Shadows Over Sol

Quick-Start
Revised

Shadows Over Sol

Quick-Start Rules & "Memories" Scenario
Revised Edition

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Introduction

Two hundred years from now what should be the shining beacon of the future is instead cloaked in conspiracy and horror. Humankind has expanded throughout the solar system, and there discovered mysteries older than humanity.

The culture has shattered into myriad subcultures; nation-states are the hollow shells of what they once were. Corporations and other groups wage small-scale wars in the streets or in space. Bioengineered monstrosities left over from these conflicts stalk the hulls of ruined stations and abandoned colonies.

But for an enterprising team willing to brave the horrors, there's always a profit to be made.

Shadows Over Sol is a hard science fiction horror roleplaying game set in our own solar system two hundred years in the future. This Quick-Start booklet is intended as an introduction to the *Shadows Over Sol* setting and the *Saga Machine* rules—something a GM can run and try out before committing to the full game. It contains a brief overview of the *Shadows Over Sol* setting, a stripped-down version of the rules (as much as we could cram into a booklet this size) and a ready-to-run scenario. Everything you need to play the scenario is included, save for the players and a few decks of poker cards.

Contents

The first half of this Quick-Start is player-friendly. In fact, players are encouraged to read the "Dark Future" setting overview, as it will contribute to their understanding of the game world. Potential players of the included "Memories" scenario should not read anything from the beginning of that section onward, as it will spoil the plot twists and other surprises should they play.

This revised edition of the Quick-Start rules was funded by the Kickstarter for the *Shadows Over Sol: Siren's Call* campaign and sourcebook.

All that said, we hope you enjoy the game and support the full version of *Shadows Over Sol*.

What Is Saga Machine?

Saga Machine is the tabletop roleplaying system used by *Shadows Over Sol*, as well as *Against the Dark Yogi*, *Dime Adventures* and many of our upcoming games. It combines an exciting action mechanic with meaningful consequences.

The rules of every *Saga Machine* game are tailored for that particular game's genre and themes, adapting a solid core and bringing in custom-made supporting subsystems. This strikes a balance between the ease of going from one *Saga Machine* game to another and the rules being tailored to the genre.

Various incarnations of *Saga Machine*, including this one, have been released under the Open Game License (OGL) and are available for use in third-party games.

Dark Future

The future holds a million wonders and a million horrors. Two centuries from now, humankind has spread into space, taking our rivalries and struggles with us. We've conquered diseases but created others. We've built new electronic networks but let the old ties atrophy and die. With each new rise and fall, we keep changing.

Welcome to the Future

Don't try to get up. I've been told you're going to be too weak for that. I'm not a doctor, but take it from me that you have some recovery to go through. Don't worry, I know you're disoriented, but with all that's happened to you, that's only to be expected. Physically, you're going to be strapped to this bed for some time, but I'm more concerned about your social recovery.

As I said before, I'm not a doctor. I'm a historian. I've been told they found you frozen in your ship near one of the Lunar Lagrange points. According to our estimates, you've been in cryo almost two hundred years—since the early twenty-first century. It's now the early twenty-third century, and things are very different. They've called me in to help you adjust socially, as I specialize in understanding your era.

No, don't try to talk. Your tongue won't be fully working yet. Just lay back and let me try to fill you in on what you can expect from the brave new world. As I said before, many things have changed, and you're going to have to adapt to them quickly.

The Networked World

We're plugged in, turned on, networked and wired in a way we never were before. From toddlers, we tune into a world of instant access and far-ranging communication. We see into the lives of others; we read their blog posts, stalk their friends lists and comment on pictures of their breakfasts. Just this morning I had a conversation in a random-match chat room with a man from Brussels. We talked about education. But he's a Heed and had different views than I.

We may never see our neighbors. We may not even speak the same languages, though they live just a hab cell over. Through the miracle of telepresence, telecommunication and telecommuting technologies, physical location means less than it ever has. I have more in common with people of my subculture in Tokyo than I have with those down the street.

If there's a linchpin of our society, it's the net. It's how we structure our lives, track our friends, jack into the social networks and pass our free time. Some of us spend more of our waking life in simspaces than here in meatspace.

Splintering of the Culture

The thing about the net, though, is that it's easy to wall yourself off from the things you don't normally seek out. We all hit up our favorite news feeds, follow our favorite subcultural celebrities and cruise our favorite forums, but these are all places we self-select. They're likely to be places that feed back to us our own confirmation biases and that market to us our own subcultural trappings. This means the media I consume, and the lens through which I obtain information about happenings in the world may be radically different than what my neighbor sees. These sorts of differences divide the culture.

Often the places we visit on the net are the same sites or descendants of the same sites our parents were jacking into in their own youth. Sure, the generation gap may give rise to new forks of the profiles or new sub-forums, but views and habits tend to pass down through family lines. Over the last couple of centuries or so, the individual subcultures people live in have diverged so much they're becoming non-geographical cultures in their own right.

Language Shift

While nation-states may be on the downslide, languages remain as fractured as ever. However, due to the widespread use of real-time translation software, the language barrier—while still present—is less of a problem than ever before. Almost all net profiles have translators built in, and most anyone actively doing business across a language barrier usually has translation software running on their hand terminal. While these translations aren't perfect, the software is pretty good at what it does, and as long as a speaker avoids obscure euphemisms or slang, the point usually gets across.

Still, sometimes software or hardware malfunctions, information is lost in translation or you come across a speaker of a language for which you don't have software installed. In times like these, you must fall back to the old-fashioned methods of learning the language.

The ten most common languages today are English, Mandarin, Wu, Arabic, Spanish, Hindi, Russian, French, Portuguese and Bengali. Many hundreds of others are spoken as well, while many hundreds still have died off in the last two centuries. Generally speaking, Mandarin is the typical language of trade while French is used in diplomacy. English is typically used for scientific works, although much scientific terminology is still drawn from Latin.

To make matters more complicated, individual subcultures often have their own dialects of languages. How varied these are differs from subculture to subculture and language to language, but at their most extreme, two speakers of the same language from different subcultures can be almost incomprehensible to each other. Automated translation programs still mitigate this somewhat, but subcultural slang is typically handled less well than the more common baseline words of a language.

The Transient Population

I understand geographic location once meant something culturally. People broke themselves up into communities and post-tribal affiliations based on it—neighborhoods, cities, baronies, nation-states. I guess geographical location still means something today, if you're living in one of a handful of backwater undeveloped locales. But for the most part, more than two centuries of the net, migrations and telepresence has led geographic location to mean very little beyond what to wear when you're going outside.

With orbital flights that can take anyone anywhere on the planet within a few hours and high-speed long-distance communication systems that can let a user operate remotely from almost anywhere on the globe (and even from the far-flung reaches of the solar system, if one allows for a few minutes light lag), where one is physically located often means very little in determining one's opportunities. It also means very little in terms of what culture one absorbs. I might not speak the same language as my neighbors and that might have once posed practical problems. But no more.

It also means people don't feel as much of a connection to some particular geographic place or nation and are much more willing and able to move where the winds may take them. This has resulted in a population that is very transient and fairly spread out. One no longer looks to the cities for jobs, as many jobs can just as easily be worked remotely. Population centers have spread out. One can no longer look at a region and say that region has some sort of homogeneous culture.

Decline of Nation-States

Once, nation-states were the major actors on the world stage. The globe was neatly carved into its various geographical regions. Each region had its political leaders and most people lined up behind them, as if those invisible lines called borders were more than just a collective delusion.

Well, nation-states are still around, but they're now the washed-up has-beens of the world stage. The comparative meaninglessness of geographic location and the readiness of the population to move across borders had led to people not strongly identifying with nation-

states. Sure, most people are a citizen of one or another—sometimes three or four. I'm also a citizen in three MMOs (massively-multiplayer online games), but few people are going to fight and die over that—at least in meatspace.

Couple this decline of identification with nation-states along with the general gutting of direct public powers, and you get to where the world is now. Most people identify more with their subculture or corp than they do with that imaginary line they were born behind. A lot of people will keep the same citizenship their entire lives and not really think about it. Others will play the citizenship market, seeking the best tax-for-social-benefits deal available to them at the moment. They'll switch citizenships a thousand or more times in their lives.

I'm sure many nation-states familiar to you still exist and have long traditions behind them, but today they are mostly shells of their former selves. They still collect taxes from their citizens and persons operating in their territories. They still can employ military forces to protect their borders—although in practice that is mostly contracted out to private entities now. They provide some legal protections and they have a court system, although this is also frequently contracted out. Almost all other social services come from a person's employer or are privately purchased.

Corporate Rise

With the decline of nation-states, it was just a matter of time until something stepped up and filled the power vacuum. Subcultural and ideological groups did that to an extent, but the corps filled most of the vacuum. This was less of a revolution than a gradual handing off of power. Prisons handed off to corps. Schools handed off to corps. Retirement plans. Healthcare. Police forces. Road maintenance. Courts. The nation-states held onto their national armies for a long time, but eventually even those were handed over. In the last few decades, the corps have even been realizing they can skip the governmental middleman, and get people to pay them directly for those services.

The effects of the corporate rise manifest in many ways. Children are educated in corp schools, which take the opportunity to cross-market to them other products produced by that school's parent corp and business partners. Militaries are manned by contracted corp soldiers whose first loyalties are to their paychecks. Oftentimes contracts are subcontracted out several levels deep, leaving accountability behind in a trail of paperwork.

All this is doubly true in space. The corps funded most of the early space exploration, and the grasps of Earth governments were never very strong out in the void. Most corps in space have gotten used to operating as a law unto themselves, much like the British East India Company of old.

Crime & Punishment

Here's something you might soon find relevant: if you run afoul of the powers that be, punishments are rather different than they were in your time, especially out here in space. Don't look at me like that! This is serious!

The good news is that capital punishments are a lot more rare—at least for the sort of crimes where a trial actually occurs. Back on Earth, they'll mostly fine you or put you into stasis. Keeping a lot of criminals in stasis is expensive, but certainly less so than incarcerating them while awake for long periods of time. Fines tend to snowball indefinitely, and if you can't pay them, you're looking at a term of indenture.

Out here in space, though, things are a bit different. Living space and life support are at a premium. Fines are still common, but when they don't suffice as punishment, authorities look to exile or corporal punishment. Exile is exactly what it sounds like, and the convicted party may not have a lot of say in where they're sent. As for corporeal punishment, well, the removal of body parts is considered rather backward, but society has gotten rather good at inflicting large amounts of pain in a very cheap manner.

Crimes committed with the aid of implants will usually result in the forcible removal of those implants as part of the punishment. This is often accompanied by the offender being barred from legally obtaining any similar implant from the same colony in the future.

All About the Money

Okay, here's something that should be familiar to you: it's still all about the money. Everyone wants it. Everyone needs it. Most people don't have enough of it, and a few people have too much. Sound familiar? Good. Here's where things begin to change.

Most money in your time is backed by a nation-state. They print it. They try to control inflation. It's good as long as the nation-state remains solvent or at least until the political leaders change their minds. But money is a complicated fiction. It's valuable because people say it is; and because people treat it as valuable, it continues to stay that way. If one currency begins to tank, you trade it in for another currency—or at least you try, hoping that there is the available liquidity to do so.

Currency today is an even more complicated fiction. A few nation-states still issue their own money—usually in the form of bonds rather than physical currency, but most common notes are backed by corps. After all, they're the major players on the political block now. A few subcultures have even tried issuing their own voucher currency, but those haven't worked out so well.

The corps are where the money is at because they are where the employment is at. Every major corp has its own credit system used to pay its employees and many of its debts. This credit is redeemable at any corp-affiliated market. Naturally, a variety of exchanges exist to trade one type of credit for another. Most trades on these exchanges are made automatically, done in real-time with the swipe of a credit chip.

Money is rarely physical. It's mostly a series of bits sitting in various centralized accounts and transferred back and forth between computer systems as transactions take place. On a planetary network, this is almost instantaneous, but in space, these transactions require synchronizing with financial databases minutes away by broadcast.

It's different on Earth, but out here the de facto standard for currency is the Unitech microcredit. That's because of Unitech's commercial dominance in space.

Shiny New Toys

You are the third person we've resurrected from cryo. None were from as far in the past as you are, but each of them have seemed very interested in one particular question: what sort of shiny new toys do people have to play with now? That is, what new bounties has technology brought the world? Let's cover that.

I understand that in your time, the world was still undergoing a revolution in computing and networking power. Today those technologies are mature. We have basic microcomputers everywhere, in everything from toasters to clothing. Most of these machines are dumb—even by the standards of your time—but they network regularly with more powerful machines, and this makes for a good deal of intelligence. Shops can take digital inventories with the small computers in every product reporting their location. Refrigerators can provide alerts when staple foodstuffs get low. AIs can plan a person's evening wear from the chips in her wardrobe.

The biological sciences have also undergone a considerable revolution. Most of us have had our genomes sequenced before birth and have been screened for common genetic defects and developmental issues. Many, going on most, of us have also been genetically upgraded before birth for enhanced attractiveness, reflexes, durability or cognition. Out in space, upgrades tend towards not suffering bone degradation in microgravity, suffering less from radiation exposure or decreased life support requirements. These can be life-savers in the environments out here.

Where computers and cognition meet is the realm of augmented reality (AR). We're currently in the middle of an AR revolution, just as you were in the middle of a computing revolution in your time. Many of us have implanted AR interfaces or cheaper external interfaces. This lets us look out at the world and see it enhanced with tags and other metadata. I have an early AR interface model, and I no longer have to remember people's names most of the time—they just appear in my vision floating above their heads. I also no longer have to keep a tablet with notes. It's all in my head.

I don't have time to go into all the other technological advances, but they are many: thorium fission reactors, cloning, vat-meat, trans-genetic modifications, biological implants, tissue engineering, low-sapient AIs, asteroid mining and quantum encryption. It's all too much to name at once, and I have limited time.

A Final Word

Now pay very close attention: this is perhaps the single most important thing I have to say. I am not a doctor, and this is not a hospital. We are a resistance group based out of Mars. In a very short time—perhaps a few minutes now—Unitech troops will come bursting through that door, guns raised.

I'm going to be arrested, but I'm sure my ties at the university will pull me through. You, on the other hand, have no ties in this time. You have no electronic records. You have no established identity. In this pan-optic day-in-age, that is very rare. The troops are going to take you and they're going to ask a lot of questions. They will likely even lie to you and tell you many half-true stories about our time. Remember what I've told you. Remember that there are other points of view out there—in fact, many of them.

At some point in the future, we will contact you again. Don't worry, we have ways. Then we will come to collect on having revived you from your icy death.

Saga Machine

Shadows Over Sol makes use of the *Saga Machine* system, adapted and expanded to best fit the horror and science fiction genres. Whether it's a desperate struggle against a bioengineered monstrosity or breaking into a highly-guarded computer system to steal sinister corporate secrets—*Saga Machine* can handle it.

In this chapter, we present the core of the *Saga Machine* system—the basics everyone needs to know—followed by the health and combat systems. The full *Shadows Over Sol* game also includes systems for wealth, engineering, character creation and advancement, but these are outside the scope of this Quick-Start and the included scenario.

Overview

The core of *Saga Machine* really boils down to two components: actions and consequences.

The action mechanic is used to determine whether or not actions taken by a character are successful. To help resolve this, the system employs a standard deck of poker cards with the jokers left in. One such deck per player, plus one for the game master (GM), is recommended. The full *Shadows Over Sol* rulebook also includes an alternative system using dice.

The consequence mechanic, on the other hand, is used to represent the effect of actions on characters or the game world. This mechanic is used to model status effects as well as environmental circumstances, obstacles or benefits.

Actions

When resolving an action, the player whose character is performing the it will declare her intent to act, and the GM will then call for a card to be played. This is called a flip. The value of this card will be added to that character's relevant stat and/or skill, and this total value is compared to a target number (TN). If it's equal to or higher than the TN, the flip was a success. If it's lower than the TN, however, the flip was a failure. The GM then narrates the results of the action.

Stats

Every character has eight stats, each measuring the strength of a particular quality of the character. Whenever a character takes an action, one of these stats will be relevant. For example, should a character try to force open a jammed airlock door, the strength stat may be the relevant stat for that action. Often actions taken in this way will have other modifiers as well.

The eight stats break down into two categories—physical stats and mental stats. They are listed below:

Physical Stats	Mental Stats
Strength	Intelligence
Dexterity	Perception
Speed	Charisma
Endurance	Determination

Edge

Player characters (PCs), and possibly a few non-player characters (NPCs) as well, will have Edge. This trait represents the subtle advantages these characters have in the narrative, whether due to luck, good sense or simple self-preservation. Edge determines the number of cards the player draws at the beginning of each session.

Fractions & Rounding

Shadows Over Sol only makes use of whole numbers. If you ever encounter a fraction during the game—which usually happens as a result of halving a stat or similar score—always round it down. In this way 7 ½ becomes merely 7, 22.9 becomes a 22, etc.

Consequences

Actions will often result in consequences. Consequences are **Saga Machine**'s way of representing lasting effects in the system. These effects can be placed on either characters, places or the scene itself. For example, attacking another character may result in a "wound" consequence for the target, setting a forest on fire results in an "on fire" consequence for that forest, etc.

Consequences come in three parts: an effect, a duration and a severity. These tell what the consequence does, how long it lasts and how severe the effect is, respectively. All consequences have the same hierarchical set of severities:

Severity
Light
Moderate
Severe
Critical

Anthropocentrism

Most characters in **Shadows Over Sol** will be human. Humans are, after all, a dominant and prolific species. As such, the game mechanics assume a character has basic human capabilities unless a trait specifically indicates otherwise.

This means characters don't need special traits for basic human things, such as the ability to walk, talk or use opposable thumbs. They also don't need special traits for basic human weaknesses, such as having an off hand, the necessity of breathing or the need for regular sleep. Some characters may vary from human norms in all these ways, but when they do, character traits and basic common sense should indicate it.

Characters

Mechanically, all characters in **Shadows Over Sol** are comprised of four parts: an array of eight stats, some number of skills, a few traits and some derived scores. Each of these mechanical components of a character are described in detail below.

