

FACT BOX

Duration: About 4 hours

Number of players: 5 + 1 one game master

Genre: Space Survival / Horror (with a potential for existential twist)

Type of players: You want to invest in the fiction as well as your character. You enjoy a degree of uncertainty about what challenges you might face, and a less than perfect certainty that you can decide your character's fate. Also, you like science fiction that may secretly be an allegory of real world issues.

Type of game master: You can work in a structured but flexible format to push players and characters, using a slight degree of randomization to surprise both them and yourself. You feel confident you can represent a vast, hostile and indifferent universe. You like to push people to think about what it actually means to face a situation you just may be able to control, but most likely will kill you.

Logistics: This scenario requires a mid-sized room, several chairs and a table. Character tags should be made available, as well as a laptop and a pair of percentile dice.

If players prefer to play scenes in live action, a handful of miscellaneous items to use as props would be helpful (especially jackets for spacesuits and objects for use as tools).

Run Them Again

by Moyra Turkington and Brand Robins

This game is about the cold equations of systems that do not care: the unyielding physics of deep space, the tenuous connections with other people, and the utilitarian calculus of sacrifice and profit. You are long haul space miners: the driver, the veteran, the rookie, the specialist, and the suit. You excavate and tow the raw building blocks of civilizations between the solar systems. It's a hard job and a shit wage. Your best hope is that you pay off your contract, feed your kids, or set yourself up just well enough so you can get out before the job kills you.

Now something has gone terribly wrong.

You ran the numbers when you came out of hypersleep. You have a 19.5% chance of survival. To get even that much you must be back in your can in less than three hours and thirty-one minutes. There are things you can do increase the odds, but they offer no guarantees. In fact, attempting them may kill you faster.

At the ragged edge of endurance, if your hand shakes on the torch? You may end yourself and your crew, here and now. In the hard vacuum of space, when you don't return to the hatch in time? The sun may burn you to nothing in a nanosecond. But, if everything goes right you can increase the odds that you'll ever see home again - to even: the flip of a coin.

Can you save yourselves? Do you deserve to be saved? Does it matter?

You ran the numbers, make your choices and run them again.

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STYLE OVERVIEW

Play Style

The first and last scenes of the scenario are embodied scenes: characters will stand up / lie down as appropriate during these scenes. The rest of the scenes can be played either around a table or Up on the Floor to suit the comfort and desire of the group.

In our first playtests, players chose to move around and act as their characters would act. If your players prefer to play this way we found that it added something to have a couple of jackets or coats on hand for use as space suits, and a couple of objects to stand in for Gear.

The Game-Master

The game-master of the scenario acts as a Director to actively control and push the tension of the story – this is a big space movie, right? You will need to be flexible and responsive to what is happening in the room at the moment. This scenario has a structure for scenes that provide a clear direction on what can happen next. However, we encourage very experienced and confident Director's to take liberties where they need to calibrate the urgency and emotion in the room. You will need to be active, engaged, use the tools provided. Make the story feel dire and urgent and isolating.

Semi-Transparency

This scenario is transparent in that even though there will be secrets among the characters, there are no secrets among the players. However, there is a way it is not transparent: while the game has a formula for determining probability of survival, the formula itself is not available to the players. This is done because the scenario is a story about people trying to save themselves in the face of an uncaring universe, not a strategy game.

The universe is going to do what it is going to do. We face forces we do not fully understand in the moment, and in trying to deal with them we create meaning. The numbers in Run Them Again are not there to decide if you win or lose. They are there to give something unseen but factual to struggle against, as the imposition of meaning upon that struggle is what creates story.

When you are fighting for your life in the terrible void, there is no clear path to salvation, and neither is there one in this scenario. We wanted player actions to have practical impact however we urge Directors and players to focus on how characters develop and how the situation feels, not on finding the “right way to play”.

Resource Management

The players will be expected to track some personal resources through the scenario. The character nametags contain tear away tags that characters that will be lost when the character is injured. The tags contain information about what each character is good at.

Time Management

Run Them Again is a four hour scenario. While this is a good chunk of time, there is a lot to accomplish. The Director needs to keep an eye on the time to make sure that all the necessary scenes have time to be fruitful and everybody scene gets its time.

Death

Players should be made aware before starting the scenario that it is possible for their characters to die before the end of the story. The likelihood that this will happen is narrow until the third act, and most likely will be player-voluntary, but it can happen suddenly or slowly, despite your best efforts to survive. Where characters die, we ask them to stay present as audience in the scenario, and help out the Director if desired.

Overview of Play

Workshop:

- Meet & Greet – 00:00 - 00:05
- Meta-techniques 00:05 – 00:15
- Human Knot 00:15 – 00:25
- Character Selection – 00:25 – 00:35
- Procedural Overview – Challenges, Resources, Injuries and Fights 00:35 – 00:55
- Character Introductions 0:55 – 1:10
- Captain’s Briefing 1:10 – 1:15
- Quick Break 01:15 – 01:20

Act I:

- Visualization 01:20 - 01:27
- Wake Up – 16 Tons 01:27 – 01:35
- Situation Report 1:35 – 1:40
- Oh Shit - Challenges – First Round 01:40 – 01:55
- Captain Dies 01:55 – 02:00

Act II:

- Challenges – Second Round 02:00 – 02:20
- Personal Scene – Lug 02:20 – 02:30
- Personal Scene – Doc 02:30 – 02:40
- Challenges – Third Round 02:40 – 03:00
- Personal Scene – Mom 03:00– 03:10

Act III:

- Personal Scene – Diesel 03:10 – 03:20
- Personal Scene – Pup 03:20 - 03:30 (Floating)
- Last Ditch Push (03:30 – 03:50)
- Return to Hypersleep (03:50 – 03:55)
- Run The Numbers

Debrief

Meet and Greet

Greet everyone and have everyone say their names, a bit about themselves. Introduce yourself and make sure everyone knows the high level about the scenario.

This is simple social stuff, and things we've all done a hundred times.

Meta-Techniques

A quick overview of the meta-techniques below, especially Cut and Brake, to be sure everyone knows about them. While most of this scenario is action-movie style and so may not cause any bleed, there are parts that could be difficult for some players (dying alone in a cave in comes to mind) – so everyone should know the signals and be on the same page.

Cut / Brake:

Standard Cut & Brake.

Explain use and practice if there are players who have never used them before.

Cross-cut / Switch

Cross-cutting is an important meta-technique in *Run Them Again* because there will be many times where the crew will be physically separated and performing two or more actions that are happening simultaneously, and can impact each other. The Director is in control of the focus and direction of these scenes, cutting back and forth between them for dramatic tension and effect. We encourage the Director and the players to think of running the scenes like edits in a film. When two scenes are running at the same time, the Director can cut back and forth between them by using the command “Switch”.

Explain and Practice.

Bird-In-Ear / Whispering

Bird-In-Ear can be used in this scenario by the Director to help encourage the drama and offer guidance to the players. To use this technique the Director can speak quietly into the ear of the target player as if it were thoughts or questions happening in the character’s head. The player is free to use or ignore the information presented, as desired.

Hotseat

In some character-focused personal scenes, the Director may employ the hotseat meta-technique. In this technique the Director will ask questions directly to the character’s mind, and the character will answer out loud in a way that is as truthful as the character is personally able to be. Other characters do not hear what is said during the hotseat.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY: Human Knot

Stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle with the players. Ask everyone to introduce themselves to the person standing to their left. Then ask them to introduce themselves to the person on their right. Ask everyone to extend a hand into the middle of the circle and take someone else's hand across the way (no one should take the end of a person standing next to them). Ask the players introduce themselves to the person whose hand they are now holding. Tell them to keep holding the hand they are holding, and with their other hand, reach out and grasp the hand of the last person that have not yet met, and make introductions.

Tell the players to hang on to the hands they are holding and explain that their objective is to untangle themselves (without letting go) until they are all unwound and forming a large circle.

Apart from the initial instruction, do not lead the activity. Keep an eye on them to make sure no one breaks hands. If they get frustrated, be encouraging, but do not try and lead or direct the actual unwinding. Also, be sensitive that there may be players that could have physical difficulty participating in the game (ability, size, height, etc.) this game is meant to be fun and help them work together, not be interpersonally destructive. If you feel like it is not a good idea to do this game, or if you start and you feel it is not working, tell them they are out of time and bring the game to the end.

As you participate, observe how the players deal with the activity. Notice who talks, and who does not. Notice who seems uncomfortable and who is at ease. Notice who takes charge, who follows, and where conflicts of opinion arrive. Some players will likely take charge, some will quietly follow. Use this as an opportunity to learn about the personalities you will be directing for. Quiet and reticent folks may end up needing encouragement or support during in play; assertive, overbearing people may need to be reined in a bit. Overall, use this exercise as a learning activity, to inform how you direct.

After it is over, go around the table and have everybody answer the following questions:

- What was difficult?
- What strategies worked?
- What did you learn?

CHARACTER SELECTION

Use the short description cards to introduce the five characters (if only four players, lose **Pup**). See if there is anyone very invested in playing specific characters. The Director can cast the roles based on what was observed during the Human Knot exercise.

Distribute the characters and give the players a few minutes to read them. Let them know that relationships will be reviewed before play.

Explain that the tags on the bottom of their character badges represent the kinds of skills characters have, and what they are good at. **Challenges** that they encounter will need different kinds of skills. The tags are there to guide them in understanding which character is best suited to the tasks they will encounter.

- **HANDS** represent physical strength and prowess; it is useful when doing tasks that involve hauling, moving, enduring, and exerting force.
- **KNOW** represents intellectual capacity and academic knowledge; it is useful for tasks requiring an understanding of science and engineering, medicine or other knowledge disciplines.
- **GEAR** represents specialized training experience with and access to equipment; it is useful for tasks requiring physical expertise like piloting, navigating, forklift operation and welding.

PROCEDURAL OVERVIEW

Anatomy of a Challenge

The Director should give an overview of how a challenge will run during the workshop. The first challenge will be played with active in-game support from the Captain, so they don't need to memorize the details up front, but getting familiar with the process of the challenge and the basic concepts will help better prepare them for a smooth game.

A - Introduction

The Director will introduce challenges by describing things that are happening in the ship, placing the challenge card down on the table in front of the players. The Challenge card has a description of what has gone wrong, an idea of what it will take to fix it, and a handful of descriptors to help the players visualize the scene. At this time, the Director will draw one random **Complication** from the deck for each Challenge. The Director will not share the complication with the players at this time.

B - Building the Plan

In most, if not all challenge rounds, there will be more than one active challenge on the table, and a plan will need to be built to resolve the issues at hand. It is important that the discussions on building the plan happen **in-game**. Characters will need to decide amongst themselves who is going to be working on what Challenges, and what they will be doing when they go. As long as internal coms (the internal communications system) on the ship are working, players can help each other from far away, **in as much as it fictionally makes sense**. (E.g. Mom can talk Pup through the process of operating a forklift while giving medical attention in a different location).

Specializations: Specializations are held. It's good for characters to plan to be in challenges where they can see a practical use for their specialization, but don't have to commit to how they are using them until actually playing out the Challenge (and any Complications are arising).

Rule: When a character is working on coms to contribute to two scenes, she cannot duplicate the resources that she offers, but he can split them (E.g. If Mom were working on a medical challenge that required 2 KNOW, 2 GEAR for success, and was talking Pup through working the forklift, he could offer 1 GEAR to Pup on coms without jeopardizing his own task but does not get to allocate his 3 available GEAR twice).

C - The Gut Check

The gut check allows players to call on the Director to perform an assessment of their task based on their area of expertise – a gut feel about how well the plan will work based on what they should fictionally know. When each player has a sense of the plan and is ready to perform a Gut Check, they signal this by putting a closed fist against their stomach and holding it there. If the scene is running very long, the Director can call last chance for the Gut Check and force it to happen (or not).

Rule: There can only be one Gut Check per challenge round.

Once all players have signalled, one player will recap the plan, and the Director will provide them a positive (thumbs up), neutral (thumb to the side), or negative (thumbs down) gut feel based on their expertise in the challenge they are facing. Thumbs up indicates that they have high confidence that the plan will work in terms of their area of expertise (they have more resources than needed). A neutral response is cautious one – things should be OK as long as nothing goes wrong. A negative response indicates that based on your experience, shit is going to go seriously wrong. After the gut check, the players have five minutes to make any changes and get going.

