

PROJECT GALILEO



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PROJECT GALILEO

By Natalie Ash

2033: You've been pursuing your scientific exploration on Mars, 11 Earth-months into the 12 you'll be spending in Galileo Base, after which you will board your drop-shuttle and return to Earth. Much of the operation of the structures is automated, allowing you to spend most of your time on your own research. Today, a mining drone on a routine sampling program broke through into a cavern. Originally, everyone assumed it was natural, but it quickly became apparent this was the result of construction.

Finding the first evidence of another intelligent species would be the most important scientific discovery in history. You've decided to explore it as a group and share in the glory that will soon be coming your way.

CREATING YOUR SCIENTIST

Across your scientist's life, they have accumulated a variety of skills that can help them solve problems. This is represented by selecting the following traits. If none of these traits feel appropriate, work with the rest of the people you're playing with to create one that feels right. On the character sheet, make a note of your scientist's name, pronouns, and ethnicity. Then follow the rest of these prompts.

OCCUPATIONS

Occupations represent your scientific past and what type of science your degree is in. Choose 1.

- Archaeologist (*skilled in History & Excavation*)
- Geologist (*skilled in Tectonics & Mineralogy*)
- Engineer (*skilled in Structures & Construction*)
- Biologist (*skilled in Farming & Anatomy*)
- Physicist (*skilled in Optics & Mathematics*)
- Linguist (*skilled in Symbols & Communication*)

BACKGROUNDS

Before heading into grad school and pursuing your advanced degrees, you had a different life. What was it? Choose 1.

- Prep School Graduate (*skilled in Propriety*)
- Inner City Schooling (*skilled in Perseverance*)
- Former Athlete (*skilled in Athletics*)
- Would Rather Be An Artist (*skilled in Aesthetics*)
- Child Prodigy (*skilled in Analytics*)
- Game Show Winner (*skilled in Public Speaking*)

MISSION TRAINING

Before sending you into space, you have been given specific training to fulfill your role in ensuring the mission's success. What were you trained in? Choose 1.

- skilled in First Aid
- skilled in Cooking
- skilled in Computer Repair
- skilled in Mechanical Repair
- skilled in Hydroponics
- skilled in Piloting

DRIVES

While space travel has become (relatively) safe, it still has risks. What drove you to taking this journey? Choose 1.

- Receive a Nobel Prize
- Buyout your contract with Anantech
- Pay for your family's immigration to New Columbia
- Prove your antagonistic dissertation adviser wrong
- Become famous enough to marry the socialite you love
- Hide the fact you have no original research

RITUALS

There's no such thing as magic, but sometimes strange things happen. Can you bend the odds in your favor using one of these tropes? Choose up to 3 and increase your starting Ruin by 1 for each Ritual chosen.

- Percussive Maintenance (*fix a device by hitting it*)
- Improbable Intuition (*know an answer you cannot know*)
- Fantastical Engineering (*construct a device out of unsuitable parts*)
- I Dreamt This (*know part of an event before it happens*)
- It's **This** Button (*get a sense of how a machine works*)
- Bypass It (*change the function of a device*)



HOW TO PLAY

If you're familiar with Trophy Dark by Jesse Ross, you already know how to play this game. If not, the instructions are included here.

It's important to note as you play Project Galileo that your character is not likely to survive and if they do, they may not be recognizable as the same person. Take risks. Play into the drama. **Play To Lose.**

RISK ROLL

When your character attempts a risky task, say what you hope will happen and ask the GM and the other players what could possibly go wrong. Then gather 6-sided dice.

Take one light-colored die if the task is something your character would be able to do because of one of their Skills.

Take another light die for accepting a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM. Devil's Bargains are described in the following section.

Add a dark-colored die if you are willing to risk your character's mind or body in order to succeed. You must include this die whenever your character performs a Ritual.

Roll the dice. If your highest die is a:

- **1-3:** Your character fails, and things get worse. The GM describes how. The GM may also allow your character to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.
- **4-5:** Your character succeeds, but there's some kind of complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how your character succeeds.
- **6:** Your character succeeds. Describe how.

If you included a dark die and it rolled equal to or higher than your highest light die, it counts as a Ruin Roll as described under *Ruin Roll*.

If you are unhappy with your roll, you may add an additional dark die to your dice and re-roll. You can keep adding more dark dice and re-rolling. You cannot re-roll when a dark die is the highest die in your roll.

