves* on the first column of page one.
- ✦ Political and investigative *Moves* on the second column of page one.
- ✦ Social and relationship *Moves*, particularly useful for reducing *Pressure*, on the third column of page one.
- ✦ Moves you can use to improve on the results of a roll, or **Support** (or **Interfere** with) other character's actions, on the first column of page two.

If you have time for nothing else, explain *Pressure* and the holy trinity *Moves*. Once you've done that, make sure you prompt people to use them during play. Did they want to use **Raise The Pressure** to boost that missed roll? Might they want to **Reach Out** now to get some *Pressure* back? Once the group is used to these rules they're pretty simple, but it can take a bit of practice to get started.

Once you've explained all that, it's a good idea to reiterate that you'll be reminding them how all this works, and they needn't worry about remembering every detail. If anyone has a question, now or later, they can just ask. They should just focus on playing their characters, responding to what's happening, and they won't go far wrong.



KEY RULES

FRAMING AND ENDING SCENES

When you start play, you've got this whole fleet to worry about, thousands of people, maybe a dozen or more named characters, all sorts of stuff going on. I hardly need say that we don't tackle this all at once, any more than a TV show or book would try to tell you everything that's going on at once. The game is instead broken down into scenes: individual chunks of action or conversation (or both) where one or more player characters do their thing. "Framing a scene" means getting it started by saying where and when it's happening, who is there, and what's going on at the outset. "Ending a scene" means deciding we're done with the events at this particular time and place and can move onto a new one.

In *Last Fleet*, scenes can be framed by pretty much anyone, but there's two typical cases:

- ◆ A player character (or maybe more than one) has something they want to do, or someone they want to talk to, and they ask for a scene where they can do that. The where and when and who often flow directly from the reason for the scene.
- ◆ The GM wants to make a GM Move, and they decide to frame a scene around it. Again, the details of the scene framing pretty much write themselves. For example, the GM might decide that an explosion happens on board the *Alexander*, and decide it would be most interesting to do it while Lt Saxmundham is on board. They ask Lt Saxmundham's player to describe what they're doing on the *Alexander*, and then narrate the ship shaking as the bomb goes off.

Scenes generally end by common consent. If nobody has anything left to do in the scene, it can end. Anyone can suggest that it's time for a scene to end – obviously, avoid interrupting an interesting interaction or action sequence to do this – and the GM in particular should keep an eye on scenes to make sure they aren't dragging on, and encourage people to get to the point if need be.

It's entirely possible to do stuff in the fiction without framing a scene. Just say what you want to do, and bam, it's happened. For example, you might say "I want to drop by the cargo bay and pick up that package that Isabella told me about". We don't bother to frame a scene, we just nod and move on. In fact it's possible to make *Moves* in this way if appropriate, describing what you're doing in the fiction but never actually framing a concrete scene. Of course if anyone wants to intervene in what you're doing – a character who wants to get in your way, or if the GM wants to introduce some kind of drama around it (including if you make a *Move* in this way but then roll a *Miss*), then we don't want that playing out in the abstract. We want concrete details, so maybe you get a scene after all.

MOVES

During scenes players can generally get on with describing what their character does and speaking their words, and occasionally describing little bits of the fictional context, without worrying about the rules. However, the game contains a whole bunch of self-contained chunks of rules text called player *Moves*. A player *Move* includes a trigger, usually a fictional action or fictional circumstances, and a procedure you follow when that trigger is hit. This is generally written as "when <the trigger> happens, do <the procedure>". The procedure will often involve rolling dice, and will usually have both game-mechanical and fictional consequences.

Player Moves only apply to player characters. NPCs don't make player Moves, or roll the dice. When the GM wants an NPC to do something, they make a GM Move (see page 60–77) and, generally speaking, it just happens. Occasionally their stated action may instead trigger a player to try and prevent what they're doing, in which case you might roll a player Move instead.

When it comes to player Moves, the fictional trigger and the mechanics in the Move are inseparable. If you don't want to following the procedure described in the Move, you have to change your actions so that the Move isn't triggered. If someone describes actions that seem like they should trigger a Move, anyone can and should interrupt and ask them if they meant to do that. **Make sure you hold each other to this.** The moment people start ignoring the Moves, you may as well be playing a freeform game – which is fine, but that isn't *Last Fleet*.

Equally if you want the mechanical benefit of a player Move, you must take the trigger action in the fiction, and say what you're doing that triggers it. If anyone says they want to make a Move and picks up the dice without further ado, anyone can and should interrupt and ask them to describe what they're actually doing to trigger the Move. **Make sure you hold each other to this.** The moment people start making Moves without describing what they're doing, you may as well be playing a board game – which is fine, but again, that isn't *Last Fleet*.

There are three main types of player Move: *Basic Moves*, *Role Moves*, and *Playbook Moves*. *Basic Moves* are available to everyone, and are detailed in full on pages 89–112. *Role Moves* are listed on pages 113–116. They can only be triggered by someone who has chosen the appropriate Role: *Tactician*, *Marine*, *Pilot*, *Engineer*, *Investigator*, or *Influencer*. *Playbook Moves* are only available to someone who has chosen them from the relevant *Playbook* – see pages 130–167.

KEY RULES

Most player *Moves* come in the form: When you do X, roll +*Stat*. In that case, the player of the character who hits the trigger condition X rolls 2d6 and adds the relevant *Stat*. You may also add bonuses or penalties of various kinds. No matter what, the combined modifier to your dice roll can't be more than +4 or less than -3.

The *Move* will usually then go on to tell you what happens when you roll a 10+ (*Strong Hit*), a 7-9 (*Weak Hit*), or perhaps just "A *Hit*" (i.e. 7+). A *Strong Hit* generally means you're going to get what you wanted in the situation; a *Weak Hit* might mean you get a bit less of what you wanted, or you get what you wanted but there's a complication of some kind, or you don't get what you wanted but there's some compensation involved. Notice we don't use the words "success" and "failure" here, so you might have something bad happen to you even on a *Hit*, and you might get some or all of what you want even on a *Miss*.

The GM is always free to make an GM *Move* when someone rolls a *Miss* (6 or less). That means they introduce some threat, trouble or consequences into the scene, usually to the detriment of the person who rolled. Some *Moves* say something specific that happens on a *Miss* - if so, the GM may make a GM *Move* as well, if they wish. GM *Moves* are discussed in more detail on page 60-77.

Some player *Moves* simply say: When you do X, do Y. In that case, you don't roll any dice. The player of the character who hits the trigger condition X does whatever Y says.

Sometimes *Playbook Moves* tell you to use a different *Stat* from usual when you hit a particular *Basic Move* trigger condition, and sometimes they will tell you to follow an entirely different procedure for a particular *Basic Move*. Pay close attention to the wording of the trigger conditions for these *Moves*: the trigger is

nearly always slightly different from the normal version of the *Move*, and unless you meet it exactly, you must still use the normal version of the *Move*.

There is a special group of *Moves* called *Cardinal Moves* which are marked with an asterisk (*). You gain *Experience Points (XP)* when you make these *Moves*, but you cannot use *Pressure* to improve your rolls with them. This is explored in more detail later on in the sections on *Pressure* and *XP*.



Pressure and Breaking Point

A key mechanic in the game is *Pressure*. Player characters build up *Pressure* when bad stuff happens to them, and can also voluntarily *Mark Pressure* to get bonuses to rolls (see the *Basic Move Raise The Pressure* on page 110). If a character's *Pressure* gets too high, they reach *Breaking Point* and must do something risky and/or irrational to get their *Pressure* down again.

Your *Pressure* is recorded on a five-box track. When you are called on by the GM or by the rules to *Mark Pressure*, check one box on the *Pressure* track, starting on the left and working your way rightwards.

Any time something hurts you, or you do something exhausting, that probably means you'll have to *Mark Pressure*. A lot of *Moves* will tell you when to *Mark Pressure*, but the GM may also call for you to *Mark Pressure* in appropriate fictional circumstances, such as:

- ✦ You've sustained significant physical harm, but not enough that you've got a seriously debilitating injury like a broken limb or suchlike.
- ✦ You've suffered a major emotional blow, like a loved one dying or a mission failing completely.
- ✦ You've encountered something horrifying or traumatic.
- ✦ You've done something that otherwise wears you down, like slogging through several miles of narrow crawlways.

After making a roll, you can *Raise The Pressure* on yourself, pushing yourself beyond your limits. When you do, *Mark* up to three *Pressure* and give yourself +1 to your roll per *Pressure Marked*. The usual maximum bonus of +4 applies as normal. You can't *Raise The Pressure* after rolling a *Cardinal Move* (those marked with an asterisk (*)).

You can reduce *Pressure* through various *Moves*. The most common are **Reach Out** and **Let Loose**.

When your *Pressure* hits five, you are at *Breaking Point*. It is no longer possible for you to *Mark* or *Erase Pressure*, even if a *Move* says you should, and you may not make any choice that would automatically cause you to *Mark Pressure*, until you have taken a *Breaking Point* action. *Breaking Point* actions are listed on your *Playbook*, and are generally irrational, risky, or otherwise extreme.

When you take a *Breaking Point* action, choose one from the list and do it, *Erase Pressure* until you have exactly two boxes *Marked*, and *Mark* the *Breaking Point* action. You can't choose that as a *Breaking Point* action again while it's *Marked*. You can still take that action if you like, it just won't count as a *Breaking Point* action. Each *Playbook* only has about five or six *Breaking Point* actions that don't lead to inevitable death, capture, or ostracism from the fleet; so spend that *Pressure* wisely!

All *Playbooks* have the *Breaking Point* actions listed below, and each *Playbook* has one or two unique ones too:

- ✦ **Lash out** at someone who matters to you. Tell them what you hate about them, blame them for your problems, or otherwise push them away.
- ✦ **Abandon your duties**, immersing yourself in your vices, personal priorities, or whatever helps you to forget the pressure you're under.
- ✦ **Melt down publicly**, letting others see your weakness and displaying your fear, pain, anger, and/or grief in its rawest form.
- ✦ **Put yourself or others in immediate danger** through foolish, rash, stubborn, or negligent behaviour.
- ✦ **Exit the game**. Whether through death, breakdown, or some other route, your character leaves the game. Work with the GM to decide how and when.

KEY RULES

Breaking Point actions should be provocative and intense. GM, watch out for people narrating weak *Breaking Point* actions. Ask them if that is really enough?

Note that a *Breaking Point* action can trigger another *Move* as well. For instance, lashing out often triggers **Call Someone On Their Shit**; abandoning your duties could trigger **Let Loose**. Resolve the effect of the *Breaking Point* action and then make the *Move* as normal. Any *Pressure* changes that result from the *Move* are additional to, and after, *Erasing Pressure* down to two boxes *Marked*.

HP

Player characters have a five-box track for recording *Experience Points (XP)*. You earn XP every time you make one of the *Cardinal Moves*, marked with an asterisk (*). These include the *Basic Moves* **Reach Out**, **Let Loose**, **Support/Interfere**, and **Raise The Pressure**, as well as many individual *Playbook Moves*. When you earn XP, you *Mark* one box on your XP track, starting on the left and working your way rightwards.

When all five boxes are full, *Erase* all five and improve your character by gaining an *Advance*. All *Playbooks* have the following *Advances*, each of which you can take at most twice, and some have their own unique options:

- ✦ Gain a new *Move* from your *Playbook*.
- ✦ Gain a new *Move* from another *Playbook*.
- ✦ Improve a *Stat* by one (maximum +3).
- ✦ *Erase* a *Mark* against a *Breaking Point* action.

Relationships

Relationships mechanically represent how much you care about another character. Each *Relationship* has a target (the other character) and a level from one to three. You start with some, and you can create more or increase their level by **Reaching Out** or through relevant *Playbook Moves*. You may also increase the level of a *Relationship* if something has happened in the game's fiction which has clearly brought you closer together, made you care about them more (or vice versa), or changed the nature of the *Relationship*.

Relationships are two-directional – meaning if I have a *Relationship* with you, you have the same level *Relationship* with me.

If you have a *Relationship* with another character, you can add its level to your roll, in place of the usual *Stat*, whenever you make one of the following *Moves*:

- ✦ **Support** their action.
- ✦ **Interfere** with their action.
- ✦ **Pull Strings** to ask them for help (NPCs only).
- ✦ **Call Them On Their Shit**.

The downside is, it would hurt to lose them. Losing the *Relationship* would be very painful, and you therefore must *Mark Pressure* equal to the *Relationship's* level any time:

- ✦ One of you ends the *Relationship*, cutting the other out of their social and emotional life.
- ✦ They betray you completely.
- ✦ They die, or you believe they have died.

npcs and mechanical effects

Many of the player's *Moves* have potential effects where another character could *Mark* or *Erase Pressure* or *XP*, or change the level of a *Relationship*. These mechanical effects need to be considered in a separate way for NPCs.

If they're being used as leverage – if the *Move* offers the character a choice whether to do something to gain a mechanical benefit, for example to *Erase Pressure* – then the NPC will act, within reason, to do what they need to in order to gain the mechanical benefit.

If an NPC is called on to *Mark Pressure*, the GM should have them do something similar to a *Breaking Point* action. In other words, have them do something irrational, risky, or otherwise extreme, or alternatively (if appropriate) become seriously injured or die. Similarly if they're called on to *Erase Pressure* you can de-escalate any irrational, risky, or otherwise extreme behaviour they're currently exhibiting.

In effect, rather than track these various mechanical effects for NPCs, when they should gain one, the GM immediately makes an appropriate *Move*. When they should remove one, the GM immediately rescinds any relevant badness.

Relationships for NPCs are recorded only on the player's sheet. (There are no NPC-on-NPC *Relationships*.)

doom clocks

A *Doom Clock* is simply a circle divided into four *Segments*. When something bad is on its way, but not immediately, you can draw a *Doom Clock*, write down a future consequence that it's counting down towards, and *Mark* one *Segment*. From now on, when a significant chunk of game time has passed, *Mark* another *Segment*. When the *Doom Clock* is full, the consequence happens.

The purpose of a *Doom Clock* is to create time pressure, and to enable you to enforce dire consequences while giving the players a fair shake at stopping them. This helps incentivize the players to spend *Pressure* in pursuit of avoiding the dire consequences, pushing them further towards *Breaking Point*. Because it's there to create time pressure, you should put it where everyone can see it, and normally tell everyone what the consequences of its completion will be.

What counts as “a significant chunk of time” is at the GM's discretion, and varies depending on the situation. If the *Doom Clock* is counting down towards the next in a series of terrorist bomb attacks, it could be hours or even days. If it's counting down towards an injured character bleeding out, it could be minutes or seconds. Often, it will simply be a case of *Marking* a *Segment* every time someone makes a *Move*. Or it might be that you *Mark* a *Segment* every time someone does a specific thing: like every time the fleet jumps, if it represents fuel running low.

The future consequence should be something concrete and irrevocable. I strongly encourage you to give people *Doom Clocks* for life-and-death situations, with someone dying if the *Doom Clock* fills. You must write it down, so that you aren't tempted to change your mind part-way through.

KEY RULES

Great future consequences could include:

- ✦ You're bleeding out. You've got about five minutes before you bleed to death.
- ✦ Your ship is dead in the water and leaking oxygen. You've got about an hour before you asphyxiate.
- ✦ That bomb wasn't the only one that's out there. When this *Doom Clock* fills, the next one goes off.
- ✦ The fleet is out of water. You've got three days to find more before people start dying.

Optionally, you can make it so that every time a *Segment* marked off, you make some other smaller *Move*, ahead of the big one that happens when the *Clock* is full. You can use *Clocks* to map out the steps in some evolving bad thing, if you like, assigning one to each *Segment* of the *Clock*. Again, make the *Clock* itself public, and normally tell the players about the *Moves* it's generating.

shortages

In *Last Fleet*, it's a given that resources are scarce. Civilization has been destroyed: you can't just get in a new shipment of ammunition or hire some new engineers. Against this already low baseline, it's possible for the fleet to run critically low of some resource. This is recorded with a specific *Doom Clock*.

A *Shortage* could be just about anything, but common ones to record – because they make a big difference to how effectively the fleet can function – are Food, Water, Ammunition, Fuel, Fighters, Pilots, and Engineers.

When there's a *Shortage* on, it means that almost everyone is having to make do with much less than they would normally have; many may have nothing at all; and any major loss of that resource will mean you run out altogether. You should reinforce that with your every description in scenes: hungry workers

look lean and hunched during a food *Shortage*, fighters sit idle in the bay if there's a pilot *Shortage*. And reinforce it when people miss a roll, by having them run out of ammunition, or pass out from hunger, or suchlike.

Meanwhile, the *Doom Clock* is ticking away. I suggest that for things like Fuel, Ammunition, Fighters, and Pilots, you *Mark* a *Segment* when they are used – e.g. when the fleet jumps (for fuel) or fights a major battle (for ammunition, fighters, or pilots). Food and Water are in constant use, so should be *Marked* with time passing. And other things like Engineers don't exactly run out, but a *Shortage* of them will inevitably mean random mechanical failures which build up over time, so again they should be *Marked* with time passing.

What actually happens when the *Doom Clock* runs out is up to the GM, depending on the *Shortage*, but it should be some sort of catastrophic problem. Perhaps the enemy attacks and there are hardly any fighters to defend the fleet, so the GM decides to start the battle *Doom Clock* (see page 192) inflicting two *Attrition* per *Segment* instead of one. Maybe during a food *Shortage*, one of the ships is taken over by rioters who try to board another ship and take their food. An explosion happens when a part that should have been replaced isn't, because there were no engineers to replace it.

Once you have a *Shortage* of something, it becomes an urgent problem to address. *Shortages* are removed through appropriate action in the fiction: if you have a *Shortage* of pilots, train some more. If you have a *Shortage* of fuel, search for an asteroid to mine. The GM will tell you whether a given action is enough to tackle the *Shortage*. You may have to make an appropriate *Move* such as ***Seek Out*** or ***Pull Strings***.

GM: take care with *Shortages*. They can potentially put the continued viability of the fleet as a whole at stake. Once you have a water *Shortage*, you have a matter of days before staying true to the fiction dictates that mass death must

happen. A *Shortage* will often form the main focus for one or more entire sessions of play, with all other considerations ignored. So, they should be unusual events: real crises, to be used sparingly.

Fleet tracks

Alongside the players characters' stats and tracks, there are two fleet tracks which monitor the health of the fleet as a whole. These are looked after by the GM, but should ideally be somewhere the players can see them, and the players can ask to look at them at any time. (Note: you may be tempted to ask the players to look after these, but I encourage you not to – awareness of where these tracks, and any active *Shortages* and *Doom Clocks*, which also sit on the same sheet, is vital to do your job.)

The fleet tracks are:

- ✦ *Attrition*
- ✦ *Momentum*

Each track has five boxes. *Attrition* is *Marked* from left to right, while *Momentum* has just one box *Marked* at a time.

Attrition is a measure of how badly off the fleet is right now, in terms of its ships, its resources and its people including morale. It starts with two boxes *Marked*.

There are several situations where you should *Mark Attrition*:

- ✦ When there's damage to fleet assets (ships, resources, people) but it's not enough to cause an outright *Shortage*.
- ✦ Whenever a major problem or defeat occurs publicly enough to harm morale.

- ✦ When the factions of the fleet are at loggerheads and it's clear the tension is close to boiling over.
- ✦ In general, when something bad has happened to the fleet – whether physically or socially – that leaves it less able to cope and closer to falling apart, without leading to an immediate and concrete problem for the player characters.

Conversely, anything which improves the fleet's capability or resources, or boosts morale, without having an immediate and concrete benefit for the player characters, might lead to *Erasing Attrition*. Acquiring new resources can reduce *Attrition*, as can repairing damage to the fleet. See the **Engineer Role Move** (page 114–115) for more details on the latter. **Pulling Strings** can sometimes reduce *Attrition*. A major victory or visible progress normally reduces *Attrition* because of the effect on fleet morale. And there are *Playbook Moves* which can have this effect too.

When all five boxes are *Marked*, *Erase Attrition* until there are exactly two boxes *Marked*. The GM then unleashes havoc with an appropriate *Move*. This could manifest as physical destruction: a ship is destroyed outright, killing hundreds of people; or some important resource supply is lost or contaminated. Or it could manifest as social disorder: riots on the fleet, an attempted coup, a brutal crackdown. It can be any problem or collective action that could be driven by the slow build-up of loss, damage, and strain on the fleet.

GM *Moves* that result from the *Attrition* track filling up may generate further mechanical effects such as *Doom Clocks*, *Shortages*, or *Momentum* changes, but they should not in themselves lead to the immediate marking of *Attrition*.

Momentum measures how the war is going. Each box of the track has a modifier next to it starting at -2 (the leftmost box) and running up to +2 (the rightmost box). You don't *Mark* or *Erase Momentum* the way you do with other

KEY RULES

tracks, it's more like a *Stat*: but a *Stat* that moves up and down in response to changes in the fiction. At the start of the game, you should normally set *Momentum* at -1, to represent the fact the fleet is losing the war but not in a catastrophic rout (yet). When *Momentum* is low, the human fleet is desperately fleeing, mostly reacting to attacks and other problems, with little hope of proactively attacking the enemy. When *Momentum* is high, the human fleet is in a stable position and ready to take the battle to the enemy. This is reflected in the ***Momentum Move*** (see page 110–114).

When there's a major turning point in the war, the GM can change *Momentum*. A decisive victory or defeat, or the destruction or acquisition of a major resource, for example. *Momentum* can change incrementally or in one big jump, as appropriate. GM, consider sometimes making a *Momentum* change the explicit stakes of a mission or battle, so that the players understand how important it is. Of course, you won't always know in advance: things don't always go the way you expect.



Smiling the game

overview

As GM, you're doing three things:

- ✦ Pretty much all the time, as needed: Bringing the world and the characters in it to life by describing the environment and the people and things in it, saying what's going on, taking on the roles of NPCs, and (sometimes) passing those things over to another player by asking a question.
- ✦ A bit less often, but still fairly frequently, when called to: Intervening in a more forceful way by making a *Move* – a discrete change to the fiction that injects energy and momentum into the game and either changes the direction of the story or moves it further down its current trajectory. Your *Moves* are listed on page 60–71.
- ✦ Responding when the players make *Moves*: Sometimes by making choices from their *Move* lists, sometimes by making a *Move* (if they roll a 6 or less), and sometimes by simply continuing to bring the fiction to life in response to however the world has changed now that they've made their *Move*.

You will typically have a role as a kind of facilitator/referee as well. After all, you are most likely the one most familiar with the rules. It's important to understand that you do not have sole responsibility for this, or sole authority over the rules. The game asks you and the players to follow the rules equally, so if they point out a rule that would stop you doing something, that's fair play: you can't do it, whatever it is, and it's totally within their expected role to point it out. Just be aware, the players are in less of a good position to understand and interpret the rules, so helping them to do so is part of your job too.

THE GM'S MOVES

Your *Core Moves* are:

- ✦ Signal what's coming.
- ✦ Put something at stake.
- ✦ Make them choose.
- ✦ Bring the consequences to bear.

You can get by just fine with the *Core Moves*, but if sometimes it's helpful to have more specific *Thematic Moves* to draw on:

- ✦ Set the clock ticking...
- ✦ Make demands...
- ✦ Stoke suspicion...
- ✦ Someone loses it...
- ✦ Take something away...
- ✦ Kill their darlings...
- ✦ Unleash mayhem...
- ✦ ...and impose a mechanical consequence, as established.
- ✦ Modify a *Move* that a player is about to make.
- ✦ Make a *Threat Move*.

These *Moves* are set out in more detail on page 60–61 (*Core Moves*) and page 62–71 (*Thematic Moves*). But before we get into them in detail, let's talk a bit about when and how you should make *Moves*, and run the game more generally.

when to make a move

You should only (and always) make a GM Move when:

- ✦ The dice demand it.
- ✦ The fiction demands it.
- ✦ Pacing demands it.

You always make a *Move* when someone rolls a 6.

You can also make one when fiction requires a *Move*. What I mean by the fiction is the facts as you've established them at the table, or in your prep. Just remember, something that's only in your head doesn't count: spell it out at the table, or put it in your prep, to make it part of the fiction. In other words, it has to be something that you've committed to, not just something you're thinking about.

Finally, you can make a *Move* if everyone's waiting for something to happen, or you can tell the scene has stalled, or it's needed to get a scene started, or the wider game's events seem to have hit a rut: to get things moving.

Of course, in all cases, the *Move* should be something that seems to follow from the current fictional situation or, at the very least, doesn't seem illogical or wildly improbable.

When you're called on to make a *Move*, you decide how hard or soft a *Move* to make. Are the consequences of your *Move* immediate, imminent, or further off? Do they directly affect the player characters, or are they more indirect? How severe are those consequences? Each of those dials can be set to harder or softer. It's a good idea to start out soft and, when the players fail to act (or act, but fail), make your *Moves* steadily harder. But sometimes you'll see an opportunity to make a harder *Move* right away. If the dice, the fiction, or pacing demand it – go right ahead.

Often, as you describe the world and bring in NPCs, you'll realize after the fact that you made a *Move* without thinking about it. This happens a lot with **Signalling What's Coming**, which is an integral part of describing the world. That's ok, these rules aren't meant to force you to think about every little thing you say. But the harder the *Move*, the more it ought to be justified by the dice, the fiction, or pacing.

Responding with a GM move

The simplest mode of play in *Last Fleet* goes something like this:

- 1 GM **Signals What's Coming**.
- 2 Players say what they are doing about that.
- 3 GM assesses the likely outcome of the players' actions and responds by **Bringing The Consequences To Bear**.
- 4 (Repeat steps 1–3 as appropriate.)

This simple loop can be used to resolve many, perhaps most, situations.

You'll notice that there are no player *Moves* in there. You might be tempted to reach for the dice and try to have someone make a player *Move* every time the players do something interesting or risky. But that's not how *Last Fleet* works. Player *Moves* only happen when their specific fictional trigger has been hit. If they do something that they ought to be able to do, and no *Move* trigger has been hit, but you feel like something ought to happen, then that's probably a sign you should make a *Move* of your own!

Here are some good approaches to this:

- ✦ If it isn't risky and nobody is trying to stop them, they just do it! **Bring The Consequences Of Their Actions To Bear**, as appropriate.
- ✦ If someone else is trying to stop them, say what the other person is about to do (**Signal What's Coming**), and what will happen if they succeed (**Put Something At Stake**), then ask the player what they do now. Maybe their next action will trigger a player *Move*, or take them out of danger altogether. If not, **Bring The Consequences To Bear**.
- ✦ If it's risky, tell them what the risk is (**Signal What's Coming/Put Something At Stake**), then ask them what they do now. Again, you can then **Bring The Consequences To Bear** if appropriate.

HANDLING PLAYER MOVES

Remember: if the fictional trigger for a player's *Move* hasn't been hit, it doesn't happen. Conversely though, if the fictional trigger for a player's *Move* has been hit, you must follow what that *Move* requires.

Player *Moves* are powerful tools for intervening in the fiction. They interrupt the simple loop described above, and force specific outcomes, often dependent on the roll of the dice. Do not be tempted to ignore those outcomes.

Quite often, player *Moves* generate new problems that lead to the action snowballing in exciting ways. After every player *Move* the situation has most likely changed and you may need to pause to reassess and communicate what's changed to the players, **Signalling What's Coming** and **Putting Things At Stake** as appropriate.

Sometimes a player *Move* resolves a situation completely. If, after completing a player *Move*, you realize that there is no longer anything at stake in the current scene, it may be time to end the scene and move on to something new.

principles

Following the rules will take you a long way, but to make *Last Fleet* work really well, you need to GM the game in a particular way. The *Principles* listed below describe how to do that. They're not rules as such, but they're not optional either. If you don't follow them, you'll end up with a completely different (and less good) game.

The *Principles* are:

- ✦ No mercy.
- ✦ Make space for interpersonal drama.
- ✦ Make them care.
- ✦ Everyone is up to something.
- ✦ Make scarcity ubiquitous.
- ✦ Make the fiction and the mechanics transparent.
- ✦ Failure is not an option.

No mercy

The characters have lots of ways to make sure their dice rolls succeed: they can spend *Pressure*, **Support** each other, **Pull Strings**, use their powerful *Playbook Moves* or, when desperate, **Wait Helplessly**. So when they fail, it has to mean something. The consequences have to be significant. When they've had their chance to act and things didn't work out, you should be brutal in enforcing those consequences. You want them to walk away from that scene wishing they'd spent that *Pressure*.

Last Fleet has a distinct rhythm between action and problem-solving scenes, and interpersonal scenes. The former are high-pressure, often high-stakes situations, where you as GM are constantly in the players' faces telling them

about some threat or issue and telling them the results of their actions. The latter are quieter affairs, sometimes explosively dramatic but very much more focused on the players. “No mercy” applies mostly to the former. Don’t have the result of a failed **Let Loose** roll somehow cause death and destruction, unless the situation is absolutely screaming for it.

Make space for interpersonal drama

Last Fleet gives you ample threats and problems for the fleet to deal with: enemy attackers, infiltrators, resource shortages, and so on. You should make time for the group to deal with these issues. But as well as spotlighting this action-oriented play, make sure you allow time for interpersonal drama. The game really sings when you’ve got characters making demands on each other, getting in each other’s faces, expressing their human flaws.

So make sure that you allow ample time for that. Give the players chunky periods when it’s less manic, when there isn’t an immediate attack on the horizon, so that they can talk to each other. And during those periods, introduce NPCs who push on the players’ characters in interesting ways, and make time for those conversations too.

Err on the side of making things quiet, because as soon as you introduce an attack or major crisis, everyone will want to focus on that. It can be quite hard to extract yourself from action-oriented play once you’ve started. So, when you’re in an action-oriented situation, lean away from escalation and introducing new threats; and when you’re in a quieter period, lean away from introducing urgent problems.

Note in particular that the **Momentum Move** tends to force things into an action-oriented space. That’s why it calls for you to roll when there’s been a prolonged quiet period – to help protect that quiet time.

Make them care

Focus in on a small number of characters and bring them vividly to life. Quieter periods are a great time to start doing this. What are they doing to keep from going crazy? What are they doing to make their lives better? What are they doing to help their loved ones? Who are they secretly fucking, who are they in debt to? What are their hopes and dreams? What are their fears and prejudices? Make each character idiosyncratic and real. Give them names, faces, needs, and strive to connect them to the players so that they care what happens to that character.

I advise you to make as many characters as possible likeable. Don't fill your game with misanthropic individuals, because the players won't care that much if they die. Instead, make some of your NPCs uncomplicatedly nice. Make them helpful, supportive, resourceful. Have them do favours for the characters, make sure they have their backs. Even for those who aren't such wonderful people, make sure they have at least one thing that make the players like them - perhaps they're great for a wild night on the tiles, or maybe they're incredibly loyal. Do this even when the character is an antagonist; perhaps even the bullying colonel is someone who will never leave a soldier behind.

You can apply this *Principle* more widely. For example, give each ship a personality and make it at least a little lovable. Certainly, show how it matters in some way. And populate that ship with at least one notable character the players will like.

Later, when you've made them care, you'll use the emotional attachment you've created against them, putting the characters they care about in peril. See the GM Move **Kill Their Darlings** (page 66) for more.

Everyone is up to something

An important dimension of *Last Fleet* is competing agendas. Factions pulling the characters in different directions. NPCs who are likable and loyal but who also have their own beliefs and goals. So, give every NPC and faction something that they currently need or want. This could be something personal, like they lost their daughter during the evacuation and want to find her. Or it could be something that affects the whole fleet, like they want to get rid of the current commander of the fleet.

Partly this is about making sure that, when a faction or character features in a scene, they have something to say. Partly it's about providing a rationale for actions that don't always align perfectly with the fleet's needs, creating tension. Partly it's about putting the characters under pressure to do what this person or faction wants. And partly it's just about reinforcing the theme of the fleet straining under pressure, ready to fly apart at any moment.

Whenever you're considering what action that an NPC or faction might take in a particular scene, think about what would further their goal in this situation. If they can't take action themselves, who could they **Make Demands** on to help them? (See page 63.) What might they ask a player character to do? Or what obstacle could they work towards removing?