The Eight Stats

Shadows Over Sol divides up a character's capabilities into eight different ratings representing how good the character is at a broad class of actions. These ratings are called stats and are scored for human characters on a scale of 1 to 10. The higher the number, the better the character is at the category of actions. On this scale, a historical human with wild type genes—entirely average in all aspects—would be rated a 4 in each stat. Modern humans, on the other hand, with the ubiquitousness of basic genetic screening and upgrades, average around a 5 on this scale. The highest stat within human potential is 10, although nonhuman NPCs may go beyond this limit. Mechanically, these stats are used to help determine the success or failure of the character's actions.

The eight different stats are divided evenly into two groups: physical and mental. Physical stats represent some physical aspect of the character, while mental stats represent some mental aspect of the character. Every stat has an associated card suit, which is used in the action mechanic to determine a trump (see page 18). What each stat represents is described below.

♠ Strength (Str)

A character's strength is a measure of her muscle and physical power. It helps determine how much she can lift, how hard she can punch and what she can push around.

♥ Dexterity (Dex)

A character's dexterity is her coordination, flexibility, agility and balance. It helps determine her athletic ability, aim with a ranged weapon and manual dexterity.

♦ Speed (Spd)

A character's speed is a measure of how fast she moves, her reflexes, her reaction time and her ability to get out of the way when malicious people are trying to beat her head in.

♣ Endurance (End)

Endurance is a measure of a character's toughness, health, constitution and stamina. It helps a character resist disease, keep from losing consciousness from blood loss and keep from getting winded after a long jog.

♠ Intelligence (Int)

Intelligence is an indicator of how quick a character learns, how much she knows and what her capability is in terms of logical reasoning and deduction. Put simply, intelligence is used to know stuff and figure stuff out. Mechanically, any character with an intelligence of 1 or more is considered sentient.

♥ Perception (Per)

A character's perception is a measure of how alert she is, how good her senses are and how aware she is of the world around her. Perception also includes a component of her speed of thought.

♦ Charisma (Chr)

A character's charisma is her force of personality, presence, bearing, social skills and appearance all wrapped up into one. It's used when trying to make friends, influence others or strike a deal.

♣ Determination (Det)

Determination is a character's resolve, mental fortitude, willpower and grit. It's used when resisting fear or mental effects, pressing on despite the hopelessness of the situation or seeing things through to the bitter end.

Skills

The eight stats represent innate human capabilities—after all, everyone has some degree of strength, intelligence and perception. Skills, on the other hand, are the mechanical representation of capabilities that are learned.

When a character in *Shadows Over Sol* takes an action, the action might have a relevant skill as well as a relevant stat—this will likely be true for the majority of actions. When this is the case, the skill's value will add to the action as well as half the value of the stat (see the "Actions" section, page 17).

Skill Values

Some characters are more skilled than others. To represent this, skills are rated from 0 (unskilled) to 5 (world-class). In actions where a skill is relevant, this rating will add to the total, along with half the value of the relevant stat. The different skill values are described below:

Description	Value
No Training	0 (does not have skill)
Basic Proficiency	1
Skilled Amateur	2
Professional	3
Renowned Expert	4
World-class	5

Skill Experiences

Over the course of play, characters will gain experience using their skills. When a character gains an experience, she notes down what that experience is next to the skill in question. For example, experiences with the stealth skill might include "forest terrain," "crowds," "cover of darkness" or "hiding places."

When a character is using a skill, one of her experiences might be relevant to the action in question. Should she have an appropriate experience to call upon, her action will gain a +1 bonus. Only one experience may be called upon at a time in this way.

Skill	Skill	Skill	Skill	Skill
Athletics	Conspiracy	Guns	Melee	Program
Awareness	Crafts	Investigate	Naturalist	Socialize
Bio-Sci	Deception	Lib-Arts	Ordnance	Stealth
Bureaucrat	Empathy	Mechanic	Persuade	Thievery
Comp-Ops	Engineer	Medic	Phy-Sci	Vehicles

Skill Breakdown

There are twenty-five skills available in **Shadows Over Sol**. Above is a table of all skills, followed by brief descriptions of each.

- **Athletics:** The athletics skill covers any number of athletic activities—from climbing to jumping and from racing to tumbling. This skill includes both aerobic and anaerobic activities, as well as feats of strength—such as bending bars or power lifting. It also includes throwing weapons in a threatening manner.

- **Awareness:** Awareness is more than general perception. It is a skilled alertness regarding one's surroundings. Awareness covers noticing that someone is sneaking up on you. It also covers spotting someone in a crowd of people and recognizing a strange smell when entering a hab.

- **Bio-Sci:** This skill covers knowledge of the biological sciences, from bioengineering and genetics to physiological changes brought on by exposure to radiation or microgravity. This is the skill to use when diagnosing rare medical issues, understanding novel lifeforms or experimenting in laboratory conditions.

- **Bureaucrat:** Any sufficiently large organization has its ins and outs, its movers, its shakers and its paperwork. Those skilled in bureaucrat are adept in getting a feel for how this structure works in practice and in using it to their advantage. Additionally, the bureaucrat skill covers finding the right buyers or sellers, finding those that offer potentially questionable services and bartering the best deal.

- **Comp-Ops:** Comp-Ops is the skill for making basic use of computer software. It's used to filter through the net, to get an understanding of any given graphical user interface, to know common terminal commands and to make use of advanced software features.

- **Conspiracy:** Conspiracy is the skill of knowing information that others want suppressed, or at least knowing where to look to find such information. It also includes the ability to sift through the resulting conspiracy theories, separating the dross from the kernels of truth. Conspiracy is the skill of finding things that others don't want found.

- **Crafts:** The crafts skill covers the creation of art, crafts and simple devices with few-to-no moving parts. It can be used to create a realistic 3D rendering of a specific person, to carve a makeshift spear out of a plank of wood, to cook a tasty meal and to paint a masterpiece.

- **Deception:** The deception skill includes telling convincing lies, giving off inaccurate body language, pulling the wool over the eyes of others and disguising oneself as someone else. Additionally, deception is useful in gambling, acting and other pursuits that require making oneself difficult to read or which involve deceiving others.

- **Empathy:** Empathy is the skill used to read a person's body language and tone of voice. It's used to get an idea of a person's emotional state or to give some insight
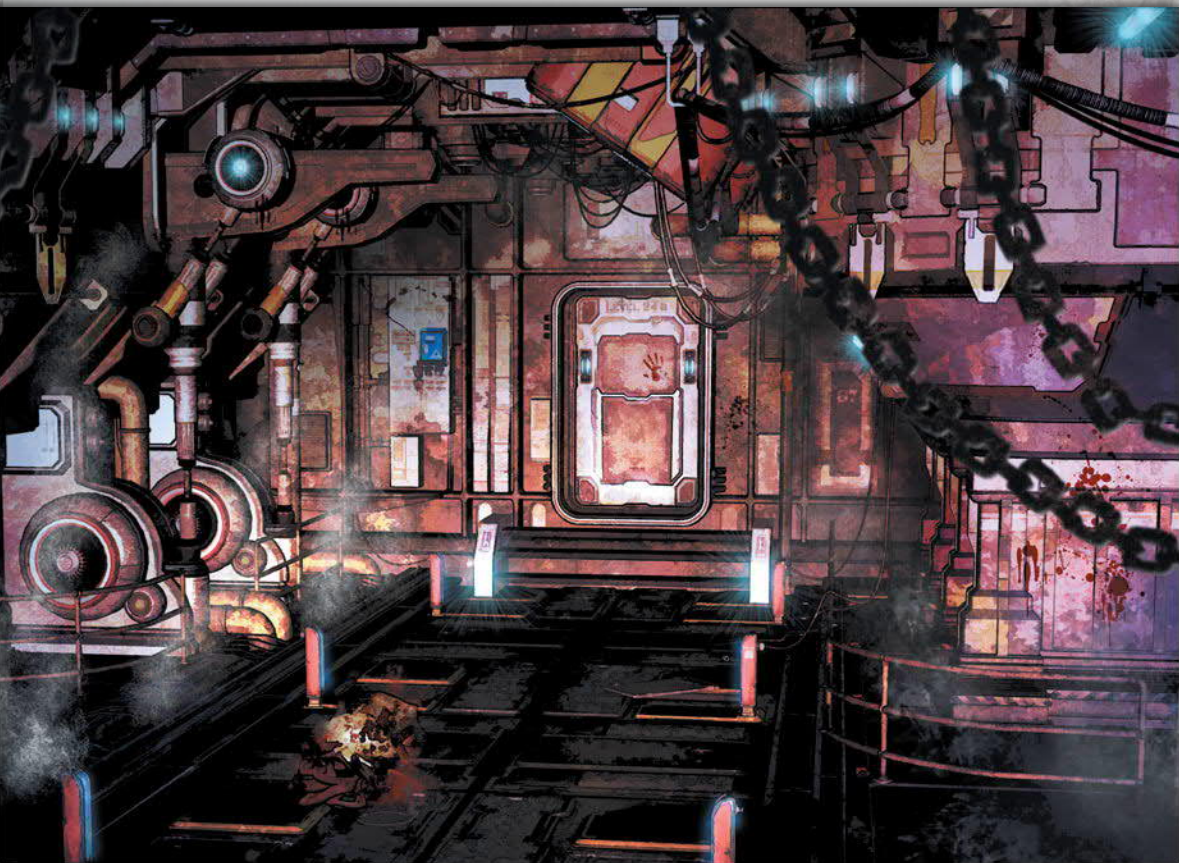
into their motivations. Empathy is not a lie-detector. It might let one know that another person seems nervous, but it wouldn't tell you they're nervous because of a specific lie or half-truth.

- **Engineer:** This skill is used to understand, design and modify electronic hardware, machinery and other complex contraptions. Engineer is useful when rerouting power on a ship, when making street modifications to firearms and when designing a custom hab complex.
- **Guns:** The guns skill covers firing, maintaining and operating any number of personal firearms and other projectile weapons, from lasers and slug throwers, to archaic bows and arrows.
- **Investigate:** Investigation is the art of looking into an unknown matter and trying to make sense of what's found, often by piecing together seemingly disparate clues. The investigate skill covers searching a particular area for evidence, as well as other aspects of investigation—such as questioning witnesses, checking the right sites on the net and asking the right questions.
- **Lib-Arts:** Lib-Arts is a broad skill covering a character's degree of education in the liberal arts and social sciences. It includes knowledge of history, geography, mathematics, the fine arts, economics and sociology.
- **Mechanic:** Mechanic is an applied skill covering the upkeep, repair and assembly of pretty much any mechanical system. Use it for repairing vehicular damage after a battle, maintenance to a ship's systems or assembling a new implant.
- **Medic:** This is the skill of applied medical knowledge. It's used to treat injuries and other medical conditions, take practical diagnoses, treat poisons, perform surgery, apply first aid and dress wounds.
- **Melee:** Melee is the skill used for hand-to-hand combat, street-fighting, wrestling, fencing and boxing, as well as any other activity that mimics close combat. Despite the prevalence of guns and other advanced weaponry, simple fistfights remain the most common type of violence in the solar system.

- **Naturalist:** The naturalist skill covers the ability to survive outside the bounds of civilization, as well as the applied knowledge of the local flora and fauna. It covers working with and training animals, as well as the practical knowledge of both what's edible and what's dangerous. It covers tracking and reading animal signs, as well as makeshift ways to gauge atmospheric pressure, composition and radiation.
- **Ordnance:** The ordnance skill is used to plant and disarm bombs, mines and other explosives, as well as to operate heavy vehicular or stationary weaponry. Use it to fire a ship's weapons, plant an explosive charge or call in aerial support
- **Persuade:** The persuade skill covers a variety of tactics to get other people to see things your way or to otherwise comply with your requests. It covers sweet-talking, formal diplomacy, browbeating, fast-talking and intimidation. It also covers knowing useful techniques in argument, as well as knowing the right social approach to use—from solid reasoning to subtle psychological tricks to seem more commanding.
- **Phy-Sci:** Phy-Sci covers knowledge of the physical sciences—from physics and chemistry, to geology and meteorology. Use it to understand orbital mechanics, test new chemical compounds, carbon date archeological relics or recognize different strata of rock.
- **Program:** The program skill is used to design, modify and create software. It is also used in computer hacking, cracking and attempting to get software to operate outside of its normal design parameters.
- **Socialize:** The socialize skill is all about being an enjoyable person and getting other people to like you. Those adept in socializing are the ones that other people want to talk to or be around. Use this skill to get a feel for the word on the street, to pick up rumors or recent memes, to put one's rivals at ease, to make a play at seduction or to distract others with small talk and other pleasantries. Additionally, this skill covers knowledge of the appropriate customs, slang, mores and etiquette.

- **Stealth:** The stealth skill covers hiding and generally sneaking around. It includes any aspect of remaining hidden, from fitting into small hiding spaces to tailing people without them noticing, from setting ambushes to sneaking by security.
- **Thievery:** Under the auspice of the thievery skill fall many simple but questionable proficiencies. This includes the ability to pick locks, larceny, breaking and entering, disabling simple security devices and picking pockets.
- **Vehicles:** This skill is used to operate any vehicle—whether in two or three dimensions—as well as to pilot a vacc suit around with thrusters. It includes the operation of spaceships, boats, groundcars, mag-trains helicopters and submarines.

Scores

Scores are the final mechanical component of a character. They include a variety of numerical values derived from a character's stats and used by the game's various systems.

- **Damage Reduction (DR):** This is the ability of a character to resist damage. It is usually granted by armor or nonhuman traits.
- **Defense:** This is the ability of a character to avoid being struck in combat. It consists of two values—the target number to hit the character and the target number to score a critical hit on the character.
- **Edge:** This is the number of cards drawn into the character's hand at the beginning of each session.
- **Shock:** This the damage value necessary to stun the character in combat and possibly upgrade the severity of wounds.
- **Wealth & Lifestyle:** These scores represent the character's wealth and resources. As these are largely outside the scope of the provided adventure, their rules systems have not been included with this Quick-Start. For now just use them as relative indicators of wealth and status.
- **Wound:** This is the total number of severities of wounds at which a character begins to risk death.

Actions

In order to determine the outcome of an action in **Shadows Over Sol**, a simple mechanic is used. The player taking the action makes a flip. That is, she plays a card and adds its value to the appropriate stat for the action. Then she adds any relevant modifiers and compares the result to a target number (TN). If the result is equal to or exceeds the TN, the action was a success. If it is lower than the TN, the action was a failure.

If it ever becomes necessary to know how much of a success or failure the action was, determine it by figuring out the magnitude of the effect (Mag). The magnitude is determined simply by calculating the difference between the TN and the total of the flip. So, for example, an action that got a total of 16 on a TN 10 flip succeeded with Mag 6, and an action that got a total of 9 on a TN 12 flip failed with Mag 3.

Expanding on this simple action mechanic, two variant types of actions will often come into play: group effort and opposed actions. We will now go over simple actions and these two variant types of actions in turn.

Simple Actions

Simple actions, the most common type of actions, are something of a building block other types of actions expand on. When a player takes a simple action, she makes a flip. That is, she plays a card, flipping it over and revealing which card it is. This card can either be from her hand or from the top of her deck. The value of this card is then determined, which may require turning over subsequent cards. These subsequent cards are always from the top of the deck and never from the player's hand.

Once a card has been played, the player does not draw again immediately. Instead, she simply has fewer cards in her hand. If she has no cards left in her hand and takes an action, she has no choice but to play off the top of the deck.

If no skill is involved with the action, the value of the card being played is added to the relevant stat. If a skill is involved, it's added to

Setting up the Deck

The *Saga Machine* action mechanic makes use of a standard deck of poker cards with both jokers left in. For ease of play, we recommend all players and the GM each have their own deck, although all players could share the same deck in a pinch.

At the beginning of every session, each player draws a hand of cards equal to her character's Edge (see page 20). The GM also gets a hand, although this hand is shared by all NPCs rather than being for a single character. The GM draws a number of cards equal to the number of players present at the session.

half the relevant stat and the relevant skill. Either way, this total is then compared to the TN.

Example: Argyro is making a "Dex/guns-10" flip. This action uses her Guns skill, is based off her Dexterity and has TN 10. She has Guns 3, Dexterity 4 and plays a card valued at 6. She adds the value of the card to half her Dexterity (half 4 is 2) and her Guns skill for a total of 11—a success. If how much she succeeded matters, she has Mag 1.

Card Types & Scoring

There are three types of cards found in the deck: value cards, face cards and jokers. Each is scored differently.

Value Cards

Value cards are the simplest to score. They are the cards marked two through ten, plus the ace, which is low and has a value of one. Whenever one of these cards is played, it is worth the value printed on the card. This gives value cards a nice even distribution between one and ten.

Face Cards

Face cards are the jack, queen and king. These cards are worth +1, +2 and +3, respectively. Whenever a face card is played, the next card on the top of the deck is flipped over

and placed on top of it. This is called a stack, and for most purposes in the game, a stack is treated as if it were a single card with the suit of the first (bottom) card of the stack. If the second card in the stack is also a face card, one does not flip over a third; there can be only two cards in a stack.

To determine the value of the stack, simply add the value of each card together. So a king (+3) and a 6 would have a value of 9. Or a queen (+2) and a jack (+1) would have value of 3.

Jokers

Jokers are both good and bad. Whenever they come up as part of a flip for any reason, the result of the action in question is always treated as a critical failure—that is, a failure with Mag 6.

The upside, however, is that after this action is resolved the player may refresh her hand. This means she may discard any cards from her hand she wishes and may then draw up to full Edge. If she's already at full Edge and does not discard any cards, she may instead simply draw a single card, putting her one over full Edge. After playing a joker, the player must always then shuffle her discard pile into her deck, including shuffling into the deck the joker she just played.

Trumps

Every stat has an associated trump suit. Whenever an action is taken and a card is played matching the stat's trump suit, the action is said to be trump. This increases the potential value for the action.

To determine which stat values correspond to which suits, see the table below. This information is also available on each character sheet.