If you use a Risk Roll to try to defeat a monster in hand-to-hand combat, you will die. Instead, roll to hide, roll to escape, or roll to use a Ritual against it. If you fight something that is not monstrous or if you fight a monster but not to defeat it (for example, to fight your way past it), be clear about what you want from the fight, then roll normally.

DEVIL'S BARGAINS

The GM or any other player can offer you a bonus light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain. Common Devil's Bargains include:

- Your character causes collateral damage or unintended harm.
- Your character gets lost or separated from their companions.
- Your character sacrifices an important item.
- Your character betrays a companion.
- Your character attracts unwanted attention.

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die.

The Devil's Bargain is always a free choice; you can reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). Anyone may veto or suggest alterations to a proposed Devil's Bargain, especially if it would also impact their character.

RUIN ROLL

Your Ruin shows how much physical and mental harm your character has suffered. It starts at 1.

When your character witnesses or undergoes something disturbing, make a Ruin Roll by rolling one dark die. If you've made a Risk Roll which includes a dark die, and that die is equal to or higher than your highest light die in that roll, your dark die is automatically considered a Ruin Roll. If your dark die rolled higher than your current Ruin, add 1 to your Ruin and work with the GM to describe the decline of your character's mind and body.

REDUCTION ROLL

When your Ruin reaches 5, you may now reduce it when your character attempts subtle acts of sabotage against their companions. Each time your character does this, roll one light die. If you get less than your current Ruin, your character succeeds at their task and you decrease your Ruin by 1. You may continue reducing your Ruin in this way when your Ruin drops below 5.

LOSING YOUR CHARACTER

When your Ruin reaches 6, your character is lost. This is an important moment: Everyone focuses on your character's last flashes of lucidity before they run away or turn against their companions. Hand your character over to the GM to control, and either create a new character or exit the game.

HOW TO RUN PROJECT GALILEO

If you're familiar with Trophy Dark by Jesse Ross, you already know how to play this game. If not, the instructions are included here.

THE "WIN" CONDITION IS HAVING FUN

The characters might hope to get home and become incredibly famous and successful, but you and the players know better: they are all going to die horrible deaths (probably).

But this is a good thing.

It lets you off the hook of having to play "smart", and lets you focus on **making things interesting.**

You, the GM, have to be the biggest fan of the story. You have to give the players all the rope they need to tie their own characters into horrible, horrible knots. Fortunately, you aren't set on your own, adrift, with no help. *Project Galileo* is written to give you a structure and the tools you need to make that possible.

THE RING STRUCTURE

In this case, we aren't talking about a massive, artificial, habitable ring in the ecliptic plane of a star, we are talking about the 5 rings of a Trophy Dark Incursion.

You will play through them in a linear order, and you should tell the players when they enter a new ring. If you need to take a break, in-between rings is where you want to do that. Each ring is its own set of experiences that — while it is part of the whole adventure — also represents its own encapsulated portion.

Each ring is intended to evoke different types of pressure on the characters.

Ring 1 is about making the characters feel heroic by overcoming a fairly easy challenge, and beckon them deeper into the incursion.

Ring 2 is about the characters confronting an unfriendly landscape, to signify that the world itself is opposing them.

Ring 3 brings the characters back to their own drives, their own selfish desires, and sowing the seeds of distrust between characters.

Ring 4 confronts the characters with a horrific beast that they can do nothing but run from. However, it does push them into the conclusion of the adventure, basically cutting off any possibility of retreat.

Ring 5 is the ultimate end of the incursion where those who have survived can reach out and grab the treasure, but in order to do so, they have to sacrifice something important to themselves or, perhaps, their humanity itself.

When playing through them, first the characters will need to confront the terrors and overcome the difficulties they encounter, and then address the temptations.

ASK QUESTIONS AND BUILD UPON THE ANSWERS

The adventure doesn't lay out a lot of backstory or history. Ideally, it provides only what you absolutely require. The rest of the empty spaces in the story are intended to be filled in by you and the players *as you play*.

What do their backgrounds mean to them? Why does their drive push them so obsessively? Heck, ask them to fill in bits of the world, too. As in ring 3, which asks "*Ask what they see in the glyphs that reminds them of a memorial.*", turn to the players and ask them to describe parts of the world. This invests them in a story that they are helping to construct. It also lets you embed that character's experiences into the world which you can then turn on them, or rip away from them.

USING MOMENTS

Moments aren't encounters in the way terrors and temptations are, they are small bits of set dressing you can pull into your descriptions as needed. They can also be useful for transitional moments, to give a sense of montage as the characters travel from one ring to another.