Whenever anything happens that helps or hurts their goal, have them react. Whenever someone asks them for something, consider it through the lens of their goal – if it helps them achieve it, they'll be in favour of it. If it hurts, they'll be against it. And the easiest way to get them to do what you want will always be to offer them something that helps them meet their goal. Remember as well that NPCs hold their goal close to their heart: stand in their way and you'll be seen as an enemy, assist them and they'll see you as a friend.

NPCs and factions needn't be completely one-dimensional. Sometimes they do things that aren't related to that one goal. But having that one goal helps you make quick decisions about them and their behaviour.

Part of this is to consider what it might take to make an NPC or faction act against the interests of the fleet. Sometimes this is really easy: if they're actually a traitor or criminal, their every action will be undermining the war effort. Sometimes it's less direct: if my sick brother will die without medicine, I'll consider stealing from sick bay, even though I know that medicine is needed by others. When **Someone Loses It** (see pages 64–65), one option is to have them pursue their goal hard, without regard for practicality or rationality.

Make scarcity ubiquitous

The human fleet is far from home, away from any supply chain. There's not enough of just about everything, even at the best of times. When there's an actual *Shortage* on then it becomes really serious, so that nearly everyone doesn't have enough. What there is, is often less good than you might want – it's a substitute, second best, a bodged-together version of what's required.

You can take this too far: clearly, the fleet's ships must be functional and airtight, or the fleet would be destroyed. There must be food available, or everyone would starve. But lace your descriptions with just enough references to the effects of that underlying scarcity to remind the players of the situation they're in.

This means thinking about:

- ✦ What people are doing to get hold of scarce things. (Consider having them **Make Demands** for these things.)
- ✦ What they are doing to cope.
- ✦ How people are helping each other.
- ✦ What people are using in place of what they'd ideally want to be using.
- ✦ What's been repaired or jury-rigged.

When things get really bad, think about:

- ✦ Who is desperate, and what they're doing about it.
- ✦ Who has exceeded their limits, and how long they've got before it leads to disaster.
- ✦ What might be suddenly unavailable, or broken, at just the wrong moment.

Make the fiction and the mechanics transparent

The situation in the fiction is conveyed entirely by what is said at the table. As GM, you have primary responsibility for describing the world, NPCs, what is happening now, and what might be about to happen. The players can't make good decisions if they don't have the full information, so give it to them. If they seem to make a bad decision, check in with them – did they realize the implications of what they're saying? If there's something you think they ought to be considering, tell them.

That includes mechanical consequences. There are a lot of abstracted mechanics in this game. *Pressure*. *Attrition*. *+1 Forward*. It's your job to translate those consequences into fictional reality, and to make it clear when something that might happen in the fiction would have a mechanical consequence. Tell them "If you do that you'll have to *Mark one Pressure*."

Make it as clear as possible what is going on fictionally and mechanically, what might happen fictionally and mechanically, and what the results of their actions might be fictionally and mechanically. Lay it all out on the table, and let them decide what to do about it.

Failure is not an option

When you're narrating the results of the characters' actions, make sure you're doing it in a way that supports the idea that they are competent, effective individuals. Obviously, the characters don't always succeed at everything they set out to do. But when things go wrong, it shouldn't ever be because the player character was incompetent or screwed up. Think of some other reason why things went wrong.

So what happens when someone rolls a *Miss*?

Well, they might not fail at all. Perhaps they succeed at what they were trying to do, but the situation evolves and/or some new threat appears, so that their success doesn't net them the victory they were hoping for. Or they succeed but there's a complication – even though they got their victory, now there's a new situation to deal with. Or they succeed, but too well – they get some unexpected consequence from success that might not be what they wanted.

Or perhaps they fail, but it isn't because of their own inadequacy. There are lots of ways for this to happen:

- ✦ Too good! You didn't get shot down because you're a bad pilot, you got shot down because they're an ace shooter. This makes the enemy seem scarier, and makes the players want to win even more. Note: once you have decided someone is "too good", that means they're a significant opponent – take every opportunity to keep bringing them back, to give the players something to hate.

- ✦ Something breaking from wear and tear or because it was jury-rigged in the first place. That helps to ram home the scarcity of the situation – everything is in short supply, everything is second-hand or kludged together from parts.
- ✦ Overwhelmed. They could have won a fair fight, but they're outnumbered, outgunned or otherwise put in an unfair position.
- ✦ External obstacle/bad luck. They had their shot lined up, but a timely barrage forced them to take cover. They would have tracked down the spy, but they escape while the ship is on lockdown.
- ✦ What they're doing turns out to be impossible. They were out of range all along. They were searching for water but there is no water source to find.

Never describe what happens in a way that makes them look stupid, incompetent, or weak. Sometimes they'll do that for themselves, and sometimes an NPC will try to do it; but you as GM should never do it.



Techniques

This section describes a list of things you as GM can do to enhance your game, but which aren't part of the rules. They're optional, in the sense that you can choose when to use them or even whether to use them: but definitely recommended.

Speak to the fiction

It helps people's sense of immersion in the story if you refer to people by their character names, not their real-life names. "Commander Pask, there's an angry mob outside your office, demanding your resignation. What do you do?", not "Simon, there's an angry mob outside Commander Pask's office".

It's also a good idea to talk about fiction, not mechanics, wherever possible. In particular it's rarely necessary to say the name of a GM Move out loud. So like "you cut the blue wire, and the red light stops flashing; but partially concealed behind the first device, you spot a second – and less easy to access", not "I'm going to **Signal What's Coming** in the form of a second bomb". Talking about the fiction instead of the rules as much as possible makes the world feel more real.

You'll find you sometimes have to use player names, and quite often refer to mechanics. Don't worry about that! Just keep in the fiction as much as you can.

Go with your gut

The players are at the table making everything up as they go. When you as GM say "you see West sneaking about in engineering after hours, what do you do?" they don't have an answer planned – they just make it up. In line with your objective to play to find out what happens, that's what you should do too.

Sure, it's nice to have a bit of prep done to think about what might be happening in the fleet right now, and what clouds are gathering on the horizon.

But you shouldn't be wedded to your ideas about what might happen next, and you definitely shouldn't have a pre-scripted story.

When you're making stuff up, go with the first thing you think of by default. That instinctive first idea is often the best. By all means draw on your prep for ideas, but be prepared to do something different if that's what seems right in the moment.

I'm not saying you shouldn't think before you speak. But often the thing that you've chewed over and carefully figured out is not as good – not as credible, as true to what's happening right there in the scene – as your first thought. Trust that first thought. Use it.

Ask questions

The other players at the table are a fantastic resource. They're full of their own ideas and imaginings about what your game world looks like, who your NPCs are and what they might be up to. When you don't have a clear idea for some creative decision yourself, ask another player.

“Where do people go to drink on this ship?”

“Who is the captain of the *Agamemnon*?”

“It's two hours after the battle finished, what would you be doing right now?”

“I'm not sure if Switchback trusts the Commander, what do you think?”

“What do Corax fighters look like?”

Doing this spreads the creative burden, it makes your job easier. If your first instinct isn't giving you a clear read, someone else's might be. It also brings the players into your world – they're not just spectators, they're helping you create it.

There's one particular type of question sometimes called a loaded or provocative question, where you decide something important and then ask a player to tell you how it happened. Something like "what are you doing down on C Deck?" – you've basically told the player they're going to be down on C Deck, presumably because you think you can frame a potentially interesting scene there, and asked them to come up with a reason. This is great, but use it carefully. There are some RPGs where it's cool to say out of nowhere something like "how come you shot Switchback?" and the player then has to improvise why they did that. In this game, that's not generally an ok thing to do. If you want to prompt a player to do something like this, you can ask "hey, do you think you might shoot Switchback now?", but unless the rules specifically say otherwise (notable exceptions include *Let Loose* and *Sleeper Agent*), let the players decide their actions for themselves.

Share the spotlight around

It goes without saying that you want every player to get plenty of time "on screen" playing their character, right? It's a good idea to track who has had spotlight time. Simply write each player's name down and put a check mark against their name every time they are in a scene.

It's also good to try and mix up who is in scenes with who. If some player characters aren't ever in scenes together, you can contrive reasons for them to be in the same place, just to see what happens.

Even better, try to contrive reasons for two players to connect up to the same NPC – the more links there are between two characters, the more reason there is for them to interact. Asking a loaded question can be quite good here – questions like "why are you spending Saturday evening with Blackjack?" allows the players to help you define an interesting relationship with an NPC. The best is where two players have different sorts of relationship with the same NPC, so

that when something happens to that NPC it will affect them in very different ways. These “PC–NPC triangles” lead to the player characters having interests that overlap or conflict, which often leads to fun.

Of course, don’t forget that you, as GM, take up spotlight time. Every scene that you’re in as an active participant, playing an NPC or pushing forward threats, means less time for others. Realistically, the GM probably will get more spotlight time than others. But lean towards framing scenes where player characters can just talk to each other, as much as you can. And definitely don’t worry if you’re sat on your hands some of the time: some of the most memorable RPG scenes are interactions between two player characters where the GM doesn’t say a word.

Hard scene framing

You can, when appropriate, start a scene with stuff already happening, even quite bad stuff. Like “you arrive in the system but before you know it there’s a wing of enemy fighters on top of you, and you were forced to retreat into a nearby asteroid field; you’re stuck there now, parked on the underside of an asteroid, while the enemy fighters search the field for you – what do you do?”

Doing this sort of thing often involves making a *Hard Move*, and if so you can’t just do it any old time, you have to follow the usual rules for making GM Moves.

Fast forward, flash back

Roleplaying games tend to roll forward time in a more-or-less linear way, skipping over dull bits like when the characters are asleep, or when they have to travel somewhere. But you can and should fast forward time more dramatically when you feel like it.

“It’s a couple of weeks later, and it’s been kind of quiet for a while, when a ship jumps in right in the middle of the fleet.” Legit.

You can also use flashbacks occasionally when you feel you need to flesh out a relationship or provide context to present-day action. This isn't the kind of game where you use flash backs to retroactively give the player characters some sort of advantage, though: it should be used for making up backstory on the fly and not much else.

Draw maps

Everyone loves a good map! They're particularly useful for helping everyone to grok the layout of battles. Don't sweat scale or anything like that, since after all there's no rules for how fast anyone can move, or weapon ranges for that matter. But feel free to say things like "the enemy mother ship is over here, out of range - it'll be about 30 seconds before your fighters are within weapons range".

What do you do?

"What do you do?" is sort of a catchphrase for PBTA games. Some games tell you to say it after every *Move*, but that can get a bit mechanical. Really, the point is, pause often to give the players the chance to act. Ask them what they do next. Feel free to suggest some options. What the player characters do is what the story is all about, so make sure you're always focusing on that.

GM MOVES

CORE MOVES

The *Core Moves* are the simplest way of describing the components of what you do as GM. In an absolute nutshell: describe what's happening, what is about to happen, and what could happen, then let the players respond. As they respond, react by saying what the results are, what's happening now, what's about to happen, and what could happen.

Signal What's Coming or Put Something At Stake

Describe the signs that something bad is coming. Sometimes that's simple and direct: "An enemy fleet just jumped in – they're launching fighters, what do you do?" Sometimes it's very much not: "Lieutenant Swift furrows her brow and bites her lip, like she's considering saying something, but then decides not to. What do you do?" Let them decide whether to act and, if they don't, follow through by ***Bringing The Consequences To Bear***.

Describe situations that the characters could exploit, if they're willing to take the necessary action. Highlight the opportunity – what it might be worth and, if appropriate, what it might cost. Let them decide whether to act, and if they do, follow through by ***Bringing The Consequences To Bear***.

Say ***What's At Stake*** with a given course of action. Tell them what they'll get if they succeed – or what will happen if they fail. Tell them the fictional consequences ("unless you can stop those fighters attacking, the *Alexander* will get blown up") and the mechanical consequences ("If the *Alexander* blows up, your fuel supplies will be crippled and I'll create a *Shortage* and *Doom Clock* for that"). Or just flag that something or someone is in danger – that's putting it at stake too, even if you aren't saying it's going to take a hit right now.

Use this *Move* to warn them what *Move* you might make in future, or what options you might pick from a player-facing *Move*'s list.

Make Them Choose

Often, it's fun to telegraph competing problems, opportunities, or threats. Give them a sadistic choice to make – the bad guys are bearing down on your best friend's fighter, dead in the water, but if you go to help her then another bunch of them will blow up the fleet's main fuel ship. Or you can give them a more pleasant choice, perhaps between two opportunities: they can't have both.

Sometimes the choice is more mixed. You've got time to salvage valuable equipment from this ship before it plunges into a nearby star. But if you do, you'll be at risk from the enemy fleet that you know is on the other side of the planet.

Bring The Consequences To Bear

Once you've signalled a problem is coming, if the players fail to act (or act, but fail their roll), the problem materializes. Make the consequences of that problem feel real. Similarly, if you signalled an opportunity and they seize it, now they get the benefits of their actions. If they fail to, it slips beyond reach.

Once you've done that, don't forget to make any mechanical consequences happen, too (see below).

To reiterate: a lot of the game is simply telegraphing something that is about to happen, or will happen if you don't do something, or might happen if you do something; and then making that come true.

Thematic moves

The *Thematic Moves* are specific ways you can bring your *Core Moves* to bear, that highlight the themes of *Last Fleet*. If you're at a loss for what to do, they'll give you some good ideas that will keep the game on-genre. On the other hand, if you already have an idea for a *Move*, you can pretty much guarantee that you can make it by ***Signalling What's Coming, Putting Something At Stake, Making Them Choose*** or ***Bringing The Consequences To Bear***. If that's the case, you don't need to read this list, just go ahead and do the thing you had in mind.

Set The Clock Ticking...

A good way to ramp up the pressure on the characters is to make it clear that they only have a limited time before something bad happens. Do this with immediate-term threats like “the hole in the hull is bleeding oxygen – you've got about half an hour before you asphyxiate” and “you're hidden for now, but those soldiers are methodically searching the area – it'll be a matter of minutes before they find you, if you're lucky”. Do it with less immediate threats like “there's a mutinous atmosphere aboard the ship, and although the crew are obeying orders for now you can sense it won't be long before they take matters into their own hands”. Do it with long-term threats like “you've got about three months' worth of food – you've got that long to figure out a way to feed the fleet longer-term”.

You can simply ***Signal*** that something is on its way soon, and that if they don't act it will be too late. Alternatively, a harder-edged way to make this feel real is to start a *Doom Clock*. See pages 35–36 for details on how to do this.

Make Demands...

Have a faction or NPC demand something from a character. This could be something concrete, like a specific item or action they want them to take. Or it could be something more in the social/emotional space, like they want you to admit you're wrong about something, or to display affection for them.

Make it something they won't want to give; something that they'll regret later; or something that will advance the relationship in a meaningful way. Ideally all three!

If they won't do it, or try but fail, that's a good time to reduce a *Relationship*. For a demand that is really major or highly significant, fulfilling it might trigger increasing a *Relationship*.

Stoke Suspicion...

A constant danger for the fleet is infiltration by the enemy. Almost as dangerous is the threat to the cohesion of the fleet from selfishness, division, and corruption. This *Move* is for when a character and faction acts against the interests of the fleet, pursue their own agenda or actively betraying the human race. Equally, it is for when someone decides to investigate or hurl accusations, justified or not.

Acting against the interests of the fleet could mean anything from hoarding food for themselves to more serious criminal activities, right up to helping the enemy or launching a terrorist attack.

A softer version of this *Move* is to **Signal What's Coming** by introducing behaviour that seems out of the ordinary or otherwise suspicious, or by revealing personal problems (debts, addiction, desperate need, blackmail) that might compromise a person. Then if nobody acts, take it to the next logical step.

You can also use this *Move* to have an NPC become suspicious of a character: they investigate them or accuse them of something. This is a great way to put someone under pressure when they've been up to something they shouldn't. Suspicion can come from all quarters – a concerned friend, a hard-ass superior officer, an official investigation.

The party under suspicion needn't be a player character. When one NPC starts accusing another of treachery, the players will be forced to act as adjudicator. They'll also be forced to consider whether there really might be treachery afoot – and if so, who it is that's the perpetrator.

This *Move* is a good way to push players into making the ***Seek Out*** or ***Cover Up*** Moves; players might also target a suspicious person or retaliate against a dogged accuser using ***Call Someone On Their Shit***. If they don't, then the consequences should be commensurate with the nature of the offence and the status of the investigator. A concerned friend looking into someone's alcoholism might give them a quiet word with an implied threat to report them. An official investigation could have much more serious consequences.

Always consider the social consequences if someone is investigated, accused, proven guilty, or exonerated. Whose opinion has changed? Who will take action?

Someone Loses It...

The people of *Last Fleet* live under enormous pressure. The destruction of most of the human race, the loss of their homes, the shortages, paranoia about enemy agents, and the constant fear of an enemy attack. With this *Move*, someone cracks and has an emotional outburst or does something selfish, irrational, or destructive. Think of it as *Breaking Point* for NPCs.

Watch for NPCs who are in difficult situations, and consider how far that situation would have to go for them to snap. If a bad situation worsens, consider who might have reached their limit. Then show them breaking by:

- ✦ Doing something stupid, risky, pointless or self-destructive.
- ✦ Venting their emotions at someone, perhaps publicly.
- ✦ Taking drastic or selfish action to push their own needs or wants.
- ✦ Sacrificing themselves through dangerous action in battle.

Factions can also lose it. They finally lose patience and push for their goals via the most direct route available, regardless of the consequences. Or perhaps they lash out at a scapegoat within or outside their ranks, venting anger and frustration.

Finally, the ordinary people of the fleet can lose it en masse. Protests, rioting, looting, for example. Or more self-destructive behaviour, like the spread of drunkenness or drug addiction as they try to calm their fears.

Whoever is losing it, make it concrete by describing what the players see and hear. Don't have someone quietly lose it in their bunkroom. Give them something to respond to.

This is a particularly good *Move* to make when the *Attrition* track fills up. Have an individual or group react with panic or ruthless action to the growing pressures on the fleet.

Take Something Away...

Part of making scarcity ubiquitous is that sometimes things break or become unexpectedly unavailable. Equally, things can be damaged or lost in the middle of a scene. Think of something they'd find useful right now, or at any rate in the near future, and take it away.

You can also use this *Move* to take away options and opportunities. Block their way out. Have the fleet jump away without them. Put a sentry between them and where they were heading. Give them an urgent mission so they can't pursue their personal agenda.

Kill Their Darlings...

If you're following your *Principles*, you've created characters that the players care about. Now, hurt them. When a disease ravages the ship, you take someone they care about and give them the disease. Put them in sick bay, wasting away. Or better yet, have them show up to their station pale and drawn because they spent the night next to someone else's sickbed. If you've done your job well, the players will feel the pain of these characters and be motivated to do something about it.

The hardest form of this *Move* is to do exactly what it says on the tin: ***Kill Their Darlings***. When the enemy have a ship in their sights, think who is on that ship. When they screw up their dice rolls and the enemy fighters come screaming in, don't shrink from killing off those beloved characters. The anguish the players feel when they know they'll never have a scene with that character again is what makes it feel like the war matters.

And by the way – when you literally killed someone, don't forget to apply *Pressure* loss from any *Relationships* players had with them. Even if they didn't, you should ask them if they cared about that character dying. If so, they must *Mark Pressure*.

Unleash Mayhem...

You can use this *Move* to introduce big, disruptive events like a bomb going off, the enemy fleet attacking, or a riot. Sometimes these *Moves* are the result of a slow build-up of low-level effects over time, which you will have signalled over and over. Sometimes it will seem to come out of nowhere.

The water tanks rupture, jettisoning vast amounts of water into space. The refuelling ship catches fire. An astro-navigation computer error jumps one of the ships into a star and it is destroyed. Food supplies are spoiled, disease breaks out. A bomb kills the command staff of the capital ship. An enemy mothership jumps in and starts spewing fighters.

This is a serious *Move*, one which will have far-reaching implications and hugely ramp up the perceived threat level. By doing this you put the safety of the entire human race at stake, right now. Pilots will scramble. Engineers will rush to contain damage. Civilians watch with bated breath. I'm labouring the point slightly, because I want you to use this *Move* sparingly. Once you've done it, you're a few bad rolls away from total carnage: consequences that will dominate the game for sessions to come. You'll also make this fight the sole focus of play for a decent chunk of game time.

With that said, *Last Fleet* is about the human race on the brink, fleeing from an inhuman adversary. Sometimes you have to make that real.

Don't forget, too, that there can be smaller battles; lesser disasters. A handful of enemy fighters can be encountered away from their main fleet, or enemy footsoldiers can be found on the ground. A single ship could be sabotaged, or one docking bay blockaded by protesters. Smaller events also telegraph the potential for future danger: shoot down these fighters, or they'll be back with reinforcements. Placate these protesters or there will be a riot tomorrow.

Whatever the event is, you'll need to consider the immediate mechanical consequences, and what further mechanical consequences might be at stake if no action is taken. Spell them out, so the players can scramble to limit the damage.

...and impose mechanical consequences, as established

There are a bunch of mechanical consequences you can inflict on a character, when the fiction justifies them. I'll list them in full in a moment. The important thing to understand about these is that you cannot simply impose a mechanical consequence without having established it in the fiction first.

So when it comes to mechanical consequences, *Moves* come in pairs: say what's happened in the fiction, and then inflict the mechanical consequence you've just established a fictional basis for. That's why this *Move* starts with "and", because you should never make it on its own – first say what's changed in the fiction.

Of course, your decision-making doesn't have to flow in that direction. You can decide "I want Darius to *Mark Pressure*... what could cause that?" Or equally, you can say "This situation seems unbearably difficult for Darius, I think I'll he should *Mark Pressure*." Either is equally fine.

As a rule of thumb, if a player-facing *Move* requires a mechanical consequence, don't duplicate that same consequence using an GM *Move*.

So what mechanical consequences are available, and in what fictional circumstances can you use them?

- ◆ Require someone to make a *Move*. Most player *Moves* are triggered by player actions, but sometimes they can be triggered by something you did as GM. ***Weather Serious Harm*** is a good example, as it's nearly always the

direct result of you deciding to inflict a powerful attack. *Shake Off* is often made as a direct consequence of a *GM Move*, too.

- ✦ Make someone *Mark Pressure*. To do this, they must take mental, emotional or physical harm, or come under, uh, pressure. Say what's pushing them closer to breaking point, and make them *Mark Pressure*.
- ✦ Start a *Doom Clock*. Do this when you want to create time pressure by having a specific thing happen after a limited time period.
- ✦ Shift someone's *Relationship* up or down. If it goes down, you should consider making them *Mark Pressure* as well.
- ✦ *Mark Attrition*. Do this when the fleet's vulnerabilities have been exposed publicly, or something else has happened to terrify the people of the fleet; or when some substantial damage has been done to the fleet's capability or resources. Ships blown up? *Mark Attrition*. Chief engineer died? *Mark Attrition*. Plague puts half the pilots in sick bay? *Mark Attrition*.
- ✦ Create a *Shortage*. Do this only when there is major damage to a specific resource such as fuel, ammunition, food, or water. Start a *Doom Clock* to go with it.
- ✦ Change *Momentum*. Do this only when there is a major shift in the fleet's fortunes. A victory or loss that substantially changes the strategic position. The destruction – or capture – of a truly vital asset. A game-changing moment.
- ✦ Give someone *+/-1 Forward*, or *+/-1 Ongoing*. Do this when the situation makes things substantially harder or easier than usual, not just for a marginal advantage or disadvantage. Only do it when there's a concrete advantage in play, not something ephemeral like "I'm trying extra hard" or "I've planned in advance" or indeed anything you could do pretty much every time you roll. (See below for more details on this.)

Bonuses and penalties can be a bit complicated:

- ✦ You can give someone a modifier that applies to any roll they make or, if you wish, you can limit the modifier to a particular action or context. For example “you get +1 *Ongoing* to being stealthy, while you’re using the ghost field”.
- ✦ Don’t forget the combined modifier to a dice roll can’t go higher than +4 or lower than -3. As a guide, if it’s something that a player could theoretically simply narrate doing every time they take the relevant action in future, then it shouldn’t provide a modifier.
- ✦ Roll penalties are for general adverse conditions that don’t create a long-term impact on the character. You’re not injured, but you’re operating below par because of some external condition. An *Ongoing* penalty is for when the environment is hostile, like you’re fighting in zero-g, or you’re making an argument in front of an angry crowd. A penalty *Forward* is for when there’s no ongoing environmental challenge – perhaps you got concussed, or someone caught you by surprise.
- ✦ Don’t inflict a roll penalty if there’s a concrete fictional effect that can apply instead. So, if there’s fire blocking your path so that you can’t escape from the landing bay, there’s no need to inflict -1 *Forward* to escape the landing bay. You just... can’t escape, or perhaps you have to **Shake Off** the fire. But if the landing bay is filled with smoke, you might inflict -1 *Ongoing*.

As a rule of thumb, don’t inflict multiple mechanical effects for the same fictional cause. Choose the most appropriate one and go with that. So if you’re giving -1 *Ongoing* for smoke, don’t also make them *Mark Pressure*.

Make a Threat Move

The next section describes a range of threat types that you can bring in, from factions to enemy ships. Each has its own list of *Moves* which you can use with a threat of that type. When it's time to make a *GM Move*, you can always make an appropriate *Threat Move* if you wish, provided you have a threat of the relevant type to make it with. As with other *Thematic Moves*, these are here to help inspire you when you're stumped, so if you prefer to do something that isn't listed, that's fine too as long as it fits with your *Core Moves*.



Threats and Threat Moves

Listed below are various threat types. When you decide to use one, you obviously need to define the specific individual or group that you're using. For example, you can't just reveal secrets of the universe willy-nilly, you have to introduce a location that could be hiding those secrets. Equally, you can work backwards: in this scene I've got an NPC who is a senior military officer, so I take a look at the fleet leadership *Threat Moves*.

People

The individuals living in the fleet. Soldiers, crew, civilians.

For each one, start with a name, appearance/noticeable traits, and a role.

When you use them as more than simple window-dressing, you'll also want to get to grips with what drives them. Who or what do they care about? What do they want? Let that drive their behaviour in play.

Whiplash is a fighter pilot. He's a handsome dude with a ready smile. He likes the action-packed life of a pilot and he wants to enjoy the better things in life.

That's why Whiplash nearly always volunteers for dangerous missions, but it also explains why he's running a small-scale black market operation from out of his footlocker.

Moves:

- ✦ Display their everyday life.
- ✦ Show what they're doing to cope with the pressure.
- ✦ Reveal their hopes and dreams.
- ✦ Reveal their doubts and fears.

- ✦ Show who or what they care about.
- ✦ Ask for help.
- ✦ Do something suspicious.
- ✦ Lose control and do something stupid.

The fleet leadership

High-ups in the military, senior politicians.

It might be that your players take all the high-up roles in the fleet, and that's fine. But if they don't, you can fill those roles with NPCs.

The leaders of the fleet are just people, right? So you can think of them in that way sometimes, and use the *Moves* listed above for people. But for a lot of the time they're defined by their responsibilities and the power they wield. They've got the whole fleet looking to them to sort out every problem. So a lot of what they do will represent the reaction of "those in charge" to some problem.

There's a few good ways to play with the fleet leadership:

- ✦ Have them make reasonably sensible, practical decisions about very difficult issues, and give them to a player character to implement. The decision is a good one, but it's a very difficult problem, and now it's the players' problem to deal with it.
- ✦ Have them make foolish, impractical decisions, and then make the fallout of those decisions the problem. How long will the players put up with their crap?
- ✦ Have them take against someone. This one here is a dangerous idiot. Give me one excuse, and they're cooling off in the brig for the next few days.
- ✦ Have them decide they like someone. This one here is meant for big things. They need to be given interesting problems to solve. Make it something really hard.

Fleet leadership has to be at least somewhat remote, to leave space for the players to have their fun. They can't be like Captain Kirk coming along on every mission, or making every little decision.

Moves:

- ✦ Give orders or non-negotiable suggestions.
- ✦ Ask for advice.
- ✦ Take a strong stance on an issue.
- ✦ Take an interest in a person or problem.
- ✦ Crack down on bad behaviour.
- ✦ Inexplicably overlook a problem.
- ✦ Defend or extend their authority or control.

Factions

Groups of people in the fleet with shared ideals and/or goals. Political, military, religious, terrorist, criminal.

A faction is like a person, in a way. It has its own style and approach, and its own drive and interests. Those interests tend to be bigger, and more political in nature, than an individual's interests. An individual wants food: a faction wants control of the food supply. An individual wants revenge on the officer who ordered their loved one to their death: a faction wants to remove the corrupt leadership and replace them with like-minded people. You get the idea.

Each faction is a specific kind of group. They're not just some random mob, they're the Cult of the Goddess Athena, or an ultra-right-wing paramilitary force, or the Cain crime family, or the worker's rights party. The nature of the group will define their style and approach, drives and interests, and the likely resources at their disposal.

Of course, the faction is in reality just a bunch of individuals, so everything it ever does is done through individual people. Sometimes it's ok to just treat those people as arms of the faction, other times you'll want to bring out their individual drives and needs. There should usually be one main character who is identifiable as the leader, or perhaps just the voice, of a faction, so the players have someone to interact with.

Moves:

- ✦ Share their view of the world.
- ✦ Look after their own.
- ✦ Hoard power or resources.
- ✦ Make unreasonable demands.
- ✦ Offer a deal or alliance.
- ✦ Get in the way of something important.
- ✦ Escalate to violence.

Enemy fleet

One or more enemy ships.

The enemy fleet is out there, waiting. It could appear at any minute. Wherever it arrives, it's a direct and deadly threat.

The appearance of the enemy fleet is also an opportunity to build on your initial conversation about who the enemy are. What technology do they possess? What do their ships look like and what can they do? If there's a boarding party, we get to see what they look like in person. Seize the opportunity to make their inhuman nature apparent, and scare the shit out of the players.

Moves:

- ✦ Arrive out of nowhere.
- ✦ Close the distance to firing range.
- ✦ Launch a wave of smaller ships.
- ✦ Send a boarding party/landing party.
- ✦ Block the way.
- ✦ Destroy a vulnerable target.
- ✦ Jump away, leaving something behind.

Infiltrators

Traitors, shapeshifters, possession, spies.

You can't trust anyone. Not really. Your best friend might seem like she's got your back. She's smart, brave, and dedicated to protecting humanity. But is she really?

In *Last Fleet*, the enemy can make themselves seem human. Anyone might turn out to be one of them. And some humans, inexplicably, decide to work with the enemy too.

Don't overdo this. If everyone's an infiltrator then the game stops being fun. Most infiltrators are anonymous NPCs, just another bad guy to find and kill. But just occasionally, make it someone they care about.

Remember infiltrators are people, too. They're not just a very convincing facsimile of a human - they have thoughts and feelings, even if underneath it all their driving purpose is to destroy humanity.

Moves:

- ✦ Inveigle themselves into important fleet operations.
- ✦ Work to secure the trust of the players.
- ✦ Put on a convincing display of innocence.
- ✦ Conceal something on the fleet (bomb, transponder, etc).
- ✦ Steal, damage or destroy something important.
- ✦ Make contact with sympathizers in the fleet.
- ✦ Make an assassination attempt.

Locations

Planets, moons, asteroid fields, space stations, the inside of enemy ships.

The fleet moves around all the time, so you'll be creating these on the fly, most of the time. You haven't got time to plan, so come up with a suitably vivid generic SF location and use it. Use it to hide the enemy fleet, or seed it with useful resources, perhaps hard to exploit. And sometimes, just sometimes, put something stranger there – something which sheds light on the enemy, or even deeper truths about the game universe.

Moves:

- ✦ Conceal enemies.
- ✦ Trap someone.
- ✦ Offer resources.
- ✦ Offer shelter.
- ✦ Reveal secrets of the universe.



setting up your game

Before you start playing the game, you need to have an idea of what happened to leave your characters on the last ragtag fleet of human ships anywhere in the galaxy, who their enemy is, what the fleet is like, and who your characters are.