When an action is trump, flip over the next card on the top of the deck and set it beside the card that was just played. If the suits match—that is, if they both are trump—add the value of the two cards together when resolving the action. If they don't match, simply pick one to take (usually the highest value of the two).

To clarify things, here are a few examples:

Strength 6
Athletics 3

Spades are trump!

Suits don't match:
Take highest!

Total 11

Example: A character with Strength 6 and Athletics 3 makes a flip. She plays the 5 of spades—a trump. She flips over the next card off the top of the deck: a 4 of hearts. Since the suits do not match, she takes the highest of the two (the 5 of spades) and adds it to half her Strength and her Athletics for a final total of 11.
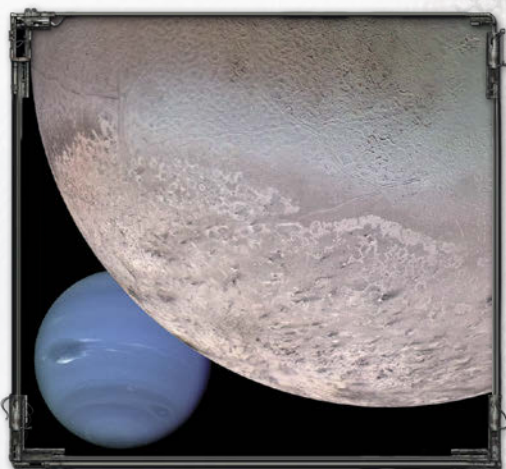
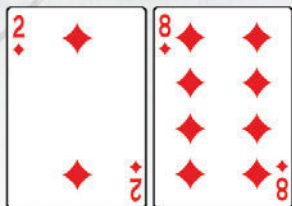| Stat	Suit	Stat	Suit
Strength	Spades (♠)	Intelligence	Spades (♠)
Dexterity	Hearts (♥)	Perception	Hearts (♥)
Speed	Diamonds (♦)	Charisma	Diamonds (♦)
Endurance	Clubs (♣)	Determination	Clubs (♣)

Speed 4

Diamonds are trump!

Suits match:
Add the values!

Total 14

Example: A character with Speed 4 makes an action. She plays the 2 of diamonds—a trump. She then flips over the next card: an 8 of diamonds. Since these suits match, she adds them together and then adds her Speed for a final total of 14.

Determination 7
Socialize 3

Clubs are trump!
King is a face card!

Only suit of first card in stack matters!

Suits don't match:
Take highest!

Total 16
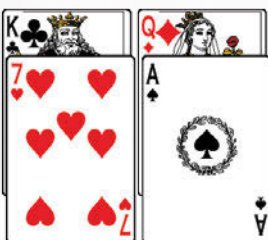
Example: A character with Determination 7 and Socialize 3 makes an action. She plays a king of clubs—a face card and a trump. First, she flips over the top card of the deck, a 7 of hearts, and plays it on top of the king, forming a stack. This stack has a value of 10. She then flips over the next card, due to the trump, and places it beside the first stack. This card is a queen of diamonds—also a face card. She then flips over yet another card, ace of spades, and places it on top of the queen forming a second stack, with a total of 3. The second stack's suit (diamonds) does not match the first, so she takes the higher of the two and adds it to half her Determination plus Socialize for a total value of 16.
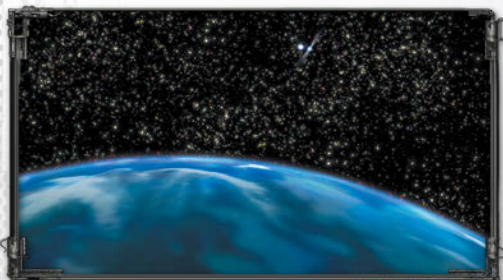
Target Numbers

The target number (TN) of an action is chosen by the GM; she may or may not decide to share it with the player making the action. The GM should ask herself: would the character know exactly how difficult this action is? The higher the target number, the more difficult the action will be and the greater the chance of failure. The following TNs below should be used as reasonable guidelines:

Difficulty	Target Number (TN)
Trivial	6
Easy	8
Average	10
Difficult	12
Daunting	14
Desperate	16
Absurd	18
Impossible	20

Group Effort

Sometimes multiple characters work together in an effort to accomplish a task, such as prying open a jammed airlock door or investigating a suspicious corp. In these situations, use the group effort rules to model this sort of cooperation.

For the action, one character is designated as the primary actor (usually the one accomplishing the bulk of the work) and the rest are designated as secondary. All involved characters then make a flip as if they were taking the action.

Every secondary character with a total less than the primary adds +1 to the action, while every secondary character with a total equal to or greater than the primary adds +2. Secondary characters who critically fail add -4. The total bonus from group effort can never exceed +4.

Example: Frida is trying to defuse a bomb and has her team of three other characters helping her out by running scans. Frida makes a Dex/ordnance flip and gets a total of 11. Her team also makes flips and gets 8, 9 and 15, which gives her group effort bonuses of +1, +1 and +2, respectively. This totals to +4, which is the maximum bonus possible from group effort.

Opposed Actions

Many times a character will want to attempt some action another character is actively trying to thwart. These are opposed actions. Examples of opposed actions include hiding from a stalking monstrosity or trying to win a formal debate.

There are two parties involved in opposed actions: the initiator (the party taking the action) and the target (the party opposing the action). To make matters potentially even more complex, opposed actions also could be group effort actions.

Mechanically, opposed actions work just like all the other types of actions with one exception: they do not have a fixed TN. Instead, the initiator's flip sets the target number for the target's flip to resist. Here's an example:

Example: Abebe is trying to sneak by a guard. This is a Dex/stealth vs. Per/awareness flip. Abebe—the initiator—makes his flip and gets a total of 14. This sets the target number for the guard to notice him. The guard then makes her flip to resist and gets a 12. She fails to notice Abebe sneaking by.

If the magnitude of an opposed action is needed, it can be found simply by taking the difference between the two totals. Since the initiator sets the TN for the target and a success is normally equal to or exceeding the TN, the target effectively wins ties.

Edge

All player characters—and occasionally non-player characters—have a score called Edge. This score represents the subtle advantages these characters have in the narrative: whether due to luck, good sense or simple self-preservation.

At the beginning of each session, the character's player draws a number of cards equal to her Edge score. The number of cards held is the character's current Edge, and it will fluctuate during the game, as cards are played or more cards drawn.

If a character spends an edge, this does not affect her permanent Edge score, it only affects her current Edge—the number of cards she holds in her hand. Similarly, if a character gains an Edge during play, she simply draws a card. This likewise does not affect her permanent Edge score.

Edge is gained when a Weakness trait affects a character in some significant way. It can also be awarded by the GM for actions that particularly fit the genre or enhance the game in other ways. Finally, a character may regain Edge when a joker comes out during play (see below).

Drawing the Joker

A player may never hold a joker in her hand as part of her Edge. Anytime a joker is drawn, she must immediately discard the joker as well as any other cards she wishes to discard. She then draws back up to full Edge, exactly as if a joker came out during play (see "Playing Jokers" below). All discarded cards are then shuffled into the deck, as normal.

Playing Jokers

Anytime a joker comes out during play, the action in question is an automatic critical failure, but the character's player also gets to refresh her Edge. This means she may discard any cards from her hand that she wishes and may then draw up to full Edge. If she's already at full Edge and does not discard any cards, she may instead simply draw a single card, putting her one over full Edge.

Anytime a joker comes out in this way, the player must at the end of the action immediately shuffle her discard pile into her deck. In this way, her deck will always have two jokers in it. Jokers never sit around in the discard pile.

Spending Edge

In *Shadows Over Sol*, Edge can be spent in three ways:

- **Play a Card:** When making an action, a player may play a card from her hand in place of the usual card from the top of the deck. This card may result in additional cards being played from the top of the deck, as per the usual rules for trumps.
- **Luck:** After an action has been declared but before a card has been played for it, the player in question can choose to discard a card in order to make the action automatically trump. When resolving the action, she flips over a second card and takes the highest of the two, exactly as with a normal trump. If the suits match, she adds together the value, as normal. The value of an edge card discarded in this manner does not matter.
- **Serendipity:** A player may discard a card to announce the existence of some small, convenient coincidence. A use in this manner must be accepted by the GM and may not derail or be detrimental to the game. Examples include declaring that the character remembered to bring some wire or declaring that a vehicle takes a couple tries to fully start at a particularly convenient moment.

GM Edge

In addition to the players, the GM has Edge of her own. This Edge represents not just the Edge a single character, but the Edge all minor NPCs collectively. At the beginning of a session, the GM draws a number of cards equal to the number of players present. She may spend the Edge for any of her NPCs, just as a player would spend Edge for her player character.

The Right Tool for the Job

Most actions benefit if the character has the right tool for the job. Not having the correct tool can make a task more difficult or even impossible. For example, it's a lot easier to pry open a crate if one has an appropriate tool, like a crowbar. Other tasks—such as programming a computer—are going to be impossible unless one has the right tool: a computer interface of some sort. Often these tools are going to be physical equipment. Other times they're going to be metaphorical tools, such as speaking the right language or being familiar with the right subculture.

Anytime a character tries to perform an action without an appropriate tool designed for the task, the action is at a -4 penalty, or at the GM's discretion, simply impossible.

A character who manages to scrounge up an improvised tool—one not designed for the task, but still capable—has the penalty lessened to a mere -2. For example, a chisel or tire iron might be used in place of the crowbar mentioned above.

Having the right tool for the job confers no penalty or bonus. This is the assumed norm, and the tools are said to be "sufficient."

Finally, some tools are of a superior quality for the task at hand. These tools provide a +2 bonus on the action in question.

Consequences

In the *Saga Machine* system, actions are just half the equation. The other half is consequences—the direct mechanical effects of a character's action. Consequences can represent many things: receiving a mortal wound, experiencing fatigue, being on fire, being broken, lusting after another character, being the life of the party, etc. They are as many and as varied as the actions characters can take. Furthermore, cleverly placed consequences can be exploited by crafty characters and made to be a significant mechanical boon.

What is a Consequence?

Consequences as a unified mechanic are a concept many role-playing games lack; nevertheless, they are quite simple. A consequence is simply the mechanical representation of a status effect upon a character or upon some part of the scene. Look at some example consequences in a little more detail below:

Example: Xuan is attacked by a group of hired thugs. He takes the action to dive for cover behind a crumbling brick facade. This action grants him the Cover consequence, which hinders the thugs' incoming attacks.

Example: Natasha is attending a fancy party of corp executives. Also in attendance is Juan, a member of the corp's board who tried to have her assassinated. She takes the action to gossip with the attending executives, undercutting his credibility and standing in the corp. This gives Juan the Humiliated consequence, penalizing his social actions.

Example: Ngunza is creeping quietly through the darkened corridors of an abandoned space station. Something else is out there in the station. It makes an eerie howling noise as the flickering lights of the station seem to make the shadows warp and twist across the walls. The thing's action—the howl—gives the station the Unsettling consequence, penalizing actions against fear.

The outcomes of all of these situations are consequences. Note that in all of these cases,

there is some clear benefit or hindrance to be had from the consequence of the action, although a consequence in some situations may provide both a benefit and a hindrance. This might potentially be exploitable by any party, friend or foe. Also note consequences can be applied either to characters themselves or to the scene around the character. Deciding which consequences apply to actions is a task performed by the GM, who takes into account a number of rules of thumb detailed below. Players are, however, free to declare their intent when taking such an action or to make suggestions.

Levels of Severity

Not all consequences are created equal; some outcomes obviously are more severe than others. Because of this, consequences come in four different levels of severity. Each level increases the severity of the effects of the consequence in question. The different levels of severity are as follows:

- **Light:** Light consequences are the least severe type of consequences. They are the small cuts and bruises, the single case of stuttering when delivering a speech or the minor misconception in understanding a complex story.
- **Moderate:** Moderate consequences are a bit more severe. They are the nasty gash dealt to one's arm, the insistent wavering of one's voice when making a speech or the flawed understanding that affects a minor but still significant part of a story.
- **Severe:** Severe consequences cannot be easily ignored. They are the profusely bleeding wound in one's stomach, the almost unintelligible speech being delivered or the deep-seated bias rendering the understanding of a story mostly useless.
- **Critical:** These consequences—critical consequences—are the most severe. They are the mortal wound, the passing out from hyperventilation during a speech or the flawed understanding of a story rendering it worse than useless.

Scene Consequences

The GM may want some scenes to begin with consequences already on them. In this manner, clever players can use these initial consequences to their benefit. These sorts of consequences are called "scene consequences" because they were placed on the scene before it began. Perhaps a scene already has the "noisy" consequence, applying a penalty to actions to socialize and applying a bonus to characters using the noise as a distraction when trying to use stealth. Maybe the scene has the "blood-splattered" consequence, forcing characters running through it to make an action against slipping in the fluid.

Scene consequences can be a useful tool for the GM to promote certain behaviors among characters in different scenes, as they provide characters with a reward for behaviors making use of the scene consequences. For example, a GM might want to promote caution in a scene by giving it a "danger lurking in every corner" consequence that makes ambushes or fear particularly easy.

Adjudicating Consequences

As a general rule of thumb, the better the success or failure of the action, the more severe the consequence produced by it. Start with a light consequence, and as the magnitude of success or failure increases, the severity of the consequence increases as well. Refer to the table below:

Consequence	Magnitude
Light	0
Moderate	2
Severe	4
Critical	6

This is not a hard and fast rule, and GMs should feel free to bend it when appropriate. Rather, it is a standard guideline for assigning a severity to consequences produced by an action.

Effects of Consequences

Consequences can have a variety of effects, and deciding upon an appropriate and balanced effect is something of a learning process. GMs should endeavor to make all consequences of a given severity roughly on par with each other, although there will always be a certain amount of wiggle room.

Nevertheless, it is good to have a few standards from which to judge the appropriateness of consequences. A "standard" consequence provides a modifier based on its severity to a class of actions where its application makes sense. For example, a "looking extraordinary" consequence might apply as a bonus to social actions but may also apply a penalty to actions to blend into a crowd. The standard modifier per severity for consequences is given below:

Consequence	Modifier
Light	±1
Moderate	±2
Severe	±3
Critical	±4

A list of common consequences used by various systems in *Shadows Over Sol* is provided on the next two pages, and may also be used as a benchmark when adjudicating consequences.

Duration of Consequences

Consequences don't usually stick around forever: wounds heal, people get over bad first impressions and structures on fire are either put out or burnt to the ground.

By default, consequences stick around either until the end of the scene or until an appropriate action is taken to make the consequence go away. The type of action that is appropriate, of course, will vary with the nature of the consequence. For example, an "on fire" consequence may go away once an action is taken to put out the fire, and a Stun consequence may go away once a character takes a moment to concentrate and gather her wits. Many consequences will have an obvious action that can be taken to bring them to an end; for other actions, the GM will have to make it clear. When deciding upon these, the GM should keep in mind game balance and common sense.

Some consequences, however, are lasting. These consequences stick around past the end of a scene and involve some more significant act to bring it to an end. Such consequences are usually special cases, such as the Wound consequence used by the combat system.

As a general rule of thumb, an action that causes a lasting consequence should cause a consequence one or more severities lower than it normally would. So, for example, an action that succeeds with Mag 6 would normally cause a critical consequence, but if the consequence is lasting, it might only cause a moderate consequence. In essence, severity is traded for duration.

Consequence List

The following is a list of common consequences used by the various subsystems in **Shadows Over Sol**. These consequences also can be used as benchmarks when assigning one's own consequences.

Bleeding

Physical ■ *Health* ■ *Lasting*

Effect: The character takes a wound equal to the severity of this consequence at the end of every round. This ignores DR.

Duration: Bleeding lasts until the character successfully receives first aid or dies.

The character is suffering from an ongoing source of damage. This is usually literal bleeding from open wounds, but it may also represent ongoing damage from maladies or environmental conditions.

Cover

Physical ■ *Circumstantial*

Effect: +1 per severity to Defense against attacks targeting a character through cover. If the cover bonus would make the difference between success or failure on an attack, the object providing cover is struck instead and takes the damage.

Duration: This lasts until an action is taken that negates the cover, such as moving to where the obstructing object does not provide cover or destroying the cover in an attack.

There is some physical object the character can get behind and use as cover against incoming attacks.

Dazed

Mental ■ *AP*

Effect: -1 per severity to all actions. At the beginning of a round, a character can, however, take one fewer AP to ignore this penalty for the round.

Duration: This lasts until a concentrate action is taken for the character to clear her head and remove this consequence.

The character's mind is cloudy and dazed. She is spacey and easily-distracted and finds it difficult to focus on the task at hand.

Fatigue

Physical ■ Lasting

Effect: -1 per severity to all Strength-, Dexterity-, Speed- and Endurance-based actions.

Duration: This lasts until the character gets a good night's rest and some relaxation, unaffected by the source of the fatigue.

The character has become fatigued and physically exhausted. This can be caused by stress, excessive physical activity, starvation or any number of reasons.

Fear

Mental ■ AP ■ Subject

Effect: The character cannot take an action that directly affects the subject or her fear or which moves her closer to the subject of her fear. At the beginning of a round, she may take one fewer AP in order to ignore this restriction for the round.

Duration: This lasts until a concentrate action is taken for the character to clear her head and remove this consequence.

Subject: When this consequence is gained, the character always has something of which she is afraid.

Something is making the character fearful. Her fearful reaction could run the gamut from solidly intimidated to sheer, mind-boggling terror.

Spin

Physical ■ Circumstantial

Effect: -1 per severity to all actions executed while spun. This penalty also applies to reactions such as dodge and zone of control. While spinning, aim actions cannot be taken, nor can most move actions.

Duration: This lasts until a move action is taken for the character to regain control of her position and movement.

The character or vehicle is moving in an uncontrolled fashion. For a character, light severity might represent being off-balance, and moderate might represent being knocked prone. Higher severities could represent uncontrolled spin in microgravity. For vehicles, this could represent spinning out in any number of fashions. Spin is both disorientating and makes performing many actions very difficult.

Stun

Mental

Effect: The character cannot execute actions other than to end this consequence. This includes an inability to take reactions, such as wait, zone of control or dodge.