USING CONDITIONS

When characters fail risk or ruin rolls, you can give characters conditions and the adventure provides a list for you to use or take inspiration from. Each character is fairly likely to get a condition or two within the first couple of rings.

As characters fail further on, you might choose to give them a new condition, or you might think about how a condition they currently have *can get worse*.

Once a character has a condition, be sure to take it into consideration when describing or judging the fictional narrative around future actions. Conditions are less about "rules", and more about the fiction taking place, so be sure to use them and keep them in mind.

INCURSION
PROJECT GALILEO

MOMENTS

When you want to add some environmental detail to your scene description, you can use these moments as those details. They don't affect the story in any way, but they do serve to create immersion.

- The dust on the perfectly flat floor is thick from thousands of years. It is broken by footprints filled by hundreds of years of dust. The footprints are fan-shaped and made by creatures with more than two legs.
- From farther ahead, there are echoes of an unmistakably regular ticking - *tick tick-tick tick-tick tick*, then silence. This repeats for 71 minutes, 19.5 seconds, after which it ceases entirely.
- There is a square stone projecting about an inch away from the wall. When someone nears it, it glows with a soft orange light.
- All communication between the EVA suits is slightly obscured by static. In the hiss, there are purposeful sounds, but can't be heard clearly.
- There is the sound of a small rock falling and the blur of small, white creature vanishing into a crack in the wall.
- There is a section of wall that shimmers like liquid. It reflects only inorganic materials and light. It is solid to the touch.
- A pool of water in which is growing a small, white clover-shaped plant
- A peach-sized stone, cracked open to reveal a fern-like fossil.
- An alcove in the nearby wall contains a haphazard pile of small, white, metal disks. They are inscribed with similar but not identical glyphs.
- There is a small black stone pedestal. There is a small, black sphere floating several inches above the pedestal, slowly rotating.

CONDITIONS

When a scientist attempts to do something risky and fails, they may increase their ruin. They may also - or instead - be given a condition. Conditions don't affect the mechanics of the game, but they do affect the narrative truth of the game. If a scientist attempts to do something a condition precludes, then they cannot undertake the action.

- You take a deep breath and feel something squirming in your lungs. You cough and it stops moving. For now.
- There is a subtle change in your eyesight – reds lose some saturation, but you begin to see shades of green you have never seen before.
- You find a small hole in your EVA suit. You patch it up, but you've lost some oxygen. To continue, you turn down your oxygen saturation and it leaves you feeling lightheaded.
- You feel the beginnings of an intense headache. When you speak, you sometimes use a foreign language word instead of the intended word.
- There is a ringing in your ears that increases in volume in direct proportion to the amount of light you see.
- Your boots are not fitted quite perfectly. You have several growing blisters on the bottom of your feet.
- Your suit radio stops working. You can only hear your companions when they yell, and they can only hear you when you yell. What conversations are you excluded from?
- Something clogs your suit's ventilation system. You can still breathe just fine, but the fog on your faceplate makes it hard to see details.
- There is an itching on the back of your head, almost as if an insect were crawling through your hair.
- You must have touched something dirty: the side of one of your gloves is covered in a red substance, kind of liquid, but kind of gritty. You can wipe most of it off, but it has stained your non-porous, un-stainable EVA suit exterior.

RING 1

TERRORS

The scientists have put on EVA suits and descended in the path of the mining drone. They stop just inside the cavern, sending the mining drone further ahead. It sends back images of a worked stone hallway, very tall and just a bit narrow. Metallic panels are on the wall, all about six feet above the floor, but at irregular intervals. Abruptly, there is a flash of blue light, the drone's camera sending the image of an electrical arc before the signal cuts out.

Moving to look down the tunnel with their own eyes; their flashlights sweep the space. There are still occasional flashes of electricity between the wall and the partially melted drone, but the burn marks on the wall panel suggest this is not intended. Still, after an unknown number of years, something remains functional.

The scientist might try to insulate themselves against the electricity, partially collapse the wall, engage in repairs, or some other plan. You can pretty much let any of these approaches work if they can succeed on the risk roll and the fiction is in any way plausible.

TEMPTATIONS

Beyond the remnants of the drone, the hallway gently curves. The scientists come to a simple, unlocked mechanical door. The handle – a six-pronged knob – is at head height. The door opens easily.

As the scientists pass beyond the door, ask them what their initial research conclusions what might be, and what they hope to see beyond this entrance.