For this, you have three options:

- ◆ Set your game in one of the settings provided in this book. You could go for the aftermath of the Corax attack on the Interplanetary Commonwealth, using the details summarized below and described in full in pages 199–209, with or without the quick-start scenarios provided on pages 211–231. Or you could use the alternative Promethia Damned setting on pages 232–243. This approach gives you pre-generated characters and relationships, and will save you time if you want to get started quickly.
- ◆ Create your game from scratch, collaboratively. The rest of this section helps you through that. It explains the game's assumptions, which need to be true for the game to play the way it's intended to. And it divides setup into manageable chunks, identifying the questions you need to answer before you start.
- ◆ You can mix and match, grabbing bits from the settings and scenarios on pages 199–243 and adding your own ideas. The setting is specifically designed so you can pick up a specific ship, faction, character, or enemy, and drag and drop them into your own world.

We don't want to dive into the setting in enormous detail at the start. The best stories weave background detail into the narrative: they show, rather than tell. Try to emulate that here, and agree just enough to enable you to start playing

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through scenes without tripping over a lack of shared understanding of the game setting. Keep it brief.

Once you've created these things, you can and should use flashbacks to flesh out more detail as needed. Short scenes of life before the war, what happened when the war broke out, and how the fleet came together, with your characters embedded in those scenes so we can see these events through their eyes and understand their personal story better. But again, we want to see what's happening right now, so make these brief and relevant to the present day story. If you choose to do a flashback, it's like you're stepping back into game setup for a moment, so don't roll dice or make Moves, just say what you think might have happened and discuss if needed.

The Commonwealth and the Corax

Before the war, our civilization was a loose federation of three planets, called the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was riven with rivalries and factions, it wasn't perfect, but it was home. That all changed the day the Corax attacked. All that is left of the Commonwealth now is a fleet of ships, in an uneasy détente between a civilian fleet led by the warship *Hecate*, and the much larger battleship *Agamemnon*.

The Corax is an intelligent extradimensional fungus network. This vast entity lurks in the tenebrium - the medium through which FTL ships travel - making incursions into the physical universe through dimensional rifts. The Corax is capable of absorbing the genetic and informational content that make up a living being into its network. Those who are paralysed and dragged off in battle against the Corax will soon return: indistinguishable from who they once were, but dedicated to an alien cause.

The war – before and after

Start by agreeing the setting for the game. You can agree this during the first session, through open discussion, focusing on ideas that seem to enthuse the group and avoiding ideas that turn anyone off. Or if the GM is inviting the players to take part in a game that they already have a strong vision for, the GM can describe what they want the setting to be like and (hopefully) the players will opt in if they like what they hear. Or mix and match – perhaps the GM describes the enemy and the players describe the fleet, for example. The key thing here is to give everyone the opportunity to see what's going into the game and steer away from anything that they find a major turn-off, because once you start play it will be harder to take stuff out that you don't like.

There are some things that will definitely be true whatever setting you agree. Changing any of these would mark a major departure from the core premise of the game, and might mean some of the game's rules won't work without modification. These include:

- ◆ Human civilization has been destroyed. It no longer exists, full stop. The most you're going to find now is isolated hold-out groups, and those will be very few and far between.
- ◆ It was destroyed by an inhuman enemy that is bent on finishing the job. There might be dissent within the enemy's ranks, but as a whole they want the last of humanity wiped out.
- ◆ The players, and most if not all of the human race, are on a fleet of ships fleeing through space. This fleet can jump from one point in space to another using some form of FTL transport. It contains at least one massive warship, the capital ship, as well as a much larger number of smaller fighters. It might contain medium-sized civilian ships as well.

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- ✦ There is a significant military element to the fleet, from which many (if not necessarily all) of the player characters will be drawn.
- ✦ There are infiltrators on the human fleet. They appear human. They may actually be human sympathizers, traitors, or mind controlled. They may not be human at all.

With the above assumptions in mind, you should go into the game agreeing on:

- ✦ **What human civilization was like before the war.** Was there one home planet? A small number of colonies? A vast galactic empire?
- ✦ **What the enemy are like.** Are they aliens? Robots? Demons? Do we even know, at the start of the game, what their true nature is? What's the overall aesthetic, when describing them and their ships?
- ✦ **How the enemy hide among the fleet.** Are they shapeshifters? Is it a psychically projected illusion? Do they look just like us in their natural form? Do they use mind control or possession?

Feel free to flesh out other details you get interested in during your discussion. Details like how the enemy were first encountered are often interesting to discuss. But don't forget to keep it brief – the game is about playing through the aftermath of a war the humans have already lost, not building an epic setting.

The Fleet

Once you've got basics of the war sorted out, it's time to create the fleet:

- ✦ **What's the fleet like** – is there just one big ship, or are there a number of ships travelling together? What's the name of the capital ship? What are the fighters called?
- ✦ **Who runs the fleet** – is it exclusively a military operation, or is there a civilian authority as well? If the latter, what's the nature of the civilian authority? Is it elected, a monarchy, a council of elders, something else?

- ♦ **What factions are there on the fleet** – create at least three groups whose agenda is different from that of the fleet leadership. They could be a union, political party, gang, criminal organization, religious group, scientific society, paramilitary organization, or something else. Sketch out their nature and agenda.

Bear in mind that an option for your characters will be to become involved with one or more of these factions. If you make them all villainous, that won't be an attractive option; so if you fancy some shades-of-grey political intrigue then try to pitch at least some of your factions as having sympathetic goals.

If you want a game that focuses in on the military side of the fleet, with dramatic tension around the hierarchy, check out Rank and Duty, on pages 172–185, for tips on how to bring this in during set up and beyond.

Tech Levels

The default technology level for *Last Fleet* is pretty similar to that of the early 21st century, but with extras such as FTL travel, artificial gravity, and advanced spacecraft. However, technological detail isn't terribly important to the game. You are free to vary the tech level however you'd like, so long as you don't undermine the fundamental themes of the game.

This is particularly risky with advanced technology. Fully functioning replicators, for instance, would take away from the idea of resource scarcity. Star Trek-style scanners could make some aspects of fleet infiltration impossible. In the opposite direction, the absence of FTL would make it challenging for the fleet to get away from their pursuers.

YOUR CHARACTERS

Each player must choose a *Playbook* to create their character from. I recommend reading out the italicized text at the start of each *Playbook* – it's fun to share this job around, taking turns, if your group are comfortable with that. Players may then want to look at the one(s) that grabbed them, before making a decision. Each player has to choose a *Playbook*, and each *Playbook* can only be chosen by one player.

If two people want the same *Playbook*, talk about what attracted you to the *Playbook*, and see if there's another which might deliver a similar experience. The GM will likely be able to help with that.

Once you've chosen your *Playbooks*, go through the following steps, not necessarily in order:

- ✦ Choose **a name and appearance** for your character. Pilots will also need a call sign. Some people like to do this first, some tend to do it last. Either is fine. There's a name list available at <https://blackarmada.com/last-fleet-downloads/> if you're struggling for inspiration.
- ✦ Choose **your stats**. Set one at +1, one at -1 and the rest at +0.
- ✦ Choose **three Role or Playbook Moves**. At least one of these must be a *Role Move* (see pages 113–116), and some *Playbooks* have one *Playbook Move* pre-chosen for you as well.
- ✦ Agree **ranks as appropriate**. This means setting the relative ranks of the military characters, and any important civilian titles held by characters. See page 175 for some possible ranks. This isn't a decision you can make entirely in isolation: you might choose to be a Captain to have some seniority, only to discover that everyone else has chosen to be a Major. So talk about it together.

Once you've done those three steps, you're ready to introduce your characters. Let everybody have your name, rank, and describe your appearance and whatever they'd know about your personality and background. Keep it brief! We'll find out more in play.

After characters have been introduced, **ask your *Relationship* questions**. These are listed in your *Playbook*. They are questions like “who hates my guts” and “who saved my life once”. You should ask at least two. Once you’ve got the answer, flesh it out a little: ask why, how that came about, and so on. Enough to get a feel for the nature of the relationship.

When you ask your questions, you can either:

- ✦ Offer it to the other players to answer as their characters.
- ✦ Create an NPC (or use one someone has already created) and have them be the answer.

You want most of the answers to come from Player Characters – definitely at least half – but having a few NPCs with interesting relationships to the Player Characters (ideally more than one Player Character per NPC) at the start of the game is a good thing.

Once you’ve answered your *Relationship* questions, everyone who has either answered one of your questions or had their answered by you gets a level one *Relationship* with you. Multiple questions doesn’t mean a higher-level *Relationship*.

Finally, set up your *Pressure* track, and the fleet tracks:

- ✦ If you plan to start the game with a challenging, action-oriented scene (like a space battle), everyone *Marks* one *Pressure* to start with, so that they’re able to use *Pressure* effectively to tackle the situation they’re faced with.
- ✦ If you plan to start the game in a quiet period (including, as suggested in the “first session” below, in the immediate aftermath of a crisis), everyone *Marks* three *Pressure* to start with, so there’s plenty of opportunity to *Erase Pressure* through social and emotional scenes.
- ✦ Set *Momentum* to -1.
- ✦ *Mark* two *Attrition*.

The first session

Once you've set up the game, created the setting, generated the characters and set up their relationships, you're ready to run your first session. This section gives you some advice on how to do that.

The first session will establish the tone for your game as a whole. It's important to give the characters room to get to know each other and find their feet, and an action-oriented start gets in the way of that. But we also want to establish the threats and problems of the war. So, instead, give them the chance to explore their characters in a less tense context. They've just jumped away from some sort of dangerous situation, and they're at a place of safety, for the moment at least. Emphasize that it will take the enemy some time to track them down.

I recommend that you use questions to establish what harrowing situation they've just come through. This enables you to quickly set up the aftermath of that situation, where they'll have lots of stuff to react to, but also space to interact with each other.

Here are the questions I suggest:

- ✦ You've just escaped from a crisis. What threat were you facing? (Prompts: was it an attack by the enemy fleet? Sabotage? An assassination attempt?)
- ✦ What went terribly wrong during the crisis that made it even worse?
- ✦ Whose quick-thinking actions got you out of it?
- ✦ Who was hurt during the crisis?
- ✦ What was the cost you paid to resolve the crisis?

You needn't necessarily ask all of these questions. Definitely you need to ask the first, and each of the rest add layers of interest and tighten the screws. If

you can, ask a question to each player at the table, so they all feel invested in what you've created.

Once you've got the crisis and its resolution properly established, give them some time and space to play through the aftermath. You may find that they immediately have things they want to do prompted by the situation. But if not, ask them what they're doing, their routine, who they work with. Study the answers to their relationship questions, too, and consider asking them questions about those.

You should also use this opportunity to introduce NPCs and start making them care about them. Get started on that right away, especially if the players don't seem initially sure what to do. Ask questions to establish who is connected to those NPCs – whose subordinate are they, or whose advisor, or who are they secretly sleeping with?

Ask questions, too, about the ships, the key locations on each of them, what happens in each location and who tends to be found there. Follow your curiosity, and try to get a feel for the place. You'll be using that later on when you're wondering where to put a secretly smuggled package, or where to have a clandestine conversation, or which bit of the ship to blow up next.

You might find your players get itchy feet. Some people get bored just doing conversation all the time. If so, you can introduce low-key problems to keep them engaged. Maybe there's a black-market ring to investigate, or a problem with one of the ships, or someone's acting suspiciously. Just don't blow anything up yet, ok?

Once the players have started to get a feel for who their characters are, you can introduce some bigger threat or danger. A good way to do this is to call for the **Momentum Move**. Depending on how long your sessions are and how quickly

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your players get through the quieter scenes, that might happen at the end of the first session (which makes a wonderful cliffhanger) or partway through the second, but definitely don't leave it longer than that. Remember, once you've introduced a fresh crisis, you'll want to keep coming back to those quieter periods too. That's the rhythm of the game: crisis, recovery.

You can take the exact same approach during a one-shot, using one of the scenarios on page 211–231. Each of them comes with a pre-loaded tense situation, but it's still a good idea to set up something that just happened, using the questions above.



PLAYER MOVES

BASIC MOVES

Engage In Battle

When you **Engage In Battle**, roll +Raw. On a *Hit*, choose:

- ✦ You overcome a tough target's defences, or destroy a number of weaker targets.
- ✦ You hold off a determined assault or drive away a formidable opponent.
- ✦ You keep a target safe during the battle.

On a 7–9, choose two:

- ✦ You take fire in the process and must **Weather Serious Harm**.
- ✦ Someone or something else gets damaged or destroyed, the GM says who or what.
- ✦ Your actions leave you or someone else exposed, the GM will say who takes advantage.

Engage In Battle is strictly for potentially deadly fights between enemies, not scuffles or boxing matches or anything of that sort. You must have a weapon capable of doing significant harm to the enemy, and defences capable of withstanding their attack, otherwise you can't make the *Move*. Similarly, your opponent must have a weapon capable of doing significant harm to you, or defences capable of weathering the attack; or else there's no need to make the *Move*, you succeed automatically.

The effect of *overcoming a target's defences* depends on the situation. Attack an enemy mothership with your fighter and you might be able to damage a key system, but you won't destroy it. Attack it with ordnance and the damage will

be more severe. Equally, overcoming the target's defences might mean getting past the defences rather than destroying the target.

Holding an enemy off or driving them away does not mean they are permanently neutralized. But it does mean you've kept them at bay as long as you needed to. Similarly, *keeping a target safe* doesn't mean they're permanently delivered from harm, just that they are safe from the immediate threat(s).

Examples:

- ✦ You're trying to capture an enemy bunker. You roll to **Engage In Battle**, and get a 7-9. You choose to **Weather Serious Harm** and your actions leave you exposed, and the GM tells you you've got past the bunker's defenders but they've set up a booby trap which is about to explode!
- ✦ You're trying to protect an exposed civilian ship from enemy fighters. You roll to **Engage In Battle**. You get a 10+ and so you keep the civilian ship safe long enough for it to rejoin the safety of the fleet.
- ✦ Alone in your fighter, you're trying to prevent an enemy heavy raider from boarding your ship. It's protected by a wing of fighters. You roll to **Engage In Battle**. You roll a 7-9, breaking through the defending fighters and blowing the heavy raider out of the sky, but the fighters wheel around to attack you from all sides. You must **Weather Serious Harm**, and you're left exposed, unable to bring your weapons to bear. You'll have to **Shake Them Off** if you want to get home safe.

Note that the *Marine* and *Pilot* roles are better at these two *Moves* (see page 116).

See the section on Space Battles, on page 191-198, for how to handle the interplay between individual combatants and the larger battle.

Shake Off

When you **Shake Off** a threat, roll *+Hard*. On a *Hit*, you've shaken it off, but on a 7–9, the GM chooses:

- ✦ It's out of the frying pan, into the fire.
- ✦ You don't escape unscathed.
- ✦ You lose or use up something in the process.
- ✦ The threat intensifies, escalates, or targets someone else.

On a 10+ you're in full control, take +1 forward.

Shake Off is used when some external threat is putting you at risk, but you have a chance to avoid, resist, or reduce it, even if only by luck. Not all threats can be avoided! But often they can, and in that case you use this Move. It's good for evading enemy fire, fleeing from pursuers, hiding from a search party, getting past a security system, and many more.

Don't roll to **Shake Off** if you've already taken the brunt of something harmful; in that case roll to **Weather Serious Harm**.

Out of the frying pan, into the fire means that you're (at least for now) safe from that threat, but there's something else putting you at risk. Maybe you had to flee into a dangerous asteroid field, or maybe you were so busy dealing with the threat that something else has become a problem.

You don't escape unscathed means you've managed to shake it off, but not before it did something bad to you. Or perhaps you just held firm against it, suffering some consequences. The GM will say what, and what the mechanical effect is (if any). It might well include **Weathering Serious Harm**. If you were trying to shake off the attentions of an enemy patrol, perhaps they spotted you, but you then managed to get out of their sight – so they're looking for you, but

haven't found you right now. If you were trying to **Shake Off** an attacker, perhaps you took a hit before you escaped.

You lose or use up something in the process means you've had to burn through your fuel to get free, or you had to abandon your only weapon, or similar.

The threat intensifying or escalating means that although you've avoided the threat for the moment, it's very much still around, even more dangerous than before, and will probably return to threaten you or others. For instance, you get free of the fire that has broken out in engineering, but it spreads into the main engine room.

Note that **Shake Off** is never used if another more specific move applies. For example, if you're keeping an armed foe at bay by shooting at them, you're **Engaging In Battle**, not **Shaking It Off**.

Weather Serious Harm

When you **Weather Serious Harm**, roll +*Hard*. On a 10+, you withstand it but must *Mark Pressure*. On a 7–9 it hits you hard, the GM chooses two (may pick the same one twice):

- ✦ You must *Mark Pressure*.
- ✦ You are injured or (for pilots only) your fighter takes damage to a specific system – the GM says how it's slowing you down, getting in the way, or putting you in a spot.
- ✦ You lose something important (an item, your secure well-defended position, etc).

On a 6 or less you feel the full force of it: you are out of control, lost, trapped or helpless, and the GM may start a *Doom Clock*.

Weather Serious Harm is for when you have been unable to avoid an attack or other threat. We're not rolling to see if you can resist it or avoid it – that would be **Shake Off** – we're just trying to see how bad the effect is.

It has to be a seriously harmful blow. After all, if you roll badly you are potentially going to be helpless or at risk of death. So for example if someone punches you in the face it might be serious, but more likely it isn't. In that case the GM will most likely just tell you to *Mark Pressure* or some other lesser effect.

Injuries and damage to specific ship systems should be something serious and/or debilitating that makes life hard in the current scene. Don't choose something that won't matter until later. For instance, a broken leg could be appropriate for a character who is trying to fight their way to the flight deck past enemy boarding parties, because having a broken leg would make that a lot harder. But if they were already in their fighter, a broken leg would be no more than a minor annoyance, so you wouldn't bother noting such an injury – choose something else, or just hit them with some *Pressure*.

There's a list of ideas for *damage to ship's systems* on pages 189–190.

The *Doom Clock* represents how the consequences of the blow will spin further out of your control. You might be trapped in your damaged fighter with limited time before your air supply runs out. Or you might be unconscious behind enemy lines, with limited time before the enemy finds you. The GM chooses the danger and how fast the clock is ticking.

Seek Out

When you **Seek Out** something well hidden, say what you're looking for or just that you're sure there's something to find here, and roll +*Sharp*. On a *Hit*, you find it. On a 7–9, the GM chooses one:

- ✦ You attract unwanted attention.
- ✦ You discover something unexpected and horrifying (implicate a friend, discover a terrible truth, expose your own weakness, etc).
- ✦ You've found it, but something stands between you and it.
- ✦ Your investigation takes a long time (allowing your enemies to advance their plans, or using up resources).

Note, before you roll you have to say what you're looking for and how you're going to find it. You have to choose something that would have a decent chance of working! You can't just say "I'm searching for any traitors in the fleet" without having a clear means for finding them.

Sometimes *Scale* can come into this. It's not possible for one person to search the entire fleet for a bomb; depending on your method you might need a large number of people helping you to stand a chance of success. **Pulling Strings** is a good way to overcome problems of *Scale*.

Another way around this is to break the problem down, and identify something you can find more easily, as a stepping stone to the thing you're really after. For instance, if you're looking for a bomb, but there's just too many places it could be, you could search for sources of bomb-making materials, via your black market contacts. Then you could go and grill the right people on who has been buying their stuff. That's something one person can do fairly easily, and it might

lead to information that will make it easier to track down the bomber, and then find the bomb.

Discovering something unexpected or horrifying invites the GM to introduce some new fact that they maybe didn't have in mind before. The bomber turns out to be someone you care about, for example. GM: It's ok to reveal something horrifying that you'd been sort of planning anyway, but it's also great to introduce something new right at that moment, specifically chosen to horrify the investigator.

Something standing between you and it could mean it's in a hard-to-reach location, it's protected by someone or something, or similar. Information could be encrypted or locked in the brain of someone who isn't ready to spill their secrets. Whatever the case, you have more to do before you get what you wanted.

You should only choose the final option – that *the investigation takes a long time* – if time actually matters. Don't worry, it's usually possible to find a way to make sure that it does matter.

What about interrogation?

Interrogation does not enable you to force an NPC to tell you the truth, even when under duress. Yes, you can question NPCs and potentially get information that way – but that’s either because they choose to reveal it, or because you scrutinize their behaviour and words and deduce something they didn’t mean to reveal.

The *Aquarius Playbook* has a *Move* which does allow you to ask direct questions and get answers during an interrogation, but for everyone else the best you can do is to **Call Them On Their Shit**, demanding that they prove themselves by answering your questions. That will only work if you have some kind of emotional or social leverage, and even then they can opt to take the consequences rather than give you the truth.

The point is, as noted above, you need a way to get information before you can **Seek Out**, and interrogating someone doesn’t necessarily count. If you question a fanatical enemy agent, there’s basically no way that’s going to yield detailed information about their plans; so you can’t use an interrogation as the trigger to **Seek Out** those plans, unless as part of a broader investigation.

Interrogation scenes can, as a result, be a bit dull, and I don’t recommend you spend overlong on them. It can be fun to play through the highlights of such a scene, but a prolonged question and answer session is usually more frustrating than revealing.

Pull Strings

When you **Pull Strings** on the fleet, say who you're going to for help and what you want them to do, and roll +*Smooth*. On a *Hit* choose one:

- ✦ Gain help with a specific task from an NPC or group and *Hold* one towards choosing an option from the **Support** or **Interfere** Move list, or taking an *Action At Scale*.
- ✦ You gain temporary access to rare or restricted equipment, resources, skills, or information.
- ✦ Change people's behaviour on the fleet at large (curfew, rationing, calm rioting, etc).

On a 7-9, the GM chooses two:

- ✦ You can't do it without help from someone you you'd rather not get involved with.
- ✦ Someone demands a favour in return, or else they won't help.
- ✦ You attract unwanted attention.
- ✦ There's an unexpected cost or consequence.

Pulling Strings is used for any situation where you're using social or political leverage to get something done on the fleet. You might be reaching out through a contact network to get hold of something you need. You might be asking a faction to help you with something. You might be putting in place fleet-level measures like rationing, a quarantine, or a curfew.

This can include *getting help* from the military, including by giving orders through the military chain of command. This is because we assume that everyone is busy doing their regular duties. For example, if you wanted to get the marines to search the fleet for smuggled goods (act at scale), you'd have to **Pull Strings** even if you're the captain of the marines. If you want any

mechanical benefit from help from military subordinates (**Support** options) you must roll to **Pull Strings**, even though they answer to you. On a 6 or less, the GM should normally assume your orders still get followed – remember, **Failure Is Not An Option!** – but have something go wrong or some other problem arise. With that said, in extreme circumstances it is possible for a mutiny to happen – just make sure it's supported by the fiction.

Note that choosing to gain *Hold* means you can get the benefits of the **Support** Move without having to roll it in the middle of a dangerous situation. You still have to be in a position where the relevant NPC or faction can help you, and say what they're doing to help. They have to be actually available to help in the scene, you can't just say "and then so-and-so appears out of nowhere and leaps to my aid!" If an NPC is helping you in scene already and you have a *Relationship* with them, e.g. if they're part of your military unit and backing you up in combat, you can roll the **Support** Move instead, without having **Pulled Strings** ahead of time.

Notice that "*rare or restricted equipment, resources, skills, or information*" is a relative term. It excludes anything that you personally have routine access to. For example, if you are a fighter pilot, a fighter ship is neither rare nor restricted. To anyone else, it probably is. Conversely, a fighter pilot would have to **Pull Strings** to get access to engineering equipment. It is important to note that, while it might seem as though a senior officer or politician could easily pull rank to get any equipment or skills from anywhere on the fleet, most of these are not routinely accessible to them, so they still have to **Pull Strings** to get them.

Acting at Scale means you take on a task that's bigger than you alone could normally attempt. Once you've **Pulled Strings** and opted to *Act at Scale*, you undertake the task, rolling any relevant *Moves* as normal to see how successful you are, but the scale of any resulting effect can be larger and perhaps more significant than if you were acting alone. A good example is if you wanted to **Seek Out** something across the whole fleet. That's something you couldn't realistically do as an individual; but with help from a larger group, you can. Roll to **Pull Strings**, and then if you've been able to *Act at Scale*, roll to **Seek Out** to determine whether and how you find what you were looking for.

Changing people's behaviour on the fleet at large is how you typically solve social problems resulting from build-up of *Attrition*. You could use it to deal with civil unrest (e.g. by making concessions to whatever is causing discontent). You could use it to deal with *Shortages* (e.g. through rationing). Or you can also use it to deal with issues such as disease (e.g. through imposing a quarantine). Any time that you want to get a result at large scale that can't be achieved through any other move, consider whether this option might help. You can also use this option when taking actions to generally boost morale, and thereby reduce *Attrition*, if you wish.

If you need *help from someone you'd rather not get involved with*, that means that whoever you went to for help isn't able to do it on their own. Perhaps they hook you up with help from someone else, or perhaps you end up having to approach someone else directly. Either way, the GM will choose a person or faction that is disreputable, inconvenient, or otherwise problematic for you.

If *someone demands a favour*, it could be the original person you asked, or it might be someone else who is involved (including "someone you'd rather not get involved with" if the GM chose that option). They may not ask you to do anything immediately, but they won't help you unless you agree to their

Player moves

demands. GM: if they're asking for something in future, make sure to make a note of it, so you can bring it up later – and if the character refuses to honour the deal, they'll have to do something to handle the aggrieved NPC, or they'll make them wish they had.

Unexpected costs or consequences are in addition to anything you'd normally expect – so if you impose food rationing then you'd expect there to be a certain amount of black-market trading going on, those aren't unexpected. But you wouldn't expect a specific NPC to get sick from lack of food, and their wife to start stealing medical supplies, for example.

What, no question Moves?

If you're a PBTA veteran, you'll be familiar with the sort of *Moves* that let players ask the GM questions about the world, about the situation, about NPCs and what they're thinking and feeling. Some of the *Playbooks* in *Last Fleet* have them, but there's no basic *Move* for doing this like there are in a lot of other games.

That doesn't mean there's no way for you to get information! In fact one of the GM's *Principles* is to make the fiction and mechanics transparent, so if you're not sure about something, ask – you don't need to make a *Move* to get answers.

What it does mean is that most characters don't have a way to determine if there's an ambush waiting for them, or if someone's lying. *Last Fleet* is full of concealed motives and suchlike, and for most players, you'll just have to deal with not knowing for sure what someone's up to. **Seek Out** is your main tool for getting to the bottom of mysteries, if you're so inclined.

Cover Up

When you **Cover Up** something serious, roll +*Smooth*. On a 10+ they buy your deception, as long as no clear countervailing evidence appears. On a 7-9, the GM chooses:

- ✦ They're only fooled temporarily.
- ✦ You must give a concrete assurance, provide some extra corroboration, or do something extra to throw them off.
- ✦ Someone realizes you're up to something, and it won't be the last you hear of this.

Cover Up can be used for situations where you're trying to conceal something you're doing right there and then, or to deflect notice from wider events. Either way, you have to say what you're doing that could conceal, deceive, distract, or confuse the target.

It can be used on an individual or a group, if you're in a position to fool them directly yourself. If you need to **Cover Up** more indirectly, through rumour or propaganda or similar, you will need to **Pull Strings** to *Act at Scale* before you can make the **Cover Up** Move. This is particularly the case if you're trying to conceal something from the whole fleet.

Cover Up is only used for serious situations where the repercussions of discovery really matter. Don't use it for hiding your concealed bottle of moonshine – unless possession of alcohol is a really serious offence in your game. But feel free to use it to conceal your black-market moonshine operation.

Cover Up is not generally used for simple stealth. Avoiding someone's notice entirely is typically handled with **Shake Off**. But if the target is aware of you and you're trying to conceal the fact you're carrying an illegal firearm, by all means roll to **Cover Up**.

If *they're only fooled temporarily*, it means that you've got a limited period of time before they realize what's up and (most likely) come after you or raise the alarm or similar.

Requiring something additional can vary a lot depending on what it is you're trying to do. If you're trying to get into a command centre on a fake ID, perhaps the security guard asks you to surrender your firearm, so now you're going in unarmed. If you're trying to convince the whole fleet that everything is under control when it really isn't, then maybe you'll have to make up a really big lie to distract them from the truth. Work with the GM to figure out what will convince or distract the target most effectively.

If *someone realizes you're up to something*, that might mean they're going to investigate you later; it could mean they'll try to blackmail you; they might come after you demanding answers; or it could mean you've simply lost the trust of someone whose opinion matters for you. The GM decides how much the NPC has deduced, and what they're going to do about it.

Cover Up vs Seek Out

Cover Up and **Seek Out** might seem to be in direct opposition to each other. And indeed, it can be that they are – if it happens that one character is trying to **Seek Out** the exact thing that the other is trying to **Cover Up**. This is rare, however, for a number of reasons.

First, in order to **Seek Out** something, you have to believe there's something to look for. A successful **Cover Up** would persuade you otherwise. Similarly, to **Cover Up** something, you must believe that someone might be trying to find it out. A successful **Seek Out** could mean that someone finds you before you have the chance to distract them with lies. So in a lot of cases, one person gets the drop on the other and there is no conflict.

It's more common that the two are adjacent rather than directly in conflict. Someone might try to **Seek Out** a murder weapon while the other tries to **Cover Up** that they are the murderer, for instance. So before assuming that the *Moves* are directly opposed, consider whether they might be aimed at subtly different things, such that both can succeed.

Remember, too, that **Cover Up** is about persuading another character of a truth, while **Seek Out** is (typically) about finding something. It's perfectly possible to use **Seek Out** to catch someone red-handed only to be persuaded that they are innocent. You have all the facts, but you disbelieve the logical conclusion that you should draw from them.

Despite the above, you might find yourself in the rare situation where one person's successful **Seek Out** would defeat another person's successful **Cover Up**, and vice versa. If so, the first person should roll to Interfere with the second person's **Cover Up** roll. The results of the **Cover Up** roll – modified as necessary – then resolve the conflict. This means that a good **Cover Up** roll is generally able to win out, and sneaky PCs are able to conceal things if they really want to.

Reach Out*

When you **Reach Out** to someone who matters to you, choose one or more:

- ✦ Share a significant doubt or fear with them.
- ✦ Share a significant hope or dream with them.
- ✦ Share a significant failure or regret with them.
- ✦ Share your feelings about them.

For PCs, ask them if they respond positively, and roll +*Warm* if they do. For NPCs, roll first: on a *Hit*, they respond positively. On a 10+, you each *Erase* one *Pressure*; on 7–9, choose one of you who *Erases* one *Pressure*. Either way, increase your *Relationship* with each other by one.

Reaching Out means opening up to them in some way, sharing what you're thinking and feeling. It implies a fairly friendly interaction: yelling your feelings at them during an argument wouldn't trigger the *Move*. It also implies novelty – you can't just keep sharing the same doubt or fear over and over again to crank out an unlimited supply of *Pressure* reductions.

To get the benefit, they need to respond positively, which means neither rejecting nor ignoring what you're telling them. They needn't respond in kind: as long as it's clear that they're listening and treating what you've shared as important.

You can use **Reach Out** with more than one person at once. If so, you get to trigger the *Move* as long as one of them responds positively. Roll once, but only those who responded positively get to *Erase Pressure* or increase *Relationships*.

Let Loose*

When you **Let Loose** and indulge your base needs, roll +*Raw*. On a *Hit*, everyone involved *Erases* one *Pressure*. On a 10+, you choose one option from the list below and decide the details; on a 7–9 you still choose, but the GM decides the details, and they'll make it something you'll immediately regret.

- ✦ You end up in the arms of someone you shouldn't.
- ✦ You share a secret you shouldn't.
- ✦ You make a promise you shouldn't.
- ✦ You anger or alienate someone that matters to you (you may reduce an appropriate *Relationship*).

Say what happens, and who else is involved.

On a *Miss*, the same as a 7–9 but nobody erases any *Pressure*.

Letting Loose means you're doing indulging some sort of vice in a fairly uncontrolled way. It could mean drinking, taking drugs, gambling, sex, sports, fighting, bragging, or gossiping. It needn't be something you're heavily into: e.g. you don't have to be an alcoholic to go out and get stinking drunk. It does have to be something you'd find relaxing and/or cathartic. This is not a case of having a couple of drinks or a light-hearted ball game: it means you're throwing yourself into the activity, and potentially losing control.

When a group of two or more PCs **Let Loose** together, one person should roll, with the others **Supporting** if they wish. The person rolling to **Let Loose** chooses who *Erases Pressure*, but anyone can benefit. In such a case, while it's possible for the options listed to affect a player character other than the person who rolled the *Move*, that should only happen if they agree, or if they rolled a 7-9 on **Support**. Either way they should be involved in the decision as to which option to choose.