Rule: The Director's Gut Check feedback is based on the difficulty of the Challenge alone, not on the difficulty of Challenge with the Complication (complications are not foreseeable).

Example: A gut check has been called. There are two challenges on the table. The Director knows that challenge #1 is HANDS 6, KNOW 6 and Gear 6, and challenge #2 is HANDS 5, KNOW 7 and GEAR 6. The characters have described their plan of action, and based on the resources in play, Challenge 1 is currently covered with 6 HANDS, KNOW 6 and 6 GEAR, plus 2 points of specialization that haven't been assigned -- which should be enough to cover any complication. So the Director gives them a strong thumbs up. But the second challenge is currently covered with 5 Hands, 6 Know, and 6 Gear -- which is a little short before specializations, and could fail on a complication. So the Director gives them a weak sideways thumb. If they only had 3 Know, or 3 Hands, it would be a thumbs down as failure is likely.

D – Enacting the Plan

Once the characters are on the move, the Director will choose one of the challenge groups and introduce the scene. Visually describe the scene as if you were describing it in the Cinematographer's notebook: What does the environment look like? Show it intense and dynamic like space, but shitty and decaying like the ship (look for inspiration in the Captain's briefing and elements in each challenge sheet). Describe visual and auditory symptoms of the challenge (screens flashing, sparks, ghostly noises on the comm. etc). The Director should also encourage the same in the players by asking "What do we see?" Like in the movies of this genre, each scene should reveal a little bit of the ship, see some of the action that is happening, and contain some exploration into the interpersonal relationship between the characters. It's the Director's job to make sure these fruitful bits come out through the characters and through the challenge itself (see the Challenge Politics section of each for further inspiration).

The Director will tightly control focus in the Challenges by using Cross-cutting. Both scenes are happening in the same moment in time. As a general guideline, scenes should cross-cut anytime: 1.) a significant piece of progress has been made, 2.) the Director has foreshadowed that something is about to go very wrong (Complication), 3.) the chaos of a Complication has been established or 4.) the characters have taken action to contact (when internal coms are up) or physically go to the other physical location. The Director is in charge of managing time continuity, especially where contact between teams is occurring.

E - Complications

The Director has been aware of the impending Complication since the beginning of the Challenge round, and will be looking for an opportunity to use it to fictionally enhance the scene (look to the challenge sheet for inspiration on how to integrate the complication fictionally). Where complications occur

(sometimes they will not) it is often a good idea to foreshadow the complication coming by visually introducing it to the players (but not the characters) prior to a cross-cut (e.g. describing the small wisps of smoke (FIRE) coming out of the back of the computer's mainframe where the characters cannot see it. Sometimes, it is a good idea to erupt a complication in the middle of a scene (e.g. "And then (HUMAN ERROR) somebody does something terribly wrong. Who does it? What does that look like?".)

Most complications require additional resources to the already established difficulty of a Challenge. The Director should use Bird in Ear to let the characters know if they are OK or not – this is best done by calling on the skilled strengths of the characters and giving them the "insider view" a bit like you did in the Gut Check. Example: Where a challenge is in HANDS deficit, describe to the highest HANDS character how they can see the plan it going wrong. Give them hints about how much more they'd need to get there. When doing this, don't talk numbers, use descriptors to indicate whether "just a little more help carrying" might be enough, or if "the damned thing is going to crush one of you if you don't get some serious help right fucking now!"

Once the Director has made it clear if the characters involved in the scene already have the resources necessary to resolve the problem, they can just go ahead and successfully act out overcoming the challenge where they have been successful. If they have not been successful, then they can scramble to overcome by creatively applying Specializations or getting help from other crew on the coms (where there is excess and coms are available). If they can not cover the gaps, their characters will suffer the **Consequences** of a deficit.

F - Suffering Consequences

If, after the Complication has been introduced, the characters in the Challenge have enough resources to cover the difficulty of the Challenge and the Complication, they are fully successful, and will not suffer Consequences. If however, they do not have enough resources, they will suffer consequences. Consequences are paid by the characters who are involved in the Challenge that has the shortfall.

The Director should encourage describing the Consequences dynamically and visually – this is a Big Space movie and this is a chance for them to take big risks and showcase their specialized skills, guts, and resources. Example: Diesel taking a short hop flight to get to the relay in time, Lug using a power lifter that shorts out and collapses part of the superstructure on top of her, Mom mixing chemicals wrong and creating a poison gas, etc.

Sometimes it is obvious in the fiction who should take the injury, sometimes you'll get creative – the Challenge cards are full of inspiration to figure out how you might get hurt. If no one volunteers, the Director can prompt the players to decide who takes the hit by asking questions: "One of you is Injured. Who is that? What does it look like?". When a player takes a consequence, they tear off the tag related to the deficit they're in and once the tag is lost it cannot be regained.

Deficit	Condition	Outcome
HANDS (any number)	Injured	One player loses one HANDS Tag
KNOW (any number)	Concussed	One player loses one KNOW Tag
GEAR (any number)	Damaged Equipment	One player loses one GEAR Tag
Any one resource (any number)	Sense of Self	One player loses a Specialization Tag
All resources (any number)	Cut Off (Catastrophe)	One character is isolated and the Catastrophe Card "Cut Off" is forced in as one of the two challenges for the next round.

Rule: When a challenge results in more than two consequences, it is overcome, but it will not help increase the crew's chance of survival (Eg. Lug, Doc and Diesel are trying to **Fix Thruster Alignment**. The plan went very badly and the complications fucked them hard. They have deficits in HANDS, KNOW and GEAR and each of them takes a Complication: Injured, Concussed, Damaged Gear. The players rip the appropriate tags from their character sheets. The Director describes the Thrusters reluctantly falling back into place but damaged, wobbly and inefficient. The act has allowed the characters to move forward, but has been done so badly, or at the cost of so many resources that in the end their chances of survival have not been helped.

G - Catastrophes

There are two **Catastrophes** in the game. Catastrophes can be introduced as a fictional outcome (player is dying and needs **Medical Attention**) or as a result of a Complication (**Cut Off** as a result of a Cave In/Collapse). Catastrophes are extra challenges brought into play that are optional but have hard stakes. Doing them makes things harder but will save your crewmates lives. Ignoring them may be strategically advantageous but will result in character death.

Cut Off happens either as a result of a Complication or when the players choose to mitigate the consequences of a disastrous challenge.

Medical Attention happens when one of the characters is reduced to zero non-specialized tags to bring a character back from the brink of death.

Other Rules

Fighting

Fighting and interpersonal violence is not a core component of the game, but where characters need to make tough decisions under pressure, arguments and struggles could break out. To handle this, *Run Them Again* has a simplified fighting solution:

- When violence is initiated, the players of all characters choose if they are in and what side they are on.
- The group or individual with the highest cumulative "HANDS" rating wins the fight.
- Where there is a tie, Diesel acts as the tiebreaker.

- Where there is a tie and Diesel is not in the conflict, someone on each side ends up injured, concussed or with a loss of sense of self and there is no winner.
- If fights continue through multiple rounds, players can leave or enter the fight but must make it fit the story.

Injury

- The winner can choose who on the other side suffers injury.
- The injured player chooses the kind of wound suffered: Injured (HANDS), Concussed (KNOW), Sense of self (Specialization) and rip the associated tag.
- There is no way to restore lost tags.
- If you lose all your tags and your crew fails your **Medical Attention**, you die.

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

One by one, go around the table and have each of the players introduce their characters to each other. Each player should cover the following items in their introduction.

- My name
- My job on the ship/crew
- What I look like
- How I move
- What it's like to live with me in close quarters
- How I feel about each of you
- Ask and answer a few brief questions to and from the other players and GMs (e.g. "What did you do when I told the Corp you had cancer?") but keep it fairly brief and in the past. We just want them to have enough to bite on in play.

CAPTAIN'S BRIEFING

The following material is provided so the Captain can give the crew a briefing, semi-in fiction, before play proper starts. The briefing is the standard spiel about the ship, the cargo, the timetable, etc., that's given before every long-haul. To the characters it would be the work-day equivalent of being told where the emergency exits on a plane are, but for the players it provides some critical information about their situation.

Much of this information is things the characters would know, with the possible exception of Pup. It's fine to give them access to these sheets, or to let them know as the Captain is briefing them before the run that this is the 1000th time they've heard all this -- especially for Lug.

In playtests we ran this after character selection but before we started the opening sequence. It gave a little space for a soft-open with the characters, to let them establish a bit of history with the captain, and for the Director to work out the Captain's voice and relationship with the crew before the tighter focused scenes started.

I liked my Captain as an authoritarian, experienced older woman who towed the corporate line, but was on the side of her crew when it came down the hard choices. Still, she brooked no shit even when sitting through boring pre-run briefings, and put any smart talk in its place. Feel free to make your own Captain's voice -- the key point is to make it the type of person whose loss with shake the characters, as well as giving them a chance to take actions they wouldn't have considered while the Captain was present.

The Ship

The ship is a 41 year old Kaze class JSTAV-316, call sign "KIRA." When it was fresh off the line it was already out of date, and 41 years of hard use to eke out every nickel to minimize capital expenditure have left her running on spit and bailing wire. Every year the corporation reviews the ship's performance logs while the safety committee tries to get it retired or retrofitted. And every year it passes inspection and goes back out -- signed off by VP of Operations J.K. Stuart -- who has many toilets across the company fleet named in his honor.

The ship is divided into three (rough) components: the tug, the frame, and the haul. A common comment on the ship's appearance is that it looks like a bumblebee hauling a coconut wrapped in chains -- and just like a bumblebee, no one is quite sure how it actually flies. This isn't how any engineer in the system would describe it, but it's how the crew and the corporate suits do.

- The tug is the small forward section, containing the crew quarters, mess, command and control deck, personal effects storage, and the majority of the technical and operational systems.
- The frame is the ~1 km x .73 km x .75 km network of frame struts, thrusters, control and steering, and security systems that provide primary drive power for the ship and (most importantly) secure the cargo for transport.
- The haul is the cargo itself. In this case the cargo is a mass of unrefined iron, cobalt, platinum, antimony and indium mined from an unusually productive cluster of M-type asteroids. It's total

weight is ~870,000,000,000 kg, and has an estimated current market value of just over 110 billion Euros.

As the primary value of the craft is the haul, it's well secured. While the tug can, technically, separate from the frame, and the haul can, technically, be jettisoned the current setup of the ship is designed to prevent either occurrence. The tug's separation mechanisms have been shut down, and it is hard welded to the frame at multiple points. The frame and the haul are protected by automated defensive systems – supposedly to stop pirates and asteroids, but everyone know they're there to blast any miner who tries to steal or sabotage the run. And while the haul can (obviously) be separated from the frame, those defense systems are backed up by the fact that every lock and coupling has security passwords, locks, and can only be accessed from outside the ship. In dock that's easy enough, but on a flight it means a long space walk with robotic guns shooting at you.

The crew shouldn't worry about that though. What are the chances they'd have to dump the cargo?

The Flight

KIRA is a long haul ship, working asteroid clusters at the outer rim of the solar system. It typically takes 2 to 5 year tours, a year to eighteen months flight out, six months to a year of hard work between four and ten different sites, and then a year to eighteen months back. This trip was 3 years: 1 year and 4 months to the Rudovnik asteroid cluster, 7 months on site, and 1 year and 3 months back.*

The Work

Work in the cluster is long hours, grueling conditions, and the constant presence of potential death. Even though there is massive and expensive support technology available (including magnetic brooms, plasma bores, high grade explosives, etc.) the truth is a lot of the work to make the machines work is still exhausting, dirty, and dangerous. It's normal for the 6 to 7 months on site for the crew to pull 70 to 90 hour weeks, every week, for the whole duration. Not everyone's job is equal. Lug and Pup, for example are most likely to spend 12 hours a day hauling machines to and from, in space-suits the whole time, soaking up radiation and either bitterly cold or burning hot the whole time. But Doc is most likely to have to work 48 hours without sleep to fix technical problems, and Mom has to be available both to every member of the crew and the corporate calls for reports at all times. And Diesel is known to pull 78 hour shifts doing short flights, followed by booze-fueled naps.