RING 2

TERRORS

Coming out from the tunnel the scientists reach a large ledge. Their flashlights can illuminate the space they are on, but do nothing to penetrate the inky blackness beyond. They can make out a series of buildings receding into the darkness, ever so faintly illuminated by green lights on their exteriors. In the same green glow that illuminates the buildings, it illuminates a bridge just ahead, leading directly to the entrance of a building. Several holes in the bridge surface near the apex of its arch will make traversing it risky. There is a second bridge that spirals lower into the darkness. From here, its destination is unknown.

*If the scientists attempt to cross the broken bridge, it will require a risk roll, but only one despite the number of breaks in the surface. They traverse to **Temptations 1**.*

*Taking the lower bridge is an easier path, and takes them to **Temptations 2**.*

Either path, once traversed, comes to Ring 3.

TEMPTATIONS 1

Directly ahead is a building, more ornate than the others visible nearby, with an open entrance just ahead of the scientists. The doorway - too narrow for its 5 meter height - is ringed with brass glyphs. They have a subtle green backlight, nearly invisible to the human eye even in this complete darkness.

Ask what they see in the glyphs that reminds them of a memorial.

TEMPTATIONS 2

If this were human architecture, this might be servant's entrance. There is a metal door, slightly sagging in its stone frame, and will require some force to open. Inside, there is a staircase leading upward and downward. The stairs are much taller and narrower than the scientists can easily traverse.

RING 3

TERRORS

The scientists enter the building. There are no lights in here save the flashlights the scientists have, and these barely illuminate the gloom. This large space is filled with monolithic metal objects, black and matte finished, nearly ten feet tall and two feet square. Each is marked with a series of indentations in the metal: clearly intended to communicate something. Next to each monolith, on the same side as the markings, there is a circular pedestal about six feet in height topped with a slightly-reflective metallic sphere.

Any scientist who asks to look at or inspect the spheres or monoliths are afflicted with the psychic imprint of the being who is interred and recorded. Detail how they feel like they are sharing their mind with an incomprehensible intellect. Any scientists experiencing this must make a ruin roll. You might use the following descriptions as a basis when describing what the scientists experience. If they come near to multiple spheres, they must make a ruin roll each time.

TEMPTATIONS

The memories fade quickly, almost like a dream. A small seed remains: these beings were more advanced and the seeds of memory hold knowledge for every field of study, not just their own.

At the center of this massive open space is, obviously, an elevator of some kind. Once everyone is on, it slowly ascends through layer after layer after layer that seem identical to the first.

As they ascend, ask each scientist what revolutionary idea they had in another scientist's field. Ask if they share it or save it for themselves.

RING 4

TERRORS

The elevator reaches the top. The flashlights can barely illuminate a hallway, spiraling and ascending. On the wide floor, there are piles of mechanical components, completely rusted through, but the piles are quite large. Smaller bits of scrap litter the floor. Still, it is easy enough to walk past and continue ascending into the darkness and silence. The only sound is the boots of their EVA suits striking the worked stone floor.

Pause for a moment. Let the players get a little antsy, but try to continue before they begin to ask any questions.

After a short time, they begin to hear the sound of metal grating on metal, a horrible shriek that echoes through the space. Through the wail, they hear heavy footsteps and begin to feel the vibration through the floor. From behind, there is a faint green light reflecting on the walls, growing brighter by the moment.

Should the scientists wait to see the metal monstrosity, most of their vision will be obscured by the bright green light emerging from a glass eye in the center of the body mass. It's limbs and body look partially melted due to the rust and disintegration. Every motion comes with a deafening shriek of grinding metal. It may not move quickly, but its movements have mass. Anyone who gets near to it should make a ruin roll due to the danger and noise.

Attempting to run in this environment, in the darkness, with detritus strewn about the floor, requires a risk roll.

TEMPTATIONS

The scientists come through a door back into the open air of the cavern. Faint green lights on distant buildings are the only illumination. Steps lead higher on the top of the building. Small structures are built to the sides of the steps, each containing a monolith and sphere, like below, but these are transparent. The tall, gangling, white-skinned bodies of these beings are suspended in the monolith, wasted and emaciated. The heads are encased in the spheres, similarly decayed, thin skin stretched over a skull that is too long and too narrow.

Ask the players to fill in the information about the creatures. How many eyes? How many arms? What do the scraps of clothing left on the bodies look like? Make note of these and any other descriptions the players want to offer, because it will be used in the next ring.

