

ANOMALY

CONTAINMENT BREACH

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What Is Containment Breach?

Containment Breach is a tabletop roleplaying game about a supernatural anomaly escaping from a facility where it has been contained by a sinister organization. Key media touchstones for the genre are the SCP Foundation, The Magnus Archives, Warehouse 13, Maximum Ride, and The Thing. From a game design perspective, much of the inspiration comes from Avery Alder's game The Quiet Year, my earlier game Anomaly.

What is a Tabletop Roleplaying Game?

There are many ways of thinking about roleplaying games. The one Containment Breach subscribes to is that the game functions as the mediator in an act of collaborative storytelling—the goal of a game of Containment Breach is not the success or victory of any player or group, but to tell an interesting story.

Game Supplies

To play the game you will need several six-sided dice, a deck of tarot cards, and a few pieces of paper.

Safety Procedures

Containment Breach is a horror game. This means, by its nature, the game will often contain disturbing imagery and content. Because of this, before you start the game, it is good to think about any content that you don't want to include in the game, and discuss it with the table. Nobody should need to justify why they don't want something to appear.

If during play, someone wants something another player suggests taken off the table, do it. You'll be able to come up with something else to replace it that won't make anyone at the table uncomfortable.

Starting the Game

Though the story of each game of Containment Breach will be different, there are a few things that will remain constant. There will be a sinister organization, their facility, and the Anomaly that has escaped. Before the game starts, it is best to discuss these aspects and what they will look like so everybody will be on something of a same page as to what type of story is aiming to be told. At the same time, a large part of the game is learning more about these things, so don't get into too much detail.

Think about giving a broad genre for each of these things. **For example, the organization could be:**

- A shady extra-governmental task force
- A Secret Society
- A University's paranormal investigations department
- A cult
- A cyberpunk megacorporation
- An institute of witchcraft and wizardry

The facility could be:

- A secret underground bunker
- A museum of mystical artefacts
- The dread tower of a powerful wizard
- a corporate research facility
- a compound built to hide a dimensional rift

The Anomaly could be:

- A terrifying creature
- A group of teenage experiments
- an ancient curse
- an eldritch plague
- an artificial intelligence

Playing the game

Containment Breach doesn't have any player characters; when playing the game, you primarily represent the perspective of the both the escaping Anomaly and those working to contain it, they are the central characters of the story, but feel free to bring in any other perspectives that might become relevant in your specific game. At the start of the game, very little about the situation you're in will be known. Because of this, you have extreme freedom in early turns. Don't hesitate to say something big about the state of the world, the nature of the Anomaly, or anything else in these early turns; making big decisions quickly will give the other players more to build on.

The game operates in turns, during which a single player makes decisions and describes their thought process. While thinking of and coming up with something fun and cool is important, don't second guess yourself- there will be plenty of time to build on ideas in future turns, and the game will drag if every decision takes several minutes.

During a player's turn, they do three things:

1. Resolve a card
2. Advance Projects
3. Take an action

1. Resolving a card

At the start of each players turn, they draw a card from a deck of tarot cards. Each card has questions associated with it. For example:

Five of Swords	The Facility Security find a way to hurt the Anomaly. How? How does this injury manifest?	The Facility security try to attack the Anomaly, with disastrous consequences. What does the Anomaly do to them when they are at its mercy?
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If there are two questions, the player answers one of them, their choice, and the other is ignored.

Note that the availability of something as an action does not suggest you shouldn't be doing these things as part of answering questions. If the answer to a question endangers something, that is normal. If you have an idea for a character as part of the answer to a question, define that character, there's no need to wait for an "Introduce A Character" Action. The actions exist to add additional details and give a chance to use ideas, not to be the sole source of new characters or objects.

2. Advancing projects

Advance all project dice by one, narrating the results of any projects that tick down to zero. See Projects for more detail.