Note that the options listed are pretty wide open in terms of how you interpret them. "*Ending up in someone's arms*" could vary from a friendly embrace to an intense romantic scene to wild sex. "*Sharing a secret*" could mean something personal or state secrets. "*Someone that matters to you*" could mean a friend or lover, or it could mean a superior officer. In any case it has to be something you're going to regret. Choose something that's fun and interesting to play out.

The consequences of a 7-9 result could include increasing the level of or gaining a *Relationship* with another character who is involved, where appropriate. It depends on whether you end up closer to them, or caring more about them (or vice versa). It's not automatic, though, because there's plenty of ways for these consequences to play out in a completely unemotional way: casual sex, *sharing an operational secret* rather than something personal,

angering someone important as opposed to someone you care about, and so on. In cases like that, there'd (probably) be no change to the *Relationship*.

GM: note that on a 7-9 or *Miss* you get quite a lot of control over what the PC does. Pay attention to your *Principles* here: we want something that's fun and interesting for the player, not something that arbitrarily humiliates them. If in doubt, consider checking in with the player before you make the decision. This is especially true with the option where they *end up in someone's arms*. They've put their trust in you by choosing that option – don't let them down.

Call Someone On Their Shit

When you **Call Someone On Their Shit**, tell them what their problem is and what they'd need to do to convince you otherwise, and roll *+Hard*. On a *Hit* they choose from the options below; on a 10+ they are limited to the first two options, and if they choose the first they *Mark XP*.

- ✦ They act to prove you wrong by doing what you asked.
- ✦ They openly and forcefully refuse to do what you asked them to (and they *Mark Pressure*).
- ✦ They openly and unequivocally admit you're right.
- ✦ They act contrite and give you something they think you want.
- ✦ They respond by **Calling You On Your Shit**.

Calling Someone On Their Shit is a form of social and emotional pressure. You tell them what's wrong with them and what they need to do differently, and the better your roll, the harder it is for them to refuse.

On a *Strong Hit* they must either act to prove you wrong (meaning they do whatever you said they'd need to do to convince you otherwise) or ostentatiously refuse to do so and *Mark Pressure*. On a *Weak Hit*, you have options to side-step the pressure they're putting on you in various ways.

In addition to the potential mechanical effects of refusing your demands, there may be social consequences. For example, if you accuse someone of treachery and they seem to respond by acting shiftily, that is likely to confirm the accusation in some peoples' eyes.

On a *Hit* NPCs generally do what you've asked them to do, unless it goes against their interests to do so.

Examples include:

- ✦ Katerina demands Isaac explain why he's been sneaking around so much. "I'm beginning to have my doubts about you, Isaac – I don't know if I can trust you anymore." She ***Calls Isaac On His Shit*** and says that he has to tell her what he's really up to. Katerina rolls an 11. Isaac doesn't want to tell her that he's been smuggling illegal drugs to a sick friend, but if he refuses he'll have to *Mark Pressure* – plus Katerina may assume he's up to something far worse. He confesses what he's been up to and begs her to keep his secret.
- ✦ Anton wants Ursula to give him access to the high security lab on deck D, to examine some secret files. She's refusing – he isn't authorized to be there. "Come on Ursula – you know you can trust me. After everything I've done for you I can't believe you're refusing me this one little favour." He ***Calls Her On Her Shit*** and rolls a 7. She doesn't want to give him access to the lab, so she apologizes and offers to check the files for him instead (act contrite and do something she thinks he wants her to do). Anton doesn't really want her to see those files, but he doesn't have much choice, so he takes her offer.
- ✦ Ebony is charging out alone to rescue a stranded civilian ship from a massive wave of enemy fighters. Ruth cries out to her over the radio "Don't be an idiot, Ebony! You can't fight them all, you knucklehead!" She's ***Calling Her On Her Shit***. She rolls a 5. The GM tells Ebony to *Mark Pressure*, and starts a *Doom Clock*. If she doesn't get the civilian ship to safety before it runs out, the fighters will destroy it.

Support/Interfere*

When you **Support** or **Interfere** with another character's *Move*, *Mark Pressure* and roll +*Warm* (support) or +*Sharp* (interfere). On a 10+, *Hold* two. On a 7–9 *Hold* one, and be prepared to be entangled in any fallout from the *Move*. Spend *Hold* to:

- ✦ Give +/-1 to the *Move* after they roll.
- ✦ Create an opportunity or problem for them.
- ✦ Redirect a negative impact of the *Move* from the person making it onto someone else.

When an NPC supports your *Move*, you roll +*Relationship* on their behalf.

To **Support** or **Interfere** you must say how you're helping or hindering the target character. Encouragement or moral support isn't enough to **Support** someone – you must be providing useful information, resources, or actions that help theirs. Equally, annoying or insulting someone probably isn't enough to count for **Interference** by itself: you need to be actively getting in their way or diverting their energies from what they're trying to do.

NPCs can **Support** you, but only if you have a *Relationship* with them. If so, you roll +*Relationship* instead of +*Warm*. You still have to spend *Pressure*, and you gain and spend the *Hold* on their behalf. The GM should be particularly attentive to consequences rebounding on the NPC – make sure they suffer when things go wrong! note that NPCs, even NPCs you have no *Relationship* with, can also provide help if you have **Pulled Strings** ahead of time; in that case, you can gain *Hold* which can be used in the same way as *Hold* for the **Support** *Move*, but without the risk of something going awry there and then. See pages 97–98 for more detail on this.

Depending on the situation, on a 7–9 you may be exposed to the risks of the *Move* you're trying to influence. If you roll a 10+ then you won't be exposed to any additional risk through **Supporting/Interfering**. That doesn't mean you're immune to fallout – obviously if someone was trying to protect you from harm by **Engaging In Battle**, and their roll to **Engage In Battle** fails, then you'll take the consequences of the failure even if you were **Supporting** them and rolled a 10+.

Don't forget the combined modifier to any dice roll can't go higher than +4 or lower than –3.

Wait Helplessly*

When you **Wait Helplessly** as others tackle a major problem, after another player rolls the dice you can say what you're doing to cope and **Mark two Pressure** to give them +1 to their roll.

Wait Helplessly can be viewed as a strictly meta-game effect; or you can think of it as the gods intervening in response to a silent prayer, if you prefer. Either way it helps other players to be engaged when they aren't in the spotlight, since it provides a mechanism for them to take part in the scene, even indirectly. It also helps to spotlight the sense of fear and doubt of non-combatants during battles, for example.

You must say what you're doing to cope! No fair just spending two **Pressure** without any roleplaying.

Raise The Pressure*

When you **Raise The Pressure** on yourself*, pushing yourself beyond your limits, **Mark Pressure** up to three times and add +1 per **Pressure Marked** to a roll you just made.

You can only **Raise The Pressure** once per roll. The usual maximum of +4 added to a roll applies.

You can't **Raise The Pressure** with **Cardinal Moves**. These **Moves** are marked with an asterisk (*) next to the name of the **Move**.

Momentum Move

When there's a prolonged lull in the action, where the fleet is (for the moment at least) safe and neither under attack nor dealing with a direct and immediate threat, the GM rolls **+Momentum**. On a 10+ the GM offers the fleet an opportunity to seize an advantage or hurt the enemy. On a 7-9 the GM introduces a threat to the fleet, but with the opportunity to avoid or mitigate the danger. On a 6 or less, a threat materializes without warning, and all that can be done is damage limitation.

The purpose of the **Momentum Move** is to keep the game moving, and keep the pressure on, through continuous introduction of opportunities and threats. You should roll it at the start of the first session, but after that it only kicks in if you've had a few scenes without the fleet being exposed to any real danger.

It's important to keep things from getting out of control. An existential threat to the fleet every session could lead to a never-ending adrenaline ride with no time for the characters to interact with each other. That's why you should have a prolonged lull – with time for characters to **Let Loose, Reach Out**, and so on – before making this Move. You can vary the length of these quiet periods: sometimes it might be just enough to catch their breath, but usually longer than that – enough that they can go into the coming storm with good reserves of unmarked *Pressure* slots.

When you make the **Momentum Move**, something interesting will always happen – a threat or an opportunity. You should choose something that's appropriate to managing the pace of the game, not necessarily always something that puts the fleet in deadly danger or marking a potential major turning point in the war.



End Of Scene Move

At the end of a scene, check whether any of the tracks should change.

- ✦ Did someone suffer a significant blow (social, emotional, or physical), do something exhausting, get given a truly daunting task, or have to do something horrible? They must *Mark Pressure*.
- ✦ Did they alienate someone they care about? Reduce their *Relationship* (if any) by one, and considering if they should *Mark Pressure* as well.
- ✦ Did the fleet, its people, or its resources take a significant blow? *Mark Attrition*.
- ✦ Was there a publicly visible event which was unsettling, scary, or indicative that the fleet is losing? *Mark Attrition*.
- ✦ Did the fleet gain new resources or skilled people? *Erase Attrition*.
- ✦ Was the scene a major turning point in the war? Change *Momentum*.

In theory, the above effects should be applied right away when the fictional trigger happens. But let's be honest, sometimes in the heat of the action it's easy to forget to apply them as consistently as we should. So at the **End Of The Scene**, it's a good idea to look over the events of the scene to see if any of these should have applied. Obviously, if you applied an effect during the scene itself, you shouldn't apply it a second time at the end of the scene.

ROLE MOVES

Role Moves are only available to characters who have chosen them from their starting allocation of three *Playbook Moves*, or bought them as an *Advance*.

Not all *Role Moves* will be taken in your group, of course. In that case, it is normally appropriate to handle relevant actions off-screen. If there is no PC engineer, don't focus on damaged ship systems, for instance. If you don't have any pilots, you may wish to downplay space battles, or focus on the actions of the bigger ships. These roles are still fulfilled, of course – by NPCs. But we aren't all that interested in the detail of their actions.

Tactician

When your people go into battle, *Hold* one for each that is true:

- ✦ You have a good view of the battlefield and direct comms with your people.
- ✦ Your people are trained and prepared for this sort of conflict.
- ✦ You knew the details of the battle in advance.

You can spend your *Hold*, one-for-one, to do one of the following:

- ✦ **Support** someone by ordering your forces to assist them or saying how you'd drilled them for this eventuality.
- ✦ Order your forces to redeploy and erase one *Segment* on a battle *Clock*.
- ✦ Order a swift reaction to a problem and negate one *Attrition* as it is inflicted.

The purpose of this *Move* is to enable *Tacticians* to take part in battles, and to generate appropriate strategies on the fly, as though they had planned them out in advance. The *Move* is mostly used for barking orders like “attack pattern

alpha!" or "B Wing, protect the *Olympic Carrier!*" and everyone swings into action, granting you the mechanical benefit described.

You get an additional option if you had advance knowledge of where the enemy would be, what numbers they have, the layout of the battlefield and so on. In that case, you can plan a detailed strategy, which enables you to retroactively declare that you had something planned all along, and have it be true. This is true even after the enemy has started moving around, since we assume that you'd thought out various scenarios.

Tacticians can also take command of the capital ship's big guns and can occasionally use them to provide **Support** in battle. See "Running space battles" on pages 191–198 for more on this.

Engineer/scientist

When you work on an engineering job (*research, repair, design, construct*), roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+ you complete it successfully – *Erase* one *Attrition* or fix a specific problem. On a 7–9, the same but the GM chooses: it's a temporary fix, it's unstable, it's not working as well as you hoped, you need _____ to complete it, you'll have to cannibalize _____, it's going to take a while.

The GM can choose an extra option from the 7–9 list (even if you rolled a 10+) if any of the following are true: you don't have enough time, you don't have the right tools or crew, the project is extremely ambitious.

Working an engineering job can fix a specific problem like a damaged fighter or malfunctioning navigation computer, or fix generalized damage and even wear-and-tear by *Erasing* one *Attrition*.

See the Damage section (pages 186–191) for more about damage to ship's systems, including what happens if something is *Unstable*.

Something that just *Erases* one *Attrition* should never be a temporary fix. You don't want to have to keep track of how much *Attrition* is temporary, so just don't choose this option!

Other characters who attempt anything more than simple repairs will probably *frak* it up (a great opportunity for a GM Move) though they can potentially work under an engineer's direction. You might occasionally see engineers directing a character to repair something over the radio, if they're stuck in a busted fighter. This generally requires the non-engineer to **Shake Off** the risk of disaster, before the engineer can roll the **Engineer Role Move**. The two characters don't get to **Support** each other in this instance – there's no easy way for the engineer to anticipate what the other character might mess up, and the other character doesn't have the expertise to do more than follow instructions. Even if everything goes well, the GM still gets to choose from the 7–9 list for not having the right crew.

What if there's no **Engineer**? Things break, and if nobody chooses the **Engineer Role** then there's nobody to fix them, right? Well, no. There's probably still engineers on board. You just won't be delving into the detail of how you fix engineering problems. If there's something important that breaks, it still gets fixed. But the GM gets to make *Moves* as usual. Maybe it takes a long time to get fixed, or requires some resource that the characters will have to get hold of. Or maybe not – since nobody has chosen the **Engineer Move**, it's legit to just keep engineering problems off-camera entirely.

Marine

When you **Engage In Battle**, you choose one less option on a 7-9.

Pilot

When you pilot a fighter, you can pilot it without incident in normal situations, and depending on the capabilities of the individual craft, you can use it to **Engage In Battle**, **Shake Off** a threat, **Support** or **Interfere** with other pilots, or **Seek Out** when scouting. Other characters who attempt to do this are courting disaster – the GM can make a *Move* in response.

In addition when you **Engage In Battle** while piloting a combat-ready ship, you choose one less option on a 7-9.

Influencer

When you **Pull Strings**, you may choose one more option from the first list or have the GM choose one less from the second list.

An *Influencer* might be a politician, fixer, or any well-connected person.

Investigator

When you **Seek Out**, you choose your 7-9 result instead of the GM. On a 10+ the GM may offer you something extra in addition to what you were looking for – if you take it, though, you must choose from the 7-9 list.

An *Investigator* could be a researcher, journalist or any perspicacious person.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Grace is GMing a game of *Last Fleet* with Alex (playing pilot Amos “Ace” Acker the Aries), Clare (playing Commander Constanca Catan the Capricorn) and Leroy (playing Lieutenant Luis Lauder the Libra, the chief engineer). I promise, no more alliteration after this.

Grace: Ok, that’s setup mostly done. All we need to do now is to create the starting situation for the game. I’m going to ask you each a question about it.

Amos, you’ve just escaped from a crisis. What threat were you facing?

Alex: Oh, ok. Let’s say a bomb went off right on *Patroclus*, and the fuel tanks caught fire.

Grace: Cool. Constanca, whose quick-thinking actions got you out of it?

Clare: I think that’d be me. I vented all the oxygen from that whole section of the ship, putting out the fire but also losing us a lot of our fuel, and ejecting a whole bunch of crew into space.

We assume here that the world, fleet, enemy and characters have already been created.

Grace is using the first session questions. She’s **Speaking To The Fiction**, addressing the character Amos rather than the player Alex.

Alex made this answer up. He’s **Playing To Find Out What Happens**.

Grace thinks that this is a pretty bad situation already, so she focuses on how it was resolved rather than making it worse.

Clare jumps on the opportunity to focus on her playbook’s schtick, which is taking decisions at a cost.

Example of Play

Grace: That'd do it. I'm going to go ahead and create a fuel *Shortage* for that. I'll start a *Doom Clock* to go with it. You've got four jumps left before you run out of fuel.

Great. One last question. Luis, who got hurt in the crisis?

Leroy: Let's say me. I was with my crew fighting the fire, trying to stop it getting into the aft fuel tanks. I got badly burned and had to be dragged off to sick bay – otherwise I'd have been blown into space with the others.

Grace: Ok. So it's the day after the crisis. *Patroclus* is safely parked in the lee of a nearby moon. The fires are out. There's no immediate threat to the fleet. Amos, what are you doing right now?

Alex I think I spent the last few hours desperately trying to pick up any survivors from when the commander vented the ship. There weren't many. I'm exhausted, and I'm heading to the ship's bar to get wasted.

Grace: Sounds like you're planning to **Let Loose?**

Alex: Yup.

Grace: Cool. Are you going alone, or is anyone else in the frame for a night on the lash?

Grace is **Imposing The Mechanical Consequences** of the stuff that Clare just described happening in the fiction.

Leroy picks up what Clare narrated a moment ago. He's **Engaging The People Around The Table** – and setting up some pretty cool recriminations.

Grace **Makes Space For Interpersonal Drama** by taking the opportunity to emphasize that they're starting the game in a quiet phase.

Anyone could have called out the *Move* here, but the GM is often the person most likely to do it, and Grace is no exception.

Alex looks around the table. The others shake their heads.

Leroy: I'd come, but I'm in intensive care.

Alex: Guess I'm going alone.

Grace: Ok, so what's the ship's bar like?

Grace uses the **Ask Questions** technique.

Alex: I don't think *Patroclus* is outfitted with one as standard, but the crew have set one up in an empty cargo hold. Its makeshift furniture is old oil drums and crates, and the glasses are a hotchpotch of mugs, too-fancy champagne flutes, jars and so on.

Again, Alex is just making this stuff up. The random ideas he comes up with on the spot are good stuff.

Grace: Cool. Let's roll the *Move* now and see what comes out of it.

It would be fine to describe the scene a bit more first, but by rolling straight away Grace can jump to the action.

Alex rolls 2d6 and adds his *Raw*, which is +1. He gets an 8.

Alex: Ok, a *Weak Hit*. I get to choose an option but you decide how it plays out. So, I think I'll take "end up in the arms of someone I shouldn't".

Grace: Nice. Ok, let me think who that might be.

Clare: Actually, if you don't have anyone specific in mind, it could be me. I wouldn't go to the bar with "Ace", but ending up in bed together sounds wonderfully inappropriate.

This would have been a good moment for Grace to **Ask A Question**, but Clare offers herself up anyway.

Example of Play

Grace: Cool, that sounds fun. So in effect you are letting loose together, even though you hadn't planned to. The result affects you both, ok?

It's Grace's decision what happens, but obviously she accepts Clare's offer. She checks in that they're ok with the result affecting them both.

Clare and Alex nod.

Grace could have instead told them what happens and get them to describe it themselves. Either way is fine.

Grace: Great. So you're both hitting the bottle hard in different parts of the bar, and end up hitting the dance floor at the same time. We see a bit of dancing, which gets closer together-

Clare: The commander's dance moves are pretty great, actually.

Obviously given it involves their characters, the players get to come in with their own description too though.

Alex: Not Amos. He's one step above dad dancing.

Grace: Haha! Now I'm imagining his kids watching in horror. Anyway, little bit of canoodling, and cut to someone's quarters. Hmm, is that ok? You don't mind me narrating you an off-screen sex scene?

Grace is doing a safety check here. Mechanically it's her call what happens but of course she's not going to force a sex scene on two unwilling players without checking.

Both give the thumbs-up.

Grace: Cool. Whose quarters is it?

Asking Questions again (and it's a good one).

Clare: Definitely mine. No way is the commander doing the walk of shame out of Amos's room.

Grace: Ok, fair. So, what do you do afterwards?

Cuddling, more sex...?

Clare: I think once her desires are satisfied, Catan kicks him out. Don't want him leaving in the morning when people might see.

These sort of details are great for establishing some of the emotional charge of a sex scene without getting into unnecessary explicit detail.

Alex: Wow. That's nice. Cool ok, so Ace is standing in the corridor outside in his boxers, carrying his clothes in his arms.

Clare: I reckon only some of your clothes.

Alex: Haha, yeah.

Grace: Cool! So. Ace, how do you feel about what just happened?

Alex: I think Amos pretty much does this sort of thing all the time. No big deal. Bragging about getting with the XO is going to be great.

Clare winces.

Alex: Is that ok?

Clare: Oh yeah, I look forward to the fallout. Just, you know. Goddamn it, Amos.

Grace: Cool, so I think we'll come back to Amos's ill-advised bragging later on, but for now shall we find out what's happening with Luis?

This is Grace calling the scene to a close. It's not like Grace is the final authority on this – anyone could say “hold on, there's something more I want to do”, if they wanted to.

Example of Play

Clare: Well actually, at the risk of seeming like I'm inserting myself into everyone's scenes, I was thinking Catan might go and see Lauder for an alcohol- and guilt-fuelled visit.

Leroy: Well, Luis ain't going anywhere, so that's fine with me.

Clare: Cool. Ok, so Catan shows up at sickbay, dismisses the doctor and goes to sit down beside Luis's bed. Her uniform is dishevelled. Not to mention her hair.

Notice here how Clare and Leroy decide they want a scene, and frame it, without the GM getting involved.

Leroy: Luis is sitting up in bed, studying a tablet loaded up with work stuff. His head is bandaged up pretty good. As you approach he looks up and scowls.

"What are you doing here. Commander."

Clare: Catan's eyebrows shoot up. She is not used to being spoken to in this way.

"I just thought I'd check in on my chief engineer. You took a pretty bad beating, Chief. How are you doing?"

Leroy: "Oh, I'm recovering fine, Commander. I can't say the same for the people who got flushed into space." I'm **Calling Catan on her Shit**. I'm saying she's a cold-hearted sociopath.

Here Leroy calls out his own move. Anyone else could have done so if he hadn't.

What I want is for her to prove she isn't
is for her to admit she was wrong and
apologize

Leroy rolls the dice and gets a 10.

Clare: Yeah, not happening. "I make no apology
for doing what's necessary to save the
ship, Lieutenant. Those people died
doing their duty. My duty is to make the
hard decisions, and I'll do that whenever
I need to."

Catan came here to apologize but she's
not the sort to do it on demand. She
gets up and leaves.

Grace: Nice. I like it. Anyway, as you're leaving
sickbay, the sirens start blaring red alert.
The ship is under attack.

Clare: I'm heading for the command centre, via
a splash of cold water in the face.

Alex: Same. I mean, flight deck. But same.

Leroy: Yeah, me too.

Grace: Hmm, ok. You're still in pretty bad shape,
right?

Leroy: Right.

Clare has to do what Luis
asked her to or forcefully
refuse.

She chooses to refuse, and so
she has to *Mark Pressure*.

Normally you'd leave a longer
quiet period after some
action, to allow everyone
time to explore their
relationships and get their
Pressure down. This is a
game example, so we're
cutting the interpersonal
drama short.

Example of Play

Grace: Ok, that may come back to bite you later. No effect right now, but if things get hot later on, you may end up having to shake that wound off.

Grace is **Making The Fiction And Mechanics Transparent**.

Leroy: Yeah, I figured.

Grace: Great. So, fighters scramble. Ace, you shoot out into space in your fighter. You can see the massive, terrifying bulk of a Corax tendrill, the Tenebrium rift glowing around it. Corax pod ships are pouring out. The civilian ships are moving to get behind *Patroclus*, but the *Menelaus* has gotten itself stuck on the wrong side of the action and there's pod ships inbound. What do you do?

Grace is bringing the world to life with her descriptions, while also signalling a general threat (the tendrill and pod ships) and a more immediate one (the attack on *Menelaus*). While at it, she's setting the clock ticking and launching a wave of ships.

Alex: I'm getting in between the pod ships and *Menelaus*. I'm gonna hold them off until she can rejoin the fleet.

Grace: Awesome. Roll to **Engage In Battle**.

Alex: Argh, that's a 4. I can get it up to a 6 but I'd hit *Breaking Point* and I'd still miss the roll.

Here Alex has rolled a *Miss*. But he can use **Raise The Pressure** to increase the roll by up to three – or he would, if he didn't already have three *Pressure Marked*. Luckily Clare is able to help.

Clare: Hold up there. I get to use **Tactician** to help out here, right?

Tactician hold ought to have been worked out at the start of the battle but obviously nobody makes a fuss about it.

Grace: Sure. Let's see, you've got a good view of the battlefield and direct comms, your people have trained for this sort of conflict, but you didn't plan this specific situation. Right?

Clare: Seems right to me. So I get two *Hold*, I can spend one of it to **Support** Amos.

Grace: What are you actually doing to support him?

Grace is checking that the trigger for the **Support** Move has actually been met.

Clare: I'll order the big guns to light up the enemy formation with some flak. I can't hit them, but I can force them to scatter and make life easier for Ace.

Grace: Cool cool, *Mark Pressure* and roll the **Support** move.

Clare: Nice, I got a 10!

Clare gets a 10, so that means she gets two *Hold*, which she can spend on giving Ace bonuses and other help.

Alex: That's a relief. Ok, are you giving me +2? That would save me from hitting *Breaking Point*.

Clare nods.

Alex: Cool, so I'll hold them off, but I take fire in the process. Rolling to **Weather Serious Harm**... that's an 8. I could stand to roll a bit better here. I guess I do hit *Breaking Point* after all, and, uh, I take damage to a specific system.

Alex could have chosen to leave someone exposed, but that carries its own risks. As it is, his **Weather Serious Harm** Move pretty much has the same effect.

Example of Play

Grace: Noice. Ok, you race in and blast the pod ship formation apart with Catan's support, scattering the survivors and buying *Menelaus* time to get back to the fleet. But, you take a hit from a pod ship, and your engines power down with an off-key groaning noise. Oh, and I'm *Marking the Battle Clock*, so that's one *Attrition*.

Ace is dead in the water and the surviving pod ships rally to close in on his position. What does anyone do?

Leroy: Goddamn it, Amos. Ok, I'm getting on the comm. Time to see whether I can talk through a repair via a knuckleheaded fighter jock...



example of play



playbooks



playbooks

ARIES ♈

You're a creature of passion. Whether it's work or play, you throw yourself into it with a lack of restraint that can often get you into trouble. You'll go where angels fear to tread, and cross lines that others balk at.

stats

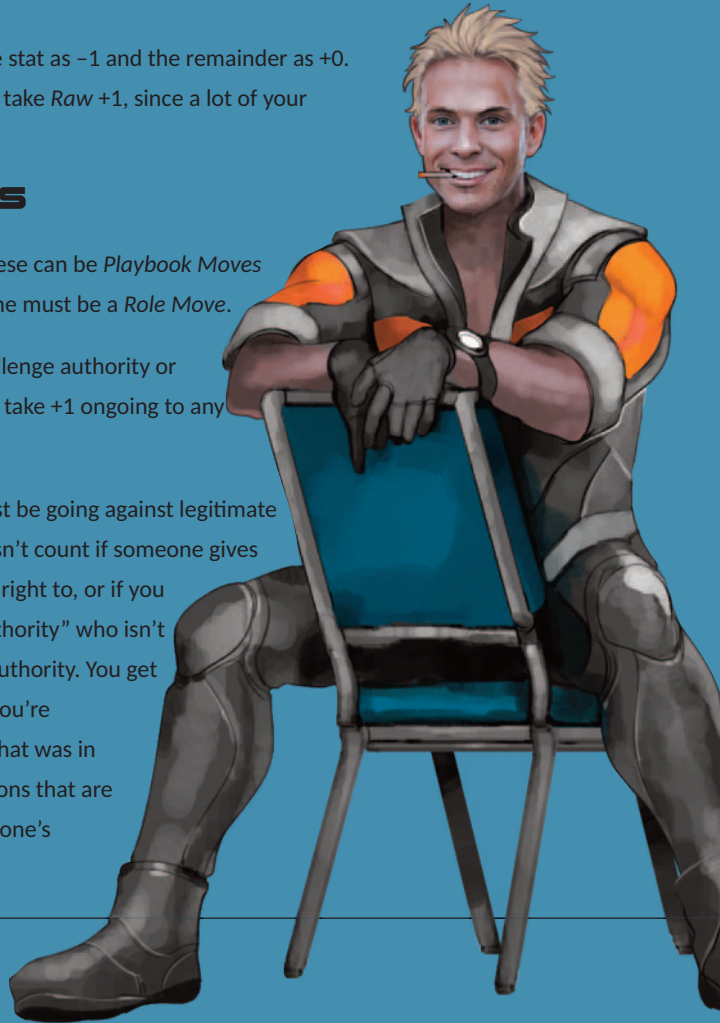
Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You will probably want to take *Raw* +1, since a lot of your *Moves* are powered by it.

ARIES MOVES

You get three *Moves* - these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Maverick. When you challenge authority or defy orders, *Mark XP* and take +1 ongoing to any associated rolls.

To use this *Move* you must be going against legitimate orders/authority - it doesn't count if someone gives you "orders" who had no right to, or if you challenge someone's "authority" who isn't in a genuine position of authority. You get the bonus for as long as you're undertaking the activity that was in defiance of orders or actions that are directly challenging someone's authority.



Shotgun Diplomacy.* When you **Call Someone On Their Shit** by getting right up in their face and giving them your opinion with both barrels, roll +Raw instead of +Hard. If you do, on a 10+ you *Erase* one *Pressure* in addition to the usual benefits.

Shotgun Diplomacy lets you reduce your own *Pressure* and/or social problems when you **Call Someone On Their Shit**. At the same time, it sacrifices persuasiveness and may make it pretty hard for your target to do what you want.

Explosive Decompression. When you **Let Loose** in a conspicuous and completely undisciplined way, on a *Hit* you can *Erase* one more *Pressure* than usual, but if you do you must either choose one extra option, or keep the normal number of options but let the GM decide the option instead of you.

If you let the GM choose the option on a 7-9, they'll also be deciding the details of what happens. So only choose that if you're really happy with anything they might choose! GM, the usual advice about not using this to humiliate people applies.

Thread The Needle. When you attempt a feat of skill that others would find impossible, roll +Raw. On a 10+ you do it, and you can give yourself or another character +1 *Forward* to capitalize on it. On a 7-9 you do it, but by the skin of your teeth. Choose two: take -1 *Forward* as you are left off-balance, *Mark Pressure* as you are bashed about, or ask the GM how your action leaves you exposed.

You can't attempt feats of skill unless you have appropriate skills. So if you want to make it a feat of flying, you need to have the *Pilot Role*.

Passions Run High. When you throw yourself into an intense relationship with someone, you can roll **Reach Out** to them with +Raw instead of +Warm. If you do, replace the 7–9 result as follows: They *Erase* one *Pressure* as normal, but you feel dissatisfied – you can still *Erase* one *Pressure*, but only if you immediately do something to **Let Loose** or go and find someone else for your passion to run high with.

The relationship doesn't have to be romantic in nature.

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Fulfil your short-term desires or whims**, trampling over someone else in the process.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who wants to win my admiration? How have I impressed them?
- ✦ Who do I have a rivalry with? How did we recently compete, and who came out on top?
- ✦ Who thinks I'm out of control? What did I do that crossed the line?
- ✦ Who is my partner in crime? What antics did we get up to together?

TAURUS

Selfless, principled, and tough as nails, you're willing to put yourself in harm's way to protect others or to do what's right. Let the enemy dish out whatever punishment they like – you can take it. Let those of lesser beliefs try to knock you off course – you're unstoppable.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Hard* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.

TAURUS MOVES

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Unshakeable Beliefs.* When you stick to your principles by refusing on moral grounds to: follow an order; accept a deal; or comply when someone ***Calls You On Your Shit***, roll +*Hard*.

On a *Hit*, the other party must *Mark Pressure*, and you *Mark XP*. On a 10+ you also negate any *Pressure Marks* or *Relationship* reduction that you would



normally get from the decision not to comply (e.g. from someone **Calling You On Your Shit**).

You only negate the *Pressure/Relationship* reduction that directly follows from the decision not to comply, not any consequences that flow from that.

Supposing that you are ordered not to continue a rescue mission because it's too dangerous, and you refuse because it's your moral duty to carry it through; then on a 10+ you won't *Mark* any *Pressure* if e.g. someone **Calls You On Your Shit**, but you would still be at risk of *Marking Pressure* as part of the rescue mission, if you're attacked or such.

No One Left Behind. When you act to rescue someone from danger, take +1 *Ongoing* to associated actions. If you rescue them, *Mark XP* and *Erase* one *Pressure*. If you fail to rescue them, you must *Mark Pressure*.

Survivor. When you venture away from the fleet, whether deliberately (on an away mission, say) or by accident (if you are captured for example), roll +*Hard*. On a 10+, *Hold* two, on a 7-9, *Hold* one. You can spend your *Hold* one for one to ask one of these questions and take +1 *Forward* to acting on the answers:

- ✦ What's my best escape route/way in/way through?
- ✦ What is the biggest threat here?
- ✦ What should I be looking out for?
- ✦ Which threat is most vulnerable to me?