For every single character work is hard, long, dirty, and dangerous. For every single character all of the frustration of such shitty conditions becomes embedded in each other's faces and voices. And for every single character very often the only thing that kept them sane and alive through the whole thing was each other.

Well, that and the knowledge that for 3 years of their life they'll be paid better than anything they could get back home.

PLAYING THE GAME

Act I, Introduction:

Players should find a place to lie down. The Director should explain that there will be a visualization exercise while their characters are in hypersleep (music will play). Also the Director should explain that immediately following the visualization, a second song will play [16 Tons]. Explain that when the song plays, they should raise themselves out of their sleep pods, and negotiate each other's physical space without talking. Instruct them to use this song exploring how their characters interact with each other in the tight confines of the ship. After the song is over, the Director – as the Captain – will issue a situation report.

Visualization

Ask all players to find a place to comfortably lie down and close their eyes. The Director should press play on the visualization song and let the music get off to a start before beginning to talk. When reading, read slowly and clearly, let the players absorb it as you go.

Music: Space Lion

Being in hypersleep isn't the same as sleeping in your bed back home. You don't curl up, quietly give yourself over to darkness and rise rested the next morning. You are pushed -- suddenly and violently -- into unconsciousness by the sleep pod. When you rise, your body feels stiff, sore, nauseous, hungry, and beaten.

You do dream, but the dreams don't come and go, they loop. You always dream of the last thing you were thinking about before the pod put you down.

It might be your mother, frail and sick and sad and tired, reaching up to touch you.

It might be the face of your children, as you leave them – again.

It might be your lover's body, a roadmap of trails you could follow forever.

It might be the task you forgot to do.

It might be that screaming fight, the fists, the blood.

It might be the one kiss that eclipsed everything.

It might be you young, you old, you free, you dead.

It might be the vast expanse of stars, infinite and black and cold.

What are you dreaming of? Who is there? What do they want? What is happening?

You will dream this dream for days, for weeks, for months, maybe even a year: over and over and over again. But whether they are good or bad, eventually they'll be shaken out of you. The ship is old and tired and full of flaws. It's always losing coms, overheating, trailing into meteor showers or false alarming.

And when it does, it kicks you out of hypersleep to clean it up. You come to consciousness, sharp and hard and sudden. You cough the fluid out of your lungs. You vomit. Your body screams out for food.

First Scene: 16 Tons

[Music: 16 Tons]

In this scene, players start to get comfortable with each other and we start to get them thinking visually and physically. While 16 Tons plays at a fair volume, the characters will wake from hypersleep and negotiate a cramped space without speaking. The players should use this time to get a sense of their relationships to other characters and understand what living here has been like for the last three years.

The Situation Report

In this scene the Captain lays out the basic information of what is going on and how bad things are. This scene is the “exposition dump” scene from every Hollywood big space movie ever. The Captain calls everyone to the command deck (which is really just a dingy grey room with a bunch of half-dead computer screens, grey tile floors that used to be white, and a table big enough for everyone to sit and have coffee at) and lays the situation out for them. Feel free to play this scene to make the Captain a character with presence in the character’s lives, as well as ensuring the players know what their characters are up against.

The key information for the Captain to impart in this scene is as follows:

- 1) The ship is damaged and several systems are offline. It isn’t clear yet how extensive the damage is, and getting a full scope of the situation is part of the initial work that needs to be done.
- 2) Many of the computer systems of the ship are down. Basic life support and power are still running, but secondary systems for reports, control, etc. are all either glitching or fully off line. This means the system needs a hard check and reboot. Once that’s done a proper assessment of the state of the ship can be made.
- 3) The InterSolar Communications Relay (IntSol) is down – and because it has its own backup system that probably means it’s damaged physically. A crew needs to get outside and check it, and make whatever repairs are necessary. Once that’s done the Captain can figure out their actual position, and radio corporate for help.
- 4) (Yes, this does mean they don’t know exactly where they are, don’t know how bad the damage is, nor what caused it, and can’t call anyone for help)
- 5) Based on visual checks and experience, the Captain thinks that the ship was hit by debris and the computer errors caused them to drift off course. His guess is that they’re far away from their planned route, and if they don’t get back to it any rescue attempt will become impossible as they’re just too far out.
- 6) Whatever they do, they have to do it in just under three and a half hours. Life support for the ship won’t last much longer than that, and so they have to do what they can and then get back into the pods and go back to sleep.
- 7) If anyone asks, the Captain will tell them he thinks they currently have about a 20% chance of being rescued. If they can fix the damage and get underway, he thinks they still have a very good chance of survival. He will tell them in no uncertain terms that all of their lives are in their own, collective hands.
- 8) Based on the date, they’ve been asleep for 1 year and 1 day. This means they should be 3 months out from the nearest base. How far they actually are they won’t know until IntSol and computer are back online.

First Challenge Round

With the information dump complete, the Captain will then start the characters on their first challenge round. The challenges on the table will be ***Repair InterSolar Communications Relay (IntSol) & Bring Computer Systems Back Online***. For this round of challenges the Captain will lay out the scope of the challenges, and tell the characters which challenge they should go to.

This gives the Director a chance to go over the procedure for challenge scenes – both in terms of the interpersonal choices of who goes to which challenge, the gut check method, and the resolution – while there is still a leverage character in the fiction.

The Captain will order Lug, Pup, and Doc go out to fix IntSol, and that Mom and Diesel stay to bring the computers back online. He'll tell Doc and Mom to stay on the coms to help out the other team with KNOW/GEAR if the team on scene needs help. This introduces the players to the idea that KNOW and GEAR can be used via com communication, as well as that HANDS have to be done on site.

It's also up to the Director if they want to foreshadow internal com's failure now by having someone make a comment that "at least our internal communications are working; if they went down we'd be screwed."

I recommend taking this scene a bit slow, letting everyone get comfortable with the procedure for resolving challenges. This game is quite a bit fiddlier and looks more competitive than many scenarios, and could make players nervous. While that is partly intentional, with the uncertainty about the game's numbers designed to create a mirror of the uncertainty the characters face, it can also put some players out of the diegetic moment. This scene thus acts as a transition, giving them a soft start into the system to help ease immersion through mimesis.

Let the players see how resources get allocated and what each of the resource types means in terms of fictional content. Let them see where their numbers add up and how that influences gut checks. And then show them complications, and how they can use their specializations to overcome them.

Act I Challenges

For Act I the Captain is a character, who has stats of 2 in everything, with no specialization.

Each Challenge is Divided into PLAYER SHEET – which can be put on the table so everyone can read it (or a copy given to every player so they aren't all craning to see the same thing – though a neat trick to deal with that is to describe it as the characters huddled around the table in C&C looking at the same technical readouts); and DIRECTOR SHEET – which has the numbers and directorial suggestions for the director to consider. The Director Sheet isn't secret, really, it's just to keep numbers and direction separate so that players can focus on character actions.

ACT I CHALLENGE: Intersolar Relay (IntSol) Down

The intersolar communications relay (IntSol) - a large series of towers, dishes, secondary control ports and cables - has been damaged and is no longer operational. Without this critical resource it will be impossible to call for help, difficult to land even if you can get the ship to port, quite likely that you could collide with another vessel when you move into busier space, and it makes it significantly more difficult to even know where you are now as you can't triangulate your position as easily. (It can still be done, but it requires way more computation.)

In order to complete this challenge a team is going to need to go outside, assess the damage, then do whatever combination of hard structural repairs and soft technical repairs are needed to get the system back online.

This is a difficult challenge, with a narrow timeline. Until this is done and the computers are back online, you're flying blind, can't call for help, and won't even be fully sure where you are. Some of the key elements include:

HANDS: People need to go outside, open and close airlocks, run shuttle or jump craft, handle tools, and have enough manpower to take up and put down fairly large towers. Of course they don't weigh anything, but they're still large and cumbersome and need to be bolted down. **(SERIOUS)**

KNOW: This is an intersolar communications array -- it's one of the most advanced systems on the ship. It involves 7 separate computer systems, translight arrays, radio signals and telemetry, solar and radiation shielding, power units, internal/external communications... it goes on. This is hard science, and while a PhD in communications could do it alone the truth is you're not communications specialists. **(SERIOUS)**

GEAR: Space suits for walking in hard vacuum, jumpers, clip cables, testing leads and butt sets, torque wrenches, welding kits, pry bars... everything from your Swiss Army knife to the multifunctional spectrometry array is needed for this one. **(SERIOUS)**

Elements

- For some reason – it shouldn't be the case – the ship is in a solar system and not far from a sun. This means that on the shadowed side of the ship things are fine, but exposure to direct sunlight causes near instant fatality. It also means there's radiation like mad out here.
- The relay's dishes are out of line, and one of the main sensor and com struts is twisted. It looks like it was struck directly by a large bit of debris, and will need to be either torn down and replaced or patched ad-hoc.
- There are large panels under one of the secondary arrays that can open like doors, giving access to the technical systems underneath. The systems are physically intact, but many of their cables have been pulled. It all needs to be replaced, and the systems reset here – final reboot can be done inside once the computers are back online.

ACT I CHALLENGE: Intersolar Relay (IntSol) Down

The Numbers

Captain's Combination – Lug, Pup, and Doc (they meet all requirements, and all have a specialization that can be invoked to overcome complications, however Doc may need to burn a point of KNOW to help the others inside the ship – which makes it possible someone get hurt)

HANDS: 6

KNOW: 6

GEAR: 6

Politics

- Ask Doc how he feels about going outside with the grunts – he's a tech specialist, a desk guy, this shouldn't be his job!
- Ask Pup who he looks up to more – Doc or Lug
- Ask Lug how many times she's had to do something like this – and what the worst fatality she ever saw while doing it was

ACT I CHALLENGE: Computer Failure – Bring Primary Network Back Online

In addition to all the other crap going wrong with the ship, a large section of the computer network had gone down. Primary systems for life support, climate, and stabilization are still online (or else you'd all be dead) – but almost everything else is either glitching, randomly dumping, or just flat out dead. It could be a virus from all the porn Pup kept on her terminal, it could be damage to hardware, it could be that the system just didn't get the latest patch before you went out... whatever it is, you need to fix it.

This challenge shouldn't make anyone leave the ship, and mostly will take place in the tug. However, while it may be less dangerous than going outside, it's not without some danger either. If you fuck it up and kill off more systems you could take down life support (in which case you freeze or suffocate) or stabilization (in which case the ship starts to rotate incorrectly, killing gravity and possibly exposing the team outside to direct sunlight). Plus, the ship is old and damaged, and who knows what can go wrong when you're crawling through the very narrow access hatches.

HANDS: there are multiple different points of work to be done – someone in the command and control center to type primary commands and monitor status, someone to check network cables and drives in the server core under the floor of C&C, someone else to check terminals and do diagnostics across the quarters, as well as pulling and resetting drives. **(SERIOUS)**

KNOW: There are 300 separate networked drives, many of which have independent operating systems, redundant firewalls and security passphrases, supposed single sign on systems that don't actually work together, as well as hundreds of programs, switches, hotkeys, etc. The computer systems are a hot mess of 25 years of folks hacking their own crap into the matrix, and the potential number of errors compounds rapidly. **(BRUTAL)**

GEAR: Having the access to the computers, all the right logins and passcode, and the ability to comfortably run multiple diagnostics and test cases at the same time. Plus, if a program is corrupt you need access to the backup systems and files. Also lots of solid state drives, networking cables, virtual terminals, and heads up displays. **(SERIOUS)**

Elements

- Command and control has a bank of monitors, old style analog ones as the newer heads up and virtual terms tend to be buggy – as well as a bank of keyboards and other hard, durable input devices that are older than the ship. It looks like the future of 1984.
- Many of the computer cables and network systems are buried under the floors of the tug, and require crawling through (or prying up the floor and hanging down into) narrow pipes full of tubes, vents, and cables. It's lit with backup lighting, red and flickering, and a bit like crawling into hell. It's also a terrible place for a fire.
- Some of Mom's gear, unlike the general gear of the ship, is really very sexy. He's got at least one full HUD display with virtual command prompts, retinal tracking, etc. Everyone else is walking around with butt-sets that could be from 2012, and he's got gear like something out of a Michael Bay movie.