3. Taking an action

After advancing projects, the player then takes an action. On any turn, a player may start a project (See projects for more detail), hold a team meeting, or take an action based on the suit of the card they drew

Suit	Action Type
Pentacles	Introduce a Character
Swords	Secure or Endanger Something
Cups	Acquire or Lose Something
Wands	Add a Fact About Something
Major Arcana	Anomalous Action
Always	Start a Project
Always	Team Meeting

Introduce a character

Introduce a new character to the narrative. This can be creating someone entirely new, or adding details and motivation to someone who was previously an unnamed background character. After this action, people at the table should know who this person is and what their deal is. Don't keep secrets- in this type of game, someone who's goal is mysterious is fine, but if you say that, be prepared for another player to have a good idea and do their own reveal.

Secure or Endanger Something

Either something that is at risk is removed from risk to some degree, or something not endangered is put into danger. Protecting something can help stop something interesting from being destroyed and allow it to be built on, or prevent outcomes that aren't interesting to you, while putting something in danger can create interesting conflict and set the story down a new path. In either case, discuss how this happens, and the consequences thereof. You can secure or endanger more than just the physical; something like "Trust" might be a fun thing to put in danger. Also, keep in mind sometimes protecting one thing might endanger another.

Acquire or lose something

Add a new object or resource to the narrative. What is it, who has it, and what can it be used for? Alternatively, what object or resource does someone not have, and why do they need it?

Use this to create the potential for new interesting situations based around the object or resource, or the need for it.

Add a fact about something

Take any detail that's been discussed, and add something to make it more interesting. Use this action to bring spotlight to something you thought was interesting and add more to that conversation.

Anomalous Action

The Anomaly does something weird. Is it dangerous? Is it disruptive? Does it follow with what the Anomaly has been seen doing before? Use this to bring focus to the Anomaly and what it does, and push its story in an interesting direction.

Projects

Projects are events that take multiple turns. They can be an effort to build something, destroy something, or take other actions that are too large in scale to be interestingly done quickly. Projects don't have to be tasks the facility staff is undertaking: They can be from any other person of significance, or even something the Anomaly is doing on a longer time scale. Choose a number between one and six when you start a project. This is how many turns it will take to complete. Place a dice to represent the project with the chosen number upwards. When projects advance, tick the die down. When it would go to zero, the player who started the project explains how it went in the end. Feel free to adjust the die when something happens that seems like it would affect how long it would take.

Team Meeting:

The facility staff discusses something. Pose a question from the point of view of someone in the staff, or a statement/order from someone in the organization. Each person responds, representing the perspective of another part of the staff or organization, ending again with the person who posed the question.

Recording the Game

It isn't essential, but I recommend keeping a written record of what happens during the game. This will make it easier to go back during play and remind yourself what has happened, allowing you to pick up loose threads and events that haven't been followed up on and work them back into the narrative. Writing a single sentence to keep track of what was done each turn, as well as a list of characters and assets, will make keeping the narrative going much easier.

Accelerated Play

A normal game of Containment Breach takes between two and four hours. If you need to play in less time than that, my recommendation is to play as normally, but only take actions if you have an idea immediately. While actions are very useful and interesting, it can sometimes take a while to come up with a good one. If you're playing this way, I recommend focusing mainly on projects when you do take actions, as they are the action that most quickly directs the action of the game towards the conclusion.

Ending the Game

The game ends when the Anomaly is no longer attempting to escape the organization. This could be because the escape attempt was successful, thoroughly thwarted, or ended in any other way. Feel free to discuss as a group what happened to the characters afterwards, but at this point their story no longer can be told with the game itself.

A game of Containment Breach typically lasts between two and four hours. A game will often naturally lead itself towards conclusion, but to help it get there, consider taking the more dramatic option when possible. For example: When drawing a Major Arcana, do the scarier thing that pops into your head. Start projects that will make big changes to the status quo and use projects from the point of view of the Anomaly to create problems that need to be addressed to drive the story forward.