Duration: This lasts until a concentrate action is taken for the character to clear her head and remove the consequence. Additionally, when any action cannot execute due to stun, the Stun consequence's severity is reduced by one. Finally, any AP left at the end of the round can also immediately be spent to reduce Stun one severity per AP spent in this way.

The character is stunned due to some effect—perhaps a sudden blow to the head, the concussive blast of an explosion or sudden shock and pain.

Wound

Physical ■ Health ■ Lasting

Effect: -1 per severity penalty to the character's next action this scene requiring a flip, or until the end consequence action is taken, whichever comes first. This may cause the character to go into her dying gasps or expire entirely (see page 27).

Duration: The penalty imposed by this consequence only applies to a single action. Wound consequences themselves, however, remain until healed (see page 27).

Dying hurts, and the character is one step closer to that final breath. She has received bodily damage of some kind—possibly from bullet wounds, blood loss or blunt trauma. Whatever the source of the wound, it will take time to heal.

Wounds and Health

Whenever a character takes significant injury, she will gain a Wound consequence (see page 25). This consequence represents the physical damage taken in the injury. These consequences work like other consequences—they are rated light to critical, they have an effect and they have a duration (see the healing rules on the next page).

Unlike many consequences, if a character would take a Wound consequence multiple times, the severities do not add together. Instead every Wound consequence is tracked separately. If a character takes a severe wound, and then takes a light wound, she now has two separate wounds—one at severe and one at light—not a combined Wound consequence at critical.

Wound consequences typically apply a penalty to the character's next flip—the sudden shock and pain of the injury—and afterward simply linger and count against the character's Wound threshold (see the next page).

Tracking Wounds

On the character sheet, one will note a series of boxes for tracking wounds. This is called the character's wound track. It will look something like this:

Light	-1	☐☐☐☐☐
Moderate	-2	☐☐☐☐☐
Severe	-3	☐☐☐☐☐
Critical	-4	☐☐☐☐☐

Whenever a character takes a Wound consequence, she simply checks off a box of the appropriate severity. If by some chance there are no more boxes available at that severity, draw some in or keep track with tally marks.

The numbers in the middle are the penalty given by that severity of wound and the severity count to add when comparing the total wounds to the character's Wound threshold.

Damage Ratings

Whenever a character takes damage, the damage being applied will have a rating that looks something like this: 4L, 12M, 17S or 8C. Every damage rating consists of two parts: a numerical value that will be compared to damage reduction (DR) and Shock threshold and a severity—L is for light, M is for moderate, S is for severe and C is for critical.

When the value is compared to DR and Shock threshold, it may result in the severity being increased or decreased (see below). For example, after comparison, a 16M wound may be staged up from moderate to severe, or it might be staged down from moderate to light. Wounds staged below light severity become trivial and do not result in a Wound consequence.

Wounds staged above critical will result in two wound consequences: one will be a critical wound, and the other will be a severity corresponding to the number of severities the wound was staged beyond critical. For example, a critical wound that is then staged up once will result in both a critical wound and a light wound. A critical wound that is staged up twice will result in both a critical wound and a moderate wound. This process continues as many times as the severity wound needs increased.

After the severity of the final wound is determined, the appropriate box (or boxes in the case of wounds staged above critical) are checked off the character's wound track.

Damage Reduction

Damage reduction (DR) is a certain resistance to damage: it is usually either innate or granted by equipment (such as armor). DR is tracked both on its own and as a bonus to a character's Shock threshold.

Whenever a character takes damage, the value of the damage is compared to the target's DR. If the value is less than her DR, its severity is decreased a step. Critical becomes severe, severe becomes moderate, moderate becomes light, light becomes nothing. If the value is below half the target's DR, no damage is dealt.

Some damage—such as from poison already in the character's system—will ignore

DR entirely. Do not compare this damage to the character's DR, and ignore the DRs bonus to the character's Shock threshold.

Shock Threshold

Whenever a character takes damage, its value is also compared to her Shock threshold. If the value is equal to or higher than her Shock, the severity is increased a step. If it's higher than twice her Shock it's increased two steps; higher than three times her Shock increases it three steps, etc.

In addition to increasing the severity of the wound, the target also increases her Stun consequence an equal number of severities. For example, if after comparison her wound would be increased two severities, her Stun consequence increases two seventies as well. If she did not already have the Stun consequence, she gains it at the indicated severity. For example, increasing two seventies severities from no Stun would result in a moderate Stun consequence.

Wound Threshold

Wounds can be fatal. To help determine when they are, every character has a Wound threshold. This is the point beyond which their wounds are not just horrific, but life threatening.

Each player should keep a count of the total number of wound severities her character has taken. Light is one severity, moderate is two, severe is three and critical is four. When this total reaches the character's Wound threshold, her combined wounds threaten death. She is said to be in her dying gasps (see below).

Dying Gasps

When a character's wound severity total equals or exceeds her Wound threshold, the character is said to be in her dying gasps.

When entering her dying gasps, she immediately increases her Bleeding consequence a severity. If she did not have the consequence, she instead gains it at light. Anytime she takes a wound in her dying gasps, her Bleeding consequence increases another severity, except wounds caused by the Bleeding consequence itself. This means if she is

not rapidly treated, her wounds will soon kill her. (For treating wounds, see below.)

If for some reason a character's wound severity total ever reaches twice her Wound threshold, she immediately expires, potentially skipping the dying gasps stage entirely.

Healing Wounds

Long-term healing is largely outside the scope of the scenario presented in this Quick-Start. The included scenario will likely be long over before natural healing kicks in. Nevertheless, first aid or some other form of improvised healing may come up.

First Aid

First aid can be used to patch up wounds shortly after they occur or to stop bleeding. First aid must take place within an hour of receiving a wound, and a character may only benefit from first aid once per set of wounds received.

To apply first aid, the healer should make a Dex/medic-10 flip. Apply the usual penalty if she does not have appropriate tools. On a success, she may either heal the patient for Mag light wounds or she may reduce a single wound a severity. Either way, she may also remove the patient's Bleeding consequence.

First aid typically takes 10 minutes to heal wounds or a round if only stopping the bleeding (see "First Aid in Combat" on page 32). Advanced equipment may reduce the time required. Applying first aid to oneself is more difficult and doubles the required time (increasing the required action points (AP) if in combat).

The "Not Until It's Over" Rule

Damage cannot be healed until what's causing it is no longer affecting the character. Bullet wounds cannot be healed until the bullets are removed. Damage from poison cannot be healed until the poison is out of the character's system. Damage from asphyxiation cannot be healed until the character is breathing once more. GMs and players should use common sense when tracking this. No amount of first aid is going to heal a person dying of starvation.

Combat

At some point, the shit will hit the fan. Guns will be drawn. Blood will be spilt. Someone will begin the age-old practice of making holes in other human beings until one party lays gurgling in their own blood and other bodily fluids, twitching and dreaming of all the birthdays they'll never have.

In the combat system, the action in the game world is broken down into 3-second increments of time called rounds. Every round, characters have the opportunity to declare actions, and later those actions are resolved. Actions declared in combat almost always require some number of action points (AP) to perform. At the beginning of each round, characters will gain a few AP, which over the course of the round can then be spent on actions or reactions.

Action Points (AP)

During combat characters will gain and spend action points (AP) to perform actions or make reactions. AP can be tracked using poker chips, glass beads or even tally marks on paper. Personally, we recommend physical tokens of some sort, as they gave a very clear tactile indicator of the number of AP each character possesses.

Unless something dictates otherwise, all characters will gain 3 AP at the beginning of every round. Some NPCs may have abilities that give them more or less, and being surprised at the beginning of combat may negate some or all AP the first round.

At the end of every round, all left over AP are discarded—that is, AP do not carry over from round to round. The next round then immediately begins and usual AP for the round is gained.

Starting a Combat

It's usually obvious when to bust out the combat system and begin to break the action down into rounds. Someone will draw a gun, a monstrosity will burst out of the shadows or someone will throw a punch. When the situation is in doubt, however, declaring the start of a combat is up to the GM.

Starting Conditions

At the beginning of combat, the GM should describe the scene and the relative positions of the different characters and should make sure each character has the appropriate number of AP to begin the round. Some characters may also begin the combat with consequences already on them—of particular note is Cover, although other lasting consequences such as Fatigue or Wound consequences will crop up frequently as well.

Surprise

Sometimes one party will attempt to ambush the other at the beginning of combat, catching them unaware. This is typically handled by making a Dex/stealth vs. Per/awareness flip. On a success, the surprised party each loses an AP for the first round of combat. They each lose 2 AP if the ambushers succeeded by Mag 5+. On subsequent rounds, they will gain AP as normal.

Rounds

In the combat system, the action in the game world is broken up into short 3-second increments of time called rounds. At the beginning of every round, all characters gain AP, and at the end of every round they discard any remaining AP.

Each round is broken down into four phases. In the first phase, players declare their actions for the round, and in the latter three phases, those actions are resolved. The four phases are as follows:

- **Declare Phase:** In this phase, all players declare their actions for the round. Only one action may be declared per phase. All declarations are made simultaneously. This includes declaring in which phase the action will take place.
- **Phase 3:** Actions declared in this phase cost 3 AP.
- **Phase 2:** Actions declared in this phase cost 2 AP.
- **Phase 1:** Actions declared in this phase cost 1 AP.

Declaring Actions

All actions for each round are chosen in the declare phase. These declarations must include the phase the action will be resolved in, what action the character is taking, as well as the action's targets and any other options that must be chosen before any associated flip.

All actions by all combatants are declared simultaneously. It is recommended for GMs to have sticky notes, index cards, scraps of paper or some other mechanism where players can write down their actions and hand them in at the end of the declare phase.

The AP to perform an action is spent when the action is declared. A character may declare multiple actions in the same round, but she must have enough AP and may only declare one action per phase.

Any remaining AP not spent on declared actions can be kept for use in reactions, such as the dodge reaction. Reactions do not need to be chosen in the declare phase; the player simply decides not to spend AP, and declares the reaction when its trigger occurs during one of the later phases.

The three resolution phases count down—3, 2, 1. Actions declared each phase will have an AP cost equal to the phase's number. That is, declaring an action in an earlier phase costs more than declaring an action in a later phase. This represents taking committed, decisive action versus a wait-and-see approach.

In their descriptions, some actions will say that they cost "at least 1 AP," "at least 2 AP" or "at least 3 AP." These actions require more commitment and must be declared in a phase requiring at least that many AP. For example, an action requiring "at least 2 AP" cannot be declared during Phase 1. It may only be declared during Phase 2 or 3, and costs the usual amount for the phase in which it is declared.

Resolving Actions

When resolving actions, the GM first resolves all actions in Phase 3, then all actions in Phase 2 and then all actions in Phase 1.

The actions in each phase occur simultaneously. An action being resolved in a particular phase doesn't occur before any other action in the same phase. For example, two combatants shooting each other in the same phase both get their shots off, even if both immediately die from the wounds suffered.

The phase into which an action is resolved may have an effect on the action. For example, aim actions resolved in phase 2 provide a greater bonus than those resolved in phase 1. For specifics, see the descriptions of individual actions.

Sometimes the events of a phase will render an action impossible to perform by the time its resolution comes up in the next phase. When this situation occurs, the player who declared the action may want to cancel it. Regardless, because the action is impossible to perform, it does not occur.

Regardless of the phase, an action is resolved in, all actions fall into one of four basic categories: interact, move, concentrate or attack. Which category an actions falls into may determine how it is affected by certain consequences or options.

Canceling Actions

At any time before its phase begins, a player may choose to cancel one of her declared actions. When she does this, the canceled action does not occur. While this does not gain her any of her AP back, it does prevent her from performing action that she no longer wishes to execute.

Reactions

A few special reactions exist which can be triggered by another character's action. When a trigger occurs, a character may immediately declare and resolve the reaction. Unless specified otherwise, all reactions cost 1 AP. The most common reactions is dodge. It is triggered by being attacked and is described in the attack section (see page 31).

Defense

The aim of combat is to snuff out another person's life or at least to inflict upon them terrible bodily injury. To do this, one typically must first not die in the process, which means avoiding terrible bodily injury oneself.

This is where a character's Defense score comes in. It is a measure of how difficult she is to hit in combat and how difficult it is to hit her well. Mechanically, a character's Defense is actually two numbers: one representing the TN to hit the character and the other representing the TN to critically hit the character. This score is written with a slash separating the two numbers. Elsewhere in the combat system, these are referred to as a "hit" and as a "critical hit," respectively.

Defense Modifiers

Many consequences or other situations can give a modifier to a character's Defense score. When a modifier is given to defense, it applies to both numbers. For example, if a character with Defense 7/15 gains a +3 modifier, her effective Defense with the modifier is 10/18.

Dodge

Anytime an attack is made against a character's Defense she may respond by attempting a dodge reaction. As with all reactions, this requires spending an AP. A character may only declare a dodge reaction if she is aware of the attack—that is, she cannot dodge attacks she doesn't see coming. The effect of taking a dodge reaction varies depending on whether the character is being attacked in melee or whether she is being attacked at range.

A character being attacked at range can use the reaction to make the best of her available cover. When the dodge reaction is made, she doubles the bonus it applies to her Defense score.

On the other hand, a character being attacked in melee—regardless of whether the attack itself is with a melee weapon or a ranged weapon—has another option. She may either double her cover (as with being attacked at range) or she may apply her melee skill as a bonus to her Defense.

Example: Sanja is being attacked. Her Defense is 7/15, and the attack action then achieves a total of 17. Normally this would be enough for a critical hit, but Sanja really can't afford to take a critical wound now. She declares a dodge reaction and spends an AP. Since she is being attacked in melee, she has two options: she can either double her cover (moderate, doubled to a +4 bonus) or she may use her melee skill (for a total of +1). She opts to double her cover, giving her an effective Defense of 11/19. This means the attack is still a hit, but it's not a critical hit.

Attack Actions

Ultimately combat is about violence, and some of the most common actions are likely to be attacks. In any attack, the aggressor picks a target and then tries to harm or hinder her in some way. When making an attack, there are a number of attack options and other situations to consider. These are detailed below.

Basic Attack

Broadly speaking, attacks break down into two categories: attacks in melee (hand-to-hand combat) and attacks at range. Melee attacks are Dex/melee vs. Defense flips. Using a gun or other ranged projectile is a Dex/guns vs. Defense flip. Throwing an object as an attack is a Dex/athletics vs. Defense flip.

When making an attack, the attacker makes her flip and compares the result against the target's Defense. If she hits the first Defense number, she scores a hit. If she hits the second Defense number she scores a critical hit. Should she score a critical hit, she will have a number of critical hit options after damage is dealt (see Critical Hits on the next page).

With either a hit or critical hit, the attacker typically gets to deal damage to her target. Every weapon should have a series of four damage ratings, each corresponding to one of the four card suits. Look up the damage corresponding to the suit of the card played for the attack. If multiple cards are involved in the attack, use the same suit that determines if the action was trump. The target takes this amount of damage (see "Damage Ratings," page 26).

Dodge (Reaction)

When subject to an attack, the target may opt to make a dodge reaction. Dodging typically either doubles the character's Cover bonus to Defense or in melee it may add her melee skill to Defense.

Improvised Weapons

Sometimes a character may be caught without a weapon at hand and will want to fight with the objects around her. Treat these as improvised tools (-2 to attack), but the damage is typically more than an unarmed attack—usually increasing the severity of the damage from light to moderate. The GM should use her discretion here.

Line of Fire

Missed shots still kill! Anytime one is making a ranged attack where there are other targets in the line of fire, one of them may still be hit on a miss. This is also true for sensitive equipment or anything else of narrative importance that might be damaged by a missed shot.

This rule is intended to heighten the danger of firing into groups or around sensitive areas. When it's important, on a miss the GM should draw a card. If it's a red 5 or less (count aces as 1s), someone or something important was hit. Determine this randomly. If firing at someone in a zone of control or with autofire, someone is hit with any red card. In either case, pulling a joker means a critical hit.

Range

Ranged attacks have the Range property followed by a value—for example, Range 10. Targets within this number of meters are at short range. There is no range penalty to attack them. Targets further away than this suffer a -1 range penalty for every multiple of this number that they are further away.

Unarmed Attacks

Sometimes a character is caught without a weapon and must fight with her bare hands. Using one's fists against an opponent armed with a melee weapon counts as improvised tools (-2 on the attack). Don't bring only your fists to a knife fight. Unarmed attacks are listed for each player character in the included scenario, for ease of reference.

Critical Hits

When an attack meets or exceeds the target's second Defense number, it deals a critical hit. Not only does the attack deal the usual damage or effect, but the attacker may also choose a critical effect to apply to the target. Some attack options restrict the critical effects that may be chosen, such as area attacks, which only allow the knockback critical effect. The different effects are described below.

Dazing Hit

The attack not only injures the target, but also causes the target extra pain or distraction, leaving her mind fuzzy. With this critical effect, the target's Dazed consequence increases a severity.

Disarm

This attack forces the target to drop her weapon—usually because it hit her arm or the weapon itself. Once dropped the weapon lands on the ground a meter or two away from the target. With a disarm, the attacker may choose not to deal the usual damage.

Knockback

This attack either makes the target off-balance or knocks her down entirely. This can be achieved by bodily knocking her to the ground, shooting her leg or any other number of methods. She gains the Spin (light) consequence or the Spin (moderate) consequence if the attack reached her Shock threshold.

Lingering Injury

When this critical effect is selected have the GM draw a card. The GM should then look up the injurious effect for the card on the Lingering Injury table and apply to it to the target (see page 33). This table is an abbreviated

version of the full tables in the core **Shadows Over Sol** game. Depending on the nature of the attack and the surrounding environment, some results may require a bit of creative interpretation. Use common sense.

Unless specified otherwise, all effects applied below are special Lingering Injury consequences with a severity and duration as described in the text. Many durations last until regrowth therapy or until surgery is performed. This is beyond the scope of the included scenario.

Vital Hit

A vital hit has struck some particularly vital part of the target's anatomy, such as the head or near important organs. Double the damage rating dealt by the attack. This has no effect on the damage's severity, but severity may still be staged up when compared to the target's Shock threshold, as normal. This critical effect may only be chosen for attacks that normally deal damage.