ACT I CHALLENGE: Computer Failure – Bring Primary Network Back Online

The Numbers

Captain's Combination – Himself, Diesel, and Doc

HANDS: 5

KNOW: 7 (1 point short – Doc can cover this on the Coms)

GEAR: 6

Politics

- Who is Mom more likely to blame if user error turns out to be one of the causes – Pup for being new and doing something wrong, or Doc for setting up this mess in the first place?
- How does Diesel deal with the Captain putting her on secretarial duty? That is to say, with typing and pulling cables instead of being outside where the action is?
- When the Captain sends Doc outside and puts the pressure for this one on Mom, how does everyone deal with that bit of news?

ACT I Complications

For Act I we use this set of complications in a small 3 card deck. We're not ready for the big emergencies yet!

<p>ACT I COMPLICATION: NULL (x1)</p> <p>Nothing goes wrong. Who knew?</p>	<p>ACT I COMPLICATION: Malfunction (x1)</p> <p>Personal gear, life support, or other tools that you were using to the job break, misfire, or malfunction at the worst possible moment. Was it due to bad equipment being supplied, or you not taking proper care of your gear? +1 GEAR AND +1 HANDS.</p>
<p>ACT I COMPLICATION: Incorrect Sensor Readings</p> <p>One of the sensors or gauges used to complete the work was reading wrong, resulting in either too much or too little force being applied – or to trying to fix something that wasn't broken. Basically, you've been digging in the wrong spot, and have to figure out where to go before you accidentally make things worse. +1 KNOW AND +1 GEAR.</p>	

End of Act I – Captain’s Death

Around the time the first challenge scene is ending, the Captain drops dead for no apparent reason. Now there is no one clearly in charge, no central point of mutual direction, and folks may wonder why a healthy man just dropped over dead. Give all the characters a few minutes to reflect on what they felt about the Captain and how they feel about him being dead. Then if people want to investigate his death, put the FLOAT CHALLENGE: Investigate the Captain’s Death on the table with the others.

This is the pivot scene for Act I, transitioning them to the brave new world of Act II where the shit will really start to hit the fan.

- Why is the Captain dead?
- How will we be getting home?
- Who’s in charge now?
- How are we getting things done?

If they are not asking these kinds of questions, starting using Bird-in-Ear to plant and ramp them.

It’s normal for the crew to want to make contact with Corp. Either the Captain’s already done it and we’re waiting to hear back, or Mom can send a request in and they’ll get back (in Mom’s personal scene). Synchronous communications home are generally twitchy and come when they come.

Act II

In Act II the Captain is no longer a character. He's all dead and does not contribute, nor does he give any orders before he dies.

ACT II Challenge Round One

In Act II Scene I the characters can use KNOW and TECH via Coms, and can use relevant specializations via Coms

ACT II, SCENE I: CHALLENGE: Broken Navigation System

With the network and IntSol both back online the onboard nav systems should be telling you where you are, how far you're off course, and how to get back.

None of that is happening.

The navigation systems are down, and if you're going to get out of here you need to bring them back online. The good news is that with IntSol back online the problems are probably internal to the ship. The bad news is that means bug hunting – searching down code errors, network configuration compiles, bad logic, and hardware issues.

The fact that you're messing with the system while others are working on the thrusters means you have to be more careful than normal too. Technically, if the nav system does something strange it shouldn't cause the thrusters to rotate, fire, or automatically course correct. But technically isn't reality, and you've all seen it happen before.

HANDS: With the computers back online and most of the connections between it and IntSol already fixed, this should mostly be just a matter of running all the inputs, having enough hands to work the keyboards, check the status reports, and maybe crawl around under the deck to fix some misaligned parts. **(LIGHT)**

KNOW: The nav systems set at the crossroads of the ship, between the computers and IntSol, between piloting and the thrusters, between... well, just about everything. The system itself is complicated, composed of hundreds of different programs, sensor inputs and outputs, but the really hard part is making sure that it interfaces correctly with the 47 separate hard systems and 210 soft systems so that you don't accidentally fly into a black hole or drain off your life support power to get really good radio reception. **(SERIOUS)**

GEAR: Having the access to the back-end of the nav systems, all the right logins and passcode, and the ability to comfortably run multiple diagnostics and test cases at the same time. Plus, if a program is corrupt you need access to the backup systems and files. Also lots of solid state drives, networking cables, virtual terminals, and heads up displays – really, technically, this isn't terribly different than fixing the computers. **(SERIOUS)**

Elements

- As with the computer systems, many of the computer cables and network systems are buried under the floors of the tug, all lit with backup lighting, red and flickering, and a bit like crawling into hell. It's also a terrible place for a fire.
- Additionally, many of the nav system components go right up against the hull of the ship – meaning you have to wedge yourself in against the hull to get at them. This is the kind of place it's hard to breath, the walls are freezing cold and often wet with condensation, and you can almost feel your body soaking up the extra rads from solar storms.
- One of the key junctions, between the fusion core and navigation and piloting systems, has been "fixed" by a previous crew. The fix is a hot mess of duct tape, soldering, and wires that spark a little if you touch them. It's pretty damn obvious from a single glance at it that no one from safety back home ever even checked this section.

ACT II, SCENE I CHALLENGE: Broken Navigation System

The Numbers

HANDS: 2

KNOW: 5

GEAR: 5

Politics

- In addition to command and control, a good part of the nav systems are in the forward cockpit – which is normally Diesel’s territory. How has Diesel decorated her semi-autonomous zone, and how awkward is it to work in there?
- Who is more responsible for the hot mess of the system – Doc or Mom? Diesel? Can we all just agree to blame the corporation? What about blaming the late, lamented Captain?

ACT II, SCENE I: CHALLENGE: Fix Thruster Alignment

Some days shit just piles on top of shit. In addition to the nav systems being down, the newly fixed computers are also telling you that there is damage to the mid-aft thrusters. They're out of line, probably damaged and unable to turn correctly, and someone is going to have to suit up and go out there – almost .75 km away from the tug, to a part of the frame that is dangerously close to spinning towards the sun.

This is a must do task. If you're as far of course as you think you are, it's going to take some serious burn to get back on course – or even to vector to a new destination. And if your thrusters aren't working correctly that won't happen. Or, even worse, if they're damaged and unreliably responsive they could just drive you further off course and do something really sweet like drop you into a sun while you're asleep. That shouldn't happen, there are safeties in place, but then **NONE OF THIS** should be happening either.

If that wasn't enough the other part of your crew is going to be working on the Nav system while you're out there in the black pit of space. The nav system that links to the thrusters, and if it gets twitchy could accidentally turn them on. While you're working on them.

HANDS: The team has to go outside the ship. This means suits and airlocks, again. And once you get there, you need to actually fix the problem. Initial read-outs indicate it isn't just software gone off – there is probably hard damage, and you'll have to rip sections of track and hydraulics out and replace them, which means heavy work. **(SERIOUS)**

KNOW: Luckily it doesn't look like there is anything wrong with the fusion reactor, or the reaction mass, so this isn't a job where you need a degree in nuclear physics. All signs say it's more mechanical, about fixing the external mechanics and running tracks of the thrusters and checking their alignment. It's not work for stupid people, but it should require calculus either. **(MODERATE)**

GEAR: This time you not only have to go out, you also have to travel a long way down the frame – which either means a very long walk, or a short flight with one of the packs or extra-vehicular jump craft. Replacing tracks or hydraulics, or doing any heavy repair, also means fusion cutters or plasma torches, heavy lifters, and a full set of repair tools. **(MODERATE)**

Elements

- You can walk from the tug to the thrusters – but it's a long walk, about a full km through space. And you have to unhook and rehook your tether multiple times along the way. And you have to make sure you give the proper authorization to the automated defense systems out there, or else they'll shoot you. Because yay, corporation.
- The thrusters look a little like large scale canon on 360 titanium tracks, with attached hydraulic systems that let them rotate in almost any direction. That is, if the tracks weren't ripped up and the hydraulics weren't leaking shit all over the hull, little round drops of oil floating away into space.
- The shuttle craft and extra-vehicular jumpers are fast ways to where you're going. But they're also notoriously twitchy, cramped, and difficult to land on the frame. The bonus is that if you do end up spinning sunwards you can survive an extra 2 minutes inside the craft, where as you burn to death almost instantly without it.

ACT II, SCENE I: CHALLENGE: Fix Thruster Alignment

The Numbers

HANDS: 6

KNOW: 3

GEAR: 3

Politics

- Do people get possessive of their tools? Does Lug feel the plasma cutter should always be hers? Does Diesel claim primacy over the shuttle?
- How do the folks out working on the thrusters feel about the fact that the folks working on the Nav systems could accidentally turn them into radioactive ash by pushing the wrong button?

FLOAT CHALLENGE: Investigate the Captain's Death

The Captain is gone, you found her lying in Command and Control cold as hard space. Considering the Captain was healthy, young enough, and had been talking to you all coherently (or seemingly coherently) up to a few moments before the moment of death... this is disconcerting. Wanting to know what killed her is natural. And, if it was something on the ship – the life support systems, sleep pods, radiation, or other members of the crew – then it's more than just curiosity. It's survival.

Luckily the ship does have a decent med-bay. After all keeping you all in working condition is a priority. There's enough diagnostic and test equipment there to find pretty much any cause of death. But it will take time, and time is one of the things you're shortest on.

HANDS: You need enough man power to move the body, run all the scanners, etc. – but it's not back breaking. **(LIGHT)**

KNOW: There is no obvious cause of death, so some medical knowledge and the ability to read medical equipment, blood tests, chemical spectrum results, etc. is needed **(LIGHT)**

GEAR: You need full access to the med bay and all the scanners, exploratory tools, needles and vacuum tubes to draw and test blood, microscopes, etc. **(MODERATE)**

Elements

- The Captain has few, if any, external signs of cause of death. She's waxy, cold, but her face looks peaceful and relaxed. Probably with less stress than anyone's ever seen her with.
- The "med bay" isn't really a full bay. It's more like a large closet with a table and a lot of provisions. It's just between Command and Control and the Sleep Pods, and doesn't give a huge amount of privacy.
- As it turns out doing an exam of a corpse isn't quite like doing an exam of a living person. Needles go in differently. They can't help you by moving here or there. So you're going to have to get in there and tug the corpse around, take off clothes, pull out hair, and deal with the fact that someone you knew isn't there anymore.

FLOAT CHALLENGE: Investigate the Captain's Death

The Numbers

HANDS: 1

KNOW: 2

GEAR: 3

Politics

- Mom can probably handle this one alone – but do the others trust him to do it? With the Captain dead, Mom might be trying to assert authority on the ship, and someone could really question if maybe Mom would have reason to want the Captain dead.
- Whoever is doing this challenge gets to watch the Captain's dead body be profaned. How do they deal with seeing this person they knew, and maybe liked and maybe respected, and maybe hated, cold and dead on a slab with people poking needles and sawing parts out?
- Ask someone to share a memory of a time when the Captain saved their life.

Personal Scene – Lug

[Music: The Lumineers, *Ho Hey*]

Lug's scene is about the hard, oppressive price of work. It's about how the Lugs of the world pay for their children with their very bodies. Lug is the character in the crew with most functional and engaged human relationships back home. Despite this, she's spent more time over the years away from her spouse and kids than she's spent with them. Her absence has hurt their relationship over and over again, and now the job is now literally killing her. And the price is still not paid. To make sure their kids are taken care of, Lug's spouse wants to have a terrible, pragmatic discussion: is it best for all of us if you die out there?

Because we have been doing some intense action scenes, you'll need to put some effort into making the emotional transition to these quieter, more personal scenes. To get there, put Lug in the hotseat for a few minutes. The scene takes place in the crew coms booth while Lug is waiting for the uplink to sync. Describe the sudden quiet and stillness of the empty booth in contrast to the chaos you've been running in. Ask her to close her eyes. Ask her:

- What did he smell like when you held him last?
- Of all your kids, who's your favorite?
- Does your body feel different when you're with them?
- What will they do when you're gone?