You'll Have To Go Through Me. When you get between another character and a threat, roll +*Hard*. On a *Hit*, they're safe for now, but you're in the crosshairs. On a 7-9, you take the immediate impact of the threat as well, so any injuries, *Pressure* or similar that the other character would have taken happen to you instead.

Wing Man. When you **Support** someone, you get one extra *Hold*, even on a *Miss*.

True Love. Choose a character to be your love. You take +1 *Ongoing* to all *Moves* targeting them (whether you're aiming to help them or hurt them). If your true love ever dies, you immediately hit *Breaking Point*. Later, you may choose a new true love if you wish.

Breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Dig your heels in and refuse to compromise**, despite the consequences.
- ✦ **Hurl yourself into certain doom** to protect someone else. If you choose this, you're automatically lost, captured or killed.

Relationship questions

- ✦ Who am I in love with? Why haven't I told them yet?
- ✦ Whose life have I saved? How?
- ✦ Who have I sacrificed greatly for? What did I give up for them?
- ✦ Whose plans have I got in the way of? How?



Gemini II

The war is important, sure, but that doesn't mean it's the only priority. You've got your own agenda, even if it's just as simple as looking after number one. Sometimes you've done things that others might consider dubious, but nobody's perfect, right? You'll do what you must to protect your interests, like anyone else would.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You'll probably want to set *Smooth* to +1, since a lot of your *Moves* are powered by it.

Gemini moves

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Compromised.* You've done something that could get you into serious shit. Agree what it is with the GM, and what your cover story is. When you elaborate on your cover story with some convincing bullshit, you get +1 to **Cover Up**. In addition, at the start of the session, if you're not currently in the middle of trying to throw

someone off the scent, roll +*Smooth*. On a *Hit* you're offered an opportunity that nobody would ever give you if they knew. *Mark XP* and *Erase one Pressure* if you take it. On a 7 or less, though, someone notices a flaw in your cover story.

The bullshit might be convincing, yes, but just remember that whatever it is, if they believe it then they'll act like it's true. That can come back to haunt you later on until you're forced into the most delightfully contorted lies.

Playing Both Sides. When you consort with a dangerous faction, roll to **Pull Strings** with a +1 bonus. On a 7 or less they always demand a favour in return, and their favours are always either utterly terrible or seemingly innocuous. If you do it, they'll give you what you want even on a *Miss*.

The enemy counts as a dangerous faction, but there's plenty of other options: criminals, terrorists, political dissidents, and more.

The Personal Touch.* When you give someone your undivided attention and make them feel special, roll +*Smooth*. On a 10+ you both *Erase one Pressure*. On a 7-9, only they do. Either way, you ask them a question from the list below:

- ✦ What has been troubling you lately?
- ✦ What do you most need at the moment?
- ✦ What secret have you been holding on to?
- ✦ What do you most care about?
- ✦ How could I touch your heart?

Web Of Influence. When you do someone a favour or improve a *Relationship* with someone, add them to your web of influence. When you **Pull Strings** to ask for their help with something that they can personally deliver, you can remove them from your web of influence before you roll to automatically get a *Strong Hit*.

Louche. When you **Let Loose** by indulging in a fancy, rakish way, roll +*Smooth* instead of +*Raw*. If you do, add these options to the normal list:

- ✦ Someone else flips out at you, creating a scene .
- ✦ Someone else joins in, takes it too far, and gets into trouble.

Breaking Point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Betray someone** who trusted you.
- ✦ **Reveal you're a traitor** who was working against the fleet all along, and become an NPC.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who suspects I'm up to something? What aroused their suspicions?
- ✦ Who owes me for something? What was it?
- ✦ Who needs me, warts and all? What recent indiscretion have they overlooked?
- ✦ Who thinks I'm a dangerous liability? Why haven't they taken action yet?

cancer

This fleet and the people in it matter to you. It's more than just a mission to you, more than saving the human race, even. Your friends, your colleagues, your people - nothing matters more. And because that love shines through in your words and deeds, they look up to you, too.

You're a skilled leader, always ready with inspiring words or wise counsel. You care about the people of the fleet - maybe too much. Some say you're getting soft.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You probably want to take *Warm* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.



CANCER MOVES

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Turn A Blind Eye.* When you let someone off the hook for questionable behaviour, roll +*Warm*. On a 10+, choose two, on a 7–9 choose one:

- ✦ Say how you shield them from any punishment they ought to have suffered, and you *Erase* one *Pressure*.
- ✦ Say how you quell any public disapproval they should have faced, and they *Erase* one *Pressure*.
- ✦ They don't want to let you down, increase your *Relationship* by one.

Don't Let Me Down. When you set high expectations for someone, roll +*Warm*. On a *Strong Hit*, they *Hold* two and can spend their *Hold* to gain +1 on a roll to meet those expectations; if they succeed in meeting those expectations, they *Erase* one *Pressure* and you *Mark XP*. On a 7–9, the same, but they also *Mark Pressure* right now.

So Say We All!* When you make an inspiring speech, roll +*Warm*. On a *Hit*, choose two:

- ✦ Urge your audience to take an action. They get +1 *Forward* towards doing it.
- ✦ Everyone who listens to your words and takes them into their heart *Erases* one *Pressure*.
- ✦ *Erase* one *Attrition*.

On a 10+, your audience's faith in you bolsters you. *Erase* one *Pressure*.

On a 7–9, everyone is looking to you to be the strong one. You must *Mark Pressure*.

Stalwart Defender.* While you stand in defence of someone, or something, that really matters to you, you get +1 *Ongoing* to any roll that helps protect it. If you have to abandon it, *Mark Pressure*.

Walk Out Of This Room While You Still Can. When you finally let someone know they've gone too far, **Call Them On Their Shit.** If they don't do what you're asking them to (whether openly and forcefully or otherwise), they must *Mark Pressure* equal to your current *Relationship* level with them, and then reduce the *Relationship* level to one.

If they openly and forcefully refuse, they get the above *Pressure* reduction instead of the usual requirement to *Mark Pressure*.

Breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Give up on someone**, withdrawing your protection and punishing them with the full weight of your authority.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who is a close blood relative of mine? What has recently caused friction between us?
- ✦ Who has me as their mentor? What do they need my advice on right now?
- ✦ Who did I forgive for a major frak-up? What have they done that I don't yet know about?
- ✦ Who chafes against my authority? What rule or command have I imposed on them?

LEO Ω

Confident, committed, inspiring. Where others feel doubt or uncertainty, you step boldly into the fray. You're a leader – not a great tactician or strategist, but a magnetic individual who people want to follow. Where will you lead them? Is their faith in you justified?

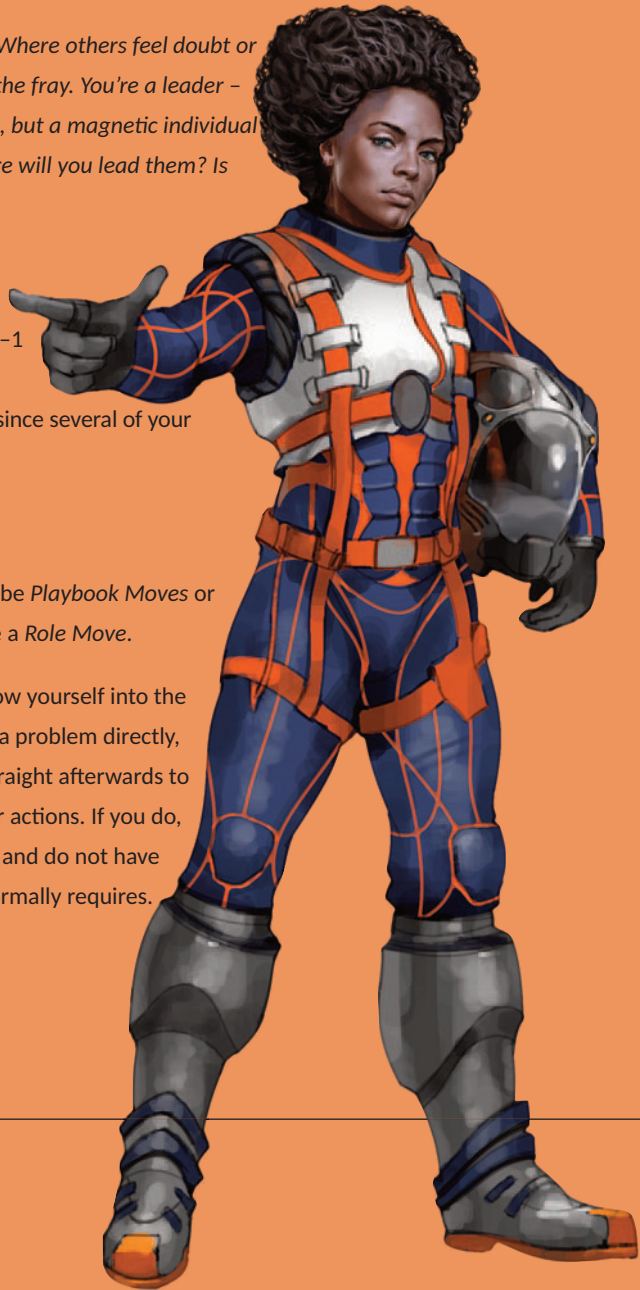
stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You probably want to take *Warm* +1, since several of your Moves use it.

MOVES

You get three Moves – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Lead By Example. When you throw yourself into the fray, making a Move that targets a problem directly, you can roll the **Support** Move straight afterwards to help anyone following up on your actions. If you do, you take +1 *Forward* to your roll, and do not have to *Mark Pressure* as the Move normally requires.



Smoke Me A Kipper - I'll Be Back For Breakfast.* When you show off in front of a public audience, roll +Warm. On a 10+ they're wowed, choose two (no duplicates):

- ✦ *Erase one Attrition.*
- ✦ *Erase one Pressure.*
- ✦ Take +1 *Forward* to proving how great you are.
- ✦ Someone in the audience is impressed by you, or wants to impress you, or both.

On a 7-9 choose one, but also choose a consequence from **Let Loose**.

Lord Flashheart. When you turn on the charm, roll +Warm. On a *Hit* you dazzle your target with your charisma. NPCs do what you want them to, as long as it doesn't involve major and direct harm to something they care about. PCs *Mark XP* if they do it, and must *Mark Pressure* if they don't. On a 10+ you take +1 *Forward* to any move that exploits their weakness.

Charismatic. When you advocate passionately for a cause, roll +Warm. On a *Hit* you're compelling; NPCs in the audience do an action you've called for, or believe a truth you've put forward. In addition on a 7-9, someone is inspired to fanatical action. The GM chooses:

- ✦ They do something drastic to further the cause.
- ✦ They demand that you do something indefensible to further the cause, and if you don't they'll come after you instead.

Followers. A few dozen people that are personally loyal to you. When you act with their support, take +1 *Ongoing* to relevant rolls. Choose one:

- ✦ Military subordinates. They're skilled at what they do and they'll follow your orders as long as it isn't obviously treacherous.
- ✦ Religious fanatics who see you as a prophet. They'll do anything you want, even sacrifice their own lives, if they believe it's for the faith.
- ✦ Criminals. They've got access to weapons, illegal supplies and hiding places. They'll do what you want if they get a cut of the profits.
- ✦ Political followers with widespread connections, and willing to use violence. They'll do what you want if they think it's for their cause.

Breaking Point Actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Humiliate someone else publicly.**

Relationship Questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who hero-worships me? What could I do to break their trust?
- ✦ Whose is one of my followers? How do they feel about that?
- ✦ Who has seen the dark side of my charisma? What went wrong?
- ✦ Who resents my social position? How did I recently trample on their feelings?

uirgo

Doing this job is an awesome responsibility. If you fall short, it could mean the end of everything. You take that responsibility seriously. You need to be the best – to be perfect. Sometimes that means neglecting anything outside the job, but that's a sacrifice you're happy to make.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Sharp* +1, since a couple of your *Playbook Moves* use it.

uirgo moves

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Single-Minded.* When the pressure is off but you stay focused on a task or mission, *Mark Pressure*. While you stay focused, every time you take an action directly related to completing the task/mission, you take +1 *Forward*. If at any time you *Erase Pressure*, you lose your focus and no longer get the benefits of this *Move*. **Letting Loose** or **Reaching Out** definitely count as not staying focused on your task or mission.



Squadron Leader. When you personally lead a mission, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, *Hold* three. On a 7-9 *Hold* one. Spend your *Hold* to give another character an order and give them +1 *Forward* to execute it.

By The Numbers. When you follow a plan to the letter, say what the plan is and roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, anyone following you gets +1 *Ongoing* while following the plan. On a 7-9, something unexpected happens straight away, but you're well prepared. Say what needs doing to handle it and give someone +1 *Forward* to deal with the problem.

Solo Mission. When you go after a tough target by yourself, you can roll any *Move* against that target using +[your current *Pressure* minus two] in place of your usual *Stat*.

For example, if you currently have three *Pressure* boxes *Marked*, you can roll +1 instead of your usual *Stat*.

Don't forget the maximum total bonus is +4.

Stimmed To The Eyeballs. When you're mainlining stimms, you get two extra *Pressure* boxes for the current task or mission, and won't hit *Breaking Point* unless you *Mark* all seven boxes. When you complete the mission or task, you lose the extra box, so if you've got five marked you immediately hit *Breaking Point* as usual. In addition, you have a new *Breaking Point* action "overdose and require intensive care".

Note that **Stimmed To The Eyeballs** combines with **Solo Mission**. For example, if you have six *Pressure* boxes *Marked*, solo mission would then give you +4 to all of your rolls!

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Stick to a plan rigidly**, after it's obviously failed.
- ✦ **Overdose** and require intensive care (if you have *Stimmed To The Eyeballs*).

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who is the only person that can get through my reserve? What went wrong when we last had fun together?
- ✦ Who knows my value? What did I do to earn their respect?
- ✦ Who knows how close I am to cracking? What did I do recently to reveal the pressure I'm under?
- ✦ Who did I let down and hasn't yet forgiven me? What for?

Libra

The enemy can destroy us from the outside, but holding them off is no good if the fleet tears itself apart. To stop that happening, it needs people like you. You're a skilled politician and leader. You know what needs to be done, and what people need to hear, to keep the fleet together. That's exactly what you'll do.

stats

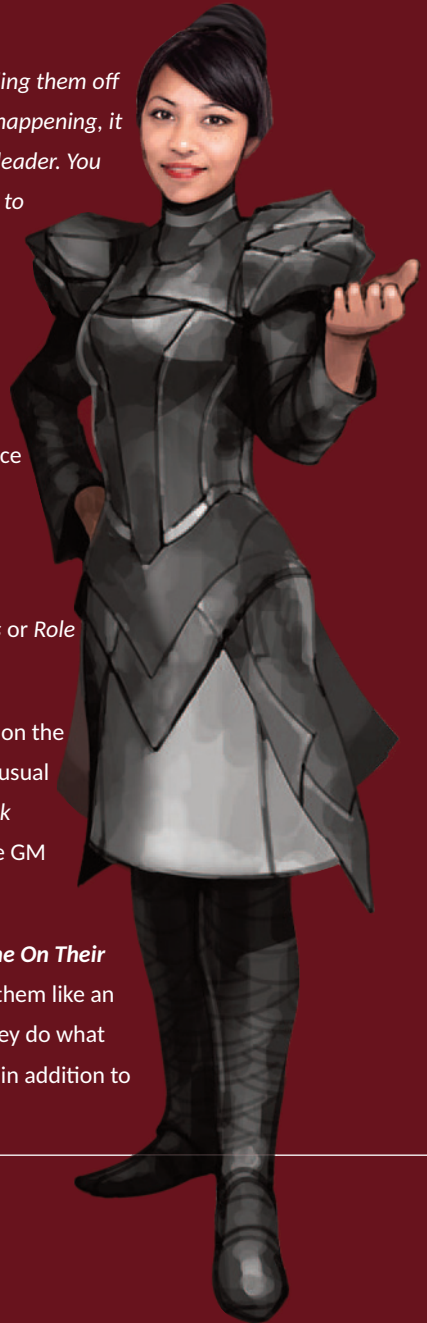
Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Warm* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.

Libra moves

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

High Stakes. When you *Pull Strings* to tackle a crisis on the fleet, on a 10+ *Erase* one *Attrition* in addition to the usual benefits of the *Move*. You can *Mark Pressure* or *Mark Attrition* to cancel a result from the 7-9 list, after the GM has chosen.

Fireside Chat. When you *Pull Strings* or *Call Someone On Their Shit* by talking to an individual one on one, treating them like an equal, you roll +*Warm* instead of the usual stat. If they do what you're demanding them to, they *Erase* one *Pressure* in addition to any other benefits.



Knew I Could Count On You. * When you publicly congratulate someone on a job well done, roll +Warm. On a 10+, choose two of the benefits below. On a 7-9, choose one.

- ✦ They *Erase* one *Pressure*.
- ✦ Improve your *Relationship* with them by one level.
- ✦ *Erase* one *Attrition*.
- ✦ Declare they were acting on your orders and redirect any social consequences or punishment associated with their actions to you.

A Special Task. When you personally give someone a special job or mission, tell them what you want them to do. They take +1 *Ongoing* when they prioritize that over their official duties. If they succeed, you both *Mark XP*.

Wise Counsel. When you speak privately with someone about a problem, you may each give each other one piece of sincere advice. You each *Mark XP* if you follow the others' advice.

Moral Compass. When you ***Call Someone On Their Shit*** by reminding them of what really matters, on a *Hit* they *Mark* one more *Pressure* than usual if they don't do what you asked them to.

This means even if they openly and forcefully refuse to do what you asked, they *Mark* two *Pressure* instead of only one. If they take one of the other options that don't involve complying, they *Mark* one *Pressure*.

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Insist on your way**, ignoring better advice to follow your preferred approach.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who believes in my leadership? What could I do that would let them down?
- ✦ Who do I confide my doubts to? What regret have I shared with them alone?
- ✦ Who has suffered because of a decision I made?
- ✦ Who do I go to when I need a difficult task done? What task am I about to give them?

scorpio ♏

Something's wrong. Maybe you woke up from a bad dream only to find that the things you did weren't a fantasy at all. Maybe you feel a strange fascination for the enemy. You're not sure who you really are, or if you can trust yourself. Luckily you're good at hiding it. If anyone else suspected, it could land you in the brig – or the airlock.

Note: playing Scorpio means that some part of you is secretly working against the fleet. But that does not mean you are a villain; you are playing the part of you that is on humanity's side. The enemy agent may come out and do bad things, but afterwards you regain control and continue to fight for humanity.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Smooth* +1, since some of your *Playbook Moves* use it – and it will be important for concealing the results of your *Sleeper Agent* rolls. Alternatively you might want *Sharp* +1 to make your *Sleeper Agent* rolls less disastrous!

scorpio moves

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. You must take **Sleeper Agent**. At least one other must be a *Role Move*.

Sleeper Agent. * At the start of each session, if you aren't currently in the middle of dealing with the fallout from your last **Sleeper Agent** *Move*, you've set something up to damage the fleet. Roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+ choose two, on a 7–9 choose one:

- ✦ You discover warning signs before your actions have their full effect.
- ✦ You haven't left any tell-tale evidence that someone else might discover.
- ✦ There won't be widespread consequences.

On a 6 or less, you don't get any of these choices.

In addition, you get an additional advance option:

- ✦ Erase the **Sleeper Agent** *Move* and gain another Scorpio *Move*.

The **Sleeper Agent** *Move* means your character isn't fully aware of their actions. Some part of them works against the fleet, but they don't know it's happening until it's too late. Maybe it's like sleepwalking, or perhaps you have two personalities that operate independently of each other. This could be the result of mind control, or maybe the saboteur is the "real" you, and your day-to-day personality is just a construct. Whatever the explanation, you don't play a villain, you may well be a hero, and you would probably be horrified by your actions if you knew about them.

If you discover warning signs before your actions have their full effect, that means you get some kind of evidence that something is up, and that it was something to do with you. For instance, you might discover an empty bottle of rat poison in your locker, and then one of the workers in the kitchen is dragged

into sickbay vomiting and in critical condition, with an hour to go before the pilots have their main meal.

If you don't choose not to leave any tell-tale evidence then that means there will be some tell-tale evidence! You'll be at risk of discovery. It is up to the GM whether they want to give you the opportunity to cover it up, or have someone discover it before you can. Either way you'll have your work cut out to keep your involvement from coming to light.

If the consequences won't be widespread, that means it will affect a small number of people, and those people aren't completely vital to the fleet. The results will still be very serious for those people, of course. If you don't choose this then the results will affect lots of people.

Manipulative. When you **Reach Out** by playing on someone's emotions or sympathies, roll +*Smooth* instead of +*Warm*. If you do, on a *Hit* you can demand that they do something for you, and they only get the usual *Pressure* reduction if they do it.

Close Ranks. When you take this, decide on a quirk for your character. Quirks can include a romantic affair, addiction, black-market involvement, thrill seeker, workaholic, [create your own]. You have a circle of NPC friends and associates who attribute your suspicious behaviour to your quirk. When you ask one of them to cover for you, as long as they can rationalize it as connected to your quirk, you can roll to **Cover Up** with +1 *Forward*, and any negative consequences from the *Move* hit them instead of you.

Feel free to create more than one quirk, or to invent more as you go. Your friends will always need some kind of rationale to overlook stuff for you.

Where There's A Way... When you conceal an object or person on the fleet, roll +Smooth. On a 10+, you know a route or location that will keep it from prying eyes. On a 7-9 the GM chooses one:

- ✦ Someone notices that it's missing.
- ✦ You can only keep it concealed during a limited time period.
- ✦ You'll have to get past _____ first.

Alien Affinity. When you get close enough to the enemy that you could reach out and touch them, say what you feel: love, lust, fear or revulsion. Choose two:

- ✦ You learn something new about the enemy. Ask the GM a question.
- ✦ You are calmed and bolstered, *Erase Pressure* until you have exactly two boxes Marked, or *Erase one Pressure* (your choice).
- ✦ The enemy tells you something about yourself. Ask the GM what.

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Confess your doubts** to another, openly revealing you think you may be working for the enemy.
- ✦ **Commit a visible and devastating attack against the fleet**, blowing something up or assassinating someone.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who has their doubts about me? How have I allayed them?
- ✦ Who is covering for me? What lie have they told for me?
- ✦ Whose ass did I recently save? How?
- ✦ Who is closest to me? What signs have they overlooked?

sagittarius

The silver lining of the war is that you get to see and do things that pretty much nobody has seen and done before. It's stressful and dangerous, but you're meeting new people and exploring new places all the time. That's what you live for.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Sharp* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.

sagittarius moves

You get three *Moves* - these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Tinkerer. When you take something apart, roll +*Sharp*. On a *Hit*, pick one from the list below.

On a 10+ you also get +1 *Forward* when you make use of the results.

- ✦ Learn how it works / what it does.
- ✦ Gain useful parts.
- ✦ Rebuild and improve it.



Explorer. When you go somewhere nobody has ever gone before, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, *Hold* two. On a 7–9 *Hold* one. Spend your *Hold* to ask questions from the list below, and take +1 *Forward* acting on each of the answers.

- ✦ What here is useful?
- ✦ What here is dangerous?
- ✦ Where is a good place to hide/defend/_____?
- ✦ Where might I find _____?
- ✦ Who is in control here?

Getting To Know All About You.* When you get to know someone for the first time, roll +*Warm*. On a *Hit* *Erase* one *Pressure*. On 10+ ask two questions, on a 7–9 ask one:

- ✦ What are you afraid will happen?
- ✦ What do you hope will happen?
- ✦ What do you need forgiveness for?
- ✦ Who do you like/love/trust? (choose one)

For each one that they answer, they *Erase* one *Pressure*.

Walls Have Ears. When you surreptitiously listen in on a conversation, roll +*Sharp*. On a *Hit*, their unguarded moment reveals a useful secret. (PCs can choose not to, but *Mark* one *Pressure* if they refuse.) On a 10+ you can also ask a follow-up question. On a *Miss*, you hear something you'd rather not hear.

In The Neighbourhood. At the start of the session, roll +*Sharp*. On a *Hit*, *Hold* one. You can spend it at any time to show up in a scene, with or without explanation. On a 10+ you also get to declare one useful item or other person you have with you. On a *Miss*, the GM *Holds* one and can spend it to dump you somewhere at the wrong time and unprepared.

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Wander alone into danger** without help or backup.

relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who is always up for an adventure with me? Where did we last go together?
- ✦ Who is my closest friend? What do we do to blow off steam together?
- ✦ Who wants to stop my meddling? How have I recently pissed them off?
- ✦ Who has secret feelings about me? Why are they hiding them?

capricorn ♈

There is so much at stake in this war. If you hold back or show weakness, that could be the end of everything. You'll do what needs to be done, no matter the cost. Some say your way is ruthless or dangerous. You know that what's truly dangerous is taking half-measures.

stats

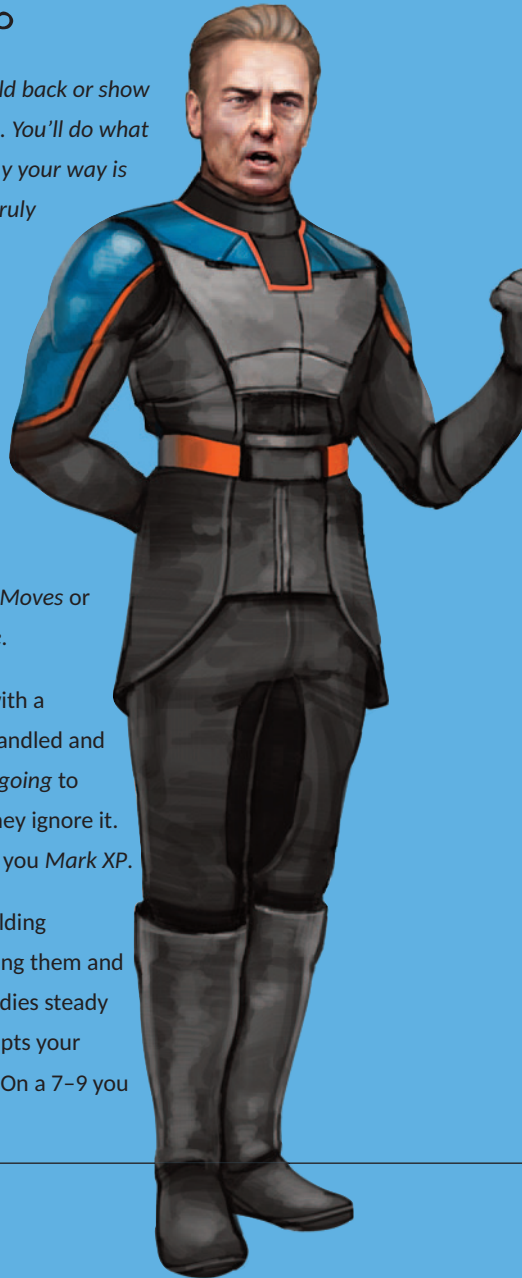
Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to set *Hard* to +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.

capricorn moves

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Doomsayer. When you point out a problem with a situation or plan, say what how it should be handled and roll +*Sharp*. On a 7-9 choose: they take +1 *Ongoing* to follow your advice, or they *Mark Pressure* if they ignore it. On a 10+, both. If the problem comes to pass, you *Mark XP*.

Zero Compromises. When you dispense unyielding discipline to someone, say how you're punishing them and why, and roll +*Hard*. On a Hit your harsh remedies steady the ship. *Erase* one *Attrition*. If the target accepts your justice, on a 10+ they *Erase* one *Pressure* too. On a 7-9 you take it too far. The target *Marks Pressure*.



No Half Measures. When you commit to a dangerous course of action without hedging your bets, *Hold* two. When something goes wrong, say how you double down on your chosen course and roll *+Hard*. On a *Hit*, ignore the effects (injuries, obstacles, etc) of the problem as you power through. On a 10+ take +1 *Forward* too. On a 7-9 *Mark Pressure*.

Acceptable Losses. When you tackle a problem directly without regard for collateral damage on your own side, roll *+Hard*. On a *Hit* it's devastatingly effective. On a 10+ there's no collateral damage, *Erase* one *Attrition*. On a 7-9 your side suffer ill effects - the GM will say what happens, and *Mark Attrition*.

Thrives Under Pressure. When everything is in chaos or your back is against the wall, roll *+Hard*. On a 7-9, *Hold* one. On a 10+, *Hold* two. Spend your *Hold* to ask questions and take +1 *Forward* if you immediately act on the answers.

- ✦ What vulnerability can I exploit right now?
- ✦ What's my best way out/through?
- ✦ What is the biggest threat right now?

You have to act on the answer right away. Any delay and you don't get the bonus.

The Old Familiar Sting. Choose a vice that you're addicted to. When you *Let Loose* with it, you *Erase* one more *Pressure* than usual (even on a *Miss*). However, a 10+ counts as a 7-9. You also get an additional option "go and give someone your unvarnished opinion of them".

Going and giving someone your unvarnished opinion of them may well trigger **Calling Them On Their Shit**.

breaking point actions

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Overreact with brutal force** to an internal crisis, coming down heavily on anyone you blame or who won't cooperate.

Relationship questions

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who has seen me come close to disaster? What prevented the worst from happening?
- ✦ Who trusts my instincts? What would it take to change that?
- ✦ Who have I been through hell with? What life-or-death situation did we come through together?
- ✦ Who nurses a grudge against me? How did my actions hurt them?

AQUARIUS

You're as sharp as they come – you see through the lies and deceit that riddle the fleet, and you'll expose them all. Maybe you're an official interrogator, or perhaps you're a journalist. You know how to get to the truth, through your connections or through asking the right questions.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Sharp* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.

AQUARIUS MOVES

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

Pointed Questions.

When you interrogate someone, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, you can ask them two questions. On a 7–9, one.



NPCs will reveal the truth through their words or behaviour. PCs must do so or *Mark* one *Pressure* for each question they refuse. You get +1 *Forward* when acting on the answers.

- ✦ What are you concealing?
- ✦ Who is pulling your strings?
- ✦ What are you planning to do next?
- ✦ What are you really feeling?
- ✦ How could I get your character to ____?

On Trial. When you **Call Someone On Their Shit** by publicly accusing them of a crime, incompetence in their official role or deceiving the public, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, regardless of what option they choose they *Mark* one *Pressure* more than usual; and in addition it's obvious to everyone that you're right, and they must face whatever consequences flow from that. On a 7-9 they get the usual options for being **Called On Their Shit**.

When using **On Trial**, on a 10+ they *Mark Pressure* even if they comply with what you want, and two *Pressure* if they openly and forcefully refuse.

Scuttlebutt. When you tap your contacts for information and gossip, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+ you can ask two questions. On a 7-9, ask one. You take +1 *Forward* when acting on the answers.

- ✦ What's the word on the street about this?
- ✦ Who could help with this?
- ✦ Where was _____ last seen and what were they up to?
- ✦ What should I be on the lookout for?

Truthspeaker. When you reveal something that others had been concealing, roll +*Sharp*. On a 10+, the truth is out and widely believed, and *Erase* one *Attrition*. On a 7-9, it's out, but people are alarmed or distressed, *Mark Attrition*.

Dedicated Focus. When you dedicate yourself to a challenging task, you get +1 *Ongoing* on rolls that contribute to fulfilling that task. You get -1 *Ongoing* to anything that takes you away from that task. At any time you can abandon the task and *Mark Pressure*.

Abandoning the task doesn't mean you've given up on it, and you may come back to it later on. Choosing to do so simply means that you're hit by the toll of diverting your attention from the task.

BREAKING POINT ACTIONS

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Publicly accuse someone** of something serious, before you're ready to back it up with evidence or political support.

RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who is feeding me information on the quiet? What secret or rumour are they about to tell me?
- ✦ Who do I suspect is up to no good? What lead do I have on them?
- ✦ Who has me as a confidante? What secret of theirs haven't I spilled, and why?
- ✦ Who sees me as a thorn in their side? How have I recently got in their way?