Other Actions

Below are a variety of other actions that characters may want to perform during combat.

Aim

With an aim action a character may take a moment to apply some extra focus and attention when lining up an attack. When this action is taken the character must specify the target, who must be visible. Every AP spent on the aim provides a +2 bonus to her next attack against the target, to a maximum bonus equal to the character's Perception. This bonus can carry over round to round, but the character's aim is broken if she takes any action other than to continue to aim at the target, if she gains the Spin consequence or if she makes a dodge against a different target.

Drawing or Reloading

Drawing a weapon or reloading one is a simple action that involves taking a weapon out or putting ammunition into one. This costs at least 1 AP if the weapon or magazine is in a holster or other easy-to-access position. It costs at least 2 AP

if it is harder to reach, such as stowed at the top of a pack or tucked inside one's boot. Some weapons may have longer reload times, requiring more AP. This will be noted in the weapon's properties.

End Consequence

Many consequences list their duration as lasting until a concentrate action is taken to end them. These consequences mostly represent mental states or afflictions of some kind. To bring one or more of these consequences to an end, the character simply needs to take a moment to clear her head and get herself under control. To do this she takes the End Consequence action and spends the necessary AP. For every AP she spends she may remove a severity of one of these consequences. Removing the last severity of a consequence removes the consequence entirely. She may divide the AP between all relevant consequences as she sees fit.

First Aid In Combat

To apply first aid in combat the healer should make a Dex/medic-10 flip. This benefits from having the appropriate tools (see page 21). On a success she may remove the patient's Bleeding consequence. A medic may not remove Wound consequences in the span of a combat round unless she has gear specifically capable of this (healing wounds normally takes 10 minutes, see page 27). Performing first aid in combat requires at least 1 AP, or at least 2 AP if performing it on oneself.

Move

The most basic form of movement is running or walking from one position to another. Doing this costs at least 1 AP per bout of movement, and the exact distances can be thought of as "1 AP of movement," "2 AP of movement," etc.

There are times, however, when exact measurements are necessary. During these times assume a character can move the average of her Spd and End in meters per AP spent if running, or half that distance if walking. This distance may be adjusted downward if the character is facing difficult terrain or other obstacles.

Value	Lingering Injury
Ace	**Winded:** The blow knocks the wind out of you. You gain 1 fewer AP next round. *Severity:* Light. *Duration:* Until the end of next round.
2	**Numb Arm:** The attack glances off one of your arms, leaving it numb and tingly. Actions made with that arm next round are at a -2 penalty. *Severity:* Light. *Duration:* Until the end of next round.
3	**Momentarily Blinded:** A blast of light from the attack or blow to the head leaves the character blinded next round. *Severity:* Light. *Duration:* Until the end of next round.
4	**Stumble Backward:** The shock of the blast sends you stumbling backward a couple meters. This increases the target's Spin consequence a severity.
5	**Bloody Gash:** The attack has opened up a bloody gash in your body, ripping away skin and exposing the flesh underneath. It bleeds profusely. This increases the target's Bleeding consequence a severity.
6	**Concussive Blow:** The blow just glances off of your head, cutting a nasty wound and leaving you dazed. This increases the target's Dazed consequence two severities.
7	**Exhausted:** The attack has left you pained and exhausted, unable to carry on with the vigor you were able to muster before. This increases the target's Fatigue consequence a severity.
8	**Broken Rib:** The attack slams into your ribs with a sickening crunching sound. At least one of your ribs snaps, leaving you in nauseating pain. You take a -2 penalty to all Strength-based actions. *Severity:* Severe. *Duration:* Until minor surgery to fix.
9	**Broken Nose:** The blow slams into your face, snapping your nose and smearing blood down your front. You take a -2 penalty to Charisma-based actions. *Severity:* Severe. *Duration:* Until minor surgery to fix.
10	**Herniating Entrails:** The attack tears open your abdomen, allowing your entrails to bulge out. Needless to say, the pain is considerable. You take a -2 penalty to all Endurance-based actions. *Severity:* Severe. *Duration:* Until minor surgery to fix.
Jack	**One-Armed:** The blow tears away your arm like pulled pork from the bone, leaving the limb twisted, ruined and several meters away. You will never enjoy your natural arm again—at least not in a functional state. *Severity:* Critical. *Duration:* Until arm replacement or regrowth treatment.
Queen	**Crushed Hand:** The attack crushes your hand, twisting it in ways it was not meant to bend. Bones are broken and it is left a bloody mess. You cannot use that hand until it is healed. *Severity:* Critical. *Duration:* Until major surgery to fix.
King	**Popped Eye:** The attack splatters one of your eyes, which is smeared down your face like some sort of jam. Additionally, the attack does quite a number on the rest of your head as well. This gives a -2 penalty to all mental actions. *Severity:* Critical. *Duration:* Until replacement or regrowth therapy.
Joker	**Double:** Draw two cards and the attacker takes her choice of the two results.

Memories

The remainder of this Quick-Start contains a scenario intended to introduce players to the **Shadows Over Sol** setting, and as a means to try the game out.

This scenario is somewhat unusual as far as published RPG adventures go. The player characters will begin the game with temporary memory loss caused by stasis sickness, and will not know each other. Also unusual, as the characters regain their memories, these revelations are designed to put the PCs at odds with each other. The gradual and building conflict between the PCs is intended to be one of the primary drivers of action in the narrative. At the same time, however, the player characters will need to work together if they are to overcome the Theta Project monstrosity. Without cooperation they will likely be picked off and killed, one by one.

This is a classic horror scenario. The PCs are locked in a ship, deep in space with nowhere to go and no escape until the conflicts are resolved. The more they stick together, the more they cannot trust their fellow passengers. The more they split up, the more they are in danger from the monstrosity. There is simply no safe haven until the scenario resolves itself one way or another.

The GM should let the players know what they're getting into, to make sure that everyone is coming to the game with the same assumptions. This also helps ensure that everyone has a good time. The players should be informed that they will start off with little in the way of memory, and will begin to regain it throughout the session. The GM should also let the players know that their memories may put them at odds with the other player characters—this is not only okay, its expected and the game will suffer without it. Finally, the GM should let the players know that this scenario is highly stacked against all of them coming out alive.

This adventure is intended to run as a single session consisting of about four hours of play. It is written for the four pregenerated characters included later in the Quick-Start. As the scenario requires little pre-existing player knowledge and comes with ready-made characters, it is also an ideal scenario to run at a convention or similar event.

Synopsis

The player characters are passengers on a combined passenger and cargo ship making the voyage from Luna to Miskan Station in the Belt. The PCs and a few other characters will be awakened unexpectedly mid-voyage. They will be suffering from a loss of memory caused by stasis sickness, and the ship's alarms will be going off. Upon investigating, they will notice one of the stasis pods nearby is damaged, with its occupant dead—clearly killed by a sharp implement, claws, teeth or something similar.

The player characters will then regain memories reminding them of resources they have on the ship. This should prompt them to begin to explore their surroundings further. Much of this cannot be accomplished until the PCs leave their passenger module and make it to the core of the ship. The NPCs which have awoke will each have their own tasks to

More or Fewer Players

This scenario works best with four players. Those who don't have the luxury of running with exactly this many can, however, still get by with a little work.

For fewer than four players the GM should run one or more of the characters as NPCs. The GM should also make sure that the information revealed to that character in the memory handouts makes its way into the game. This information is often an important driver of conflict, and revealing it can be as simple as the NPC mentioning her memories out loud.

go accomplish, which may arouse suspicion. Around this time the PCs should gain their first glimpse of the monstrosity loose on the ship.

As the survivors explore the rest of the ship they should be able to discover things that will be of use. They will regain more memories which will reveal information inconvenient to the other characters' aims. They may even be pushed into a physical confrontation with one or more of the NPCs. Finally, they may catch another glimpse of the monstrosity, or even have a short confrontation with it. Likely one of the NPCs will die, screaming, prompting a response and heightening the horror.

All this is leading up to a final confrontation with the monster. This might take the form of a cunning plan to lock it in one of the modules and force the module to detach from the ship, it could be a direct and bloody physical confrontation or it could involve some sort of makeshift deathtrap. Let the PCs drive the planning.

Lastly the PCs will likely also have to resolve their conflicts with each other. This might occur during the final confrontation with the monster, or shortly afterwards. Either way, it will set the stage for how the scenario ends—who is alive, who knows what and which port the ship ends up at.
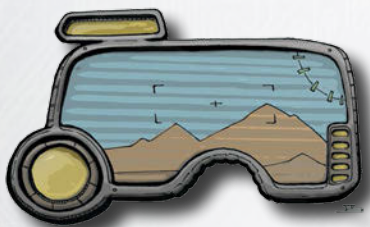
Timeline

Here is a timeline of events as they've played out before the start of the session.

- **11 months ago:** Jessie Bowdain and Doug Colt are put on the trail of the Luna Slasher.
- **10 months, 2 days ago:** Taylor Chu kills the original steward for Passenger Module A and replaces her for the voyage.
- **10 months ago:** The Metus leaves port at Luna and begins its voyage towards Miskan Station in the Belt. All passengers and crew are put into stasis.
- **1 month ago:** Theta Project is woken up in Passenger Module B for testing.
- **1 day ago:** Unitech and the Stillwater Servs go to war after a long period of hostility.
- **3 hours ago:** Casey Spenner's trojan is activated, waking her from stasis.
- **1 hour ago:** Casey is forced to momentarily power down the ship's computer to appropriately hack it for the reroute to Mars. This momentarily shuts down the safeguards keeping Theta Project inside Passenger Module B.
- **Minutes ago:** Sounds from Theta Project spook Casey, who returns to Passenger Module A and pretends to put herself back into stasis. Theta Project follows Casey, but instead attacks Dr. Kravis whom it finds in stasis. Along the way it also damages Passenger Module A's connection to the ship's core, setting off alarms and triggering Jessie's emergency routine. This wakes all passengers.

Scenario Design

Players won't know this at first, but each of the PCs in this scenario is written to have an opposite whose goals they are pitted against. Jessie Bowdain wants to capture Taylor Chu, while Taylor wants to escape capture and maybe strike again. Casey Spenner wants to reroute the ship to Mars, where Blake Colby will be captured and killed. Meanwhile, Blake's corp is at war with Casey's faction.

This opposition is one of the primary drivers of distrust and conflict in the scenario. In addition, each of the characters has memories that will reveal information important to the other pair of conflicting characters. This gives all PCs reason to interact in varying ways. How the makeshift trust and alliances break down between player characters can lead to very different runs of the scenario.

Preparing the Session

Every player should receive a character sheet. These sheets are written to be gender-neutral. It is recommended that the GM pick who plays which character. This preserves the mystery of who the PCs are from each other.

In addition to a character sheet, this Quick-Start also contains a handout with information that is available to all characters (see page 49). The GM should either make copies of it and hand it out to each of the players, or she may opt to instead read it out loud at the beginning of the session.

Players may want to also read over the "Dark Future" section at the beginning of the Quick-Start. This is by no means required to understand the scenario, but it may help give players a better feel for the setting and its assumptions.

Running the Session

When running the session the GM can broadly think of the scenario as consisting of four acts: waking, exploration, creeping and confrontation. At the end of each of these acts—aside from confrontation—the PCs will receive a memory handout, as their stasis sickness is wearing off. This handout will present them with new information, which ought to alter their goals and shine a different light on the scenario. Memory handouts should be given in order, with Memory I going out at the end of Act I, Memory II at the end of Act II and Memory III at the end of Act III.

There are no hard-and-set times to switch to the next act. The GM should keep an eye on the players, evaluating whether they are having fun or if the game has reached a lull. When the GM deems it time to shake up things a bit, she should announce that the PCs' memories are beginning to come back, give the appropriate handout to each player and then allow the players time to read and digest the contents.

NPCs

- **Manny and Helga:** These characters are both travelers on their way to Miskan Station for work. They're in the scenario to serve the narrative role of possible victims. As the acts continue, both will react to the horror in diametrically opposite ways. Manny will continue to scream, make a scene and refuse to leave Passenger Module A. He will resist any attempt to forcibly quiet him down or to put him in a stasis pod. Helga, on the other hand, will want to explore and keep moving, looking for some shred of safety that doesn't exist. Both of these characters serve to split up the survivors, allowing one or the other to be killed in a later act while the PCs aren't looking.

- **Tova, Jake and Safa:** These three serve the narrative role of provoking conflict. They are smugglers who have an illegal shipment they are keeping an eye on in Cargo Module A. The three will stick together, and don't want the PCs butting into their business. This should make them seem untrustworthy. If the PCs start trying to give orders these three will quickly resist. They exist to inject some conflict—and possibly a physical confrontation—into the earlier parts of the scenario.

- **Dr. Justine Kravis (Dead):** Doctor Kravis was the lead scientist working on Theta Project. She was employed by Blake Colby. She will be found dead in Passenger Module A, with her stasis pod damaged by Theta Project's claws.

- **Doug Colt (Dead):** Doug is Jessie Bowdain's partner in bounty hunting. He is in Passenger Module B, but will be dead by the time the scenario begins.

- **Captain Wulandari (Dead):** Wulandari was the captain of the Metus before she had her face eaten by Theta Project. She was holding the Theta Project control box in her safe for Blake Colby.

Act I: Waking

The point of this act is to give the players time to get into character, let them familiarize themselves with the rules and to introduce them to the other surviving characters. This should include the PCs, as well as the five surviving NPCs. Make sure that each of the NPCs leaves an impression in the minds of the players, even if it's just "that screaming guy."

This act should end roughly around the time the PCs discover the corpse of Dr. Kravis in Passenger Module A. If the players don't make this discovery on their own, Manny or Helga will. The discovery of the corpse both heightens the sense of danger in the session and triggers the PCs to each gain Memory I. Included in Taylor's memory is the code for the ceiling hatches, widening the possible area of exploration.

Act II: Exploration

At this point the PCs know that someone or something killed Dr. Kravis. They have the run of the ship, but they haven't encountered Theta Project yet. Each PC will also have a new small personal goal unveiled by Memory I.

Throughout this act the GM should let the players take the initiative in exploring the ship and completing their goals, but should also work in the background to ensure that several things happen: The surviving characters should be split up. This can easily be accomplished by having Manny refuse to leave the original deck, while Helga runs off to explore. Tova, Jake and Safa should also keep together and head to Cargo Module A. There they will look after the contraband the they are smuggling.

Once the characters are split up, pick an NPC with no accompanying PC. That character will meet a horrible screaming death, which should ideally bring the PCs there running. There they can gain their first glimpse of Theta Project after it's murdered the helpless NPC. If the PCs press a fight, it will attack once and then use its Quick Escape and Blend In traits to slip away, prolonging the tension.

The act should end around this point, triggering Memory II in each of the PCs.

Act III: Creeping

The danger has been revealed at this point, but questions are still left unanswered. Memory II should have revealed more information to the PCs—things which will be inconvenient for the others. Let this act unfold largely as the players see fit. Remember to have the surviving NPCs react to circumstances as well. This is a tense and high-pressure situation. If the players are itching for a little action have Tova, Jake and Safa react poorly, pressing a fist fight in opposing whatever the PCs recommend.

Allow the PCs to explore the ship, and scrounge up whatever useful gear they can. Remember, the PCs have limited time and limited resources. If they barricade themselves in a room, remind them that they don't have enough food, water or oxygen to remain there the rest of the voyage. They'll need to emerge and deal with the situation at some point, otherwise they will face a slow but inevitable death. Should they spend too long barricaded in a room, have Theta Project begin thrashing up against the barricade, and describe how the horrible strength of the creature is denting the metal. Sooner or later it will get in, and the PCs will have nowhere to run.

Once the PCs have finished exploring, are ready to execute a plan to deal with Theta Project or the game is reaching a lull, end the act and give each player Memory III.

Act IV: Confrontation

Once the players have read Memory III they should have a pretty solid idea of their character's history and role here. They also must deal with Theta Project or die. At this point, all the pieces are in place and the GM can sit back to let events play out as they will.

Whatever plan the players come up with to eliminate Theta Project, roll with it, provided it is reasonable and fits the genre. They could trap the creature in a module and forcibly detach that module from the ship. They could press a physical confrontation. They could try to lure it into a stasis pod and then destroy it while it's in stasis. Clever players will probably think of any other number of schemes.

Either immediately afterward or sometime in the middle of this scheme the players will likely begin to resolve their personal issues with each other. Let them play it out as they will. If they're not confronting each other, remind them that they will need to put themselves back into stasis if they're to survive the rest of the voyage. One of characters will have to put the others under. Who are they going to trust to do that?

Once everyone's in stasis or dead, the scenario ends. Depending on which destination the ship arrives at, describe the results to the players. Let them laugh and tell each other about their characters' secrets. Hopefully everyone had a good time.

Exploring the Metus

What follows are room-by-room descriptions of the Metus, as well as descriptions of equipment and common actions the PCs might attempt. These descriptions can be referenced during play to inform the GM as to what the PCs encounter. Also included are descriptions of the scenes the PCs will face when first waking up from stasis, and upon arriving at the ship's destination.

■ Deckplans for the Metus can be found on page 43.

Waking Up

The scenario begins with the characters waking up from stasis. The GM should read or paraphrase the following.

There is consciousness. As you awaken from stasis, your limbs are stiff and feel weak from lack of use these last few months asleep. Your mind is foggy, but your surroundings are now slowly beginning to filter into your brain—a common symptom of stasis sickness. You know that your memories should eventually come back to you over the course of the next day. The emergency siren is going off. Something is wrong. The lights are too low as well. It must be the emergency lighting.

Passenger Module A

Passenger Module A consists of three decks, each stacked one on top of the other. The entire ship rotates, providing spin gravity. The gravity is strongest at the "bottom" deck and gets progressively weaker as one ascends. The very "top" deck connects to the core of the ship through a singular portal. These decks are not large, maybe 5m by 15m each. At the two far ends of each deck, a ladder connects them together, although the hatches between each deck are sealed now that an alarm is going off. The portal between this module and the ship's core is also sealed. From bottom (where the PCs wake up) to top, the module's decks are: passenger deck, steward's deck, luggage deck.