RING 5

TEMPTATIONS

The top of this building is a domed structure. Inside, in the center, is a device that is somewhat larger than the monoliths outside, and is laying flat on a dais. Inside is a creature, similar to the ones outside, but remarkably preserved. Looking closer, there is a small digital display made of crystal that has glyphs slowly and slightly changing.

The walls of the room are decorated with images and glyphs. In several places, you see a ten-ringed image that appears to be a map of the solar system. Each has the planets in a different position and glyphs that are arranged like captions.

TERRORS

Depending on the players' choices, they may first have to contend with the awakened creature, because of course they can wake it up. It will be angry and will physically assault them. As is typical of Trophy Dark, there is no real fighting of the monster, and anyone who attempts to do so is killed.

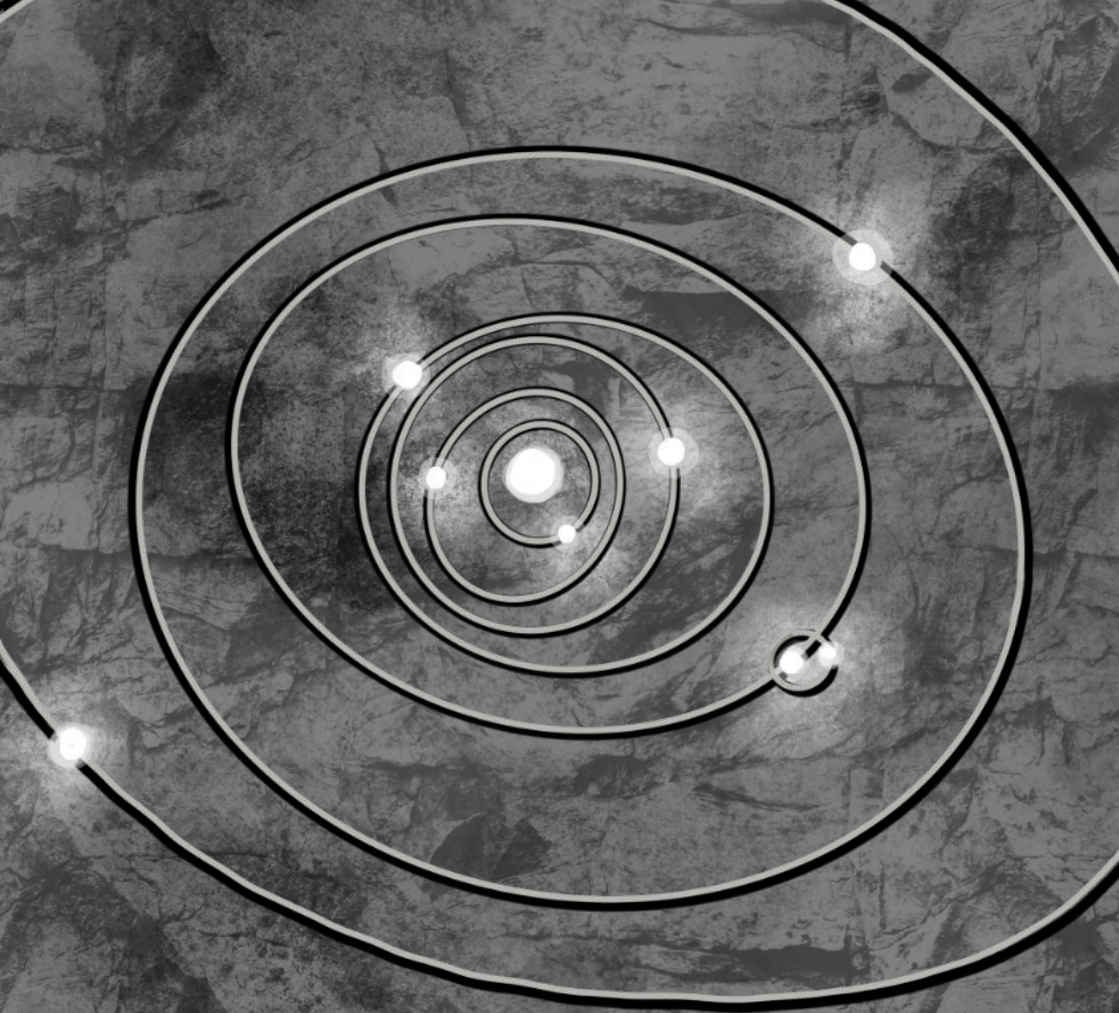
Understanding the glyphs on the wall is challenging, but it becomes clear that these planet charts are showing times and locations; one of which is Earth in the very near future. There is a plan underway. From outside, there are the sounds of the city awakening. The green lights on distant buildings are becoming brighter. There is the groan and shriek of rusted metal returning to life.