PISCES ♋

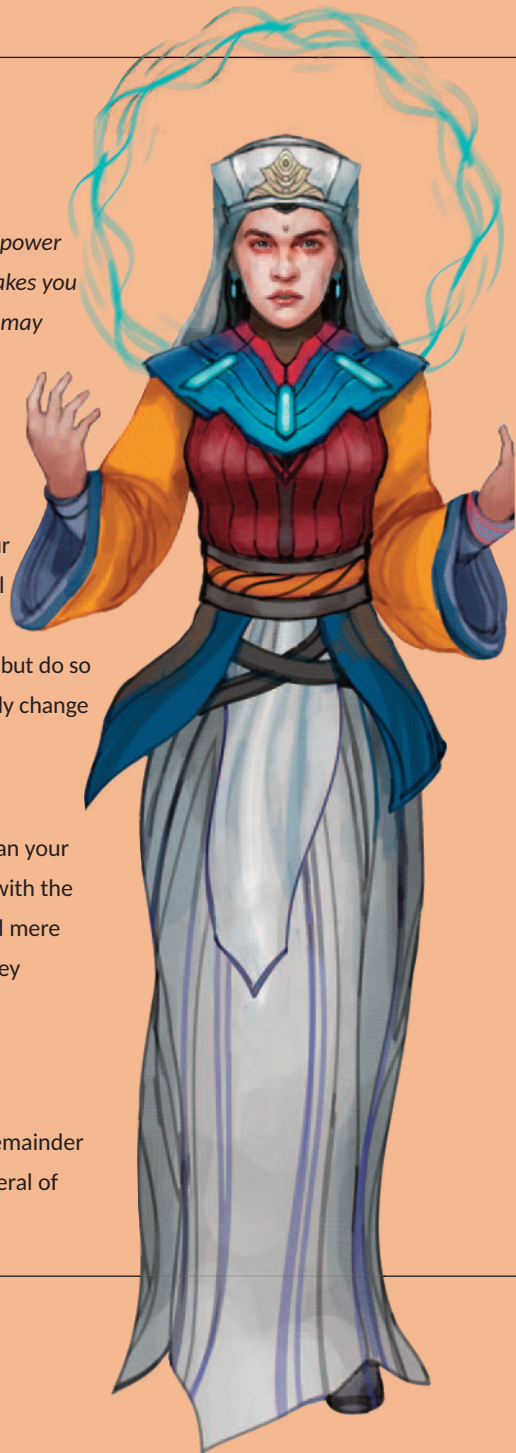
Wise, otherworldly, visionary. You can tap into something beyond yourself, to gain insights or power that are simply not available to others. This makes you strange and potentially unnerving to others. It may make you an object of reverence or fear. It can make you a potent weapon against the enemy.

Choosing this *Playbook* will introduce a more overtly supernatural theme to the game. Of course, it may not be literally supernatural: your powers may represent something technological or simply a sort of superhuman insight. It's up to you to define that according to your wishes, but do so working with the group, since it can dramatically change the feel of the story.

You'll also notice that some of the moves can potentially be combined in interesting ways. Can your mind palace be used to make psychic contact with the enemy? Does it count as a place that is beyond mere mortals? Again, it's up to you to define how they interact (if at all), with the group.

stats

Assign one stat as +1, one stat as -1 and the remainder as +0. You may wish to take *Hard* +1, since several of your *Moves* use it.



PISCES MOVES

You get three *Moves* – these can be *Playbook Moves* or *Role Moves*. At least one must be a *Role Move*.

I Have Seen It. You receive occasional visions of the future. Once per session when things are quiet, roll +*Hard*. On a 10+, *Hold* one *Vision*. You may spend one *Vision* to declare you recognize this scene from a vision and:

- ✦ Tell someone what to do and, if they do it, they take +1 *Forward* and you *Mark XP*.
- ✦ Describe or highlight a challenging risk or opportunity for the fleet. If the fleet avoids the risk or seizes the opportunity, increase *Momentum* by one.

On a 7–9 choose:

- ✦ The visions are troubling, *Hold* one *Vision* but *Mark Pressure*.
- ✦ You have a respite from your visions, *Erase* one *Pressure*.

On a 6 or less the GM describes a terrible vision. If the fleet fails to prevent it coming to pass, the GM sets *Momentum* to a new level of their choice.

You only get to roll ***I Have Seen It*** when things are quiet, not in the middle of a mission or crisis. This may mean you don't get to roll it every session.

When you spend your *Hold* can frame a brief flashback to the vision, if you like.

Inhuman Insight. When you make psychic contact with the enemy, roll +*Hard*. On a *Hit*, you see them as they truly are; ask a question from the list. When you act on the answers, take +1 *Forward*. On a 7–9, you struggle to differentiate the alien mind from your own; *Mark Pressure*, and the enemy may ask a question of you.

- ✦ How are the enemy weak right now?
- ✦ What is the biggest danger right now?

- ✦ What are they planning to do next?
- ✦ What is their objective here?
- ✦ What do they fear right now?

It is up to you how you make psychic contact with the enemy, and what this looks like. GM: Ask questions about this! Inhuman insight presents an opportunity to make the enemy into more than just an external threat. You can show how they are unnerving and monstrous inside as well as out, or humanize them. Or better, do both.

Mind Palace. You can withdraw into a trance-like state where you perceive things and people that others cannot see. You can **Let Loose** inside these visions. When you do, you roll *+Hard* instead of *+Raw*, and gain the following additional options:

- ✦ Become lost in your visions, and get distracted at a crucial moment.
- ✦ Learn an unwelcome truth from your visions.

On a 10+ you still decide the details, but you'll need to work with the GM on any unwelcome truths you might learn.

When you choose from the standard options, they may reflect you inadvertently revealing the fact you're having uncontrolled visions to another.

Mystic Attunement. When you walk in places that are beyond mere mortals, you attune to the strange nature of the place. This makes you powerful: you can make all your usual moves, but may roll *+Hard* in place of any other stat. It makes you vulnerable, and the GM says how.

This move could be used when you're doing something (comparatively) mundane like walking into an enemy ship, or it could be used when you're doing something much stranger like docking with an enemy computer system. It might even apply when you are using other Pisces moves like ***Inhuman Insight*** or ***Mind Palace***. It is up to you to work out how you are able to make your usual moves in a place where they might not seem to apply, and what this looks like.

GM: there is no direct mechanical effect that makes the character more vulnerable when they use mystic attunement. It's up to you to decide what this might mean in each scene. If they roll a *Miss* – do something interesting.

Loved By The Faithful. You hold a special place in the hearts of those who believe in your faith, whether by dint of official position or spiritual status. You take +1 to any *Move* that leverages that status.

BREAKING POINT ACTIONS

Your *Breaking Point* actions include:

- ✦ **Become overwhelmed by a vision** of a dark future that may yet come to pass.
- ✦ **Reveal your inhuman nature** for all to see.

RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Ask at least two and take a level one *Relationship* with the relevant characters:

- ✦ Who believes in me? What special role or destiny do they see in me?
- ✦ Who sees past the mystique? What ordinary moment have we shared?
- ✦ Who fears or distrusts my power? What has turned them against me?
- ✦ Who did I have a significant vision about? Has it come true yet?

The Fleet

Rank – the basics

With the military forming a central plank of *Last Fleet's* focus, it's important to have in mind who is high-ranking, who is middle-ranking and who is low-ranking, if only so that you know who is giving orders and who is anxiously awaiting them. For named characters you'll want to decide on a specific rank. An example rank structure is shown on page 175. You'll also want to fill key positions, set out below. That's sufficient if you don't expect rank to be a major focus of your game, but there's more detail on rank and how to use it in Rank and Duty, starting on page 172.

In addition to a character's rank, they may occupy an important position on the ship:

- ◆ The Commanding Officer (CO) is the person in charge of a large ship. They have final say on all decisions and the buck stops with them.
- ◆ The Executive Officer (XO) is the second most senior position on a ship. They report to the CO and implement their decisions, and will often take charge of less strategic decision-making.
- ◆ If you have pilots, you should create the Commander of the Air Group (CAG). They lead the fighter pilots on a large ship. They take part in mission planning, brief the pilots and often lead and coordinate the pilots during missions.
- ◆ If you have marines, you should create the Commander of the Marines (CM). They perform a similar role to the CAG, but in relation to ground troops.

ships – the basics

Creating ships

Last Fleet doesn't attempt to model the different types of ship you might encounter in a space-based setting in much detail. I encourage you to make up your own ship types and describe in cinematic terms what they look like. Always name your ships and always make it clear what's at stake if they're destroyed, including how many human lives will be lost.

Don't forget, too, to create characters for your ship. Even relatively small and inconsequential ships can benefit from having a commanding officer for the players to talk to when things get sticky.

The main types of ship include:

- ◆ Battleships. Massive, heavily armed and armoured, and hosting lots of starfighters.
- ◆ Frigates. Big, usually serving a specific purpose such as attack or support. Sometimes better armed than the battleships.
- ◆ Starfighters. Small, short range ships, much faster than the larger ships, designed for ship to ship combat, troop transport or scouting. These are the ships we see our Pilots flying.
- ◆ Civilian ships. These are of varying size and purpose (consider: freighter, fuel liner, research ship, cruise liner, shuttle). They're easily destroyed, even by an individual starfighter, taking resources and hundreds or thousands of lives with them.

For more detail about military ships, see page 178–179.

At a minimum, you'll want your game to include one battleship, several civilian ships, and a large number of starfighters.

Don't forget that the enemy has their own ships, too – you can think about them in the same classes as above, though obviously ships in the same class as civilian ships may be a rather different beast. Their ships may have strange functions that are wildly different from human equivalents.

If you want to get into the detail of a specific ship, to help flesh out battles involving that ship or scenes that take place on board it, here are some good things to consider:

- ✦ What is the purpose of the ship? How big is it, and how many crew? What does it look like?
- ✦ What is the general layout of the ship? Does it have a central corridor, a circular circuit for travelling around the ship, is it arranged in levels with elevators?
- ✦ What are the key locations on board the ship and how do they fit into that general layout? Where is the command centre/bridge, where are the engines, crew quarters, flight desk?
- ✦ What are important social locations? Is there a rec room, bar or holo deck? Where do people go for peace and quiet – is there an observation deck or a verdant oxygen room?
- ✦ What defences does the ship have? Does it have any armour or weapons? Are there strong-points near the airlocks, aimed at holding off boarding actions? Or is it – as many civilian ships may be – effectively defenceless?
- ✦ What are the ship's weaknesses? Does it have exposed sensor arrays that can be taken out, leaving it blind? Are the engines vulnerable to strike from behind? Does it carry massive fuel tanks that are an explosion risk?

Example ship: *Patroclus*

Here is an example ship, worked up using the prompts above.

- ✦ *Patroclus* is a massive carrier (~5km long), with a crew of 5000. It is dominated by longitudinal armour plates, pocked with holes from past battles, and the main weapon batteries that protrude from the sides like spines.
- ✦ Command is located centrally, and corridors radiate out towards key locations around the ship, with a circuit corridor connecting them – like a spider web.
- ✦ Apart from command, key locations are the main gun batteries, on the port and starboard sides, the fighter launch bay at the front, and the engines at the rear.
- ✦ There's a recreation area on the front side of the ship, near the flight deck. It has a bar, games tables, and gymnasium. The cargo holds are towards the rear and a good place for secret assignations.
- ✦ The ship has massive armour plates that cover most of its surface. These plates protrude over the launch bays, protecting fighters as they launch into battle. Side-facing flak cannons are the main offensive weapon, together with shorter-ranged guns mounted in the grooves between the armour plates, for defence against incoming fighters.
- ✦ The ship's underbelly is comparatively lightly armoured and protected only by point defence. This is compounded by battle damage.

Rank and outy: military hierarchy in your game

By Joanna Piancastelli

For many story gamers, our instinct is to keep things loose and handwave details in the service of more narrative freedom. But constraint can breed creativity: and using a consistent structure for the military in your game's setting can open up relationship dynamics and prompt play that you might miss without setting down a set of rules for everyone to follow; like knowing who you answer to and what's on the line if you mess up.

In this optional play module we'll go through the basics of creating a consistent military structure for your game, then look at how you can fill out the ranks with characters and meaningful NPCs, and give you tips on how to turn a rigid hierarchy into the sparking point for plenty of dramatic play. Consider using it if a significant number of players are interested in making military characters and like the idea of building a shared understanding of how the military works.

To use this module the GM should read it, then help the group through the questions during the Fleet section of the Setting Up Your Game process.

How rank works

Military hierarchy operates on a system of ranks and a chain of command to allow the organized communication of information and orders.

- ♦ **Ranks** indicate seniority, and higher ranks generally correspond to having more leadership training. A high rank comes with more responsibilities, but also more privileges.

- ✦ The **chain of command** means that even if someone outranks you they can't give you orders unless you are in their department and their direct subordinate.

This structure makes it very efficient to get a lot of people acting quickly in coordination, but also means that those at the bottom are often told only what someone thinks they need to know, perhaps leaving them making hard decisions with incomplete information.

It also opens up the possibility for one corrupt or incompetent individual in a position of authority to exert a bad influence across the whole military, and for heroes in the lower ranks to act for the good of the fleet but still get reprimanded for disobeying orders.

In a setting where the military is prominent, you should have a goal for what you want its role to be in the fiction. Is it a structure for a set of characters to squabble and rebel within, or a backdrop of oppressive, authoritarian control that low-ranked and civilian characters have very little power to speak up about without significant personal risk?

Setup action: Discuss the tone of the military's presence in your game and ensure everyone is on the same page about what they want from it. Think about the role of the military in the fleet – do they only serve to protect against outside threats, or have they ended up policing civilians as well, and what is the impact of that?

Ranks

Using ranks makes it easy to understand the role of all the military characters in the game and their authority relative to one another. It also sets up the kind of structural struggles each character will encounter – the Admiral of the Fleet has different responsibilities and challenges to the most junior Lieutenant aboard, for example.

There are many different rank structures used in sci-fi, and two options are presented here for you to consider and adapt for your own game. The decision on which hierarchy to use should be based on more than just which set of ranks sound snappier though, because ultimately it's a much bigger question about the structure and class system of your setting's society.

The **2-Tier Structure** gives you Commissioned Officers, who have received extensive leadership training before entering the field. This training is expensive and prestigious, so these characters likely come from a higher social class than the enlisted personnel who only went to boot camp. Choosing this structure implies your setting has a society with Haves and Have-Nots.

The **1Tier Structure** does away with a separate class of officers, implying more meritocratic advance through the ranks. Choosing this structure implies a more egalitarian society.

2-Tier Structure		1-Tier Structure	Description
Rank		Rank	
Enlisted personnel	Recruit	Recruit	Straight out of basic training, ground level duties.
	Corporal	Specialist 2nd class	Has a few years' experience, picking up a specialism or commanding small teams.
	Sergeant	Specialist 1st class	Experienced, has leadership, training, or specialised duties.
	Chief	N/a	Enlisted personnel with significant logistical responsibilities, and more experience than many officers.
Commissioned officer	Ensign	N/a	Junior commissioned officer, highly trained but with little field experience.
	Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Has a sizeable command or responsibility, such as a bridge officer or starfighter pilot.
	Lieutenant-Commander	Lieutenant-Commander	In charge of a frigate or a department on a large battleship.
	Commander	Commander	In charge of a significant asset and crew complement, like a battleship.
	Admiral	Admiral	Has authority over the whole fleet.

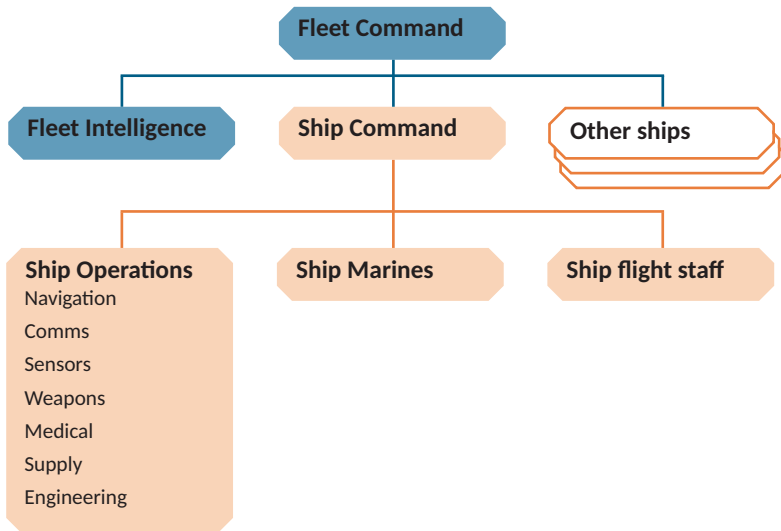
Setup action: Choose one of the rank structures to use for your game, and talk about the implications your choice has about societal stratification

This would be a great time to understand the civilian power structures present in the game setting too. What does your civilian authority look like, and how does it interface with the military?

Chain of command

To go with the ranks you'll need a chain of command so you know which characters have direct authority over each other, who non-military characters might want to find if they're trying to talk to people who can make important decisions, and where it might be valuable to add NPCs.

Here's a simplified chain of command designed to foster play:



Fleet Command

The people who determine the strategy of the entire fleet. This could be a complex hierarchy of battlegroup commanders and admirals, or a single ship's captain promoted unexpectedly to Admiral of the Fleet and making decisions that affect the whole human race.

Fleet Intelligence

Responsible for identifying and gathering information on threats both inside and outside the fleet. An intelligence operative may be stationed on a ship, but they report directly to Fleet Command.

Ship Command

Each ship has a single commander, supported by an executive officer, who is responsible for ensuring that everything that happens aboard the ship contributes to Fleet Command's strategy. What they say, goes.

Ship Operations

The majority of a ship's crew will work in one of its operational departments, serving as specialists that keep the ship running and allow it to carry out its orders.

- ✦ **Navigation** – plotting courses, calculating FTL jumps, and piloting the ship.
- ✦ **Comms** – communicating with the fleet and anyone else you meet.
- ✦ **Sensors** – observing beyond the ship and reporting back on what's out there.
- ✦ **Weapons** – protecting the ship from external threats using the onboard defences.
- ✦ **Medical** – treating illness and injury to keep the crew fit for duty.
- ✦ **Supply** – ensuring there is enough fuel, food and ammunition for the ship to run.
- ✦ **Engineering** – maintaining and repairing the ship.

Ship Marines

Troops stationed aboard the ship to maintain order, guard areas with restricted access, and repel boarders or take offensive action during combat.

Ship flight staff

A semi-autonomous group aboard, the flight staff have no role in the operations of the ship but are responsible for maintaining and piloting the nimble starfighters that defend larger vessels in ship to ship combat. They are only found aboard larger ships that have the hangar space to support fighters.

Setup action: Decide if there are any changes you want to make to this chain of command for your game, and think about which departments you might want your PCs to be from.

This would be a good time to consider what factions exist that can interact and come into conflict with the military, or that exist within the military itself.

Military ships

The ship departments in the chain of command are repeated as many times as there are military ships in the fleet, on different scales depending on the classes of ship. For simplicity's sake, assume there are three primary classes of military ship.

Battleships

The largest, most imposing, most iconic class of military ship, a battleship dominates every space combat it takes part in. Each battleship is heavily armed and armoured, and acts as a staging platform for one or more wings of starfighters within its hangar bays. It is crewed by hundreds of personnel spanning all ranks and departments. Battleships are resource-hungry, and *Shortages* can seriously impact how they run.

Having only one battleship in your game will make it the central pillar of the military in the fleet and a good place to base the majority of the PCs. Having two or three could introduce a level of politics to the military game as multiple commanders vie for power and control.

Frigates

Frigates come in many sizes and configurations to support the fleet in a variety of capacities. Gunships bristling with armaments might pack enough of a punch to take down battleships despite their smaller size, while supply craft could carry or harvest critical resources needed on a long deployment. Crew sizes could be anything from 20 to 200, and larger frigates might support a starfighter wing.

Having a lot of frigates will make your fleet feel very militarized – well-supported, but also closely observed and perhaps controlled – whereas having very few will mean your battleship(s) are reliant on the cooperation of the civilian vessels.

Starfighters

The smallest and most manoeuvrable ship class is perhaps the most romanticized of the fleet. Crewed by a sole pilot or a pilot and gunner, starfighters dock within other ships and are launched during battle to harry enemy targets and engage enemy fighters in dramatic dogfights.

If you want the risk of being grounded because of damage sustained to be a factor of the game for anyone in the pilot role, set a small, finite number of starfighters and keep track of when they're damaged or destroyed.

Setup action: Decide how many battleships you want in your game and what they're called, roughly what proportion of frigates to civilian vessels your fleet has, and how many starfighters your pilots have access to.

Get an idea of what the civilian element of your fleet looks like, too: an approximate number of ships and souls might be useful, as could identifying and naming a few vessels of strategic significance.

Making characters

It's time to work out where your characters fit in with the structure you've designed. As well as choosing names, playbooks, and moves, military characters should decide on their rank, department, and which ship they're stationed on.

If you want to play a character with a lot of authority to direct the overall path of play but who'll get blamed when things go wrong, choose a high rank. If you want to play a character who doesn't have control of their own destiny, bucking against bad orders or trying to weigh up the morality of their instructions, play a low rank. And if you want a little of both, pick something in the middle.

It's a good idea to cluster your characters on just one or two ships; but try to spread the PCs out across multiple branches to give you a bigger picture of the fleet as a whole and give each player more freedom to do different things, to act independently, and potentially bring in inter-branch politics. Having a couple of characters close together can cause interesting friction, but too many might get repetitive. Avoid the lure of playing the bridge officers of a single ship, as you'll find that action scenes will often be reduced to everyone doing what one person says.

Build shared backstories and strong relationships that cross branch and rank lines and extend beyond the military. Who have you been posted with before? Who do you know for personal rather than military reasons? The efficient operation of the military depends on strict adherence to the chain of command, but a good story thrives on conflicted loyalties, unofficial back channels, and the impropriety when you meet up to drink with the wrong people.

Decide your reputation with your immediate superiors and those who report directly to you. Are you a hero who always keeps their people safe? Are you a fool who puts the safety of their people above the survival of the fleet? Are you both at once?

Setup action: Each player chooses their name, rank, department, ship, playbook and moves. Set up relationships in the group, and decide on each PC's reputation with the people they command and report to.

Adding NPCs

As the last thing to do before the game starts, it's worth populating a few key NPCs who will reinforce the structure of the military, create friction in play, and give the GM a mechanism to bring direction and consequences to the fiction. If you created NPCs while setting up the relationships, reuse them now wherever makes sense – the best NPCs exist in a triangle between two PCs, ideally with each of them wanting something different from that NPC.

If the position isn't occupied, create an **Admiral of the Fleet** to give your military characters some united direction. Beware making this character too effective, too likeable, or too long-lived, or they'll act as a stabilizing force in a game that thrives on chaos and gets its best moments when things spiral out of control. Look for ways to bring some instability to them, and ensure that at least one faction has a reason to want them gone.

If there are any left unassigned, create a **Commander for each battleship** so everyone knows who's responsible for making decisions minute to minute, and to ensure all the actors in the political game are fleshed out if you have multiple influential ships. Give them bold personalities and clear motivations. Losing a ship's commander is a big deal, so give them plenty of connections to the PCs to ensure their loss is felt if something does go wrong.

If you want to play a tense game of secrets and subterfuge, consider adding a **Director of Intelligence** to act as an omnipresent threat to the guilty, and anyone they don't like.

The Fleet

If you want to play heavily on material scarcity, give it a human face by creating a **Quartermaster** who's responsible for keeping everyone supplied with the equipment and materials to do their jobs.

If you plan to play a lot of ship battles or sabotage, a **Chief Engineer** is useful to reflect the damage sustained and the consequences of that to the fleet back to the players. Likewise if the characters you have in play suggest the game will contain a lot of hand-to-hand combat, a **Chief Medical Officer** to patch the PCs up and order them to rest will come in handy.

Work out who **each PC's direct superior** is and how they get on. Is each character's boss tyrannical, egotistical, petty, seemingly perfect? What would create a good contrast with the PC? Similarly, get a picture of **the people under each PC's command** - not necessarily all of them, but a few key personalities: perhaps gung-ho, recalcitrant, argumentative, or far too green.

Setup action: Fill out the game's cast with NPCs that are relevant to the type of game the players want.

Creating play

Using military structures during play is all about following or undercutting the expectations of a rigid hierarchy in a way that creates narrative texture.

Sometimes it's great to see an order disseminated through the ranks, followed effectively, and have the desired effect; and you can assume that that's what's going on most of the time in the background. But when it's in the spotlight, it's often going to be much more interesting to see that process go wrong.

The order itself, its transmission through the ranks, and its eventual execution are all potential points of failure; and whether the problem is caused by malice, incompetence, selfishness, or simple bad luck, it's going to lead to entertaining scenes and juicy consequences. This is what will be most satisfying to get on screen in your game, and you can use these suggestions to help you bring these problems into your story.

High-ranking characters

Whether as PC officer or as the GM playing an NPC, look for ways to make your influence on the course of events provide entertainment for everyone involved. Drive the people you have authority over towards the action, to become heroes or face tragedy.

Play into the reputation you want your character to have in the type of orders you give your subordinates – big and sweeping, or petty and micromanaging.

Find ways to disagree with other high-ranking characters, especially if you're on equal footing, and let everyone else feel the ripples of the trouble at the top.

Look for ways to order your subordinates to do things they don't want to. Here are some great orders you should consider – and that can be used as *Moves* with NPCs:

- ✦ Demand that they compromise their morals.
- ✦ Force them to risk exposing their secrets.
- ✦ Give them orders based on incomplete information.
- ✦ Put them at odds with the people they care about.
- ✦ Send them on a hopelessly dangerous mission.

Leave your subordinates space to do their own thing or interpret your orders in broad ways so you aren't dictating how any other PCs spend all their on-screen time.

Low-ranking characters

You're the ones who end up actually executing every order, so take advantage of your ability to direct play by doing things and providing information that will lead the fleet into interesting situations. Again, this works for PC soldiers and NPCs alike.

Make your superiors look good or bad by committing to a challenge or giving a lacklustre performance, and make sure they understand that you have the power to do that.

Reinforce the authority of your superiors by saluting and addressing them formally, or undercut them by doing that to their face and mocking them behind their backs.

Look for ways to respond to orders you don't like in ways that create play - these can also be used as *Moves* for NPCs:

- ✦ Complain loudly about your orders.
- ✦ Frak up your orders, in a way that's going to cause problems later.
- ✦ Say you'll follow orders when your superior is in the room, but don't.
- ✦ Outright refuse to follow orders, exposing your superiors but also opening yourself up to disciplinary action.

Take advantage of your relative anonymity to do things that others might be too high-profile to get away with, from malicious sabotage to a little harmless bootlegging.

Civilian characters

You exist outside the chain of command, so have fun with it!

- ✦ Point out that you can't be ordered around.
- ✦ Force military characters to use physical force and prove themselves tyrants if they want to impose their decisions on you.
- ✦ Misunderstand the chain of command and ask the wrong people for things.
- ✦ Intentionally subvert the chain of command and find back routes to get what you need.
- ✦ Empower those at the bottom of the rank hierarchy and upset the system.

Play action: Look for opportunities to use the unique ways your character interfaces with the hierarchy of rank to create friction and propel the story forward.

Damage

Sometimes (ok, often) characters in *Last Fleet* will get injured, or their ships will sustain damage. Here is some specific guidance on how to handle that mechanically.

As explained in the section on Space Battles (page 191–198), we do not track the progress of big battles in great detail. There's shots being fired, explosions going off. Presumably individually ships are damaged or destroyed. But we don't worry about tracking this – on either side – until a PC becomes involved, and then we focus on the outcomes of their actions.

Furthermore, there are no stats or other numbers in *Last Fleet* to represent how much damage a given weapon does, or how much damage a given person or ship can sustain. Instead, it's up to the group (often led by the GM) to decide how damaging a given thing might be, given the fictional situation that's been described. The rest of this section describes how you go about doing that. I've given examples, but it's up to you to decide how much damage a given hazard is potentially going to cause, in your game.

How to assess damage

Damage to human ships is handled differently depending on whether the source of the damage is a PC or not, and whether the target is a PC or not. But either way the steps you go through are essentially the same:

- 1 Decide whether this attack or hazard could possibly cause noteworthy damage to the target. If someone gets pushed roughly, or a fighter gets hit with a cricket bat, that's not really going to do any serious damage, so we just continue to play out the situation without any mechanical effect happening.
- 2 If it could, decide whether any PC is in a position to stop it or make it happen, as appropriate. Could they **Engage In Battle** with the attacker?

Could they **Shake Off** the threat? If so, use that *Move* and apply the consequences of the roll.

- 3 If nobody could stop it, or if they failed a roll and the GM decides that their *Move* should be to apply the full effects of the damage, then consider what level of damage is appropriate and apply it. This will be very different depending on the type of target, as explained in the table on the next page. Mostly use the middle column, but for more extreme situations the left-hand and right-hand columns may be appropriate.

As shown in the table, the results of damage to a player character can be any of: nothing happens; apply some *Pressure*; roll to **Weather Serious Harm**; they die. **Weather Serious Harm** is for serious, potentially debilitating wounds, or damage that could stop specific systems from working. *Pressure* is for harm that falls below those thresholds, but would still make life harder for the character. For suggestions for damage to a player character's ship, see the fleet damage list on page 189–190.

For NPCs, we really don't care all that much about the specifics of any injuries, and we don't track *Pressure*. So for them, if they're harmed, we pretty much either ignore it unless out of action or dead. You can always have them react to minor harm by losing control or doing something risky that they then need rescuing from; and *Doom Clocks* are a nice option for putting an NPC's life at immediate risk without killing them straight away.

For damage to the wider fleet, *Attrition* is used for general damage that might damage or destroy individual small ships, or injure or kill individual NPCs, but without any important ship, resource or named character being destroyed. When a specific important ship, resource or character is at stake, or when *Attrition* reaches maximum, then attacks might instead result in specific systems being taken out of action, *Shortage(s)* and/or NPCs being killed.

Type of target	Noteworthy damage, but not serious	Serious damage, but not certain to be lethal	Lethal/terrible damage
Individual human (PC).	Examples: A flesh wound or punch in the face. Effect: <i>Mark Pressure</i> .	Examples: Solid hit from a gun. Caught in an explosion. Effect: Roll to Weather Serious Harm .	Examples: Trapped on a ship that's destroyed by a nuke. Flushed out of an airlock. Effect: You die.
Non-player character	Examples are the same as for PCs above. Ignore it, or have them lose control/do something risky.	They are dead or helpless and will die if nobody intervenes.	They die.
Fighter or other small ship	Examples: Glancing hit from a fighter. Passing through a corrosive atmosphere. Effect: Apply "noteworthy, not serious" harm to pilot/crew.	Examples: Direct hit from another fighter. Crash landing on a planetoid. Effect: Apply "serious damage" to pilot/crew.	Examples: Crashing into a star. Hit by a nuke. Effect: Ship is destroyed. PCs who could eject/evacuate might roll to Shake Off .
Group of fighters	Examples: None. Although fighters are armoured, we only note damage to groups where it's serious.	Examples: Concerted attack from a group of fighters, a missile strike, etc. Effect: <i>Mark Attrition</i> . A few ships are damaged or destroyed, individual NPC pilots might be harmed.	Examples: Concerted attack from a much larger group of enemy fighters; a volley of missiles. Effect: <i>Mark Attrition</i> and/or create a <i>Shortage</i> : fighters. The fighters are destroyed or crippled.
Large military ship (battleship, frigate)	Examples: They're strafed by fighters or ordnance. An explosion somewhere non-critical. Effect: <i>Mark Attrition</i> .	Examples: Direct hit from a missile. Sustained fire from a group of fighters. Kamikaze attack by a fighter. Effect: Apply an appropriate effect to the ship. E.g. weapons offline, FTL drive malfunctioning.	Examples: The entire enemy fleet is bearing down, weapons are offline and the fighters defending it have been destroyed or routed. Effect: The ship is destroyed. NPC(s) might be killed, and <i>Shortage(s)</i> might apply.