Passenger Deck

The walls of this deck have a rail along them, which can be used for support by passengers still adjusting to moving their limbs again. The deck is also divided into two rooms, providing plenty of handholds for all involved.

Each room contains five stasis pods. The PCs and Helga will all wake up in one room. Tova, Jake, Safa and Manny meanwhile will wake up in the other room, alongside the now deceased Dr. Kravis.

Let the PCs introduce themselves to each other and Helga. Inform the players that at one end of the room a ladder is leading up to a sealed hatch, while at the other end of the room there is a door. Those trying the hatch will find it requires a pass code (Taylor will get this code in Memory I). Opening the door will lead to the other surviving NPCs. If the PCs don't eventually open the door Helga will. She will then begin to introduce herself to the other surviving characters.

In the other room the survivors are still dazed from stasis. Dr. Kravis is dead in her stasis pod, the top of the pod shattered and her face scrapped away by either a sharp instrument or very sharp teeth. The PCs may be the first ones to realize this, otherwise Manny will eventually discover it and start screaming. This revelation should prompt the end of Act I, and

the players should all receive Memory I. The ceiling hatch in this room is not locked.

- The rails on the walls might serve as passable improvised weapons if they can be pried loose. Doing this is a Str/athletics-12 action. The rails deal ♠Str×3M/♥Str×2M/♦StrM/♣Str×½M damage, but give a -2 penalty to attack actions due to their improvised nature.
- A willing character can be put back into stasis by another with a successful Int/medic-10 action. A character can put herself into stasis with an Int/medic-12 action. Failing by 5+ means the character won't survive. Failing by less than that means there will be side effects upon waking. Unwilling characters cannot be put into stasis unless they're first rendered unable to resist.

Steward's Deck

This deck consists of a singular room. It's intended to be an area where the module's steward can retrieve comfort items for passengers, or where meals can be prepared. Blankets for passengers are located here, as well as a first aid kit, a few simple tools, bulbs for water and a faucet.

The most prominent features of the room are two large freezers. The left one holds twenty frozen meals—enough for all of the module's passengers and steward to get through their one expected day out of stasis before arrival at Miskan Station.

The other freezer is locked and marked as "out of order." In actuality, the freezer still works but inside is the frozen corpse of the real Taylor Chu, who was murdered by the Luna Slasher two days before the voyage.

- Taylor's Chu's gun is hidden behind a wall panel that houses the passenger module's data block. Prying the panel open requires a successful Dex/athletics-8 action. Noticing it without foreknowledge requires searching the room and a successful Per/awareness-12 action. See USD-383 "Wasp" Light Pistol, page 44.
- The first aid kit and the few tools can act as sufficient equipment for a variety of different medical or mechanical tasks.

Luggage Deck

This deck is a single room with the passengers' luggage tied down to every possible surface. The luggage is not sorted in any way. In the ceiling is a large hatch leading to the core of the ship. This hatch is sealed, but not locked. The gravity here is so low that it is quite easy to bounce off the walls or floor.

- Finding a specific bag among the jumble requires success on a Per/investigate-10 action. Jessie Bowdain's bag (marked with that name) contains a combat utility knife and a single shock patch (see page 44). It also contains a crumpled piece of paper with the words: "Fallon Naysack. Luna Slasher."
- Other bags contain a variety of necessary travel items: spare clothing, toiletries, hair brushes, a few hand terminals and cameras, portable video game consoles, etc. Let the players ask if they're looking for anything specific.
- Opening the ceiling hatch is simple enough. The heavy door slides away to reveal a small airlock-like area between the passenger module and the ship's core. Heavy damage is visible to the weak point connecting the two parts of the ship

Computer Systems

Each module attached to the ship has its own computer network that is hard-wired to be completely subservient to the computers in the ship's core. This means, for example, that a computer in Passenger Module A can be hacked with a successful Int/program-12 action, but that computer is only going to be able to access data and functions in that passenger module. There s no way for it to access the rest of the ship. To access the full ship, the central computer in the ship's core must be compromised. This requires physically being present in the core.

together, as if something very strong took a pickaxe to the seal (actually claws). This causes a small atmospheric leak every time the hatch is opened. This leak is also the reason why the emergency alarms are going off. The leak is not imminently deadly, but characters should minimize the number of times they go through this doorway, as with each opening the ship loses a little bit more of its precious oxygen.

Ship's Core

The ship's core is a long tube with the cockpit at the front and the engine room at the back. Just behind the cockpit is the captain's room, and behind that is the airlock. All four modules connect to the core between the airlock and the engine. The entire core is the center of the ship's revolution, and thus in microgravity.

Cockpit

The cockpit is little more than a seat surrounded by the various controls necessary to pilot the ship. There is enough room behind the seat for a single person to stand. The controls here access the ship's main computer, and this is the one place on the entire vessel from which all the ship's computer systems can be accessed.

- Changing the ship's destination requires a successful Int/vehicles-10 action.
- Erasing the ship's video logs requires accessing the data block, located in the wall—a Dex/mechanic-10 action. No video footage is available in the cargo modules; there are no cameras there. Sifting through the computer logs for footage of Theta Project requires a successful Int/comp-ops-10 action.
- Detaching a module requires simultaneously overriding the safety from the cockpit—an Int/comp-ops-10 action—and physically pulling a lever where that module attaches to the ship's core, a Str/athletics-10 action.

Captain's Room

The captain's room is a small space containing the captain's safe, computer terminal and two stasis pods—one for the Captain Wulandari and one for the ship's engineer. Both of these stasis pods have been broken and their occupants killed in a manner similar to Dr. Kravis.

- Opening the captain's safe requires a successful Dex/thievery-10 action or some other means of breeching the container. Inside is the Theta Project control box (see page 44). Captain Wulandari was holding it for Blake Colby.

Airlock

The airlock is a small alcove along the corridor that leads from the cockpit to the engine room. The airlock is designed so that an escape pod can be attached, however, no such pod was attached for this voyage. Also stored here are two decrepit environment suits.

- The two environment suits here each have about an hour's worth of oxygen in their tanks, as well as magnetic boots capable of sticking to the side of the ship. They can be used to access the exterior of the vessel should the PCs wish.

Engine Room

The engine room is a small room filled with all manner of panels and gauges. A sealed hatch leads to a crawlspace in the engine itself. Several of the panels here have deep gashes where they've been damaged. This damage is what has caused the emergency lighting to come on.

- Determining how to use the panels requires an Int/engineer-10 action. Adjusting the engine settings requires an Int/engineer-12 action.

Passenger Module B

Passenger Module B has the exact same layout as Passenger Module A, however, the seal between it and the ship's core is not compromised. On the luggage deck is a large

crate that used to contain a custom-built stasis pod. This pod had Theta Project inside before its release. The stasis pod is now broken.

The passenger deck is a bloodbath. The passengers here obviously came out of stasis, and shortly thereafter were slaughtered by Theta Project. This deck includes the corpse of Doug Colt, Jessie Bowdain's bounty hunting partner.

■ At some point Jessie Bowdain will remember that Doug Colt has a hidden gun implant in his arm. Removing this gun without damaging it is a Str/medic-8 action. For stats on the gun see page 44. Keep in mind that this is an improvised use of the implant.

■ Doug Colt's luggage includes a single shock patch and combat utility knife (see page 44). Finding this specific bag is a Per/investigate-10 action. Assorted travel items can be found in other bags.

■ A successful Per/medic-8 or Per/investigate-10 action on the bodies will reveal that they died in a manner similar to Dr. Kravis.

■ Examining the broken stasis pod and succeeding on an Int/investigate-10 action will reveal that it was broken open from the inside. An Int/conspiracy-10 action will reveal that this gear is of the type used by Unitech. An Int/bio-sci-10 action will reveal that its designed to hold in stasis something that is not entirely human.

Cargo Module A

Like the passenger modules, the cargo modules consist of three decks. Ladders lead between the decks, one on each of the far ends. The decks of the cargo modules are otherwise fairly undifferentiated. Crates are strapped to every possible surface, making transversing the cargo modules a maze of boxes. Sight is always limited by the stacks of cargo, giving the modules a closed in feel.

The middle deck of Cargo Module A contains two crates of drugs that Tova, Jake and Safa are smuggling. After Memory I goes out, these three will remember the location of the drugs and make their way here. See "Street

Torpestat," page 44. There are over 1000 doses. One of these crates also contains a gun (see page 44). The three smugglers will pry this crate open and Tova will take the firearm.

■ Opening one of the crates is a Str/athletics-8 action. The crates mostly contain a variety of industrial materials used in processing ore, but a few crates contain vid players, kitchenware, bedding, textiles and candles used in religious observations.

Cargo Module B

Cargo Module B has the exact same layout as Cargo Module A. It is likewise a maze of boxes and crates. This makes it a good isolated location for an ambush by Theta Project, or an ideal location for a lone NPC to die screaming.

Arriving at the Ship's Destination

The Metus is likely to either stay on its present course and arrive at Mars, or to have its course once again directed to Miskan Station. If the PCs set a different destination the GM will need to improvise.

Arriving at Miskan Station

Arriving at Miskan Station, Blake Colby will have people in place to take custody of the remains of Theta Project and sweep this incident under the rug. If exposed, Casey will be quietly picked up by Blake's agents, and likely found dead in a closet shortly thereafter. The remaining survivors will be cut loose unless unless Blake interferes.

Arriving at Mars

If the ship reaches Mars' vicinity, Casey Spenner's people are in position to capture it en route. They will board it just as the survivors are coming out of stasis, and assume control. Blake Colby will be taken away in captivity if identified. Casey will receive payment, and the rest of the survivors will be cut loose unless the spy intercedes. The remains of Theta Project will be taken for study.

UT-389 THE METUS
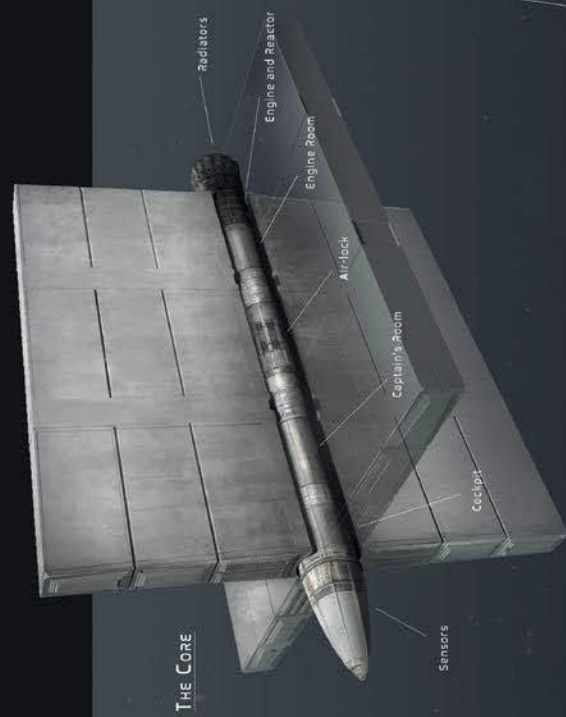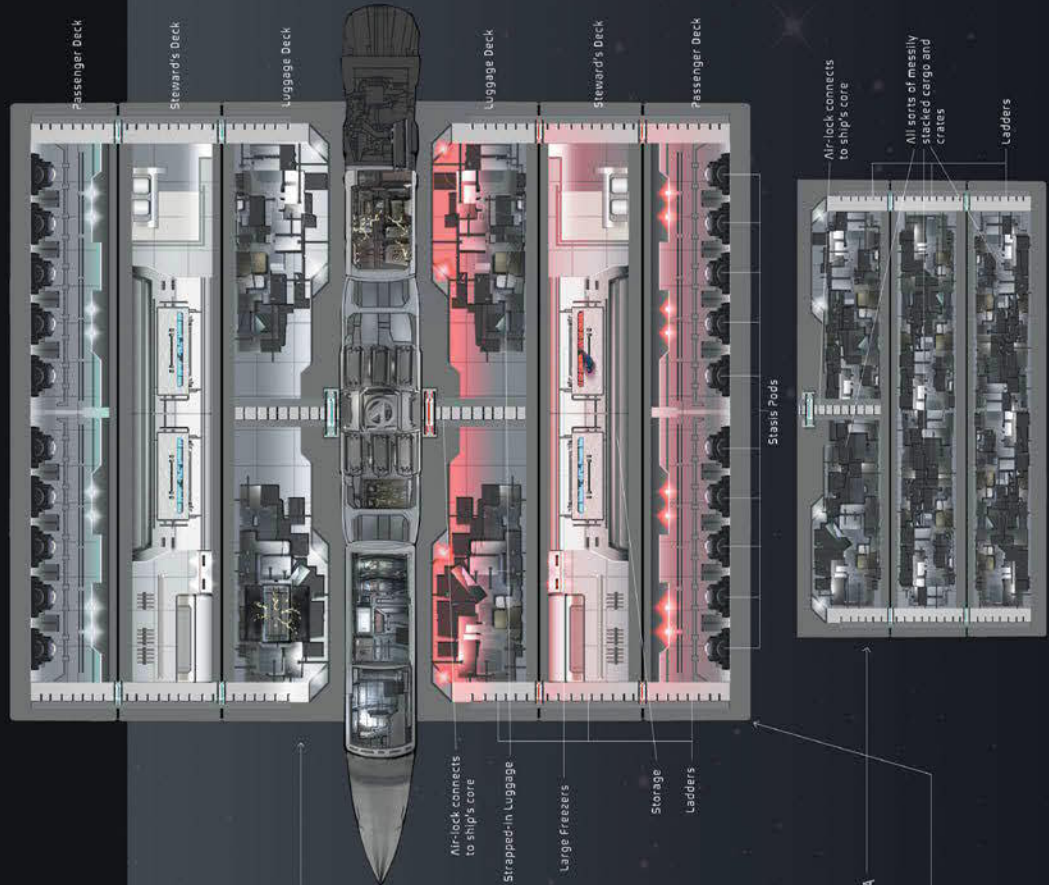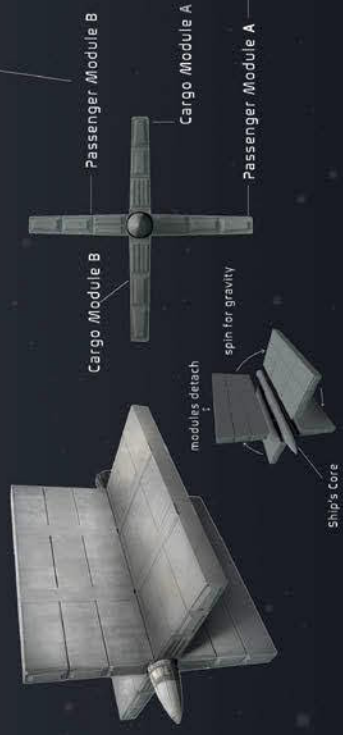
Passenger Deck
Steward's Deck
Luggage Deck
Luggage Deck
Steward's Deck
Passenger Deck

Air-lock connects to ship's core
All sorts of messily stacked cargo and crates
Ladders

Stasis Pods

Air-lock connects to ship's core
Strapped-in Luggage
Large Freezers
Storage
Ladders

Passenger Module B
Cargo Module A
Passenger Module A

The Core

Radiators
Engine and Reactor
Engine Room
Air-lock
Captain's Room
Cockpit
Sensors

Ship's Configuration

Cargo Module B
Passenger Module B

modules detach
spin for gravity
Ship's Core

Scenario Gear

The following pieces of equipment feature in the included scenario. Each description may list several properties. These are:

- **Damage ♠X/♥X/♦X/♣X:** This weapon deals the damage listed for the indicated suits.
- **Range X:** This weapon can attack without penalty within the indicated number of meters.
- **Reload X:** Reloading this weapons requires that the indicated number of AP are spent.
- **Shots X:** Indicates how many shots fit within the weapon's magazine.
- **Thrown:** Thrown weapons have a range equal to the character's Strength in meters.

Combat Utility Knife

- **Damage:** ♠Str×3M / ♥Str×2M / ♦StrM / ♣Str×½M
- **Properties:** Thrown

It's a weapon. It's a tool. It's both! Combat utility knives are a versatile weapon and tool, balanced for both hand-to-hand use as well as sudden throws. Combat utility knives can be used to cut rope, pry open simple doors or butter toast. Never leave home without one! The handle comes in a variety of custom styles.

Gun Arm Implant

- **Damage:** ♠12M/♥8M/♦4M/♣2M
- **Properties:** Range 10; Reload 2; Shots 3

Have your safety well in hand, or at least in arm, with this gun arm implant! Included is a concealed ballistic gun barrel and trigger mechanism, which embeds beneath the skin into the flesh of the forearm. The gun can be programmed to fire with a simple flick of the arm, giving the element of surprise. It holds three shots. Reloading requires opening a compartment in the arm and loading each bullet individually.

Jenseitech "Punch" Shock Patch

Be the picture of stealthy cool: use a Jenseitech "Punch" Shock Patch. This patch can disable a target if it is slapped onto the target's bare skin. Naturally, this requires both that bare skin is exposed, and that the target is human—or at least similar biologically. Applying the patch is a Dex/melee vs. Defense flip with a -2 penalty for having to target the bare patch of skin. If applied, the target must succeed on an End-16 flip; otherwise she gains the Stun (critical) consequence. An individual patch may only be used once.

Street Torpestat

Torpestat is a powerful pain-killer. Once injected, it lasts for 8 hours. During this time the recipient does not take penalties from the Wound consequence. Additionally, she gains a +2 bonus to her Shock threshold. The downside is that the drug also leaves her numb, giving her a -2 penalty to all Dexterity- and Speed-based actions, as well as to any Perception-based action relying on her sense of touch.

Theta Project Control Box

This is a remote control-sized electronic device with a yellow indicator light at the top and two buttons—one red and one green. The yellow light will blink, increasing in frequency as Theta Project approaches. Pressing the red button will emit an ultrasonic frequency which will drive Theta Project away from the device. Pressing the green button will emit a different frequency, which will draw Theta Project closer to the device.