The scene is transparent to other players, and can be overheard (but not interrupted) by Doc (only) who is waiting his turn outside the door. When portraying Lug's husband:

- Make the love tangible. Don't rush to the doom. Make him hard to leave.
- If you can, give a sense of the kids. The youngest is in trouble at school, the oldest has picked up a part time job to help out.
- Don't let Lug off easy if she tries not to tell him what's happening. He knows her better than she knows herself – he can tell something's very wrong. She may assume it is the cancer and think the worst.
- When it comes down to the truth, make it emotionally difficult but also pragmatic. Don't be afraid to let them sit in silence if it happens.
- If Lug doesn't bring it up, her husband will: the contract guarantees far more out of a death in service than it does on a Med Payout. Is the few months they'll have left together worth it?

Personal Scene – Doc

[Music: 21 Pilots, *House of Gold*]

Doc's scene is about duty and family and about how they don't always work out the way you think that they will. He's been able to eavesdrop on Lug's talk with her husband, and that should make him ripe for the hotseat. While the uplink is syncing, get into his head:

- What did his mother say to him when she bid him farewell?
- Does he love his family like that? What gets in the way?
- He's supposed to be his family's future. How does he feel about that?
- Is talking to them right now something he wants to do or feels he has to do?
- Should he be dying too – to make their future?

When it feels right, bring his mother up on the coms. She looks older than he remembers, more frail.

When playing Doc's mother:

- Make her frail but formidable.
- Show her love, but make it hard and heavy to bear.
- Set her expectations high.
- Don't press for what's happening right away, but get to it when it's right.
- Let her panic a bit, let him see her shaken, have her think through the outcome in a way that makes it uncomfortable, ask about what the contract will do for them.
- If he offers to die out there, get angry. Make it surprising and fierce.
- She'd rather have him than some outcome.

ACT II Challenge Round Two

In Act II Scene II characters cannot use GEAR or KNOW remotely with coms. If they fix the coms they can use them remotely in Act III. If not, they're unable to use internal coms to split resources again.

Additionally, if there was a Catastrophe in Scene I, its challenge can be added to the challenges on the table. This may mean the characters have more things going on than they can possibly fix, and have to make hard choices that may kill them all. Such is life.

ACT II, SCENE II CHALLENGE: Broken Central Transport Rail

The Nav systems are up, the thrusters are working... and the system that ensures the reaction mass gets to the fusion core is down. Perfect.

The Central Transport Rail is a series of mag-lev (magnetic levitation) transports that run reaction mass to, and heat away from, the fusion core that powers all the thrusters (and most of the other power on the ship). It's not a complex system, but it is about 5km worth of heavy metal rails with magnetic repulsion systems that is critical to the ship when it starts or stops. Normally on a long flight it wouldn't be needed, as once you're at full burn you're good to go. But as you're way off course and need to burn to get back home... you need it.

And it looks like several sections of it are broken. Not just "not operating" but literally broken. At least two sections of rail, including part of the main trunk, are either cracked or outright fractured. That means at least 20 tons of inert metal that you're going to have to lift, align, and fuse back together. Multiple times. And after that check the systems to make sure everything is getting powered, and the shuttles work.

And yes, it is in vacuum. And yes, you'll be out there without coms, so if anything goes wrong, you're on your own.

HANDS: It's a MASSIVE huge amount of work with many elements that require huge personal brute force -- like wedging a 3 ton section of broken track in and holding it to place while you weld the heat resistant metal into something that will hold long enough to get you home. (**BRUTAL**)

KNOW: Someone will need enough science to check that the mag-lev is working once the trunks are fixed, but it's really just following the instructions and having some basic familiarity with magnetic repulsion systems. (**LIGHT**)

GEAR: A shuttle, welding gear, lifts, grapples, fusion cutters, and a lot of other heavy equipment are all going to have to be used in combination to make this one work. This is the kind of thing you normally would do only in port, with a big system of drydock tools supporting you. Doing it on the fly is... challenging. (**MODERATE**)

Elements

- The main trunk is a .75km long metal strut, about 4m thick, flat on top and round on bottom. It's broken right through where it passes along the center back of the frame.
- There are smaller trunks every .25 km, and one near the back of the frame is cracked, a long vertical crack along the length of the tube. It won't need to be lifted, but it will require a massive amount of welding to fix – and there isn't a lot of time to do it safely.
- All of the trunks are mostly exposed to vacuum, and a section of the cracked trunk is also in sunlight – which means hard radiation, blinding light, and that you have to work from inside a vehicle in short bursts to avoid getting burned.

ACT II, SCENE II CHALLENGE: Broken Central Transport Rail

The Numbers

HANDS: 7

KNOW: 2

GEAR: 4

Politics

- Has anyone been outside the ship more than once or twice? How do they feel about the fact that they're getting more and more radiation while others stay on the ship?
- Has anyone started changing their opinion about another character because they've had several exterior scenes together? Is Pup, for example, starting to prove herself? Is Diesel starting to catch on that Lug is sick?

ACT II, SCENE II CHALLENGE: Com Failure

Internal com systems have become unreliable or outright ceased working. This means that communication between different sections of the ship is impossible, and in many areas of the ship that are full of heavy metals, grinding machines, and the constant thrum of the mass reactors it's impossible to even communicate between two ends of the same room. Coms alone may not stop you from getting home, but not having them makes everything else you do before you go back to sleep more dangerous and more likely to fail.

Best get them up when you have time but nothing else is exploding. Remember though, until you get them back up you can't call for help, get advice, or get anyone to come get you if you get trapped. Coms are the thing that let other people hear you scream.

HANDS: There's just a lot of physical checking and grunt work -- lots of connections, points, and logs to check. If the Com is a single com gone off, it corrupts the rest of the system with junk data. The low tech explanation of this is that its roughly like a bad light in a string of Christmas tree lights -- one of them screws up every com down the line. Fixing this requires finding the junked com and turning it off. Problem is there are probably a hundred coms on the ship -- and there is no knowing which of them someone has left switched on in a box under a cabinet or some crap. **(MODERATE)**

KNOW: Internal systems have a lot of switches, fiddly bits, and advanced tech -- but fixing them is largely a matter of following the instructions, doing reboots. But if there is a short in the central system is off and you have to work one of the central junction boxes... that's complicated and requires computer systems to check the 175,000 lines of code, check systems, and background static reports to find out which of the 20,000 potential line problems is actually going wrong. **(SERIOUS)**

GEAR: Finding com units with scanners, running down code boxes with a butt set, laying new line and doing line traces require some specialized tools, but its not like working on the fusion core or anything stupid like that. **(MODERATE)**

Elements

- The com systems are in Lug, Pup, and Diesel's collars, on the inside of the ring that runs around the vac-suit.
- Mom, when in a suit, has a com that pins onto the suit's chest -- its one of the big signs that Mom isn't a worker.
- Doc has a self-made com unit that is actually partly under the skin behind Doc's ear. It can response to sub-vocalizations and is very sensitive and reliable -- but if something goes wrong with it, it's even harder to fix.
- A dead com unit is dangerous. A com unit on the fritz is both dangerous and distracting -- they tend to hiss, pop, and send out "ghost" messages that distract you with what sounds like someone talking, even though it's actually just random noise that your brain tries to make sense out of.

ACT II, SCENE II CHALLENGE: Com Failure

The Numbers

HANDS: 3

KNOW: 5

GEAR: 4

Politics

- While the coms are on the fritz, does one of the characters hear the ghost of someone lost – or far away at home – talking to them from out of the static?
- With coms down characters in scenes can talk shit about characters in other scenes without fear of being overheard. And they can't check each other's position – so play up the paranoia.
- Ask the other characters how they feel about Mom and Doc's special coms and the class stratification that represents.

FLOAT CHALLENGE: Fix the Sleep Pod Chemical Mixture

Can Only Come Up After Investigating Captain's Death

Oh hey, the Captain died because of a massive stroke caused by the chemicals in his hypersleep pod being mixed wrong. Aren't you glad you checked? Because now you have a chance to fix that before it kills you all.

This also raises the disturbing thought... the Captain was probably insane just before he died. Which means that many of the weird problems going wrong with the ship may be things he caused by accident. Or not by accident.

HANDS: Chemical canisters have to be moved, pulled, and reset, along with a good deal of fiddling, sealing tubes, and simple repeated tests. Still, it's not like it needs a forklift or anything. **(LIGHT)**

KNOW: The correct formula is a known quantity, so this is mostly just a matter of making sure you read it right, enter it right, and make sure the equipment is mixing it right and you're reading the tests right. It doesn't take a PhD or anything. Still... if you get even one of them one bit wrong everyone dies screaming and vomiting blood against the inside of their sleep pod. No pressure. **(LIGHT)**

GEAR: Chemical canisters, mixers, mass spectrometers, testing kits, tools and wrenches to move the canisters and hook and unhook the feeds to the sleep pods, welders to cut away and reset any bits that are jammed full of the poisoned mix, and full access to everyone's pod and the security systems that protect them. It's a lot of bits, but hopefully goes all by the numbers. **(MODERATE)**

Elements

- Who the hell sleeps with a stuffed animal?
- The pods are semi-reclined, in a chamber that's a lot like a low rent hostel, with giant enclosing tubes in place of beds. They also tend to smell like whoever sleeps in them. Very strongly like whoever sleeps in them.
- There's a narrow area recessed behind the Captain and Mom's pods that contains a lot of the mixture consoles, and it has a door that tends to jam.

FLOAT CHALLENGE: Fix the Sleep Pod Chemical Mixture

The Numbers

HANDS: 1

KNOW: 2

GEAR: 3

The Politics

- This task is perfect for Mom. But consider the timing between this scene and Mom's call from corporate carefully – how high is the pressure here? Get Mom to monologue about how he feels about the other characters, about having their lives in his hands.
- Do the others still trust Mom to fiddle around with their sleep pods? Bird in the ear to get folks to talk about their suspicions, if it feels right.
- Does anyone speculate about the Captain's last moments? About how much of what they're going through now could actually be the fault of leadership?
- How do they feel knowing that if someone screws up this challenge they could fix everything else and die in their sleep anyway?

Catastrophe Scenes

Set all so one character can do them, if the right character does it and uses their specialization

CATASTROPHE CHALLENGE: Medical Attention

For injuries, disagreements with Diesel and close encounters of the asteroid kind.

Medical Attention is automatically put on the table when a character loses all six of their non-specialized tags. The character is not dead until this catastrophe is failed or a decision is made at the top of Act III to not help the dying character.

HANDS: A lot of the medical tech on the ship is fire and forget. Put the cast on, hit a button. Put the needle in, hit a button. You need someone to hold stuff, but other than that, it's pretty low on the manual labor level. (**LIGHT**)

KNOW: There are a lot of different medicines, needles, radiation treatment kits, and so you have to have some training to use it. Still, it's not rocket science. (**LIGHT**)

TECH: Many of the supplies are under lock and key, and some of the scanners and diagnostic equipment requires special training to use. (**MODERATE**)

Elements

- Pursuing Medical Attention eats time and resources which are in short supply. Pursuing it means that pressure will be little harder for you from here on in.
- Medicine on the ship is pretty advanced, but it's not magic. You can't regenerate or automatically reset broken bones. There are good drugs and advanced polymer casts that can get you stabilized, but missing fingers, crushed bones, and ruptured lungs are still missing, crushed, and ruptured.
- When Medical Attention is given to a character they are saved, but not especially productive. Consider their contribution to be remote-only (if coms are up) and at +1 KNOW.

CATASTROPHE CHALLENGE: Medical Attention

The Numbers

HANDS: 1

KNOW: 2

GEAR: 3

Politics

- This is another perfect scene to involve Mom and get the characters talking about who they trust and how they feel about the Suit, and how the Suit feels about them
- Who really doesn't like Mom, but really needs Mom's help and how do they deal with that?
- Is there anyone Mom is reluctant to help?

Note: If characters pursue Medical Attention, add +1 to each: HANDS, KNOW, GEAT to the Big Push Challenge chosen.

CATASTROPHE CHALLENGE: Cut Off

[Music: DeVotchKa, *How it Ends*]

I don't want to die alone.

I don't want to die here, trapped and alone.

I can't breathe. I can't move. Not like this.

Please. Please someone... please come.

Not like this.

One of the characters is trapped – under a fallen beam, off tether floating into space, stuck between the hull and the superstructure, etc. They can't get themselves out. Will the team come for them, or is it going to cost too much time?