Type of target	Noteworthy damage, but not serious	Serious damage, but not certain to be lethal	Lethal/terrible damage
Large civilian ship	Examples: N/A. Civilian ships are assumed to be unarmoured. Any notable damage to a them is serious.	Examples: They're hit by a fighter. They pass through the corrosive atmosphere of a planetoid. Effect: <i>Mark Attrition</i> and the ship may suffer specific damage: hull breach, dead in the water, etc.	Examples: Direct hit from a missile. Sustained fighter fire. Effect: The ship is destroyed. If it's an important ship, <i>Shortage(s)</i> might apply. Otherwise, <i>Mark Attrition</i> .

Damage to ship systems

Where the table calls for a specific effect or damage to a ship, you can use the list below for inspiration. Options for systems being taken out of action could include:

- ✦ Propulsion (dead in the water).
- ✦ FTL (can't jump).
- ✦ Sensors (can't effectively navigate or land without rolling to ***Shake Off***).
- ✦ Weapons (can't attack).
- ✦ Life support/hull breach (limited time for crew survival, consider using a *Doom Clock*).
- ✦ Cargo is damaged, creating a new *Shortage* (e.g. water, fuel, ammunition, food).
- ✦ Crew are injured or killed (say who dies or say their condition is unstable, see below).
- ✦ Ship destroyed. Boom!

Choose something that will be directly relevant to the current situation if possible, unless pacing suggests this is a bad idea (e.g. the scene is dragging and you don't want to introduce a new obstacle to finishing it). For PC fighters and other important ships, you'll want to record the damage so it can be repaired in

future. For less important ships, you can probably forget about it after the current scene: assume it gets taken care of in the background.

When a ship takes serious damage short of being destroyed, the GM may also declare that the damage is unstable, either in addition to or instead of one of the effects listed above. Unstable damage means a system is getting worse, and/or may inflict damage on other parts of the ship (perhaps because it is on fire, or experiencing power surges, or has a leak). You can then make the damage worse when a GM Move is called for, or you could attach a *Doom Clock* to it instead, if you like. All of this creates time pressure, and will cause engineers to run around trying to fix the problem in a most amusing way.

For example: They missed the main battery, but they've holed the water tanks – water is venting into space! There's no damage for now but the situation is unstable, if you don't fix it you could lose all your water.

In addition to the direct mechanical consequence of damage to ships, consider whether *Marking Attrition* (for ships that are important, but not vital) or changing *Momentum* (for major fleet assets) might be appropriate.

Damage to the enemy

With damage to the enemy, we care even less about the specifics than we do with NPCs. The enemy's fighters and warriors can be assumed to be more-or-less endless and interchangeable, and their big ships and leaders untouchable, unless a PC gets involved. If they do, refer to the relevant *Move*.

When individual enemies suffer harm as a result of a player's *Move*, e.g.

Engage In Battle, they are destroyed. For the bigger ships, even individual parts of the ship (their main battery, say) count as a tough target in themselves.

When such a target takes damage, it's destroyed but the ship it's a part of is otherwise unharmed.

Death

Sometimes things escalate in such a way that a PC's life is on the line. When this happens, it's important to make it clear what's at stake before it reaches that point. If things go badly, and someone dies, anyone with a *Relationship* with that character immediately *Marks Pressure* equal to the *Relationship's* level. I like to ask everyone else whether they care about the character's death. Anyone who does must *Mark Pressure*.

You can also apply this approach to NPCs the players care about. **Signal What's Coming** so that they can struggle to save the beloved character. For more bit part NPCs, feel free to just hose them when a GM Move is called for.

Running big battles

Tracking the flow of the battle

When an enemy fleet jumps in and starts launching fighters, you've got a sprawling situation to manage. Dozens of fighters join the battle, supported by a hail of ordnance from the bigger ships. Civilian ships try to stay out of danger. Command staff bark orders while pilots try to blast the enemy out of the sky. It's a lot to deal with. So... don't.

Instead of trying to track all of this stuff, *Last Fleet* abstracts most of it away into a simple *Doom Clock*-based mechanic for monitoring the overall flow of the battle. You can then focus the spotlight on the individual actions of the player characters and make them seem meaningful and important.

At the start of any large battle where there are lots of NPCs and/or ships involved, start by deciding who is going to win. That might seem counterintuitive – aren't we playing to find out who wins? Well, no, we aren't. In most cases, one side or the other will have numerical superiority. So, right at the start of the battle there's usually one side who will win unless something

unexpected happens. So, decide who that is. And in *Last Fleet*, that's nearly always the enemy, because the human race is a rag-tag fleet on the run after their whole civilization was destroyed, while their enemy is well-organized and well-supplied and just one part of a much bigger fleet.

We then create a battle *Doom Clock*. Every time a significant chunk of action happens in the part of the battle we're focusing on, we assume that the rest of the battle didn't just stop, but was carrying on in the background, and we *Mark* a *Segment* of the *Doom Clock*. Remember, *Clocks* have four *Segments*, so it won't take long to fill up.

If, as is usually the case, the human fleet is on the losing side, every time that a *Segment* is filled on your battle *Doom Clock*, *Mark* one *Attrition*. When the *Doom Clock* is full, erase all the marks on the *Doom Clock* and start again, but this time *Marking* two *Attrition* per *Segment*. The longer the human fleet takes to achieve their objectives and get out of there, the worse it's going to get for them.

When the humans are on the winning side, you probably don't need to track the overall progress of the battle. You might not need to play through the battle at all! Consider just narrating what happens, giving each character a chance to describe their role without rolling any dice. But other times, you'll be interested in some particular objective that is separate from winning the battle. In that case, focus in on the actions that matter to that objective, and don't worry about what is happening in the wider sweep of the battle. But be ready to start a *Doom Clock* if time is a factor, or if the battle turns against the human fleet.

You can also create *Doom Clocks* for other things of course - if the enemy boards the capital ship, you could create one to determine when they make it to the command centre and kill all the NPC commanders, for instance. Anything that creates a sense of pressure for the players to take action, is generally a good thing.

Focus on the action

You do, of course, describe what's happening in the battle at a high level. Each time you *Mark the Doom Clock*, tell the players that the enemy is launching fighters, now they're engaged in dog-fights, now they're launching missiles, that kind of thing. Imagine that we're getting occasional camera shots of the action, with fighters whizzing by and shrapnel flying. This helps create a sense of the battle and also gives *Tacticians* something to say when they want to make their *Move*.

However, while this abstracted action is going on, the GM should introduce interesting things for individual PCs – especially pilots – to worry about. Stuff like “there's a small group of enemy fighters headed straight towards the fuel liner” and “there's this one weird ship headed towards the *Agamemnon*, much bigger than the rest”. The players may take action to tackle those threats. If they don't, or if they fail, drive the consequences home. The fuel liner is destroyed – now there's a *Shortage* of fuel. The weird ship docks with *Agamemnon*, and enemy warriors pour onto the ship.



Equally, rather than putting something big at stake, you can just describe the most immediate enemy that player soldiers are faced with, let them roll to **Engage In Battle**. A 6 means they get into trouble, and let the consequences flow from there. In that case, you're putting the fate of the individual pilots in the crosshairs, and the drama of the battle will be about whether they get back in time to jump away with the rest of the fleet.

Finally, sometimes the players will create this stuff for you by pro-actively going after the enemy. Perhaps they decide they're going to jump in and attempt to land a ship on the enemy basestar. That's plenty interesting by itself; just tell them what's standing in their way and let the *Moves* flow.

How the battle ends

Space battles nearly always end with one side jumping away to safety. That means you engage your FTL drives or go into hyperspace or whatever your preferred SF super-fast transportation method is, and (effectively) teleport away from the battlefield. For the enemy fleet, it's up to the GM to decide when they jump – and it's a GM Move, of course. For the human fleet, it's up to whoever is in the command centre to decide when to jump. This is a great decision for PC commanders to take. If it's NPCs, you can use the battle *Doom Clock* and say “after x segments are filled in, the fleet is going to jump, whether you're back or not”, or you can have fun talking over the comm as your NPC, barking orders to return immediately, **Signalling** that they'll jump soon.

The decision to jump is constrained by the time taken to spool up the jump drive, or calculate the coordinates, or whatever your preferred SF process for getting ready to jump is. It's also constrained by the difficulty of jumping when you're directly engaged in combat. The consequences of this are:

- ✦ You can't jump away from battle straight away, there's always a period of time when you have to hold the enemy at bay. It's up to the GM to say how long this is. If you weren't prepared for the attack, but your jump drives are intact, this is usually the time it takes to fill a battle *Doom Clock*.
- ✦ If you jump away when the fleet is actively engaged in combat, you may want to make the ranking leader roll to **Shake Off** the attack, with the risk of jumping somewhere dangerous, or taking some damage before you leave, or losing part of the fleet, or bringing some attackers with you, or similar. Similarly, if one part of the fleet are engaged in combat, they might need to roll to **Shake Off** in order to get back in time for the jump.

Another possible (though rare) way to end a battle is for one side to endure such serious losses that they no longer have any prospect of victory. This should only happen if the losses are seriously decisive, like if one side's main battleship is disabled or destroyed. If that happens to the enemy fleet, we fade to black on images of the remaining fighters being mopped up and the crew celebrating. There's probably a change in *Momentum*. If it happens to the human fleet, well - that's a really big deal. They're going to jump away into a crisis situation, desperately trying to restore battle capability, or if they can't jump away, then we move to a new and even worse situation - fighting off boarding parties, or surrendering and living under occupation. That might mean the game ends on a rather bleak note, or enters a new phase.

Can't we turn the tide of the battle?

No. Well... probably not. Individual actions can't stem the tide of overwhelming numerical advantage. Even the best pilot can only destroy so many enemy fighters. The *Tactician Moves* allow the players to hold back the progress of the battle *Clock*, but that's really just damage limitation.

However.

Sometimes there's a big action that can make a difference. When someone pilots a stealth ship to land a nuke on board the enemy mothership... if that comes off, the tide of the battle is shifted. Perhaps even the tide of the war. So, when an action has consequences way beyond the normal business of trading fire, consider whether the battle's winning side has changed. And in that case, you may also wish to consider a change in *Momentum*.

What about the big guns?

While the fighters are whizzing around in space doing their thing, the bigger ships of the fleet are hammering away with turret-mounted cannons, waves of missiles and so on. For the most part, that's just part of the background battle that's abstracted away by the battle *Doom Clock*. These weapons are so huge and imprecise, and the distances so vast, that it's not possible to achieve focused tactical objectives using them. You can't, say, **Engage In Battle** by using the big guns to shoot down enemy fighters: between squeezing the trigger and the shell exploding, the fighters have moved on, and the risk of hitting your own ships is very high.

That's not to say that they're irrelevant to the battle. Fighters can be driven towards a wall of ordnance fire. A wing of fighters led by a player character pilot could clear a hole through the screen of enemy ships, allowing the big guns to land a major blow on the mothership. In other words, they're part of the

fictional context for the actions taken by the pilots. They can, in some contexts, be used to **Support** a pilot's actions – though for the same reasons you can't generally use them to **Engage In Battle**, it's often impossible to use them this way too – you'd risk blowing your own ships out of the sky.

What about people who aren't soldiers?

Ok, a little bit of honesty here. When there's a big battle on, the fighter pilots and/or marines are going to be in the spotlight. There's some tips here for how to ensure that other characters aren't sitting there twiddling their thumbs completely, but the reality is that, like any scene, not every character is going to be on focus. So the upshot of all that is, space battles shouldn't be all that frequent, and shouldn't go on all that long, if you want the rest of your group to be engaged. For smaller battles, simply play through them swiftly in a series of punchy Moves, and then move on to the next scene. Of course, if it happens that all your player characters are soldiers, and if they seem to enjoy it, knock yourself out and run some really in-depth battles.

With that in mind, here's some things you can do to make things interesting for the other characters, particularly in larger battles:

- ♦ For *Tacticians*, they have access to their *Role Move*, which enables them to provide **Support** and other effects, even when they can't directly do anything to influence the events of the battle. They may sometimes lend Support by blasting away with the weapon batteries on board the big ship, and by ordering in help from NPC fighters. And they may be the one taking the decision when to jump the fleet, which can be a fun kind of tense. When that happens, remember they need to roll to **Shake Off** where appropriate.

- ✦ For *Engineers*, there's a lot of fun to be had to frantically get damaged ships back in the air or repair or contain damage to the big ship. When someone has really come in hot, their engines on fire or whatever, things can get even more interesting, with the engineering crew battling to prevent an explosion or mitigate collateral damage. Even when a fighter is damaged and stranded, *Engineers* can have fun trying to provide advice over the radio.
- ✦ It's civilians who are least engaged when there's a battle. The fact is, there's relatively little that they can do, short of deploying their *Playbook Moves* in inventive ways. One way to keep them engaged is to cut back and forth between battlefield action and engaging social or other non-combat scenes happening contemporaneously. Another possibility is to put them in harm's way – damage to their ship or boarding parties or whatnot can draw them into combat whether they like it or not. Finally, the **Watch Helplessly** Move enables them to cut away to them simply watching what's going on from wherever they are. What are they thinking? Who are they with? What do they talk about as they watch their lives hanging in the balance? As well as the mechanical benefit of **Watch Helplessly**, there are good opportunities here for **Reaching Out**.

The Commonwealth and the Corax

setting overview

Human civilization is united under the Interplanetary Commonwealth, which consists of a small number of semi-independent planets united under a loose federation. The Commonwealth has been around for about a century, and memories are still fresh of the time before when the planets warred and bickered amongst themselves. Old resentments and rivalries still smoulder beneath the surface. Over the same time period, the Commonwealth expanded from a trading association to become increasingly like a federal government.

That was the situation before the Corax attacked. The planets were devastated and are now blanketed with alien flora, utterly inhospitable to human life. The Commonwealth and the planetary governments were destroyed. Who should be in charge in these circumstances is unclear.

The main planets of the Commonwealth are:

- ◆ **Ninmahon**, a world of bustling metropolises and spreading agricultural hinterlands. Its people (Ninmanese) tend to be educated and wealthy compared to others. The political hub of the Commonwealth and resented for it.
- ◆ **Ishkuria**, a cold and bleak planet rich in minerals and supplier of many of the Commonwealth's commodities. Its people (Ishkurians) have a proud martial and hunting heritage. Ishkuria tends to be looked down on by the other planets.
- ◆ **Nergalos**, a verdant planet with vast oceans. Its people (Nergalese) are deeply religious but also renowned for mercantile cunning; they are also known for their pilots and navigators.

Factions

The Red Temple

The *Red Temple* were the main religion in the Commonwealth. Most people went along with their practices in a fairly uncommitted way, but there were always a minority who were devoted and faithful. The Temple believe that humanity will rise to greatness in the fires of a catastrophe called “the Remaking”. Many of them believe the Corax incursion is the Remaking, and that confronting it head-on will lead to a greater future. Some are trying to exacerbate the crisis, believing that the more intense the catastrophe, the greater the benefit to humanity.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Chaplain Eduardo Chun**, once a quiet meditative man mainly concerned to look after the faithful, has begun to give more fiery sermons. He perceives the Remaking is at hand. Whose ear does he have?
- ✦ **Caitriona “Phantom” Ibarra**, a fighter jock through and through. She’s fiercely committed to the war, believes in taking the battle to the enemy and a devotee of a more fringe element of the Red Temple. Who likes to blow off steam with her?

Moves:

- ✦ Demand greater zeal and aggression.
- ✦ Publicly denounce cowardice or retreat to safety.
- ✦ Recruit someone to the Temple.
- ✦ Hasten the Remaking through sabotage or collaboration.

Unity

Unity are a political party dedicated to a more egalitarian order, particularly popular on Ishkuria. They have a paramilitary wing called *The Unifiers*, though they deny any connection with them. *Unity* are opposed to the Commonwealth political order, but even more fiercely opposed to military rule. They want to stop the military taking control of the fleet.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Julian Volkov**, a capable organizer (can be a military logistician or a political adviser, as needed) who can get shit done. He's earnest, principled, and a card-carrying member of *Unity*. Who relies heavily on Julian to run things for them?
- ✦ **Claudia Scala**, a rabble-rousing union leader. Publicly, she is ferociously dedicated to protecting the rights, freedoms, and democratic system of the Commonwealth against military manoeuvring. Privately she's looking for opportunities to remake the system, abolishing the existing hierarchy. Who has been at loggerheads with Claudia?

Moves:

- ✦ Strike a piously liberal or pro-democratic stance.
- ✦ Undermine authority.
- ✦ Cultivate like-minded individuals.
- ✦ Initiate protests or civil disobedience.
- ✦ Unifier action: kidnap, assassinate, bomb.

The Nexus

The Nexus is a network of criminals and black marketeers. Though much of the network was destroyed in the attacks, there are cells operating in the fleet. Of course, you can't make a profit if there is no fleet, and they favour pragmatism and political stability over conflict.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Morgan Kinnard**, a junior officer fulfilling a menial yet crucial role, who is secretly running a black-market operation from their work station, as part of the *Nexus*. Tell the group that Morgan is superb at logistics and administration, and is a secret black marketeer. Who has them as a subordinate?
- ✦ **Ruth Foster**, an engineer who has gotten addicted to narcotics supplied by the *Nexus*. In exchange for continued supply, she is stealing stuff from the fleet. Who has noticed Ruth's shoddy work recently?

Moves:

- ✦ Stockpile, restrict, distribute or move resources, legally or illegally.
- ✦ Find something not normally available.
- ✦ Demand a quid pro quo.
- ✦ Enforce their rules, or take revenge.

ships

Warships

Agamemnon is a massive battleship with three gun batteries and four fighter launch bays, plus space for a division of marines. *Agamemnon* has been fighting a hit-and-run war against the Corax and has only now encountered the civilian fleet. The ship is damaged and low on fuel, and must now decide what to do next.

Hecate is a smaller frigate, armed with a single gun battery and hosting a dozen fighters. *Hecate* is also home to what remains of the Commonwealth Government. In a toe-to-toe battle with *Agamemnon* she wouldn't stand a chance, but could perhaps hold the capital ship off for a time. *Hecate* has been protecting the civilian fleet, but sorely needs the help of *Agamemnon* for long-term survival.

Key NPCs:

- ♦ **Admiral Bachmann**, the commander of *Agamemnon*. A hard-headed tactician who doesn't trust the green president on board *Hecate*. Who has suffered because of her uncompromising approach to the war?
- ♦ **President Victor Pereira**, a war hero and the only surviving member of the Commonwealth Government. Who does Pereira go to for advice?

Aphrodite

Aphrodite is a research ship that has been turned over to hydroponics and fleet supplies. The ship is run by a scientist council who control production of food for the fleet with spreadsheets and rotas, and are trying to push their bureaucratic methods onto the rest of the fleet. They're also obsessed with trying to better understand the enemy, and have high-security laboratories experimenting on samples and/or prisoners. There's also a large number of lay staff on board, seconded over to boost productivity.

The ship has three glass hydroponics bays sitting around a central engineering core, with laboratories and observatories in the belly of the ship. Its two exploratory vessels are used as shuttles to ferry food and other supplies around the fleet. They have scoops and drills for harvesting samples from asteroids, gas giants and the like, though these aren't suitable for gathering large quantities of material.

Moves:

- ✦ An experiment goes wrong or escapes.
- ✦ Something is smuggled in or out.
- ✦ The scientists meddle in another ship's affairs.
- ✦ The scientists discover a secret.

Hephaestus

Hephaestus is a mining ship, equipped with dozens of small pods for harvesting minerals from asteroids. It has equipment for processing ore into refined materials. The ship is rammed with Ishkurian refugees that it rescued during the exodus from the homeworlds, and would not be safe to commence mining operations on any scale unless they were moved out.

The workers on *Hephaestus* include a hard core of feisty unionists, and the chief of mining operations is Claudia Scala (see the Unity faction). They'll be ready to

cause trouble should they suspect anyone of cutting back on safety, workers rights, or civil liberties. Equally, if brought on side, they could be very effective at organizing operations.

Alexander

Alexander is a fuel ship. It has used up much of its reserves getting *Hecate* and the fleet to where it is, but has enough to last a while. Supplying *Agamemnon* would change that.

THE CORAX

Beneath the skin of our physical universe there is a realm that obeys entirely different laws. The Tenebrium enables FTL travel and communication. But it is also the origin of our enemy. The Corax is a vast sentient network that lurks in the Tenebrium, making sudden incursions into the physical universe to consume information – the raw structure of biological life – by harvesting the DNA and neural patterns of living things.

The physical manifestation of the Corax appears to be analogous in structure to earth fungus. Like fungus, it can appear in a range of forms. Spores drift across space to seed themselves in a ships' systems and wreak havoc. Enormous filamentous structures surge out of rifts to launch attack ships. Hulking Corax warriors lead boarding parties and paralyse defenders. Most insidious of all, cloned humans, controlled by mycelium networks, infiltrate the fleet.

The Corax intelligence

Scientists believe that the Corax is essentially one consciousness. The Corax is capable of operating semi-independent instances of itself, like copies of a computer programme, but these are not truly separate minds and are always ultimately reabsorbed into the main Corax intelligence. It can also manifest avatars. These seem like individual beings, some even seeming human, but (so say the scientists) they are in fact more like simulations being controlled by the central intelligence, and no more than puppets of the true Corax mind. Regardless of the truth, it is unnerving to encounter one's dead loved ones or colleagues, large as life and possessing all their memories and emotions, and urging surrender to the Corax.

Moves:

- ✦ Respond with alarming cunning or insight.
- ✦ Draw on knowledge and skills possessed by anyone it has consumed.
- ✦ Manifest an avatar.

The Corax fleet

Corax ships come in a range of sizes and configurations. Unlike human ships, they are rarely adapted for long-distance travel. They do not need to be: the Corax is able to generate rifts between the Tenebrium and physical space through which it can extrude mycotic hubs from which the ships launch. No matter where you are, the Corax can follow you.

Of course, these are usually not ships in the precise sense of the word. Independently controlled and containing neither cargo nor crew, they are more like drones.

The most common Corax "ship" is referred to as the Spore Pod, a fast attack craft whose weapons bond to human systems and disable them, while

maintaining an airtight membrane to preserve the organic life within. More dreaded are the Assault Pods, tubular craft that dissolve the outside of a target ship's hull, form an airlock, and then release Corax warriors. A final danger are the clouds of near-invisible spores that may infest ships' systems without anyone realizing. If left alone, they grow into larger systems that may send signals into the Tenebrium to attract further Corax attacks, or spawn other Corax organisms to cause trouble later on.

Custom move:

- ✦ When you ***Weather Serious Harm*** from a Spore Pod, on a 7–9 it has the option to immobilize your ship.

Moves:

- ✦ Open a rift and extrude mycotic hubs.
- ✦ Launch fighters.
- ✦ Disable a human ship or system without killing anyone.
- ✦ Land an assault pod.
- ✦ Infest a ship with spores.

Landing parties

Corax boarding parties are generally led by hulking Corax warriors. Slow but hard to kill, they implacably advance through human ships, disabling the crew. They eject projectiles and clouds of spores which paralyse human targets or shut down ships' systems.

Once the Corax warriors have cleared the way, the Harvesters arrive. Slithering things that pose no threat in themselves, they drag the paralysed victims away, to be returned to the hub for information extraction. Anyone who suffers such a fate will have the informational content of both their body and mind absorbed by one of the Corax's extractor cauldrons. Their strengths, their knowledge and understanding, are devoured and retained for later use. They may later return as avatars: indistinguishable from who they used to be, but now working for the Corax.

Custom moves:

- ✦ When you attack a Corax warrior with something less damaging than high explosive or a chainsaw, it just keeps going.
- ✦ When you **Weather Serious Harm** from a Corax warrior, on a 7-9 it has the option to paralyse one of your limbs.

Moves:

- ✦ Paralyse someone or something.
- ✦ Advance silently and inevitably.
- ✦ Shrug off damage.
- ✦ Drag off victims.

Infiltrators

The Corax have numerous ways to infiltrate the fleet. The most basic is sporic infestation. The Corax have a range of spores that can inhabit the exterior of a ship, the warmer regions around an engine, or that can live in a life-supported area. If not discovered and removed, they grow. Once established, they can develop into organisms that summon the Corax fleet from the Tenebrium, inveigle themselves into ship's systems and disable them, or spawn Corax warriors or avatars.

Avatars are the most feared of all. They appear human. They may appear like a specific human, and put on a perfect simulation of that person's personality and memories. They are virtually indistinguishable from a real person. Once inside, they may wait patiently for months or years before moving to deal a devastating blow from a position of trust.

Custom move:

- ✦ When you **Seek Out** the truth about an avatar's identity, no matter what you roll, you can't prove for certain that it isn't the real deal.

Moves:

- ✦ Disable a ship's operations.
- ✦ Sabotage a mission.
- ✦ Feed information to the Corax.
- ✦ Assassinate someone.
- ✦ Tempt them into hesitation or surrender.



quick-start scenario: cold war

The battle cruiser *Agamemnon* survived the initial assault on the Commonwealth by pure luck: the ship was away on a deep space mission and returned to find the cities had been scoured of life and the war was all but over. Since that time it's been waging a hit-and-run campaign against the Corax fleet, with no obvious purpose besides revenge.

Two days ago, *Agamemnon* encountered a fleet of ships hiding out near a concealed research station. The ships are mostly civilian, but led and protected by a smaller warship, *Hecate*. On board is the self-proclaimed President of the Fleet, a war hero and previously Secretary of Labour, presumed to be the only survivor of the Commonwealth government.

The situation is precarious. Admiral Katerina Bachmann and President Victor Pereira are at loggerheads and there is the possibility of intra-fleet hostilities. Meanwhile, *Agamemnon* is short on fuel. And it is only a matter of time before the Corax show up.

setup

Use the Commonwealth and the Corax setting described above. It is full of factions, NPCs, and story seeds that you can draw on as needed.

Skip the usual character creation and world setup, and don't use the **Momentum** Move or the **Sleeper Agent** Move – the effects of these Moves are baked into the starting setup and GM notes. (If you're using this as a campaign starter, use these Moves as normal after that.)

I recommend using the usual session one starting questions (see pages 86–87) to get things off to a flying start, though there's enough content in the setting and this scenario that you should be able to generate plenty to occupy a one-shot if you prefer to get into scenes faster than that.

Use the characters set out below. Have the players read out the *Playbook* text as normal, plus the descriptive information next to each character's name. If you have fewer than five players, use them in the order they're listed (in other words, first drop Chief Tomika, then Captain Vega, then Major Catan). GM: you can and should use any skipped-over characters as NPCs.

As normal for a game starting in the aftermath of a crisis, the characters start with three *Pressure Marked*, and the fleet starts with *Momentum* –1. For a one-shot using this scenario, *Mark* four *Attrition* rather than the usual two (representing recent battle damage to the *Agamemnon*) and start a *Doom Clock* with two *Segments* already filled in to represent the fuel *Shortage*.

player characters

Admiral Katerina Bachmann (Capricorn)

You are the ranking officer on board *Agamemnon*. You've been harrying the Corax for weeks. Your ship has sustained battle damage and you're low on fuel. Now you've got this civilian fleet to worry about – and a novice President who thinks he's in charge.

Stats: Raw +0, Hard +1, Smooth +0, Warm –1, Sharp +0.

Moves: *Zero Compromises, Thrives Under Pressure, Tactician.*

Relationships

- ✦ Pereira was a war hero in his day, but he hasn't been in active service for a long while. You're not particularly impressed with his record as a commander or as president, and you think he's kind of soft. Unbeknownst to you, Pereira served under you in the Anathian war, and was part of the assault on Thanol. During the assault, you ordered a bombardment of the enemy, knowing that some of your own people would get hit. You're comfortable with that: it was a price worth paying to turn the tide of the battle and save lives.
- ✦ Major Catan seems intelligent and dedicated. Maybe they'll help steer Pereira to making the right decisions.
- ✦ Livia Vega is a brave and committed pilot, but needs to grow into her leadership role as Commander of the Air Group. She is prone to inappropriate behaviour – grandstanding, bar brawls, fraternization with junior officers. Firm discipline is what her people need and, you suspect, what she needs too.

President Victor Pereira (Libra)

You are in control of *Hecate* and the civilian fleet. You are a former marine and latterly commanded a small warship, but left the military long ago and took up politics, initially as a union organizer but most recently as Secretary of Labour. You've been thrust into the office of Presidency but now that you're here, you're damned well going to get the job done. Mission number one is protecting what's left of the human race.

You have a former affiliation with Unity (see "factions" on page 201). You have de-emphasized it as a liability since you became labour sec, but you still have connections.

Stats: Raw -1, Hard +0, Smooth +0, Warm +1, Sharp +0.

Moves: *High Stakes, Influencer, Moral Compass*.

Relationships

- ✦ You served in the marines during the Anathian war, where then-Colonel Bachmann was CO. During the assault on Thanol, your unit caught friendly fire from a bombardment that Bachmann must have ordered. As far as you're concerned she's too comfortable by half with collateral damage. It's no longer acceptable to take risks with the future of the human race.
- ✦ Major Catan guided you to safety in the immediate aftermath of the initial Corax attack – probably saved your life. Catan is an impressive soldier, and a trusted advisor who you can rely on.
- ✦ Chief Aldana is a very smart cookie and seems to see what others miss. You use them as a source of informal advice.

Major Gabriel “Hurricane” Catan (Scorpio)

You are the chief military advisor to the President, and had believed yourself to be the most senior surviving military officer until *Agamemnon* arrived. You helped guide the civilian fleet to safety in the immediate aftermath of the Corax attack. You narrowly survived a Corax attack in the early days of the war, but you can’t remember anything about it. Now, with strange dreams and unexplained events around you, you increasingly fear that you may be a Corax sleeper agent. You have not yet mentioned your doubts to anyone else.

Stats: Raw +0, Hard -1, Smooth +1, Warm +0, Sharp +0.

Moves: *Sleeper Agent, Manipulative, Pilot.*

Relationships

- ✦ You haven’t known the President long, but you respect and trust him, and serve loyally as his chief military adviser.
- ✦ You’re a huge fan of Admiral Bachmann. You were practically raised on tales of her exploits, and as far as you’re concerned she can walk on water. The opportunity to serve with her is a dream come true.
- ✦ You’re in love with Livia Vega. You had a brief but intense romance a few years ago, and you have held a candle for her ever since.
- ✦ You’re best friends with Chief Maki Tomika. You feel you could tell them anything.

Captain Livia “Minerva” Vega (Aries)

You are the Commander of the Air Group on *Agamemnon*. Since the war started you've been fighting hit and run with the enemy. It's dangerous, but exhilarating – you're in your element. Each time you go out there, you live on the adrenaline then come back and kick back with some random ensign. Still, you can't help but feel like you've been pushing your luck for weeks. Something has to give.

Stats: Raw +1, Hard +0, Smooth -1, Warm +0, Sharp +0.

Moves: *Explosive Decompression, Shotgun Diplomacy, Pilot.*

Relationships

- ✦ You're sick of Bachmann's shit. Just recently she ordered you into a near-suicidal raid on a Corax mothership which almost got you killed. *Agamemnon* has been making these satisfying but ultimately futile attacks on the enemy for weeks, but it's obvious the war is already lost and everything since has been wasting time and depleting resources. It's time to admit defeat and focus on protecting the human race.
- ✦ You had a fling with Gabriel Catan years ago. You haven't yet had the chance to catch up properly.
- ✦ Just last night you got rip-roaringly drunk and ended up in bed with the Chief Engineer from *Hecate*. You're in her bunk right now, wondering how to get out without half the engineering corps seeing you.

Chief Maki Tomika (Sagittarius)

You're the Chief Engineer on *Hecate*. You were picked up from the wreck of the *Ariadne*, ironically a salvage ship, after it got caught in the crossfire of a battle with the Corax. You watched helplessly from a hiding place as Corax creatures dragged off your friends. Although initially distrusted as a possible Corax infiltrator, you have won the trust of President Pereira and provide a caring ear to many of the stressed-out *Hecate* crew, who have become a kind of surrogate family since you came aboard.

Stats: Raw -1, Hard +0, Smooth +0, Warm +0, Sharp +1.

Moves: ***Tinkerer, Explorer, Engineer.***

Relationships

- ◆ President Pereira seems to have been impressed by you and has taken to coming to you for advice.
- ◆ You're best friends with Gabriel Catan. It's obvious that something is really bothering them lately, though they haven't said anything. You're worried they're going to crack under the pressure.
- ◆ Last night you got drunk with the *Agamemnon* pilots and ended up sleeping with their CAG, Livia Vega. She is super-hot and a little out of control.