USD-383 "Wasp" Light Pistol

- **Damage:** ♠12M/♥8M/♦4M/♣2M
- **Properties:** Range 10; Shots 10

A personal protection favorite, the USD-383 "Wasp" Light Pistol is ready to lock and load! Take aim at your favorite shooting range or when your life is in danger. The gun is small enough to fit most holsters or to slip into a purse! It comes with patent-pending rubberized grip and is available in gun barrel gray, matte black, racing stripe red or powder pink.

Non-Player Characters

Below are stat blocks and brief descriptions of the surviving NPCs that feature in this scenario.

Tova, Jake & Safa

Str 6, **Dex** 5, **Spd** 5, **End** 6, **Int** 4, **Per** 5, **Chr** 5, **Det** 4
Defense 7/15, **DR** 0, **Shock** 10, **Wound** 6, **Wealth** 4, **Lifestyle** 4
Skills: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Comp-Ops 1, Empathy 2, Guns 1, Melee 3, Persuade 3, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Thievery 2
Fists: +5 (♠18L/♥12L/♦6L/♣3L)

Tova, Jake and Safa (no last names given) are all burly individuals with an unfriendly look. Jake has a nose that appears like it's been broken several times. These three will not abide taking orders.

Manny & Helga

Str 5, **Dex** 5, **Spd** 5, **End** 5, **Int** 5, **Per** 5, **Chr** 4, **Det** 4
Defense 7/15, **DR** 0, **Shock** 9, **Wound** 5, **Wealth** 5, **Lifestyle** 5
Skills: Athletics 2, Bureaucrat 1, Comp-Ops 2, Empathy 2, Lib-Arts 3, Persuade 2, Socialize 3, Vehicles 1
Fists: +2 (♠15L/♥10L/♦5L/♣2L)

Manny is a small-framed mining surveyor traveling as part of his work contract. Helga is an athletic teen who's being sent to work for relatives on Miskan Station.

Theta Project

Str 13, **Dex** 9, **Spd** 9, **End** 17, **Int** 6, **Per** 7, **Chr** 7, **Det** 8
Defense 12/25, **DR** 5, **Shock** 30, **Wound** 15
Skills: Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Empathy 2, Guns 1, Melee 4, Stealth 4
Claws: +8 (♠36M/♥23M/♦13M/♣6M)
Backslash: If a melee attack by Theta Project misses, as a reaction it may spend an AP to make an immediate attack against the same target.
Blend In: Theta Project is exceptionally skilled at blending in to its environment, even changing color to match. This lets it make a Dex/stealth vs. Per/awareness action at the end of any move. On a success, Theta Project's foes lose sight of it.
Enhanced Actions: Theta Project gains 4 AP per round.
Quick Escape: After Theta Project takes an action, as a reaction it may spend an AP to immediately move away from its foes.

Theta Project is a bulky humanoid, being constructed from partially-human genetic material. It has cat-like eyes and skin covered with thick chitin. It's fingers end in long, hook-like claws, and its mouth is filled with row after row of bloody teeth.

Handouts & Characters

Handout: Out of Stasis

You are aboard UT-389, also known as "the Metus," a Unitech combined passenger and cargo ship originating from its port of origin on Luna, and heading to Miskan Station in the Belt. With any luck, this voyage will avoid any complications due to the rising tension between Unitech, the corp operating the ship, and the Stillwater Servs, a religious subculture based out of Mars.

This ship has a newer modular design. It consists of four interchangeable modules that each attach to the ship's central core. These modules can be attached, detached and rearranged when the ship is in dock, allowing for differing numbers of passenger or cargo modules. Additionally, the ship is designed to quickly spin while in transit, providing light spin-gravity. This gravity decreases as one nears the ship's core. The core itself is in microgravity.

Two of the modules attached on this voyage are passenger modules, the other two are cargo modules. They've been designated Passenger Module A and B, and Cargo Module A and B. You are in Passenger Module A. The trip from Luna to the Belt is expected to take 10 months. Consequently, all passengers aboard the ship were put into stasis shortly before launch, and the crew were put into stasis shortly afterward. This is standard practice and decreases life support costs.

Stasis slows down bodily systems dramatically, to the point where a person in stasis only ages at 1/10th to 1/100th the usual rate—depending on the quality of the stasis pods and the skill of the operator. When you awaken, your hair and nails will usually be a bit longer, but you won't have significantly aged.

Coming out of stasis means suffering from stasis sickness. The human body isn't evolved for long periods of time in hibernation. When this is forced on the body it takes time to recover. Typically, the first day out of stasis a person experiences fatigue, stiffness and memory loss while one's body and brain return to full function. A person starts off recalling only a random selection of memories—experts say somewhere between a tenth and a quarter. This rarely causes identity issues. A person's basic identity and capabilities, such as speech, are wrapped up in many different memories. It, however, takes time for all of the specifics to come back, as a person's neurons return to firing though all the right channels.

Every passenger module has a steward. This steward is a member of the crew who is responsible for taking care of the personal needs of the passengers as they are put into stasis, and also tending to them—and keeping them in line—when they come back out of stasis. As coming out of stasis involves a lot of fragile equipment and a lot of confused people, a steward is frequently part flight attendant and part bouncer.

When approaching the ship's destination, the crew are typically revived a day or so before the passengers. This gives them time to recover from stasis sickness before overseeing the passengers' emergence and recovery. Passengers are revived a day before the ship's arrival at the destination port. This gives them time to recover before being shepherded off at their destination.

Of course, when something goes wrong all bets are off.

Taylor Chu

Description

Taylor Chu is tall and well-muscled with a stern face and a stasis gown indicating them as the module's attending steward.

Background

As the steward for Passenger Module A you should have been awakened first—long before the passengers. But you weren't. Judging by the alarm and the emergency lighting, something is wrong with the ship. When an emergency happens, typically only the crew are woken. But that's not the case now. Everyone—even the passengers—are waking up.

Your steward's name tag says "Taylor Chu." That doesn't sound right. Rene Nama? That sounds right. Maybe you changed your name? Wrong uniform? Whatever. Roll with it. You've got passengers waking up and you're in charge here. It's your job to keep everyone calm and to keep them in line.

You remember that you're no longer wanted on Luna. Something happened. Maybe an accident or a run-in with organized crime? You're planning to make a new start on Miskan Station. You also remember a parade of faces—seven at least—and you know that they're all dead. Every single one. That's why you're headed to Miskan. There are too many dead back on Luna—even without the recent political troubles between Unitech and the Mars Servs.

This whole steward job seems so hollow to you. But you have to do it, at least for this one last voyage. Just get it done and deal with whatever the problem is that the ship is facing. No doubt you have disoriented passengers to calm, the rest of the crew to contact and other responsibilities. You should have nine passengers to account for. Make sure they are all alright. You're the only staff on this module, but the captain and engineer should be in the ship's core. They should know what this trouble is.

Taylor Chu: Memory I

You are in a very dangerous situation. You have someone on your trail, seeking you out—personally. All you can remember about it are the seven dead faces, each with cold, dead eyes staring back at you, one after the other.

Look around you. Any of these survivors could be the person who's hunting you down. You're pretty sure the Hunter is aboard the ship. You must be very careful. If you reveal too much, the Hunter may catch on.

You need to protect yourself. You need a gun. It's a good thing you know where a gun is stored on board. The deck above this one is the steward's deck. It's used as a staff storage and food preparation area.

There is an electrical panel hidden in the wall between the two frozen dinner lockers. If you pry the electrical panel open you will find a pistol hidden inside. You're not supposed to have firearms on board, but now you may need it. And it's best that the Hunter not be the one to find the gun.

To get to the other parts of the passenger module you will need to open one of the hatches leading to the rest of the ship. The passcode for these hatches is "12345." Just type that into the panel next to the hatch and it will unlock.

Oh, and one more thing: One of those two frozen dinner lockers on the steward's deck is locked and labeled as "Out of Order." No one should open it. You're pretty sure no one will like what's in there.

Taylor Chu: Memory II

Their necks look so fragile to you, as if all it would take is a little twist and then—snap, crackle, pop. The head bone's no longer connected to the neck bone. But no, that's an inconvenient thought. Get it out of your head!

More importantly, something that's been bothering you in the back of your mind has just come to the forefront. You've spent a lot of time as a steward on various spaceships. Remember that view on the display that you saw on the stasis deck when you first woke up? You saw the Belt, Earth and Jupiter shining in the distance. If you really are headed to Miskan Station in the Belt, they shouldn't be in that configuration. That view means the ship's front is no longer pointed outward. Somehow either the ship has drifted off course, or someone has rerouted the ship to a new destination. This is a problem. Who knows where you will end up?

Slowly, other scattered memories are beginning to come back. You remember two staff briefings before the ship set out on its voyage. One was about the Hunter on board. (If only you could remember who it was!) The other was about some important person who booked passage. You remember that Captain Wulandari dealt with that one. She was always sucking up to important people.

Taylor Chu: Memory III

They call you the Luna Slasher. You remember each and every warm body as your blade bit into their necks. Seven lovely faces in all. Seven dead faces. You remember cutting into their jugular veins. Blood sprays are so pretty in low gravity.

Of course, you're not from Luna originally, even if you spent most of your career there. You're an Earther. You grew up as Rene Nama, a mild-mannered Expret on the North American coast. It was rather unremarkable.

You don't know when you first started getting the bloody urges, but you were sixteen when you achieved your first kill. It was a friend and an argument over a video game. You still didn't know what to do then. You still got the panic and the sick feeling after the kill. So you fled. You hopped a transport to Luna before anyone could start pointing fingers, and thus began your glorious career.

On Luna you paid a hacker to inject some credentials for you into the local net. Your new identity was as Fallon Naysack, a Former and new graduate. You briefly worked in the mines, but then landed a job as a steward on a Unitech ship.

Being a steward, you travel around a lot. You're always shipping out to some new station, laying over and then making a return voyage to Luna. Every time you return you take a new life—one more dead face in the parade. Travelers are often vulnerable when alone in the city, and it takes a while for people to miss them. There have been seven in all. Once upon a time you used to keep a collage with pictures of their faces. But that's long gone. You're on the run now.

With the last of these victims you fucked up. You still don't know what it was that gave you away, but somehow the Luna authorities traced the victim back to your Fallon Naysack identity. You had to flee, but you always knew that one day you might have to do this, so you knew what you had to do. The first thing was to kill the real Taylor Chu and take the poor sap's face.

Plastic surgery is cheap, but you were time constrained and on a budget. The job that was done isn't as good as you would like, but it'll pass for now. Chu was already your same height and build. You look like them now, but you have to be careful. Any damage to your face and the plastic surgery will begin to show.

You couldn't hide Chu's body where the Luna authorities would find it. That would lead right back to this ship. They'd go looking for him and find you. Instead, his body is in a frozen dinner locker on the steward's deck of Passenger Module A. You've locked it and put an "Out of Order" sign on it.

You're also pretty sure you that have a bounty hunter on your trail. Anyone here could be the bounty hunter. You were alerted to this because there was a crew briefing that a bounty hunter seeking "the Luna Slasher" was aboard. Lucky you.

Oh, and one last thing: If anyone does discover your true identity, you need to make sure that they don't survive to tell the tale.

Shadows Over Sol

Name Taylor Chu

Geneline Modern Superman   **Subculture** Former

Stats

Strength	Dexterity	Speed	Endurance	Intelligence	Perception	Charisma	Determination
8	7	5	5	4	5	6	5
4	E2p	3	E3p	2	E5p	2	E5p	2	E3p	2	E1p	3	E4p	2	E1p

Skills

Athletics	1	Conspiracy	___	Guns	2	Melee	3	Program	___
Throwing									

Awareness	___	Crafts	___	Investigate	___	Naturalist	___	Socialize	1

Bio-Sci	___	Deception	3	Lib-Arts	1	Ordnance	___	Stealth	3
		Disguise						Ambush	
		Blatant Lies						Hiding	

Bureaucrat	1	Empathy	___	Mechanic	1	Persuade	2	Thievery	___
Gray Market						Fast-Talk			
						Intimidation			

Comp-Ops	1	Engineer	___	Medic	2	Phy-Sci	___	Vehicles	___
Comms									

Languages

Cultures
Former
Expret

Weaknesses

Computers & Software   Rating

Implants

Endurance

Gear

Encumbrance

Combat & Scores

Edge	Wealth	Lifestyle	Defense
2	4	4	8 / 17

Wounds		DR	Shock
Light -1 ☐☐☐☐☐		0	10
Moderate -2 ☐☐☐☐☐			
Severe -3 ☐☐☐☐☐	Total Wounds	Wound
Critical -4 ☐☐☐☐☐		6

Consequences _____

Arms

Arm	Attack	Damage			
Fists	+ 6	♠ 24L	♥ 16L	♦ 8L	♣ 4L
Properties		+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties		+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties		+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties			

Armor

Armor	DR	Properties

Jessie Bowdain

Description

Jessie Bowdain is middle-aged and grizzled, with a nose that looks like it's been broken before and healed. They have a bearing that seems out of place in a stasis gown.

Background

You are Jessie Bowdain, bounty hunter. You've been a bounty hunter for twenty years. You specialize in the long-range pursuit and capture of dangerous targets. You also specialize in transport across corp or governmental boundaries—often a delicate political situation.

Recently, with the rising antagonism between Unitech and the Mars Servs, business has been good. You've had no end of related contracts. Business will likely continue being good until a full-on war breaks out between the two groups. You can read between the lines—war is just a matter of time.

If you're waking up on this ship, chances are you're on a mission hunting someone down—likely someone very dangerous. Your target is probably on the ship, too. You'll just have to wait until you remember whom.

This isn't the first time you've had stasis sickness. You've been on countless voyages across the void in pursuit of your targets. You've even come out of stasis earlier than planned before—what is obviously happening now. Something is different this time, however. The emergency lighting is on and there's an alarm sounding. That's new.

Whatever's happened, the shit has just hit the fan. If the emergency lighting is on, that means something is amiss with the ship's core reactor. The alarm is probably related to that as well.

With everyone waking up, there are going to be a lot of frightened people with little sense of what to do in an emergency situation. Better be on top of your game.

Jessie Bowdain: Memory I

A bounty hunter is most efficient with the right tools at hand. Your tools for this mission are on the ship. In a voyage like this, a passenger doesn't get carry on luggage. Most of the trip is spent in stasis. One doesn't even get to keep one's clothes—instead donning these awful stasis gowns. All personal possessions are checked. It follows then that your tools for this mission are also checked.

You should have a bag with your name on it somewhere in the luggage area of this passenger module. Luggage areas are usually located on one of the upper decks, closer to the core of the ship. If you can get to your bag, you ought to find a personal weapon, a shock patch which can be used to disable a target when slapped onto open skin and—if you're lucky—you've left yourself some idea of who you're after. There are likely to be many different bags there. It may take you some time to sort through them all.

You've also remembered some great news: You are not on this mission alone. You are working with a partner by the name of Doug Colt. You've worked with him a couple times before. He's competent and professional, if a bit crude at times. When the two of you boarded this ship he was assigned a stasis pod in the other passenger module—that's on the far side of the ship, also connected to the ship's core. Unlike you, Doug never goes unarmed. That is to say he has a secret gun implanted in his left forearm. It only has a couple shots in it, but given the situation that's not bad. In case you cannot find your bag, you ought to be able to fall back to relying on him for firepower.

Jessie Bowdain: Memory II

You are the reason that all of the passengers are awake right now, and not just the ship's staff. Before the voyage you obtained illegal access to the ship's computer systems and injected into the core computer a subroutine of your own devising.

Once upon a time, there was an incident on one of these ships where your target was up and about, arisen from stasis, but you were not. You only survived that incident because your target killed the wrong guy. Ever since then you've made a point to compromise the computer system of every passenger ship you take while on a mission. Better safe that sorry. To do this, you inject into the computer a subroutine that wakes up all passengers whenever an emergency signal would wake the staff. Waking everyone allows you to avoid awkward questions about why you specifically are awake. The resulting confusion can also play to your advantage.

You've never seen anything quite like the thing that's out there on the ship. Nevertheless, you have encountered several experimental biological predator designs, and this thing has Unitech's Accelerated Research Division written all over it. You can tell because they always seem to rely on a handful of shared traits in their designs—particular bioengineered features they have patented. It makes it easier to control their IP, but also gives them away to the skilled observer.

Jessie Bowdoin: Memory III

It's all coming back now. You were in a cheap rental hab in Medyen Aleqmer, the largest colony on Luna, when you were offered the job. You were woken up for it in the middle of the night cycle. It was a special contract, high profile and dangerous. They came to you because you have a reputation for professionalism and discretion.

The target was the so-called Luna Slasher, a particularly vicious serial killer that had been operating on Luna for almost fifteen years. At least seven deaths were attributed to the Slasher. Each had been killed with some sort of sharp instrument. You'd seen pictures of the victims. It was really gruesome stuff.

The Slasher was smart, but not smart enough. The thing about serial killers is that once they get away with it enough they start to get sloppy. They start showing off. The Luna Slasher was no different. A face was picked up by a marketing cam just outside where the latest victim's body was found, and the associated screen was still playing targeted ads when security got there. With a little bit of sleuth work, colony security was able to trace the marketing metadata back to a resident by the name of Fallon Naysack. Security then sat about twiddling their thumbs as they waited for a warrant to be issued. In the intervening time the Luna Slasher slipped away.

That's when they called you in the middle of the night and offered you the contract. This must have been a really high profile case, because the money was good—almost too good. Of course you accepted the contact. But for a job like this you needed help, and so you called in Doug Colt.

While Doug was still getting up to speed, you traced the Luna Slasher to a Unitech ship called the Metus, which was scheduled to depart in only a couple hours. You immediately put in a request with Unitech to hold the ship, but it was promptly denied. Apparently the security contractor for Medyen Aleqmer is an ally of the Mars Servs. Due to the ongoing tiff between Unitech and those Servs, the corp decided that cooperation with their enemy's ally was not in order. The Luna Slasher getting away might even serve Unitech's interests if it would embarrass the security contractor enough for them to lose the contract. Come to think of it, that's probably why the contractor was willing to pay so much. That's politics for you.