HANDS: There is a lot of weight to shift, a lot of pure grunt work to get everything up and out of the way and to do it without causing secondary cave-ins, shifting the load so it crushes the victim, etc.

(MODERATE)

KNOW: You're fucking space miners. Everyone knows how to do this. Even Pup. **(LIGHT)**

GEAR: You need hydraulic lifters, the jaws of life, and maybe some heavy lifting equipment. Almost everyone on the ship knows how to use this stuff. **(LIGHT)**

Elements

- Someone trapped in an isolated place, or outside the ship, may be running out of air. Can they keep their breathing slow and steady?
- Are coms back up? Can they even call for help? Or does the static and emptiness of space speak to them?
- When people start moving things – even when they do it right, even when they're careful – you can feel the load shift, feel the potential to have it come down and settle on your chest. To have it push down slow, and even, and inevitable as you lose the ability to breathe and die slow with your chest held down, your lungs empty, your eyes bugging out.

CATASTROPHE CHALLENGE: Cut Off

The Numbers

HANDS: 4 (lots of weight to shift)

KNOW: 1 (everyone on the ship has done this, even Pup)

GEAR: 2 (you need hydraulic lifters and the jaws of life)

Politics

- Who is trapped and how injured are they? If they're out of resources anyway... is it worth risking more lives to save them? Can you do the next challenge without them? Does objective thinking like that matter at all?
- Get someone who isn't directly involved to tell a story about a time when they were in a cave in, about how it felt, and about how someone else on the crew saved them.

ACT II Complications

For Act II we use this set of complications. Bigger emergencies can happen, but the biggest (and smallest) are yet to come!

<p>ACT II COMPLICATION:</p> <p>NULL - Nothing goes wrong. Who knew?</p>	<p>ACT II COMPLICATION:</p> <p>Human Error – one of the characters present makes an error. It may be due to stress, or ignorance, but it is a clear and obvious error of judgment or action. Have the player portray this, monologue how it happens. That character removes one of their stats from the total for the challenge, as they hurt the situation as much as they help.</p>
<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Malfunction</p> <p>Personal gear, life support, or other tools that you were using to the job break, misfire, or malfunction at the worst possible moment. Was it due to bad equipment being supplied, or you not taking proper care of your gear? +1 GEAR and +1 HANDS.</p>	<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Secondary System Failure</p> <p>A system that touches on the one you're working on suddenly cuts out for no good damn reason. Maybe you caused it, maybe it had been overcompensating and burnt out. Either way, you now have a new problem that might be worse than the first problem and have to figure out where it went wrong. +1 HANDS and +1 KNOW.</p>
<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Collapse / Cave In</p> <p>Something falls in or on one of the characters or their work area, or an airlock door closes and seals to cut them off. This does not affect the current challenge, but does trigger the CUT OFF Catastrophe, and that character is now trapped, alone, and unable to help in any other challenge until other characters mounts a rescue.</p>	<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Collapse / Cave In</p> <p>Something falls in or on one of the characters or their work area, or an airlock door closes and seals to cut them off. This does not affect the current challenge, but does trigger the CUT OFF Catastrophe, and that character is now trapped, alone, and unable to help in any other challenge until other characters mounts a rescue.</p>
<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Incorrect Sensor Readings</p> <p>One of the sensors or gauges used to complete the work was reading wrong, resulting in either too much or too little force being applied – or to trying to fix something that wasn't broken. Basically, you've been digging in the wrong spot, and have to figure out where to go before you accidentally make things worse. +1 KNOW and +1 GEAR.</p>	<p>ACT II COMPLICATION: Collapse / Cave In</p> <p>Something falls in or on one of the characters or their work area, or an airlock door closes and seals to cut them off. This does not affect the current challenge, but does trigger the CUT OFF Catastrophe, and that character is now trapped, alone, and unable to help in any other challenge until other characters mounts a rescue.</p>

ACT II COMPLICATION: Fire

Something strikes a spark and sets off a blaze, eating up oxygen, threatening to start an explosion, and threatening to burn the characters. In addition to the work they already had to do, they now have to waste time putting out the fire. Fire #1 adds +1 to HANDS and +1 to GEAR, Fire #2 adds +2 to HANDS.

ACT II COMPLICATION: Fire

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End of Act II and Personal Scene – Mom

[Music: Avicii, *Hey Brother*]

This scene ignites Mom’s character arc, and is also the Act II Pivot scene. It is the only place where the Corp is physically present in the story. Though sometimes the crew might feel that the Corp is malevolent and overtly evil, it should not be portrayed this way. The Corp is terrible in its absolute indifference to the lives of its employees. It is a cold, profit-oriented business, and it prioritizes the load above all else. It does not personally wish the crew harm, but considers resource loss (crew death) a negotiated factor of the crew’s contract. Employees on runs are well warned of the dangers in orientation. Their contracts are not negotiated under duress, and as long as the crew remains within contractual obligation parameters, their families are well paid for their losses – as per agreed terms.

The scene occurs in the Captain’s private quarter’s on a command uplink where Mom has been summoned. While other characters cannot hear the conversation, the players can – the scene is structurally transparent. The Corp should:

- Ask for a status report of the load’s safety – but not after the welfare of the crew.
- Praise Mom’s exemplary service in the wake of the Captain’s death.
- Remind Mom that in the absence of the Captain, he is accountable for the mission’s success and that if he does he will be rewarded – promotion, awards, cushy planet-side jobs – whatever you think would best motivate the Mom you’ve been watching.
- Warmly demonstrate confidence and surety in Mom’s abilities to get the job done. The Corp knows it gets better performance out of leaders when we show we believe in them.
- Ask about ways to contain the expenditure of non-essential resources like entertainment and housekeeping, and the rest of the crew’s life support systems. Suggest that reliance on them be reduced or eliminated to conserve vital resources to get the load home.
- Do not engage in moral philosophizing about Mom’s choice. This is a business venture, the corporate policies are clear, and they are sure that Mom is more than competent to do what is necessary to get the load – and himself, of course, home.

As a result of this scene, give the Complication card *Sabotage* that he can choose to use or not.

Note: If for some reason (e.g. Mom is dead, dying, being prevented or Cut Off) Mom is not physically and/or fictionally able to do this scene, feel free to do it as a flashback. Pick another crew member that finds or stumbles across the call log, and let them be actual witness to the recorded conversation after the fact. Mom still gets the ***Sabotage*** card, but if he chooses to use it, must describe what he did to sabotage the crew (in a fictionally appropriate way to the Challenge) before he was unable to pursue it.

Act III

Start Act III with a recap of where everyone is and what is going on.

Is anyone dying and needing medical attention?

Is anyone trapped in a cavein?

How have the challenges been going?

Make sure that the scattered elements of Act II are refocused, so everyone knows where they are and what the stakes are. Act III acts to bring everything together into one last push.

Act III: Challenges

In Act III there is only one set of challenges – and the crew will pursue only one of them. Each challenge does, however, have multiple sub-components, and all hands will be required on deck to get through them. Both options are seriously brutal.

If there are any Catastrophes on the table concerning crew members in trouble as a result of Act II (Cut Off, Medical Attention) the must decide now if they are going to pursue them. Doing so will cost them valuable time and resources – making the last challenge harder across the board (+1 difficulty to HANDS, KNOW & GEAR). You can go and rescue someone in a cave in – but is it worth it? Will what they have to contribute overcome the extra time pressure you've put on yourself by saving them?

Also, this is the scene where Mom and Pup are most likely to use their cards. Either way, this is the scene where both of them should be pushed to make their decision. When they do, put the camera, and the pressure, on them.

Personal Scene – Diesel

[Music: Rolling Stones, *Paint it Black*]

Among the catastrophe scenes, if any.

There is no one, no one in the whole universe who will pick up for Diesel.

And if there was, and they did, she'd probably end up waking up with cops putting cuffs on her.

Diesel has been going, racing, running... for almost as long as she can remember. Late in the last run, late in the shift while everyone else was out and Diesel and the Captain were relaxing with a bottle of something hard, the Captain asked Diesel a personal question -- something Cap almost never did.

"Are you running towards, or are you running away?"

She didn't explain what the question meant. But it stuck with Diesel.

How did it feel when that man's skull broke under her boot?

Did her mother throw her out, or did she leave? Does she even remember?

When was the first time she broke 180 kmph on a bike? 1000kmph in a jet?

Running towards or running away?

When the last girl left her, told her never to call her again, while she could still taste the blood in her mouth... was that the day she signed her life away? Did she get up and run?

Towards or away?

Get Diesel going. What's it like to run, run, run. To have no one. Nothing. No one that owns you, no one that owes you. No one to love you, no one to hate you. No one at all.

Personal Scene – Pup

[Music: Eminem, *Lose Yourself*]

Pup is a classic Hollywood insertion character. He doesn't know what the fuck is going on. He doesn't know how to fix it and he doesn't want to die before anybody ever noticed he was alive. This scene is about confusion, impotence and futility. It's about feeling a lack of meaning in a life full of struggle and work and wanting desperately to stand out and do something, be somebody, mean something. It's about coming face to face with your life and deciding once and for all **who you are going to be.... or not be.**

Are you going to die a hero or live an invisible life?

Pup's scene is a hotseat scene – transparent to the other players, but mostly in his head. It takes place in the crew's com room like Lug's and Doc's personal scene, but when he arrives, there's no one there to talk to him. While he was off living in HELL, the Corp managed to push his sister through, but she didn't wait around to talk to him, and left a fucking voice mail. He might die in the vacuum of space, and all he has left to say good bye to is a fucking recording about how everybody else is making it:

Voice Mail: “Hey, kid. We got a message that you were awake and might want to talk, but we'll have to catch you later, I guess... Mom really needed to get to the pharmacy. Donny's not back from his honeymoon. Chari moved out and got her own place. You know Jackie – always working – bastard just got promoted again! I don't remember when you're supposed to be back, but I hope you're not getting too much in the way, up there! Catch you later, kid, I've got to get to class – finals are just around the corner!”

After acting out the Voice Mail, get on him. We recommend getting up behind him as he's sitting down and using what has happened in the fiction to drill him. Has he fucked up? Did he fail to deliver? Are the others treating him like shit? Does anybody asking him what he thinks? Do they listen to his input? Do they even know he's here? What does being up here remind him of – is there a scene from his life planet side that sums it up?

Are you going to die up here? If you did, what will they say about you? What have you ever been?

Your clocks up, over.

*“Look, if you had one shot, or one opportunity
To seize everything you ever wanted. One moment
Would you capture it or just let it slip?”*

Reminder: After this scene, give Pup the Card: MOMENT OF TRUTH which he can choose to use, or not.

ACT III, BIG PUSH CHALLENGE: Jettison the Load

Fuck the Corp's profits. I'm not dying for those assholes!

It isn't a guarantee, but you'll have a better chance of getting home if you aren't carrying a massive load of ore. There are still a lot of other problems to fix, but if you can get that 10% on life do you really care if it's going to cost the Corp a billion dollars, probably get you thrown in jail, and may starve your family to death... wait... ?

There are actually two challenges in this: first you have to overcome the security systems and failsafe the Corp put in specifically to stop you from doing this shit, then you have to actually pull the pin and kick it free.

Doing this should make it more likely you can get the burn you need to make it home. Should. It's a marginal case though. But then, at this point, everything is a marginal case.

HANDS: There are dozens of points of connection, many of which will have to be burned or cut through, and all of which will require a lot of manpower just to reach – much less to actually burn through. Then you have to have the capacity to separate the damn thing... **(BRUTAL)**

KNOW: Cutting the right things in the right order and not making the ship rotate into the sun while you're out there, overcoming the corporate security controls, figuring out how to distract the automated turrets and keep them off of you... this is going to require a lot of math and a lot of timing. And more luck. **(BRUTAL)**

GEAR: Someone is going to need to be in the shuttle, multiple people are going to have to work to overcome the automated security systems, you'll need fusion cutters, and maybe the magnetic shovel could be used....this is going to take all the tech you can get your hands on **(BRUTAL)**

Elements

- So this isn't just as simple as pulling a pin. Besides the countermeasures, defense guns, etc, the layout of the ship itself makes it moderately difficult. The ship is like a tow that is built into a huge frame. The load is held in the frame. The frame and load are miles long, and unhooking the frame requires unhooking it at multiple points from the load, which requires work outside in vacuum, use of transport outside the ship or semi-outside (in the frame, but without life support) and is dangerous and takes time. The reason you would want to do this is that most of the thrusters are on the frame, not the tow or the load. So if you dump the load but keep the frame you keep most of your thrust but lose a lot of the mass you have to move. (Though this only matters when you're restarting the course and coming into orbit at the end -- once you're moving in space, you're moving. So how much ANY of this will help is slightly up to question.)
- The section that contains the crew, the tow, can be separated from the frame -- but not easily. It has to basically be hard ejected from the frame, and parts of it may need to be cut away with torches. Considering its reinforced blast steel that's designed to resist space and possible re-entry conditions, that takes time and tech. Even if it is successful, it means that the ship loses a lot of its thrusters and power. It will make it easier at the end of the trip to dock, and could allow a re-routing to multiple different locations, but it's a marginal case.