Card		
The Fool	A previous conclusion about the Anomaly is proven catastrophically wrong. What is it? What happens?	
The Magician	Someone is discovered actively using the powers of the anomaly for their own ends. Who? How did they discover this power?	
The High Priestess	Those that serve the anomaly take violent action against the facility. What is lost in the attack?	
The Empress	The Anomaly is building something. What is its goal? How is it doing this? Start a project to represent this.	
The Emperor	Another organization is acting on behalf of the anomaly. Who are they? Why are they doing this?	
The Hierophant	The Anomaly seized control of something the team was relying on. What can they no longer accomplish? What foolish risk could mitigate this?	
The Lovers	One of the members of the team betrays them to defend the anomaly. Why? What personal consequences does this have for the rest of the team?	
The Chariot	All the hard work the team is undertaking is undone. All Projects fail. What caused this setback?	
Strength	The Anomaly displays raw power previously unseen. What does this demonstration of supernatural power look like?	
The Hermit	How has the facility stayed hidden all this time? How could the breach change this? How far will the organization go to prevent this?	
Wheel of Fortune	The Anomaly baffles all predictions. Roll All Project Dice. If there are no projects, everyone at the table starts a project.	
Justice	The Anomaly punishes someone brutally for their crimes, which were previously unknown. Who were they? What did they do, and how does the punishment fit the crime?	
The Hanged Man	The anomaly demands a sacrifice or it will create a terrible calamity. Do the facility staff make the sacrifice? What is the cost they pay for their decision?	
Death	The anomaly kills a member of the team, suddenly, and quietly. Who finds the body? What do they do?	
Temperance	A calming energy resides over the facility. What conflicts are halted by this? What urgent matters are neglected?	
The Devil	The anomaly ensnares a member of the team. Their death is assured, but they manage to leave a cryptic clue to save others. What is their warning, and what form does it take.	
The Tower	Something critical is destroyed utterly. What is it?	
The Star	A previous victory in containing the anomaly is undone. Who is in danger as a result?	
The Moon	Some part of the facility revealed to be part of another extremely dangerous anomaly. How was this discovered, and how does it make the situation more perilous?	
The Sun	The anomaly is responsible for some amount of prosperity in the local community. What is it, and what will the consequences of the anomaly escaping be on those that benefit?	
Judgement	A conspiracy, centuries in the making, is uncovered. What role does the anomaly play in it?	
The World	The Facility is found to be far more far reaching in size and scale than anyone in the facility knew. Just how big is it? Why does this make the breach more dangerous?	

<u>King of Cups</u>	Someone powerful promises their support. Who are they? What is their agenda? What help could they provide?	Something powerful promises its support. How could they help? What do they demand in return?
<u>Queen of Cups</u>	Someone discovers false records of the Anomalies history? What is the lie? What was covered up?	Something is found in storage that shouldn't be there. What is it? Why is this worrying?
<u>Knight of Cups</u>	Something has been stolen from the Facility. What? By who?	Someone in the facility has found a way to use the anomaly for profit. What sort of profit? Is this safe?
<u>Page of Cups</u>	The facility staff are running themselves to exhaustion trying to contain the breach. What will happen when they push themselves to far?	Where do the Facility staff sleep? Why has this become dangerous?
<u>Ten of Cups</u>	A member of the facility staff is badly injured while trying to contain the anomaly. How serious is the injury? How will the team manage without them?	A danger from the anomaly is found, and a costly solution is presented. What is the danger, and what costs must be payed to prevent it?
<u>Nine of Cups</u>	What's the scientific equipment the facility uses like?	What do the facility staff use to communicate with eachother? How did the breach compromise this?
<u>Eight of Cups</u>	How does the facility dispose of the dead? How does the Anomaly take advantage of this?	Does anyone in the Facility Staff ever do field work? What skills does that give them that helps now?
<u>Seven of Cups</u>	What unassuming substance is found to weaken the Anomaly? How much of this substance does the Faciclity have?	What unassuming substance is found to strengthen the Anomaly? How much of this substance does the Faciclity have?
<u>Six of Cups</u>	How does the facility staff get supplies? How does this make them vulnerable to the Anomaly?	How does one leave the facility? What's been keeping the Anomaly from just using the primary exit?
<u>Five of Cups</u>	A project fails , and the the organization demands awnswers. Who takes the blame, and what really happened?	The organization pulls critical support. What does the team no longer have the resources to do?
<u>Four of Cups</u>	A shipment of supplies arrives from the organization, bearing something urgently needed. What problem can now be solved?	The Anomaly destroys vital supplies. What?
<u>Three of Cups</u>	Who stands to profit from the Anomaly's escape? How have they avoided drawing suspicion?	How does the organization get it's funding? What impacts does this have on the response to the breach?
<u>Two of Cups</u>	What does the Anomaly need to consume to function? How did it get it while contained? How does it get it now?	How has the Anomaly effected the bases food supply? Who is unaware of the risks this could cause?
<u>Ace of Cups</u>	What basic supplies does the team lackc?	What useless supply does the team have an overabundance of?
<u>King of Swords</u>	What's the most dangerous part containing the breach? How is the team making it safer, and why is this not enough?	What's a danger in containing the anomaly that the team hasn't caught on to yet? What consequences will this cause later on?