Whatever the case, Unitech wouldn't hold the ship, but Doug Colt had your back. He managed to score some last minute tickets for the same ship, and the two of you set off with the rest of the passengers. You could continue the hunt after all.

Here's what you know: The Luna Slasher is on board. None of the faces here match the one picked up by the marketing cam, so the Slasher has likely paid for some sort of surgical alteration. Obviously, the Slasher will be going by an alternate name as well.

Now do the job you were hired to do. Bring your target back alive if possible, otherwise dead will have to do. Oh, and don't let the tiff between Unitech and the Mars Servs get in the way.

Shadows Over Sol

Name Jessie Bowdain

Geneline Budget Upgrade

Subculture Entro

Stats

Strength	Dexterity	Speed	Endurance	Intelligence	Perception	Charisma	Determination
4	**6**	**3**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**4**	**5**
2	E1p	3	E5p	1	E2	2	E0	2	E0	3	E5	2	E2	2	E5p

Skills

Athletics 1	Conspiracy 1 / Corp Secrets	Guns 2	Melee 1 / Fists	Program 1
Awareness 3	Crafts 1 / Welding	Investigate 3	Naturalist	Socialize
Bio-Sci	Deception	Lib-Arts	Ordnance	Stealth 1
Bureaucrat	Empathy 3	Mechanic 1 / Sensors	Persuade	Thievery 2 / Electronic Locks / Pick Pocket
Comp-Ops 2	Engineer	Medic 1 / First Aid	Phy-Sci	Vehicles

Languages

Cultures
Entro

Weaknesses

Computers & Software | Rating

Implants

Endurance

Gear

Encumbrance

Combat & Scores

Edge	Wealth	Lifestyle	Defense
6	4	4	8 / 16

Wounds

			DR	Shock
Light	-1	☐☐☐☐☐	0	10
Moderate	-2	☐☐☐☐☐	Total Wounds	Wound
Severe	-3	☐☐☐☐☐		4
Critical	-4	☐☐☐☐☐		

Consequences

Arms

Arm	Attack	Damage			
Fists	+ 5	♠ 12L	♥ 8L	♦ 4L	♣ 2L
Properties		+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ / ♣
Properties		+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ / ♣
Properties		+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ / ♣
Properties		+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ / ♣

Armor

Armor	DR	Properties

Blake Colby

Description

Blake Colby is tall with handsome facial features, and an elegant posture. Blake's stasis gown is obviously a personal garment, and is of a higher quality than the others.

Background

You are Blake Colby, Assistant Vice-President of Unitech's Accelerated Research Division. You're not quite top brass at Unitech, but you're in the upper echelons of middle management. That means you're about five steps up the food chain from the usual peons that run things on this ship. This ship—the Metus—is also part of the Unitech commercial empire.

You knew when you first stepped foot on the Metus that it would be your ass on the line. It's a new ship and everything should be running like clockwork. It's not. You've woken up early from stasis, the emergency lighting is

on and an alarm keeps sounding. That's pretty far from "operating as expected." Obviously, this is a problem, and you have to ask yourself two questions: Can any of the blame for this be pinned on you? And if so, how can you cover your ass and pin the blame on someone else?

Unitech has been in an extended conflict with a group of Servs on Mars in recent years. Each group has been maneuvering for economic advantage and strategic positioning. It's just a matter of time before the ongoing cold war escalates to a physical conflict. The Mars Servs would make a good scapegoat if you need one.

You had better get out there and bust some balls: Figure out what the problem is, figure out who is to blame and figure out why that can't be you. Make sure people see you fixing things. With any luck you can spin this into a tale about how you personally prevented loss of company resources and saved the day. That's a promotion-worthy story there.

Blake Colby: Memory I

You now remember why you are on board this ship. You're here to oversee the transport and deployment of Theta Project, one of Accelerated Research Division's newest ventures. This project is one you've tied yourself to closely. It's success or failure will make or break you in the eyes of the corp, which means it will make or break your future livelihood. The success of Theta Project is essential.

This will be, in fact, the first real-world deployment of the Theta Project. You are here to oversee it personally. You're not a scientist, engineer or other assorted lab rat. The technical details don't concern you so much as the big picture. You're a project manager. You need to make sure nothing screws this up. This situation with the ship is already complicating things.

You know that in the engine pod—under lock and key—is the control box for Theta Project. You put it under Captain Wulandari's personal care since you weren't going to trust it to some lowly steward. Besides, the captain would be in a position to be awakened and check on it before you would—or at least that was true in theory. Now that this incident is happening, you will need to do whatever you can to ensure that the control box is once again in your custody.

The control box is a small remote control-sized object with a couple different buttons and an indicator. It should be located in the captain's personal safe, near her stasis pod in the core of the ship. You need to ensure that this control box is still in working order, otherwise Theta Project—and your livelihood—is dead in the water.

Blake Colby: Memory II

Shit. You were the one who had that thing brought on board. That creature is the end result of years of intensive development, research and bioengineering. That creature is Theta Project.

Accelerated Research Division performs all sorts of weaponized biological experimentation, and that creature is the latest and the greatest. It's a walking whirlwind of death being readied for potential use in the conflict between Unitech and the Mars Servs. You had the funding secured for this project personally.

But the creature shouldn't have free reign of the ship! It should be secretly stowed away in its own industrial strength stasis pod. It should have safeguards. The safeguards should have safeguards! How did it get out?

Think… What were they saying at all of those engineering briefings? The control box should have some sort of sway over the creature. You just have to figure out how to work it without anyone pinning the blame on you.

You've also noticed something about the steward, Taylor. Not a lot of people would notice this, but you can see in Taylor's face that he's had it reconstructed recently. You see that a lot in the aftermath of Accelerated Research Division experiments. What's he hiding? Maybe you can use that as some sort of leverage.

Blake Colby: Memory III

Theta Project performed admirably in lab tests. Once loosened, other lab subjects didn't stand a change against its speed and physical prowess. After three years in development, Theta Project was green-lit to go to the final stage of trials: controlled released in a non-lab environment.

Preparations were made. A spaceship was chosen as the release environment. One of Unitech's new UT-389's would serve as an ideal environment for deployment because of the isolation each of the modules has from the core ship. The creature would be deployed in one of the passenger modules, while the team charged with studying its deployment would travel in a different passenger module. Safeguards could also be put into the ship's computer so that the creature could not escape.

As you had overseen this project from the very beginning, you selected yourself and Dr. Kravis to oversee Theta Project's first real world deployment. The two of you secured passage on the Metus in Passenger Module A, and saw that Theta Project was stowed away safely in stasis in Passenger Module B. You talked to Captain Wulandari, ensuring her cooperation in magnetically sealing Passenger Module B. Everything was ready to go.

There was a close call when the Metus was leaving port at Luna. A request was put in to hold the ship and search thoroughly for an escaped criminal. Of course, that may have also resulted in the discovery of Theta Project, so you pulled last-minute strings and saw that the request was denied.

You also had plans put in place for the arrival of the ship at Miskan Station. Unitech ships are on standby there to intercept the Metus before it makes port. They should be ready to clean up the mess, take away any evidence of the project, neutralize the creature and deliver the experiment's results to your team. Bulletins have also been put in place blaming any loss of life on the Mars Servs. All you have to do is make port in Miskan Station, and everything should be salvageable.

The *thing* was never meant to escape Passenger Module B.

There is a risk taken with any real world deployment that unforeseen variables can cause unexpected behavior. Phrases like "extraordinary circumstances," "multiple x-factors" and "variables beyond our control" should serve you well when explaining this deployment to your superiors in the corp. This isn't the first time you've released a bioweapon on an unsuspecting population, and now you just need to save yourself so that it won't be the last. It would also be beneficial if you can salvage as much data from this experiment as possible. The scientists can go through it later. There's bound to be something there that would be useful in saving the project. Everything from this point on is damage control.

There can be no damage control if you are dead. So there you have it: Save yourself. Salvage what data you can. Ensure the ship reaches Miskan Station. Think of some good excuses to save the project, and cover your own ass.

Shadows Over Sol

Name Blake Colby

Geneline Celebrity Deluxe

Subculture Former

Stats

Strength	Dexterity	Speed	Endurance	Intelligence	Perception	Charisma	Determination
4	**4**	**7**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**6**	**5**
2 / E1p	2 / E3p	3 / E5p	2 / E1p	3 / E0	3 / E4	3 / E4	2 / E0p

Skills

Athletics 1	**Conspiracy** 2	**Guns** ____	**Melee** ____	**Program** ____
Running				
Awareness ____	**Crafts** ____	**Investigate** ____	**Naturalist** ____	**Socialize** 3
Bio-Sci 1	**Deception** 2	**Lib-Arts** 2	**Ordnance** ____	**Stealth** 1
	Blatant Lies			Opportunistic Dash
	Half-Truths			
Bureaucrat 3	**Empathy** 1	**Mechanic** ____	**Persuade** 3	**Thievery** ____
File Complaints			Bargaining	
Secure Funding			Fast-Talk	
Comp-Ops 1	**Engineer** 1	**Medic** ____	**Phy-Sci** ____	**Vehicles** ____
Databases				

Languages

Cultures

Former

Weaknesses

Computers & Software   Rating

Implants

Endurance

Gear

Encumbrance

Combat & Scores

Edge	Wealth	Lifestyle	Defense
6	7	8	8 / 17

Wounds		DR	Shock
Light -1 ▢▢▢▢▢		0	10
Moderate -2 ▢▢▢▢▢		Total Wounds	Wound
Severe -3 ▢▢▢▢▢			4
Critical -4 ▢▢▢▢▢			

Consequences _____

Arms

Arm	Attack	Damage			
Fists	+ 2	♠ 12L / ♥ 8L / ♦ 4L / ♣ 2L
Properties					
	+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties					
	+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties					
	+	♠ / ♥ / ♦ / ♣
Properties					

Armor

Armor	DR	Properties

Casey Spenner

Description

Casey Spenner is small and wiry, with a crumpled stasis gown, big eyes, spindly arms and greasy-looking hair.

Background

Everyone else is waking up from stasis now. You need to think quickly. You've been out of stasis for some time, although you weren't supposed to be. You have a job to do. That job must be kept secret while it is completed.

Let's start at the beginning: Three hours ago you were woken from stasis by a remote signal. You were able to do this because you compromised the ship's systems before the voyage. If Unitech finds out they will try to kill you. This signal is an indicator that Unitech and the Mars Servs are now at war. There's been bad blood between these two groups for some time, so it's hardly surprising. The signal means the conflict has just gone from cold to hot.

You're involved in this because you are a spy working for the Mars Servs. You have been planted aboard this Unitech ship—the Metus—in order to discretely hijack it. Your mission is to wake up if signaled, make your way to the ship's core and plot a new course. You have been instructed to reroute the ship to

Mars instead of its usual destination of Miskan Station in the Belt. Once the ship arrives at Mars, the Servs there should have several vessels standing by to intercept the Metus, take control of the situation and debrief you.

Everything that has been mentioned so far—aside from arriving at Mars—you have accomplished in your last three hours awake. The final part of your mission is to cover up all evidence of tempering. No proof means no one compromises your mission or tries to regain control of the ship before its arrival at Mars. That, however, is where things begin to get complicated.

When you woke three hours ago it was not unexpected. You took most of the first hour getting over the worst of the stasis sickness, and then confirmed that the signal you received indicated war between the Mars Servs and Unitech. You made your way up the hatch in the passenger deck, past the steward's deck, past the luggage deck and into the core of the ship. There you located the cockpit and began your work rerouting the Metus to Mars. That's also when things began to go horribly wrong.

To bypass the security on the ship's operating system, you needed to do a hard reboot. That means the ship had to power down for a few seconds as the whole computer

system restarted. The lights dimmed, the system began to come back online, and when it came up the computer showed a warning light for Passenger Module B.

You ignored the warning light for a while. Whatever the cause, it would likely trigger the ship's steward in that module to wake up. It would also take some time for the steward to overcome their own stasis sickness. You still had plenty of time to deal with the situation.

As you finished plotting the new course to Mars, you began to feel like someone else was in the ship's core with you. You know that feeling you get when the hairs on the back of your neck stand up—like someone is watching? That's how you felt. Just to make sure you were alone, you looked around and didn't find anyone. You even checked on the captain and engineer in stasis. They were both still fast asleep.

That's when the power suddenly went out. The emergency lighting flashed on, the alarm began to sound, and you only had a few seconds to act.

You made a dash back to Passenger Module A, reaching the module just as the emergency doors were beginning to shut. To your surprise, everyone in the module was beginning to wake up from stasis—which isn't standard procedure. In an emergency situation, typically only the crew are woken up.

That raised a bit of an alarm in your mind. Maybe someone else on the ship was awake and about? Whatever the case may be, the fact that everyone was waking up made it easier to hide that you had been awake already. Thinking quickly, you rushed to your stasis pod and crawled inside, making it seem as if you were rising alongside everyone else.

In the stasis pod, you had a few moments to collect your thoughts and think through the current situation: You have a better idea what's going here than anyone else. You have the decided advantage that you've been out of stasis longer, and thus are ahead of the curve recovering from stasis sickness. The ship is already on course to Mars, and you just need to ensure it continues on its present course. No one else should know that the Unitech-Mars Serv conflict just went hot. No one else knows that you're a spy.

Now it's time to do damage control and cover your tracks. Your stasis pod will likely indicate that you've been awake for hours if anyone with technical knowledge queries it. That's some data you will need to erase. Finding out who else may have been awake and what they know is also a good place to start.

Casey Spenner: Memory I

You've had some time now for a few remaining memories to come back and some time to go over the situation in your head.

If you want to cover your tracks, you will need to eliminate three key pieces of evidence: The first are the diagnostics on your stasis pod—these you remembered earlier. The next are the navigation logs in the ship's main computer. These can only be accessed from the cockpit in the ship's core. Once in the core, hacking in to remove them shouldn't be too much of an issue. You just need to physically get there.

The last piece of evidence is the security feeds that take footage of the ship. These will clearly show you coming out of stasis and moving about the ship early. For security purposes, you cannot overwrite these by computer command. You will have to physically access the data block located in a wall and remove the data chips. These data blocks should be located near the cockpit and in one of the upper decks of Passenger Module A. Both will need to be removed due to the modular nature of the ship.

Casey Spenner: Memory II

Having accessed the computer systems on the Metus before, you've looked through a lot of the ship's log files. As your final memories are coming back, something has just occurred to you about a couple of them: The logs indicated unusual data access on the ship's computer systems just before the start of the voyage. What's occurred to you is that the ID number for which these accesses were keyed matches the ID of Jessie Bowdain in the ship's registered passenger logs. This is evidence that either Jessie Bowdain—or someone posing as that identity—accessed the ship's computers before you even touched them. But to what end?

Another very useful memory has also come back to you: You now remember a resource you can call upon to defend yourself. Embedded in your left arm is a small gun implant. It's a holdout gun, designed more for concealment than for any real stopping power, but it should do the trick—especially if you can gain the element of surprise (see the gun stats below).

Note: Stats for the implant are as follows.
- **Damage:** ♠12M/♥8M/♦4M/♣2M. *Properties:* Range 10; Reload 2; Shots 3.

Casey Spenner: Memory III

Having been out of stasis longer than the rest of the survivors here, you have already regained most of the memories that you have to regain.

Still, you need to keep to your goal. If it's discovered that you rerouted the ship to Mars and the ship is rerouted back to Miskan Station, you will likely be captured and killed upon arrival. Unitech doesn't take kindly to those that interfere with their commercial interests.

Shadows Over Sol

Name: **Casey Spenner**

Geneline: **Spacer's Standard** Subculture: **Techno**

Stats

Strength	Dexterity	Speed	Endurance	Intelligence	Perception	Charisma	Determination
3	**5**	**5**	**2**	**8**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1 E0	2 E5	2 E5	1 E0	4 E2	2 E1p	3 E4	3 E3p

Skills

Athletics ____	Conspiracy 2	Guns 1	Melee ____	Program 3
				Cracking
				Decryption
Awareness ____	Crafts ____	Investigate ____	Naturalist ____	Socialize ____
Bio-Sci ____	Deception 3	Lib-Arts 2	Ordnance ____	Stealth ____
Bureaucrat ____	Empathy ____	Mechanic 2	Persuade ____	Thievery ____
Comp-Ops 3	Engineer 2	Medic ____	Phy-Sci 1	Vehicles 2
Databases			Orbital Mechanics	Passenger Ship
Surveillance				Groundcar

Languages

Cultures

Techno

Weaknesses

Computers & Software

Rating

Implants

Endurance ____

Gear

Encumbrance ____

Combat & Scores

Edge	Wealth	Lifestyle	Defense
7	5	5	7 / 15

Wounds

Light	-1	☐☐☐☐☐
Moderate	-2	☐☐☐☐☐
Severe	-3	☐☐☐☐☐
Critical	-4	☐☐☐☐☐

DR	Shock
0	9

Total Wounds	Wound
	2

Consequences ____

Arms

Arm	Attack	Damage			
Fists	+ 2	♠ 9L	♥ 6L	♦ 3L	♣ 1L
Properties					
	+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ /	♣
Properties					
	+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ /	♣
Properties					
	+	♠ /	♥ /	♦ /	♣
Properties					

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Shadows Over Sol

Two hundred years from now what should be the shining beacon of the future is instead cloaked in conspiracy and horror. Humankind has expanded throughout the solar system, and there it has discovered mysteries older than humanity.

The culture has shattered into myriad subcultures; nation-states are the hollow shells of what they once were. Corporations and other groups wage small-scale wars in the streets or in space. Bioengineered horrors left over from these conflicts stalk the hulls of ruined stations and abandoned colonies.

But for an enterprising team willing to brave the horrors, there's always a profit to be made.

Shadows Over Sol is a hard-science fiction horror roleplaying game set in our own solar system. This quick-start includes:

- A brief overview of the *Shadows Over Sol* setting.
- A complete sci-fi horror scenario designed for a single evening's play.
- Four pre-generated player characters, including all stats and background information.
- All of the game rules necessary to play the included scenario, as well as to give players a taste for the *Saga Machine* system.