ACT III, BIG PUSH CHALLENGE: Jettison the Load

The Numbers

HANDS: 8

GEAR: 7

KNOW: 7

The Politics

- This one is simple – this is over one-hundred billion dollars down the toilet. You can bet the company will not forgive this. They may ruin your family, your life, everything. But you'll still have a life.
- Mom has the most to lose out of this one. Lug may as well, as if Lug makes sure the load is delivered and she dies ensuring it, at least her family gets a MASSIVE payout. Focus on them and let them speak.
- Everyone else may or may not want to do this. Push on Diesel, and give Diesel a chance to hurt someone if they don't go along.
- The crew can do this without Mom, if they get just a little luck. They probably cannot do this with Mom active and sabotaging them though. So... how do they deal with that. Feel free to mention that during the gut check.

ACT III, BIG PUSH CHALLENGE: Overclock the Fusion Core

The math is telling you that you need more burn than you've got to get back on track and get home, or at least to a place where you can be found. If you don't want to dump the load and ruin your life, should you survive, then you need to do something... crazy. Something extreme, at any rate.

It is possible to overclock your fusion core, to make it deliver 13% over maximum capacity. At least, you know that some military and science vessels have done that. But those were ships in good condition, with teams of technical and science specialists working on it. And much as Doc and Mom may have read the articles on the corp-net, that's not quite the same thing as going to the device that is basically the containment system for a small sun and turning its volume up to 11.

If you screw this up it will probably kill all of you, right now, in a giant ball of fire. But if it works you may, just may, get yourselves and the cargo all safely home.

HANDS: You have to gather your gear, your spare parts, and your materials. Then you'll need to jury-rig most of your gear. Then you'll need a couple of people outside, monitoring the core and checking the connections to the thrusters and other systems. You'll need a couple of people inside to do the computer work. And you'll need a couple of people to open the core up and do the hard, dangerous work inside the chamber itself. And yes, that means six people. And you don't have that -- so someone is going to have to do the work of two. Or more. (BRUTAL)

KNOW: The normal team that works on this system is 2 PhDs and 2 specialist technicians, and they usually have a backup team of safety workers and dock experts backing them up and giving them advice. Doc has probably read about how to do this. Once. Years ago. And you probably have schematics and a manual on the ship somewhere. That are probably out of date, in Arabic, with Chinese diagrams. But hey, don't let that stop you. All you have to understand is the nuclear physics of fusion reactions and how those interact with the propulsion system of an intersolar ship. (BRUTAL)

GEAR: There is a lot of specialized gear that is used to deal with fusion cores. And you just don't have it. So not only do you have to do all the work to overclock that monster, you have to use your current gear to jury rig the gear you need to do it. You'll have to use space suits in place of specialized radiation suits, which means altering them with extra radiation shielding -- without compromising their integrity or your ability to work in them. You'll have to modify your sensory gear and readers to monitor the internal state of the core rather than external radiation. You'll need to modify the lifters that are designed to rough handle ore to carefully handle fissionable material with precision. And you'll need to do it all in under 30 minutes, then execute the plan in under 15. (ARE YOU SERIOUS?)

Elements

- The core is a large chamber, almost the size of the rest of the tub, that sits behind the tug in the main junction of the frame. It's a triple hulled mass of high-grade alloys, cutting edge fusion reactors, and shielding that most folks on the ship like to pretend doesn't exist.
- There is room for two people inside the chamber, if barely. Inside it's lined with very dull looking sensors and shoots for tubes and sinks, none of which really look like they're the kind of thing that should generate the kind of energy that could blow up a small city. But they are.
- Unlike a lot of the systems on the ship, which are designed to be pretty generic and to be fixable by folks with generalist skills, almost every part of the core is sensitive and requires special tools. Working on it with normal tools is like trying to do surgery with a chainsaw.

ACT III, BIG PUSH CHALLENGE: Overclock the Fusion Core

The Numbers

HANDS: 8

KNOW: 8

GEAR: 9

The Politics

- This could kill you all. Not maybe you'll die on the long flight home. Like die in a ball of fire right here, right now. Why do it?
- What if the load goes fissionable? You could basically create a little sun right here – and that would kill any other ship flying through the region. You aren't just risking your own life, you're risking the lives of others you don't even know. Do you care?
- Do you honest to God think the corp is going to recognize this? The heroism? The potential sacrifice? All those promises... do they ever actually pan out?

ACT III Complications

For Act III we use this set of complications. A lot of things are going to ride on luck. A good pull may mean everyone makes it home. A bad pull may mean everyone dies before we even get to sleep.

<p>ACT III COMPLICATION: Asteroid Strike</p> <p>With everyone looking elsewhere no one sees the celestial object on collision course with the ship until it strikes. In addition to the collateral damage (which can spawn a new challenge) it causes massive trauma to the current challenge -- damaging people and gear as it is hurled about from the force of the impact, causing delicate or technical components to be damaged, and possibly causing objects to fall on characters and pin them. +3 HANDS and +1 GEAR</p>	<p>ACT III COMPLICATION: Automated System Counterwork</p> <p>One of the automated systems of the ship, which should have stopped this mess from happening in the first place, comes back online and starts undoing the work you're doing -- possibly while you're in the way, and it'll blow torch you as fast as it will a metal pipe. You have to override it and stop it from undoing your work or making it worse: +1 HANDS, +2 KNOW, +1 GEAR.</p>
<p>ACT III COMPLICATION: Major Malfunction</p> <p>Personal gear, life support, or other tools that you were using to the job break, misfire, or malfunction at the worst possible moment. Was it due to bad equipment being supplied, or you not taking proper care of your gear? +2 GEAR and +2 KNOW</p>	<p>ACT III COMPLICATION: Overload</p> <p>A part of the system you're working on overloads as it comes online, gets close to operational, or is powered up. It causes a rupture, a leak of plasma or oil, a venting of poison gasses, or a similar effect. You have to deal with the Hazmat in addition to fixing the rupture. +2 HANDS, +1 GEAR, +1 KNOW</p>
<p>PERSONAL COMPLICATION</p> <p>SABOTAGE: MOM ONLY. Mom describes / acts out how Mom sabotages a challenge (including the Last Push). Instead of adding Mom's stats to the overcome pool, Mom's stats are added to the challenge numbers. If there is a catastrophe and Mom is not present, it doesn't affect Mom. If Mom is present, it does. Don't blow yourself up Mom!</p> <p>SEPARATE FROM DECK</p>	<p>PERSONAL COMPLICATION</p> <p>MOMENT OF CHOICE: PUP ONLY. You can play this card at any time after the Director gives it to you, but only once and then it's gone. You can cancel out any complication card (including Sabotage), but only if you risk giving up your life. If you risk, flip a coin: heads you live but are maimed, tails you die. If you chose not to risk, the Catastrophe happens as normal but you take no consequences from it, and furthermore add +10% to your chance to live if you make it to sleep in the pods in the final scene. That's 10% to your personal chances ONLY, not to anyone else's. Fortune favors the coward.</p>

Final Scene: Back to the Sleep Pods

[Music: David Bowie, *Space Oddity*]

The final scene is simple. Time has elapsed... and it's time for those left alive to get back to hypersleep if they want any chance at all of surviving.

Start the music Get the players to physically go lie down in the place they started the game. Remind them:

Being in hypersleep isn't the same as sleeping in your bed back home. You don't curl up, quietly give yourself over to darkness and rise rested the next morning. You are pushed -- suddenly and violently -- into unconsciousness by the sleep pod.

You do dream, but the dreams don't come and go, they loop. You always dream of the last thing you were thinking about before the pod put you down.

Ask them one at a time:

"Mom/Lug/Pup/Diesel/Doc, what do you dream of all the way home?"

If they are dead, call to them to, but ask:

"Mom/Lug/Pup/Diesel/Doc, who dreams of you?"

END

If the players actually want to run the numbers, if they think their characters deserved it and that it does matter if they lived or died here's how you know:

Their chance of living is:

- 20%
- + 5% for every **successfully completed** challenge
- + 15% if they completed the Last Push successfully

If they must know if they lived or died, talk about why. Would the movie say? Does it make the story better or worse? Does the universe care?

If you decide to find out, it's a roll of the dice. If they roll under their percentage and they made it to hypersleep alive, then they make it back home.

(This can be done by the Director figuring this out while the players are lying down in their pods in the final scene. Run the numbers, then as they go to sleep have them go up and down a bit.)

CHARACTER PROFILES

Note: Any gender-specific language within the character profiles is entirely negotiable. Players of any gender can play any character; Characters can be freely adjusted to any gender in play. As well relationships in player’s backgrounds can be altered to fit any sexual orientation.

Use these short description cards to introduce the characters and have players choose, then hand out full profiles to appropriate players.

<p>“Mom” – The Suit</p> <p>Neither management nor crew, Mom is essentially corporate HR – The Suit. He looks after the needs of the crew, logistics, the med bay and has greatest access to the ship’s tech. He’s caught eternally between the rock of the Corp’s indifference and the hard place of the crew’s enmity.</p> <p>Mom craves acceptance and importance.</p>	<p>“Lug” - The Vet</p> <p>Lug is the vet after 20 years on the line to support her husband and kids. She’s the head of the dig crew: capable, powerful and level headed. She’s also dying of cancer.</p> <p>Lug craves family and survival.</p>
<p>“Pup” - The Rookie</p> <p>Pup, the Rookie is eager, naive and full of a light that the others have mostly lost. She’s good at putting her ego aside to get the shit work done. She’s a fast learner, but hasn’t figured out how to bury her fear.</p> <p>Pup craves becoming someone and finding a community.</p>	<p>“Diesel” – The Driver</p> <p>Diesel is the crew’s precision and endurance Driver. She’s a hard, cold, loner with a dark past. She’s got nothing to live for and nothing to die for.</p> <p>Diesel craves autonomy and freedom.</p>
<p>“Doc” - The Specialist</p> <p>Doc is the Specialist – the crew surveyor. He’s got more book smarts and big words that the rest of the crew, but that’s not really much of an advantage on this ship. He’s his family’s last best hope, and he’s letting them down day after day.</p> <p>Doc craves achievement and a life of his own.</p>	

“Mom” – The Suit

Background: You take care of the crew: head to foot, morning to night. You cook meals, do the laundry, manage logistics, patch wounds, perform the psych and med checks and write it all down for HR. You’ve cleaned up their shit and vomit, and been a shoulder for their tears and bitching. You’re a lifer. You have a wife and kids back home, but you’ve been divorced a long time, and it’s been ten years since you’ve seen them. The crew is your family now.

You know you’re as much of a grunt as the rest of them. But when the Corp’s orders come down they come through your mouth. You’re always stuck in the middle: they don’t treat you like you’re one of them, and the Corp holds you responsible when something goes wrong. Everything you do, you do for them, and one of these days some fucking gratitude might be fucking nice.

Internal struggle: Help the Crew or Serve the Corp?

Relationships:

- Even though Cap is actually in charge, he’s the hero while you’re the Corp. asshole.
- Lug asked you not to tell the Corp about her cancer – but you had to for her own good.
- Pup reminds you of the girl that used to be your daughter.
- Diesel has a violent past and you think she’s stealing from your commissary kit.
- Doc and you should be great friends.