Queen of Swords	Someone uses the chaos of the breach to break into the facility. Who? What are they here for?	Someone leaks the goings on of the facility to the public. Who? What punishment will they face?
Knight of Swords	Someone seizes an opportunity and takes a place of power in the facility. How does the team think the anomaly was involved? What will they do about it?	Someone seizes an opportunity, accomplishing something incredible despite the risks. What did they accomplish, and who was endangered to do it?
Page of Swords	Someone new joins the facilities staff. What trouble do they get themselves in due to inexperience?	Someone new joins the facility staff. How does the Anomaly exploit this?
Ten of Swords	A conflict amongst the facility staff leads to bloodshed. Who is injured? Who is bitter about the resolution?	The Anomaly turns it's attention to the facility staff. Start a Project to represent it's attempts to target them directly.
Nine of Swords	A member of the facility staff in a position of power is acting paranoid. What are they worried about, and what poor decisions have they made as a result?	A member of the facility staff is acting paranoid. What are they worried about, and how does this isolate them from the rest of the team?
Eight of Swords	Another disaster draws the organizations attention elsewhere. What goes wrong now that this breach is lower priority?	A member of the team sacrifices themselves to help contain the breach. What victory does their death buy? Do the other staff think this sacrifice was worth it?
Seven of Swords	A field operations team needs to bring a new, dangerous anomaly in to be contained. What problems will this cause with the ongoing situation?	A field operations teams request to use the facility to contain the Anomaly they are investigating is denied. What consequences will this have for the outside world?
Six of Swords	What consequence of the Anomalies escape is the facilities medical teams completely unprepared for?	What supernatural effect of the Anomaly is something the facility is able to handle easily? How much more devastating would it be if the Anomaly escapes?
Five of Swords	The Facility Security find a way to hurt the Anomaly. How? How does this Injury Manifest.	The Facility security try to attack the Anomaly, with disastrous consequences. What does the Anomaly do to them when they are at it's mercy?
Four of Swords	Who in the facility are longtime friends? What is their relationship like	Who in the facility are bitter rivals? What is their relationship like?
Three of Swords	Someone is using the containment breach as cover to steal something. Who? Why?	Someone uses the containment breach as cover to hide a long plotted murder. Who is the victim? What is the motive?
Two of Swords	Who among the facility crew is experienced in the use of violence? Where did they acquire this experience?	Has the Anomaly hurt people before it was contained?
Ace of Swords	A helpful suggestion is made by someone inexperienced. What is it, and how do others react?	Someone with authority has embarrassed themselves. What did they do?
King of Wands	The Organization sends an Elite Containment Team to the facility. What aren't the facility staff told about their objectives?	The Facility staff falsify reports to the organization. What don't they want their higher ups to know? Who is unhappy about this?