If they attempt to return to the surface, either to flee or send a message to Earth, they will again have to pass through all of the rings in reverse. In panic, in the dark, surrounded by the horrible shrieking of rusted metal, everything requires a risk roll.

Passing back through ring 3, if they fail a risk roll they will stumble into one of the memory spheres. Primed for terror, as they are, the implanted personality in their brain doesn't fade so quickly and grants a point of ruin without a roll. Anyone hitting 6 ruin here will have their personalities replaced with those of a long-dead alien.

Passing through ring 2, require multiple risk rolls to traverse the broken bridge. Anyone reaching 6 ruin at this point will fall to their death in the blackness below.

When they reach ring 1, the panel of arcing electricity is active again, but channeling even more power. Being hit by it would be fatal.





PROJECT GALILEO



NAME

PRONOUNS

ETHNICITY

RUIN



OCCUPATIONS (choose 1)

- ◇ Archaeologist (*skilled in History & Excavation*)
- ◇ Geologist (*skilled in Tectonics & Mineralogy*)
- ◇ Engineer (*skilled in Structures & Construction*)
- ◇ Biologist (*skilled in Farming & Anatomy*)
- ◇ Physicist (*skilled in Optics & Mathematics*)
- ◇ Linguist (*skilled in Symbols & Communication*)
- ◇ _____

BACKGROUNDS (choose 1)

- ◇ Prep School Graduate (*skilled in Propriety*)
- ◇ Inner City Schooling (*skilled in Perseverance*)
- ◇ Former Athlete (*skilled in Athletics*)
- ◇ Would Rather Be An Artist (*skilled in Aesthetics*)
- ◇ Child Prodigy (*skilled in Analytics*)
- ◇ Game Show Winner (*skilled in Public Speaking*)
- ◇ _____

MISSION TRAINING (choose 1)

- ◇ skilled in First Aid
- ◇ skilled in Cooking
- ◇ skilled in Computer Repair
- ◇ skilled in Mechanical Repair
- ◇ skilled in Hydroponics
- ◇ skilled in Piloting
- ◇ _____

DRIVES (choose 1)

- ◇ Receive a Nobel Prize
- ◇ Buyout your contract with Anantech
- ◇ Pay for your family's immigration to New Columbia
- ◇ Prove your antagonistic dissertation adviser wrong
- ◇ Become famous enough to marry the socialite you love
- ◇ Hide the fact you have no original research
- ◇ _____

RITUALS (increase starting ruin by 1 for each chosen)

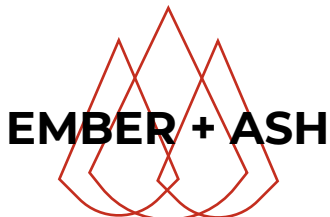
- ◇ Percussive Maintenance (*fix a device by hitting it*)
- ◇ Improbable Intuition (*know an answer you cannot know*)
- ◇ Fantastical Engineering (*construct a device out of unsuitable parts*)
- ◇ I Dreamt This (*know part of an event before it happens*)
- ◇ It's This Button (*get a sense of how a machine works*)
- ◇ Bypass It (*change the function of a device*)
- ◇ _____



THANK YOU!

HAVE YOU ENJOYED PROJECT GALILEO?

- You might enjoy other games from Ember + Ash at itch.io/ByEmberAndAsh.
- Our other incursions for Trophy Dark can be found at itch.io/c/717723/trophy
- Explore other content by us and our friends as part of the Cold Hearth Collective: www.coldhearthcollective.com



PROJECT GALILEO

2033: You've been pursuing your scientific exploration on Mars, 11 Earth-months into the 12 you'll be spending in Galileo Base, after which you will board your drop-shuttle and return to Earth. Much of the operation of the structures is automated, allowing you to spend most of your time on your own research. Today, a mining drone on a routine sampling program broke through into a cavern. Originally, everyone assumed it was natural, but it quickly became apparent this was the result of construction.

Finding the first evidence of another intelligent species is the scientific achievement for the ages. You've decided to explore it as a group and share in the glory that will be coming your way.

Project Galileo is a one-shot game suitable for 3 to 6 players and takes around 3 hours to play.

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