Personal Scene:

Call from Corp: The corp calls Mom and asks him to reduce the ship’s dependence on life support resources (essentially by killing the crew) to ensure the safe return of the cargo, and Mom, of course. The Corp promises payment, promotion and a hero’s welcome. Mom gets the **Complication** card *Sabotage* that he can choose to use or not (Theme song: Avicii, *Hey, Brother*).

HANDS	KNOWING	KNOWING	TECH	TECH	TECH	+1 MEDICAL AID & INVESTIGATION
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“Lug” - The Vet

Nobody’s ever been as good at this job as you are. There’s a good reason for that; few have ever managed to put in so many hours on the deck, in the can and on the drill. You know how to hit the core, break a vein, and on the hazmat runs - how not to kill your crew.

Six runs in twenty years. In between them you’ve learned and relearned who your children are. The first few months home are always twitchy. You can’t take anyone so close up; they fight that you’ve been gone, and that you’re back home. But by the time the next run comes, the leaving could break you all. It’s a tradition now that you head out in the dark before dawn. You don’t look up at the faces sneaking glances out the dark window to watch you go. If you did, you couldn’t leave.

You have always known that your body is buying a life for your kids; this run there’s never been anything more true. According to Mom, this is your last run. After this, you’ll be going home to die – and if the tumours in your brain have anything to do with it, sooner than later. You need to retire or die in good standing with the company to make sure your benefits pay out and your kids can see adulthood.

Internal struggle: Family vs. survival

Relationships:

- Cap: One of the few bosses you’ve ever managed to like, you’ve shared long talks and midnight drinks.
- Mom: Asshole company man who can’t keep his mouth shut.
- Pup: Young, dumb, and full of spunk. Good kid.
- Diesel: Competent and keeps to self. Alright by me.
- Doc: A pompous asshole who thinks he’s smarter than you, and he’s wrong.

Personal Scene:

Call Home: When Lug manages to get a comm line home, her husband reminds her that the Corp’s life insurance payout when dying in defense of the run is fifty times the payout for cancer. He suggests that for the sake of the kids, maybe she shouldn’t make it home (Theme song: The Lumineers, *Ho Hey*).

HANDS	HANDS	HANDS	KNOWING	TECH	TECH	+1 WHEN WORKING W/HEAVY EQUIPMENT
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“Pup” - The Rookie

Background: You’ve always been the underdog. You were the youngest in your family and came out of a shitty quadrant of a shitty sector back home. You were last in your class, back of the line, bottom of the barrel. Your options were always limited but it got worse when your dad made you promise you wouldn’t work at the refinery. “You’re not much, my girl, but even you can do better,” he said, then coughed up blood and died two days later. So when the Corp recruited, you jumped on it.

Now you’re the rookie, you do the shit work. You shovel out the canisters, grease the rigs, and clear the way for Lug and Doc to get the precision work done. Sure, you’re still at the bottom and you’ve sold away three long years of your life, but the pay or the experience might be just enough to be something better. With no husband, no kids, no ties, you’re all in, and you’ve got three years to prove to these people that you’re more than everyone thinks you are. You always secretly hoped that you’d get a chance to show them what you’re worth, but the truth is, you’re not really sure what that is.

Internal struggle: Risky hero, or safe underdog

Relationships:

- Cap: Guts and glory. Everything you want to be.
- Mom keeps trying to help you out, but when you let him, the rest of the crew cuts you off.
- Lug: Hard core. Lug knows more about this job than you will ever know.
- Diesel: Scary intense and just... scary.
- Doc’s: Whip smart. He’s just like your sister and you want him to see you like she never did.

Personal Scene:

Pup goes into the comm. booth to talk to her family, but all she gets is a voice mail message from her sister. Afterwards, the Director puts Pup in the hotseat to bring Pup to her tipping point: Who are you? What are you good for? Are you all going to die here? Will they remember if you never come home? Pup gets the **Complication** card *Self Sacrifice* to use only if he chooses. (Theme song: Eminem, *Lose Yourself*).

HANDS	HANDS	KNOWING	KNOWING	TECH	TECH	+1 ANYTHING WITH A HIGHER STAT MENTOR
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“Diesel” – The Driver

Background: It’s you in the cab with nothing but the black expanse of the stars, and that’s the way you like it. You’re a precision and endurance driver. You can ferry resources – be it crew, haul or tools back and forth to the work site in the pod through a meteor storm, and you’re the only one besides the captain that’s capable of manually piloting the ship back home.

You’ve been working with the Corp for ten years now. You’re pretty damn sure that they know your papers are forged and that you’re wanted by Colony Police. You’re pretty sure they don’t care. You and the Corp have something in common: You do what you need to take care of your business, and fuck everybody else.

Internal struggle: To the bitter end, or bitter resignation?

Relationships:

- Cap ran interference with Corp a few years ago – one of the few folks in the world that you owe.
- If Mom asks about your past one more time, you’ll make him sorry.
- Lug does her job, I do mine – and never the two need cross.
- Pup who?
- You’ve seen Doc watching you – fucking quarantine rat might be looking to cash in on the warrant.

Diesel is: HANDS 3, KNOWing 2, GEAR 1, Specialty: +1 to all piloting and navigation challenges, Diesel breaks ties in fights in her side's favor

Personal Scene:

Instead of a call back home, the Director drives a blackbox scene in which the Diesel faces the reality that there is no one to call, and no one to care, and nothing to show for his life (Theme song: Mission of Burma, *That’s When I Reach for my Revolver*).

HANDS	HANDS	HANDS	KNOWING	KNOWING	TECH	+1 FOR PILOTING OR NAVIGATIONAL
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“Doc” - The Specialist

Background: When you were a kid in the quarantine camp, you knew you had a job. Your big sister’s job was to labour: scavenge, negotiate and break her back to bring to keep your family relatively safe and warm and fed. Your little brother’s job was to tend to your sick mother. Your job was to be the future. Read, learn, apply yourself, make it through school and eventually the misery will end. They had dreams of you being a scientist, a doctor, an advocate. You did your very best but there was always somebody better. You never really made it to the good life they wanted.

When you didn’t earn the scholarship you were aiming for, you signed on to an educational contract with the Corp. They paid your way through school, made you a surveyor and give you just enough of a yearly stipend to keep your family on the winning side of want. They own you – body and soul – for the next ten years, and it’s easier to hate them than hate yourself for not being good enough to be the future. You struggle to feel like part of the crew, and they struggle back. You think for a living, and they do – and there might as well be a quarantine fence between the two. But everybody’s got to live with the job they’re given.

Internal struggle: Trust your instincts, or trust the team?

Relationships:

- Cap’s a good enough lead: Clear expectations, good instincts.
- Mom doesn’t know that you’ve swiped the last bottle of whiskey out of his commissary kit.
- Lug does things by instinct that took you years to learn in school. You respect her, but she makes you feel keenly inadequate.
- Pup is a fuck-up. Earlier this year he cut a tether while on a run and nearly ended you.
- You keep finding yourself watching Diesel, and wanting something to happen.

Doc is: HANDS 1, KNOW, 3, GEAR 2, Specialty: +1 for engineering or mechanics tasks.

Personal Scene:

Come Home: When the Corp puts Doc’s mom through on the comm unit the Director puts pressure on Doc to fulfill his duty and be the future. If he offers to sacrifice himself for the payout she will be furious with him and demands he make it home (Theme song: 21 Pilots, *House of Gold*).

HANDS	KNOWING	KNOWING	KNOWING	TECH	TECH	+1 FOR ENGINEERING OR MECHANICAL
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SOUNDTRACK

The following recommended soundtrack has been made to highlight opening, closing and personal scenes. The Director can use them if desired and available.

1. Visualization Song (Yoko Kanno, *Space Lion*)
2. Opening song: (Eels or Dandy Warhols or Johnny Cash, *16 Tons*)
3. Mom's song: Avicii, *Hey, Brother*
4. Lug's song: The Lumineers, *Ho Hey*
5. Pup's song: Theme song: Eminem, *Lose Yourself*
6. Diesel's song: Theme song: Mission of Burma, *That's When I Reach for my Revolver*
7. Doc's song: 21 Pilots, *House of Gold*
8. Cave In song: DeVotchKa, *How it Ends* (if this catastrophe happens)
9. Back to Sleep: David Bowie, *Space Oddity*
10. Debrief: Dropkick Murphy's, *The Worker Song*

About the authors: Brand's great granduncle was a miner in Colorado rather than space. When the mine caved in, he died. Mo's grandfather was a miner in Northern Ontario. When his cave-in came, he survived 72 hours of total isolation... with a ruptured spleen and a broken back. These facts have nothing to do with a game about space-miners who find themselves cut off from the rest of humanity, trying to save themselves before time runs out.

Thanks to our Playtesters!

Dreamation: James Stuart, John Stavropoulos, Stras Acimovic, Mark Causey, Kira Magrann

DIRECTOR REFERENCE: Challenge Order Overview

Challenge Scenes

The Challenges are initially set like this:

Act I – With the Captain to Direct and Help

1. Repair IntSol – Get Computers Back to Operational

Things look bleak, many computer systems aren't working and IntSol is down. It's hard to even get a full sense of what is wrong, much less what caused it, so the Captain's first orders are to get systems back online so you can start running diagnostics and calling for help.

Act II – With the Captain Dead and the Characters making their own decisions

1. Get Nav Systems Back Online – Fix Thruster Damage – Investigate Captain's Death

With the Captain dead everything is going to hell. Even though the main computer systems are back up, the Navigation systems are screwed up, there has been damage to the thrusters that will require someone to go outside and fix them, and of course everyone may want to know why the Captain is dead.

2. Fix Central Rail – Internal Com's Down – Fix Sleep Pods (only if Captain's death investigation was successful) – Catastrophe Recovery Scene (if applicable)

This is where things get complicated. The characters may be dealing with potential fallout from previous challenges going to catastrophe (cave in, etc.), may be trying to fix their sleep pods, and as if that wasn't enough it turns out that not only were the thrusters damaged, but the rail feed system that should supply them with the reaction mass they need to get the ship back to full burn is down and will need to be fixed.

Note that in this scene characters can't use KNOW/TECH remotely until coms are back up. And if they don't get them back up, they can't do it in the final act either. This is the scene where the characters will have to make the hardest decisions in terms of tactical priority – with coms down and the potential to have up to four challenges on the table, it is very likely they will not be able to even attempt all the challenges, much less overcome them all.

Act III – The Big Push

1. Overclock Reactor – OR - Dump the Load

If things have gone badly, then the characters have to do something desperate to have a chance to live. If things have been going well, then they now find out they were worse than they thought, and they have to make a big push to have a chance to live. The Director will need to frame this scene to cohere the previous challenges. Things undone are the reason for the big push, as time is up. If nothing is undone (not likely, but not theoretically impossible) then this is the moment when the last big task reveals itself as the clock ticks down. Cut down the clutter and confusion of the previous scenes, put the emphasis on the choice, the interpersonal struggle, and the final push.

The characters have a huge choice to make – they either have to overclock the reactor core (which could blow them all to hell), or dump the load (in which case the Corp may kill them when they get home).

During the Command Deck scene of this phase everyone should know this is what's on the table. Every other challenge they've succeeded at, or failed at, will effect their survival. But this is the last one, the last big push. This challenge round is less likely to have as much tactical pressure as the end of act 2, but should be the one with the most character agenda pressure. This is the moment when the characters decide if they fight to stay alive, if they fight each other, if they give up their lives, and how they negotiate that with each other.

Challenge Process in Brief:

- 1) Set out cards, discuss what it looks like, set it up in the fiction
- 2) Have characters, **IC and through dialogue** and questions, assign their resources.
- 3) Gut Check (Thumbs up=surplus, thumb to side=just enough, thumbs down=deficit)
- 4) One chance to recalibrate then push them to go
- 5) Cross-cut scenes back and forth ad foreshadow complications.
- 6) If they still have the numbers make them show their success.
- 7) If they do not, let them scramble with specializations and support to make it up.
- 8) If they don't make it, people are injured to make up the difference.
- 9) Let the fiction move forward even if they fail.
- 10) Return to command, allow personal interaction & fallout!

Remember:

- Keep it visual and dynamic. Always ask: What do we see?
- Showcase the ship, the uncaring universe and who they are as people in it.
- Control pacing. Cut it like an action movie. Foreshadow Complications.