Queen of Wands	The Anomaly gives up on one if it's attempts to escape. Why? What new strategy does it switch to?	The Anomaly acts with frenzied intensity. What has intensified it's activities? What does this look like?
Knight of Wands	The Anomaly is forced to adapt to new successful security measures. Secure Something , then take an Anomalous action . (You still take another action as normal)	The Facility is locked down as the organization retrieves critical resources. Advance no clocks this turn , and Lose Something . (you still take another action as normal)
Page of Wands	What environment is the Anomaly most dangerous in? Where does something like this exist in the facility?	What environment weakens the Anomaly? How is this replicated in the facility? What will happen when it escapes this environment?
Ten of Wands	What do the facility staff do while no working on containment?	What did the Anomaly do while it was still contained?
Nine of Wands	The Anomaly beings converting some members of the staff to work towards its interests. What does this recruitment consist of?	The facility staff begin to quarantine sections of the facility to keep the Anomaly's threat from spreading. Who is left behind by this policy.
Eight of Wands	The Anomaly willingly forgoes an opportunity to escape to protect something or someone. What isn't the Anomaly willing to sacrifice?	The Facility crew make a brutal sacrifice to try and contain the Anomaly. What do they sacrifice, and what does this accomplish?
Seven of Wands	Another contained Anomaly offers to help the Anomaly in return for rescue. Why does the Anomaly refuse this offer?	Another contained Anomaly offers to help the facility staff contain the breach. What cost will this aid come at?
Six of Wands	What does the Anomaly enjoy doing?	What part of the facility will the Anomaly miss once it escapes?
Five of Wands	The facility staff manages to foil some of the Anomalies ongoing efforts. A Project undertaken by the Anomaly fails .	The facility staff begin to work out how the Anomaly breached containment initially. Start a Project to represent this investigation.
Four of Wands	The Anomaly is is found editing the facilities records. What information has it changed? Why?	A report comes in from the organization, bearing bad news. What about the information terrifies the team?
Three of Wands	A member of the staff suggests safety precautions. What setbacks will be caused by playing it safe?	A member of the staff suggests safety precautions. What goes wrong because they aren't followed?
Two of Wands	What does the organization fear would happen if the Anomaly escapes to the outside world?	The Anomaly is baffling security countermeasures. How? What might put a stop to this?
Ace of Wands	Before the breach, what did the facility staff think about this Anomaly?	What special training do the facility staff has as agents of the organization?
King of Pentacles	Who's in charge of the facility? How often do they talk to the rest of the staff?	What's the least pleasant job in the facility? How has the containment breach made this even worse?
Queen of Pentacles	The team discovers an event they assumed was supernatural was the work of the mundane. Why is this scarier?	The Facility staff discover that much key information about the Anomaly is redacted. What key information has been denied to them?

<u>Knight of Pentacles</u>	What other similar Anomalies does the organization have a history with. Does this Anomaly know?	How was the Anomaly created? What about this process do the facility staff still not understand?
<u>Page of Pentacles</u>	How many people live in the facility? How many of them are oblivious to the true purpose?	How many other Anomalies are contained? How does the escaped anomaly treat them?
<u>Ten of Pentacles</u>	Someone is found, miraculously having survived a previously assumed death. Who? How did they survive?	The organization sends much needed supplies and back up. What do they send? How does this avert disaster?
<u>Nine of Pentacles</u>	Something just feels wrong about this place. What?	Something about this place puts people at ease. What?
<u>Eight of Pentacles</u>	A team arrives from another of the organizations facilities to help contain the breach. What conflicts exist between them and the facilities staff?	A member of the organizations leadership arrives to oversee containment of the Anomaly. What personal stake do they have in this?
<u>Seven of Pentacles</u>	What urban myth does the local community use to explain the strange happenings at the facility?	How does the organization keep the facilities true purpose secret from outsiders?
<u>Six of Pentacles</u>	The Anomaly is actively corrupting something inside the facility. What? What problems does this pose?	A member of the team makes an effort to negotiate with the anomaly. How does it react?
<u>Five of Pentacles</u>	What sort of area was the Anomaly initially found in? How was it transported to the facility?	What part of the facility was the Anomaly made in? What's become of the project since the Anomaly was complete?
<u>Four of Pentacles</u>	What's a unique geographical feature of the area? How does this make the facility more secure?	What's a unique geographical feature of the area? How does this endanger the facility?
<u>Three of Pentacles</u>	What innocent people are hurt by the Anomaly in it's attempts to escape?	What innocent people are hurt by the organization in their attempt to contain the Anomaly?
<u>Two of Pentacles</u>	Someone from outside the organization has discovered the facility. What are they looking for?	Someone from outside the organization has discovered the facility. How does this give the anomaly an opportunity to escape?
<u>Ace of Pentacles</u>	When was the facility built? How has its purpose changed over time?	Who initially built the facility? Why did they come to regret this?