GM notes

This scenario is intended to focus primarily on the internal strife in the fleet. The underlying question you and the group should have answered by the end of the first session is, whether the leadership of the *Agamemnon* and *Hecate* will trust each other, and who is going to be dominant out of the President and the Admiral. The character's relationships and background should set this up nicely: so your role is to let them get on with it, but push and prod where needed to get people talking or create further tension.

Give them some time initially to find their feet and explore who their characters are, just like you would in a normal session. Bring in NPCs and factions (see the *Corax* and *Commonwealth* setting, pages 199–209) to engage the players and make them care, and use them mercilessly as stakes later on.

When they've had a good period of time to do that, have Major Catan wake up with some sort of incriminating residue on their hands or clothes. Before Catan can do anything to stop it, a bomb goes off somewhere on the fleet: choose somewhere appropriate. Make the effects bad but not debilitating (don't create any *Shortages* or similar). The residue should obviously fit where you put the bomb: fuel for a fuel ship, dirt for a hydroponics plant. It goes without saying that Catan was responsible. Introduce evidence that could incriminate Catan, but with the opportunity for Catan to hide or destroy it.

If you want to amp up the pressure further, you can supply evidence that a second bomb may be out there: have someone show up claiming that there has been a theft of explosive materials. It could be from the armoury, or from a mining ship. The quantity taken is enough to make more than one bomb.

You can also poke and prod at the political and social situation using your factions and NPCs. Have them sound off with their opinions, or even approach a player offering some kind of deal – see the factions section for suggestions.

If you think it will help with pacing, you may wish to have the Corax fleet show up, either sending scout ships or a full-blown attack fleet. Do this carefully: it will suck up a good chunk of time, and likely distract people from their differences. I recommend doing it only once, if at all, so that there's a chance to regroup and reconsider how they feel about each other now that they've fought together.

Note that if the fuel *Shortage* becomes a significant focus, you should consider that there is enough fuel for the *Agamemnon* or the civilian fleet to keep going for a good long while – but not both. In other words, *Agamemnon* could cannibalize the fleet to keep going if it wanted to. Alternatively, the fleet could go looking for mineral deposits or abandoned Commonwealth fuel facilities – but searching would use up fuel, time or both.

Of course, I strongly encourage you to put your own twist on this scenario. Introduce additional threats and events to engage the characters according to your own instincts and preferences. The above events serve as a skeleton to hang your own story off.

Summary of the above:

- ✦ An initial few scenes of quiet, to enable conversations, establish relationships and introduce NPCs.
- ✦ Catan wakes up with incriminating evidence, then a bomb goes off.
- ✦ [optional] Supply evidence of a second bomb.
- ✦ [optional] Corax fleet shows up.

quick start scenario: dictys and danae

Misha Bushyager

Note: This scenario deals with the treatment of refugees/prisoners of war. It should not be taken lightly nor should the refugees be abused. You may end up making a hard choice to abandon them. Additionally, there may be children placed in peril both by your decision and by the situation. Please make sure everyone is comfortable with that. There will also be themes of food scarcity and possible starvation. One PC is written as the birth parent of another PC; but whether or not that is known is left up to the players. Feel free to change that relationship if necessary.

You are the crew of the *Dictys*, a scout ship: expendable, front line, extremely mobile. You are not the dregs of the fleet but pretty close.

You just encountered another ship, a Corax ship: only the people on it were not under Corax control... at least, that's what you think they said - communication has been difficult. They managed to slip free of the Corax's programming and stole a Corax ship they are calling the *Danae*. With a deteriorating ship, and low on supplies, they are drifting through empty space. 28 refugees are on board, 28 lives - though it isn't clear whether they are human lives.

The vessel was under fire from a Corax cruiser when you came across it and the cruiser turned its weapons on you. You were able to fire back, and you disabled the ship, but do not know if they were able to send out a message to the Corax motherships. The ship is still there, floating in space - perhaps the first time a

there has been an opportunity to examine a helpless Corax ship away from immediate threat of attack.

The *Dictys* took heavy damage in the exchange. Engines are offline, the pilot of one of your small fighters was injured grievously, the science and med bays are offline, and the communications array took a nasty hit. You think you can currently send long range, but incoming transmissions don't appear to be working, so you don't know if the rest of the Fleet knows where you are or if they're coming for you.

The survivors on the *Danae* are starving and exhausted and speak an entirely different language than the Fleet Standard. One of the specialists from engineering says he remembers his grandmother talking like they do, from when he was a kid. He is working with them work on communications between the two groups.

At the start of the game, after characters have been introduced, take turns to say how your character feels about the refugees.



setup

Use the Commonwealth and the Corax setting described on page 199–209 above.

Skip the usual character creation and world setup, and don't use the *Momentum Move*, the effects of which are baked into the starting setup and GM notes. (If you're using this as a campaign starter, use these *Moves* as normal after that.)

Use the characters set out below. Have the players read out the *Playbook* text as normal, plus the descriptive information next to each character's name. If you have fewer than five players, use them in the order they're listed (in other words, first drop Kirby, then McGuire, then Stokes). GM: you can and should use any skipped-over characters as NPCs.

As normal for a game starting in the aftermath of a crisis, the characters start with three *Pressure Marked*, and the fleet starts with *Momentum* -1. For a one-shot using this scenario, *Mark* four *Attrition* rather than the usual two (representing recent battle damage to the *Dictys*).

player characters

Colonel Kallin Burns (Taurus)

You are the Captain of the *Dictys*. You proved yourself worthy of a command many times over the years, first as a pilot, then as the XO of the fleet flagship. When you were finally forced to accept a command of your own you chose the *Dictys* willingly, despite the hit your career will take from being so far from the rest of the fleet command. Your reasons for choosing it are your own.

Stats: *Raw* -1, *Hard* +1, *Smooth* 0, *Warm* 0, *Sharp* 0.

Moves: *Unshakeable Beliefs*, *No One Left Behind*, *Tactician*.

Relationships

- ✦ Jaksyn Stokes and I go way back. While I climbed through the ranks, they seemed content to remain a pilot. I was given my choice of command and I chose the *Dictys*, because even though it was a step down, Jaksyn was here.
- ✦ Wiker was next in line for command of the *Dictys* before I asked for it.
- ✦ I trust McGuire's instincts almost as much as my own when it comes to the crew of the *Dictys*. Sometimes even more. But I'm worried about the pressure they are putting themselves under.
- ✦ Halister Kirby and I have been seeing each other. I really like them but I have to be careful about how it might look to the rank and file.

Major Lena Wiker (Gemini)

You are a likeable sort and you worked and schmoozed your ass off to get where you are only to have it snatched away by some shirker looking for an easy command. Well you are not going to take it lying down. You are fairly sure most of the grunts will follow anyway and you've been plotting to take control of the ship.

Stats: *Raw* 0, *Hard* 0, *Smooth* +1, *Warm* 0, *Sharp* -1.

Moves: *Playing Both Sides*, *Louche*, *Marine*.

Relationships

- ✦ I've caught a few mistakes around the ship. The more I see, the more I'm convinced they're coming from Kirby: and now I'm sure they are deliberately setting me up so as to expose my plans.
- ✦ McGuire looks up to me. Maybe they're starstruck by my reputation, maybe I remind them of a parent: who knows?

- ✦ Captain Burns – sorry, “Call me Kallin” – needs me to be their enforcer, the heavy to their soft touch. It’s annoying; and I’d be a much better Captain.
- ✦ I’m pretty sure Burns and Stokes are personal friends and it burns me up that Stokes got made XO ahead of me.

Major Jaksyn Stokes (Cancer)

All you ever wanted was to fly and hang out with you childhood buddy Kallin. Except for the year before Lake was born, before you gave them up, you’ve been able to do that. Kallin should have taken a better assignment; but selfishly you’re glad they’re here.

Stats : *Raw 0, Hard 0, Smooth 0, Warm +1, Sharp -1.*

Moves: ***Turn A Blind Eye, Walk Out Of This Room While You Still Can, Pilot.***

Relationships

- ✦ Burns and I have known each other since we were children.
- ✦ Lake McGuire is my child, though they do not know it, and I’ve followed their career. When they volunteered for the *Dictys*, I made sure I got assigned here too.
- ✦ Wiker is mad because I outrank them and Kallin made me the new XO. If I get them to follow an order without questioning it, I’ll eat my boots.
- ✦ Kirby is seeing Burns on the QT. They seem like a good egg. They just need to keep their eye on the task that’s in front of them and their head out of the stars before they get us all killed.

Specialist Lake McGuire (Virgo)

You have always been curious. Your adopted parents tried to steer your inquisitiveness into productive channels like science, but you still keep your ear to the wall on more personal things. You've been helping Kirby to investigate some weird accidents that have been happening on the *Dictys*. Now, you're sure you're on the cusp of figuring out how to tell the Corax infiltrators from the rest of the fleet, and you won't stop until you solve it.

Stats : *Raw -1, Hard 0, Smooth 0, Warm 0, Sharp +1.*

Moves : *Single-minded, Stimmed To The Eyeballs, Investigator.*

Relationships

- ✦ Captain Burns is sure I'm going to crack, but I know I can figure this out if I just have a little more time.
- ✦ Halister Kirby needs me. I know I can help them solve this. If only all these weird mishaps would stop ruining our experiments...
- ✦ I don't think Major Wiker likes me. They're still upset about that fire that wrecked the officer's mess - no matter how many times I explain that it wasn't my fault.

Lt Colonel Halister Kirby (Scorpio)

Ever since that attack on the mothership a couple of years ago, weird stuff has been happening around you. You came away victorious, but you feel wrong somehow, and little things go missing or seem out of place. But it feels like recently it's been getting more dangerous: stuff that if you hadn't caught it, could have got people killed. That near failure of the airlock? Good thing Wiker caught it BEFORE the fighters launched. You're in charge of the science labs now, so it's up to you to figure out who the Danae refugees really are – and make sure you fix any “mistakes” that come up on the way, before anyone else notices.

Stats : *Raw 0, Hard 0, Smooth +1, Warm -1, Sharp 0.*

Moves: *Sleeper Agent, Where There's A Way, Scientist.*

Relationships

- ✦ Kallin and I have been getting... close recently. I want to tell them everything, but I think they'll hate me for it.
- ✦ Major Wiker keeps covering for my... missteps. I'm not sure quite why but I'm grateful... unless they're somehow responsible for them...
- ✦ Stokes was sure I was just using Kallin and gave me a talking to that had my knees quaking, but now I think we're on the same page.
- ✦ McGuire is “helping” me investigate my problem. I've had to work with them just to keep an eye on them, but it's only a matter of time before they figure it out.

NPCs

- ◆ **Specialist Kaden Jons** His grandmother spoke a second language, similar to that of the *Danae* survivors. He's working on communicating with them but he's also one of the *Dictys*' better mechanics; and engineering could use his help making the repairs just as much if not more.
- ◆ **Sgt Riva Okami** Wiker's former lover and head of engineering. She's all for putting Wiker in charge of the *Dictys* and ditching the survivors of the *Danae*. Hell, anyone who wants to stick with Burns can get ditched too, for all she cares.
- ◆ **Dr Tiff Scot** Chief Medical officer of the *Dictys*. She's been diagnosing the injured on the *Danae*, and demonstrating how to help them in mime over the viewscreen. She's convinced they're fully human, based on what she's seeing, and is trying to convince the rest of the crew. She's one of the leading voices in the scientists' faction to bring the *Danae* survivors on board, to help treat their injuries if nothing else.
- ◆ **Lt Cas Hout** He thinks Beller from the *Danae* looks like the spitting image of the picture of his great-grandfather. He wants to bring the whole group over for testing.
- ◆ **Talia Xob** Leader of the *Danae* refugees. She's trying to get her people to safety as much as the crew of the *Dictys* are trying to save their shipmates.
- ◆ **Beller Ophon** The eldest of the refugees, an elderly gentleman with avuncular vibes. He's got an injury but insists on making sure everyone else gets checked out first.

Notes: Whether there are children or not among either the refugees or on the *Dictys* is entirely up to your table. If there are, make sure you agree as a group about how much peril they will be in with regards to any decision made about the *Danae* and her survivors.

ships

Dictys

A cruiser with a crew of 50, with three smaller fighters that can be deployed for protections. Scouts are usually deployed for six months before returning to the fleet for re-supply. Their purpose is to find threats to the fleet as well as look for habitable planets and potential allies. The *Dictys* is two months into its latest deployment, its first under Captain Burns. There are three levels: the bridge; the flight deck, science bay and engineering; and the crew quarters, lounges, and storage. The science bays house spore samples from the *Corax*, sealed in multiple controlled environments for various experiments, kept away from the main fleet to prevent an accidental spread in case of containment breach.

Danae

The *Danae* is a *Corax* transport ship, lightly armed, ill supplied, and composed of the bridge and a single large room. Stolen by Talia Xob and the other 27 refugees, it is now out of fuel and floating listlessly. The two ships have managed to connect on the short-range frequencies, and there is potentially useful *Corax* technology on it if the crew can find a way to retrieve it safely.

Kraken

The hulk of the cruiser floats nearby. There hasn't been a peep from it since the explosion right before the guns went silent. This presents the rare opportunity to examine a helpless *Corax* ship. The scientists of the *Dictys* are clamouring to explore the ship, sure there is some secret to the infiltration that they will discover there. Likewise, engineering hopes they can scavenge it for parts to repair the ship and possibly get ahead of the *Corax* technologically.

Polydectes

The sibling ship of the *Dictys*. It was last in contact with them right before they made the jump to end up at the *Danae*. They are the most likely to respond first to any transmissions from the *Dictys*.

Factions

Mutineers

Those of the crew loyal to Wiker could be persuaded to take over the ship and turn control back over to Wiker, and might even take action themselves if Burns seems not to be in control of the situation. The only thing currently stopping them is the penalty for mutiny: no-one wants to get drummed out of the fleet if they fail. There are some rumours swirling around about how the last Captain died, and some of it links back to Burns, even though they weren't on or near the ship at the time. This faction has control of most of the weapons if a mutiny does occur, and any who oppose them would likely perish.

Scientists

The scientists on the *Dictys* are among both the most likely to figure out the Corax infiltration problem and the most expendable. Many think they're on the cusp of discovery, but the Fleet command structure is sceptical without any evidence. They want to bring the survivors from the *Danae* on board to study them: to see if their claim of throwing off the spore control is true – and, if so, how?

***Danae* Refugees**

28 people led by Talia.

GM notes

The heart of the conflict is what to do with the *Danae* and its occupants. Leave it there and let the people starve? Salvage it and tow it back to the fleet for further study? The *Dictys* will be tight quarters, and even tighter rations, if it takes on the crew from the *Danae*. Until they solve the language gap, the refugees won't be much use to the fleet. It's important to take any opportunity to spotlight the (apparent) humanity of the people on board, to make them seem like more than just resources. At the same time, play up the miscommunication potential with the refugees from the *Danae*, so that it's not possible to interrogate them in detail or verify who they really are.

With only the short-range comms working and a couple of the fighters out of commission, they'll be sitting ducks if the *Corax* managed to summon reinforcements. Therefore it's best to save any such *Move* until near the end, if you make it at all.

Secondarily, there is a contingent on the *Dictys* who are upset that Wiker was passed over for Burns. There are rumblings about a mutiny, making how Burns handles this situation – their first real test as Captain – even more high-stakes. One way to throw things into even greater chaos would be to have the mutineer faction, led by Sgt Okami, take direction action and/or demand Burns' removal.

If Kirby is a PC, then for their sleeper agent setup try one of the following:

- 1 Some of the Corax samples from the labs are missing, and Kirby finds them in the med bay among the supplies.
- 2 There's an old book belonging to Jons that could help to translate the refugees' language but it's missing. Kirby finds the charred remains in the laboratory.
- 3 The rumours being spread about Burns are coming from notes distributed to key crew members, written in Kirby's handwriting.

Put *Doom Clocks* on the Corax reinforcements and the ship repairs. There might be inorganic components floating about, so that scavenging from battle detritus may help with repairs. Powering up components from any Corax vessel should push the Corax *Doom Clock* forward and alert the Corax to the location of the *Danae* and *Dictys*.

Promethia Damned

An Alternate Setting by Gav Thorpe

"You can trick the Fates but you cannot outrun Death."

In the Mortal Age, a great civilization spread across the fertile plains and came to be known as Promethia. Many were its miracles and wonders, for the people of Promethia mastered not only the magic of mortals but also entreated great aid from the Gods. With every passing generation their dominion became more complete – over land, over water, over air and even over time.

Yet there was ever a boundary they could not cross – the great rivers of Styx and Acheron that separated mortals from immortals. No matter how far heavenward they strove, the wise of Promethia were ever slaves to Hades and the power of Death.

As time passed the cities and peoples of Promethia became more and more obsessed with avoiding that last journey to the cold realm of Hades. They extended their lives beyond natural measure and developed magical technologies that could heal grievous wounds and cure fatal illnesses; but always there came a time when life force diminished past the ability to resuscitate, be that after a century or more of vitality.

Such longevity came at a price, for the gods would grant no more life even if the span of existence was extended. Childlessness became the norm and each generation dwindled a little in number even as they enjoyed the sweetest fruits of their ancestors' miracles and research. It mattered little to the Prometheons for they had automatones of Hephaistos to labour and care for them, allowing them to devote their lives to the study of Death.

One day a triumvirate of the greatest minds – the best of theology, medicine and magic – created a trap for the entity known as Charon, the embodiment of the force that moved a soul from the realm of life to the underworld of Hades. The Charonteikos occluded the spirit of Charon, severing the link between the mortal and immortal realms; effectively creating a barrier to the departing spirits of the living so that they did not flee.

Immortality had been achieved. At first this seemed a great miracle, for not even the most hideous wounds, savage viruses nor old age would cause the Prometheons to perish. There came no more children, but it was not considered a burden to those that would live forever. What need for generational legacy when one would not die? But in solving the riddle of mortality there was no goal left for which the Prometheons strived. They quickly found themselves listless and bored, and without peril to life no exploit or adventure seemed to stir them.

They continued to sacrifice to the gods and so their transgression against Hades was not discovered. Yet the torture of unending existence took its toll on the minds of the cities' people, and they slowly were driven mad by tedium and lack of purpose. Yet there was not one that wished to renounce their immortality for now that they were deathless they feared more than ever the realm of the Underworld.

Eventually, the triumvirate came together again in secret, and they spoke of the ill in the world that they had brought. After much debate, the scholars broke open the Charonteikos and released Charon. Disaster befell Promethia as Death returned, with old wounds inflicted anew and the decay of robbed centuries visited upon the cities.

As the dying continued, the people raised up their voices and made great sacrifice to Hades but in doing so they drew his eye upon the sins they had committed against him.

Moved to rare rage, Hades unleashed terrible forces against Promethia. Nemesis released unto him the Keres, the embodiment of Violent Death, to reclaim that which had been kept from him. The Keres were vengeful indeed for they were sisters to Charon, who had been shamed and was still partly imprisoned by the device of Promethia. Hades bade the Fates, the Moira, to seek out the fugitives and guide Death after them. The animated spirits of the dead were brought forth; as unwitting spies in the form of Returned Prometheons, and as footsoldiers in the form of the Doom, an army of the dead.

The scholars did what they could to repair the Charonteikos, yet they could not fully restore the barrier between themselves and the gods; they could only move themselves from beneath their divine gaze for a while. Though the Charonteikos shielded Promethia for a while, its people were no longer immortal, nor could they hide from the gaze of the Moira for long. For a generation they fled from realm to realm, remaining in a place as long as possible while they entreated the other gods to spare what favours they could, making sacrifices to please them so that they might exert their divine authority to power the Charonteikos afresh. Some gods did so because for they could not refuse the sacrifices offered; other gods continued to vex Hades for their own purposes, as the rivalries and alliances of the immortals continued without end. The Prometheons hoped that one day their travails and travels would bring them to Olympus itself so that they might throw themselves upon the mercy of Zeus and the other high gods and make atonement for their transgressions.

Gaming with Promethia

Drawing upon the same mythologies as the universe of the Interplanetary Commonwealth, the Promethia cosmology doesn't require any adjustment to the rules as laid out for the standard background of *Last Fleet*.

In place of starships we have cities, each an independent state but bound together by common heritage and shared fate. They are, of course, larger than starships, but the populace of Promethia that escaped the Keres was a fraction of those that once lived there, so many of their ancient avenues, halls and palaces are abandoned, falling into ruin. There are a few children, none older than teenagers, while everyone else is likely to be younger than fifty – the oldest Prometheons were the first to die when the Keres were released.

The universe is High Concept, in that it combines elements of technology, magic, and divine power, all in the same place. However, none of these is all-encompassing – the gods are fickle and demanding, technology is breaking down, and magic is unpredictable and dangerous.

However, the combination of these three elements gives you anything you might want from the science-fiction roots of the system – ornithopters and winged beasts for pilots to fly; the Charonteikos is the equivalent of the FTL drives of the fleet; and rather than visiting strange planets, the cities come across entire dimensions that have their own peculiarities, dangers, and opportunities.

Some of these places may be within the mortal sphere, much like our own but with hidden dangers from flora and fauna, and other societies – especially if inspired by myth, such as a weird take on centaurs who will only help the players if they join a riotous feast, or finding a bountiful alien orchard only to discover it is protected by the epimelides nymphs.

Other destinations might exist within the realms of the gods – literally. Imagine an undersea series of adventures whilst bargaining with Phorkys, Triton and other undersea creatures, or a spectral moonscape under the guardianship of Hecate. These realms are not without strife, from rival powers and external threats. By performing tasks for these divine beings the people of the cities can stave off the Keres for a while, earning favour and building opposition to Hades among the other gods.

Technology and magic

There is an overlap between magic and technology, with many of the weapons, vehicles and devices of the Prometheons powered by mystical energy, though this power then converts into physical forms such as motion, electricity and heat. Nobody is sure where magic comes from, but it is linked to the gods in some way. As they move across dimensions, the cities encounter other magical properties, some of which interfere with or boost existing magic, some that distort or nullify it.

Maintenance is a problem, with the knowledge of the oldest rituals lost during the great death following the breaking of the Charonteikos. More and more the Prometheons are having to rely on non-magical solutions as they cannot rely on their more esoteric inventions. Even so, weaponry, communication and medicine are on a par with a science fiction-level background even if some of it is attained by slightly less orthodox means.

The Gods

The gods of Promethia do not bestow their gifts lightly. Sacrifice – *charis* – is required to feed their egos and give them worship so that they may continue to compete with each other in their immortal contests. In the Mortal Age sacrifice took the form of slaughtered animals and feasts, and some of that custom has returned.

More common is personal sacrifice (in the shape of *Pressure*) that individuals take upon themselves, dedicating particular acts, days and efforts to a named deity. To sacrifice is to give up, and so they give of themselves to their god, be it in battle, in the home, or at some other place. They sacrifice time, blood, energy, and thought.

Each god has a priesthood, but often only the head priest serves on a full-time basis. Temples are maintained by those wishing to make sacrifice, and tended on a part-time basis by more dedicated followers. Cities, families, organizations, and even individuals will have a patron god or gods they turn to, and to whom they will make oaths.

In return the gods protect, empower, and present gifts to their petitioners. The greatest way they do this is by passing their divine influence into the Charonteikos. When fully illuminated, the Charonteikos can transplant the cities to a new realm. Sometimes a city is lacking in its sacrifice, and its connection to the Charonteikos is weak. At such times there is a risk that the city will be left behind when Promethia breaks realms.

Charis is not a simple cause-and-effect, but an ongoing relationship with the gods. When making hasty sacrifice, for instance, a petitioner may remind the god of more elaborate and honoured sacrifices in the past, and of favours the god has granted previously. Even so, the gods have their own rules and desires, and there are no guarantees that their intervention will be beneficial; especially in the longer term.

Changes to Basic Moves

- ✦ When you **Raise the Pressure**, you must dedicate your action to a god.
- ✦ When you make a ritual sacrifice, roll to **Pull Strings** and accept divine aid. In addition to the usual options, this may be used to call on supernatural assistance. On a 6 or less, you anger the gods.

Factions and special persons

As mentioned, each god has their own priesthood, but only a relative handful have any significant power – the cults of Zeus, Hades, Athena, Demeter, and Hera have the most influence in the majority of cities. Of these, the Cults of Zeus and Athena have twin rule over Promethia.

Cult of Zeus

The priesthood of Zeus, led by the *archon basileus* (king-magistrate), is dedicated to the running of Promethia as a society. Their goal is, ultimately, to bring Promethia to Mount Olympus where they may petition Zeus directly. To this end they wish all of Promethia to dedicate to Zeus as often as possible, to build up his goodwill toward the cities.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Polyxena Olympias** is the *archon basilissa*, as close to a ruler as Promethia has given its city-state structure. She rules the largest city of Agamemnon and is head of the cult of Zeus, which gives her immense influence, except over the armed forces of the cities. She is relatively new to the role, however, and relies heavily on her advisors and the good will of the Cult of Athena.

Moves:

- ✦ Demand a heavy sacrifice.
- ✦ Power – or withhold – activation of the Charonteikos.
- ✦ Bestow – or withhold – gifts of Zeus.
- ✦ Motivate with gifted oratory.

The Cult of Athena

Athena is the goddess of war and her high priest is the *polemarchos*, a combination of general, air marshal, and high admiral in one rank. Until the coming of the Keres the military of Promethia was almost entirely automatons, but nearly all have been lost in the fighting. Now, a new mortal army and air force has been created to honour Athena in the hopes of holding back the attacks of the Doom. Young and precocious, these warriors are foolhardy and eager to prove their worth, yet can ill-afford to lose many of their number in battle. Not all members of the cult are fighting personnel, there are many that help behind the lines that wish to dedicate themselves to military success.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Marios Challimachus** is only the second *polemarchos* since the strife began, taking over the position when his predecessor was slain just two years into the time of woe. Marios has elevated the cult from a ceremonial oddity to a fighting force capable of defending the cities against the Keres and their legions.
- ✦ **Laureline “Terrapin” Laval**. A support gyrocopter pilot. Cautious, seen as dependable, but possibly cracking under pressure. As with other gyro-pilots, she is at the forefront of keeping watch for the arrival of the Winged Furies and has even been known to engage them on occasion despite not having a frontline combat craft.

Moves:

- ✦ Recruit for the war effort.
- ✦ Demonstrate great – perhaps foolhardy – courage.
- ✦ Make a bombastic speech.
- ✦ Rigidly follow orders.
- ✦ Strike an enemy ruthlessly.

The Scholars

The Scholars as an organization are the intellectual descendants of the three that created the Charonteikos and as you might expect they are responsible for its upkeep and activation. They are, however, subject to the command of two individuals to do so – the heads of the cults of Zeus and Athena. Without authorization from both, they will not – cannot – transfer the cities to a new realm. The Triumvirate ruling council succeeded the original creators of the Charonteikos. Beneath them work a number of officials, philosophers, magisters, scientists, and others trying to organize and understand the powers that have been unleashed, while researching ways to help steer Promethia and combat the Doom.

Key NPCs:

- ✦ **Professor Kin Shoa.** A mid-level official of the Scholars, Professor Kin is conducting an audit of the fleet's assets, although if anyone checks there are no records of him being authorized to do so. His history with the Scholars is also vague but his placement allows him to travel from city to city without restriction. When spoken to, the professor seems to be pushing for rededication to the gods: but whether that's for ideological reasons, to address scarcity on the fleet, or for personal political gain, is a matter of speculation. The truth is that Kin Shoa is the god Hermes in mortal form, sent by Zeus to monitor the progress, and loyalty, of the Prometheons. He is aware of the existence of the Returned and will reveal this secret at some future point. The fate of all the cities could well depend on what the professor concludes from his visits...

Moves:

- ✦ Recall old wisdom.
- ✦ Denigrate a Rival.
- ✦ Discuss Cosmology.
- ✦ Analyse a problem.

The DOOM

The Keres are utterly relentless, empowered by Hades to bring back every single soul of the Prometheons. Their pursuit follows a specific sequence of events.

The Moira

The Moira are the Fates, who spin and cut the thread of time for mortals. They are constantly seeking the cities of Promethia across the realms of the immortals.

Moves:

- ✦ Direct the Doom with uncanny foresight.
- ✦ Commence a *Doom Clock*, portending the arrival of the Furies, Keres, or Doom.

The Winged Furies

The first to arrive are the Winged Furies, circling over the cities of Promethia to guide the eye of the Moira. They are the heralds of the Doom and if not turned back, the skies darken and pulse with the energy of Hades as the Keres arrive with their legion. The only option for the Prometheons is to flee, with such cities that have made sufficient sacrifices to the gods call upon their divine power to take them through the gate summoned by the Charontheikos. However, to do so they must hold off the attacks of the Winged Furies until the gate is open.

Moves:

- ✦ Gather in the skies above a city.
- ✦ Summon a Keres.
- ✦ Overwhelm with sheer numbers.
- ✦ Demoralize the populace.

The Returned

The Winged Furies are not the only means Hades has of trailing the cities through the realms. He can send spirits back in corporeal form, and several already exist within the cities and are unwittingly trying to create the conditions for more to arrive. These Returned souls, restored to their living state, have no recollections of their deaths until Hades calls upon them to act. Using Hypnos, the God of Sleep, Hades speaks to these spirits and commands them to perform acts against their companions, though they have no recollection of such instruction.

Keres

“The black Dooms gnashing their white teeth, grim-eyed, fierce, bloody, terrifying, fought over the men who were dying for they were all longing to drink dark blood. As soon as they caught a man who had fallen or one newly wounded, one of them clasped her great claws around him and his soul went down to Hades, to chilly Tartarus. And when they had satisfied their hearts with human blood, they would throw that one behind them and rush back again into the battle and the tumult.”
– Hesiod.

The Keres are the embodiment of Hades’ thirst for bloody vengeance. It is uncertain how many there are, though it seems likely there are at least three, each commanding a cohort of the Doom. They cannot slay themselves but wait for the souls that make up the Doom to kill, and then they draw the departing Spirit for Hades, whilst feasting on the physical remains.

Where the Keres arrive, they bring with them a floating temple-ark that is a physical gateway to Hades. (Yes, it is a base ship!) Large numbers of the Doom swiftly follow, but the Keres are fearful of their own demise and can be driven away by stiff counter-attack if assailed swiftly. It is also believed by many across Prometheia that if the dead are allowed to linger – that is the corpses – they act

as a beacon to the Keres. Thus, cremation is carried out as swiftly as possible while ongoing battle will draw more of their kind.

Moves:

- ✦ Summon the Doom.
- ✦ Spread Terror.
- ✦ Despatch Winged Furies.
- ✦ Feast on Souls.

Soldiers of the Doom

The army, the Doom, are almost universally incorporeal spirits that can temporarily take form when they break through the Charonic Veil – as ghostly creatures, zombie dragons, skeletons, wights, whatever takes your fancy. Their hold is tenuous and easily broken, but the dead are effectively limitless, so there are always more soon to arrive.

Custom Moves:

- ✦ The Doom are unaffected by noteworthy damage, they respond only to serious effects and worse. Conversely, they are individually weak and groups fewer than five cannot easily finish off wounded and damaged foes – they await the Keres to complete what they begin.

Moves:

- ✦ Become incorporeal.
- ✦ Manifest terrifying aspect.
- ✦ Chilling Touch.
- ✦ Assail a city.

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The last of humanity are fleeing across space, pursued by the Corax, an implacable alien intelligence that destroyed their civilization. They're outnumbered and outgunned. Supplies are running low. Corax doppelgangers undermine the fleet from within. The actions of a brave few souls are all that stands between humanity and extinction.

Last Fleet is a tabletop roleplaying game where you play courageous pilots, officers, engineers, politicians and journalists struggling to hold the human race – and themselves – together under unbelievable pressure. The game focuses on action, intrigue and drama in this high-stakes situation. You'll fight space battles, search for enemy infiltrators, and navigate faction politics. You'll strive against your own self-doubt and sometimes crack under the stress.

This book includes the full game rules and setting, twelve character playbooks, two quick start scenarios, and the alternate "Promethia Damned" setting, in which teleporting cities flee from the god of death. Additional material by Misha Bushyager, Joanna Piancastelli and Gav Thorpe.

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