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The Road To Retaliation

Printing Instructions.

If you would like a hard copy of the game instructions, game events and epilogues, please print the following pages. These are designed in order to take players through the sequence of :

Board set up , game instructions, game events, winning conditions and epilogues.

And in doing so make game play more ergonomic.

Once Winning conditions have been read, page 18, the text will guide players to which epilogues to read.

Print pages **4 - 30**



Catch 22 Out of the Frying Pan.

If Facility A was not destroyed turn the page otherwise read on.

Witness personal data log 005

“I passed on what I knew about the things we had learnt about the intruders to the Response Team, but that was a fucking waste of time, some clown has blown Facility A sky high. The CEO is not going to be pleased that place was his pride and joy. In fact the CEO is currently incandescent because Facility-B, has also gone quiet. I think he is intending to “make an appearance” in anticipation of having to deal with some tough questions from the authorities. Good move, that way the Corporation can have a presence while we get back on track with Mothers journey. And as for Facility-B well I figure either the competition is being extremely proactive or somebody hasn’t been paying the best attention to quarantine rules. Either way it isn’t my problem.”

Turn to page 6.



Witness personal data log 005

“I passed on what I knew about the things we had learnt about the intruders to the Response Team, who are now on clean up duty at Facility-A. They are real professionals that place will be as clean as a newly minted laser pistol. In the meantime the CEO was making some other preparations in regard to Facility-B, which now too has gone quiet. I think he is intending to “make an appearance” in anticipation of having to deal with some tough questions from the authorities. Good move, that way the Corporation can have a presence while we get back on track with Mother’s journey. And as for Facility-B well I figure either the competition is being extremely proactive or somebody hasn’t been paying the best attention to quarantine rules. Either way it isn’t my problem.”



Choosing the Intruder type.

Prior to providing background information for this Scenario it is important to establish which Intruder is to be faced and which Characters are going to be in play. Thematically it would be logical to use the same Intruders as in Scenario 4, if the chosen Intruder is the same, then any discovered Intruder Weaknesses will be valid in this scenario and Characters can keep their knowledge. However, the choice is entirely up to the players. Intruders are either Night Stalkers' or Chrytids, these can be chosen by the players or decided randomly by throwing a six sided die, even numbers indicate the Intruders are Night Stalkers and odd numbers Chrytids. The number of Characters in play is the choice of the players and is limited to a maximum of five.

If the Character pool **does not** contain any survivors from Scenario 4 termed **Lockdown Survivors** please read the printout Scenario 5 Introduction 2 or turn to page 12.

The following text also explains how the Character pool can be set up. The Character pool is not only important to maintain the narrative but also for what information is provided to players with specific Character types.

Character set up

Characters in this game consist of three possible types **Lockdown Survivors**, **Nemesis Survivors** and **Facility Workers**. These three types are fully described below.

The pool of Characters in play must not exceed five and the priority for assigning Characters to the pool of Characters in play is, 1) Lockdown Survivors, 2) Nemesis Survivors, and, finally 3) Facility Workers. If the combination of Lockdown Survivors and Nemesis Survivors causes a clash with Character colour type, i.e Soldier plus Survivor then ignore the Lockdown Rules and keep the Characters that have survived previous scenarios. If Facility Workers are required in the Character pool then these Characters must follow the rules for maintaining a balance in colour "type".

a) **Lockdown survivors** are any surviving Characters from Scenario. If you are playing a Lockdown Survivor competitively in this campaign you cannot simultaneously play a Nemesis Survivor or Facility Worker. As there may be a clash in these Characters objectives. If you are playing cooperatively then it is possible to play all Character types. Lockdown Survivors start the Game in Room 004.

b) **Nemesis Survivors** are Characters from who have escaped from the Nemesis. This number should not exceed one. If there are too many Nemesis survivors then use the Character Draft system to establish which Character remains in Scenario 5. The other Character(s) keep their VP and continue the campaign in Scenario 6.

For the sake of gameplay the number of Nemesis Survivors cannot increase the number in the Character pool to beyond five. If there are five Lockdown Survivors then there are no Nemesis Survivors in the game, thematically the Survivor's Escape Pods would have been diverted to Mother on the express instruction of the CEO where they are able to join the campaign with all their Victory Points intact in Scenario 6.



Nemesis Survivors start the game in the Isolation Room

c) **Facility Worker**. These are Lockdown Facility Worker Characters that are optional additions that can be used to balance the available Character pool. These Characters are to be chosen to compliment any Lockdown Survivors or Nemesis Survivors, as per the Lockdown Rule book. I.e to ensure there is no duplication of Character or Character type (e.g no two reds). Facility Workers start the Game in Room 004.



Introduction 1

This scenario continues the campaign story and character development on Mars, it picks up with the Lockdown Survivors as they are travelling across the Martian surface in their Rover. Players will be pitting their wits against Intruders and the vagaries of the Corporation's demands. Gameplay is based on the rules described in the Lockdown Rule Book and utilises the alternate side of the board. All relevant details for Scenario 5 are described below.

Player Information

The journey aboard the Rover is suddenly interrupted by a priority message relayed through the Rovers' console speakers. The stunned face(s) of the Lockdown Survivor(s) look deathly pale in the weak Martian light as they listen to what soon develops into very unwelcome news.

"This is the CEO now listen up we have a situation and The Corporation has need of your services again".

"It transpires that our sister Martian Facility, Facility-B, has just gone "off the map". The situation breaks down like this".

"Facility-B has gone quiet. No outgoing transmissions have been made and no responses to any enquiries have been received. Satellite data indicates that the normal surface activity and traffic between the Facility and the local space port has ceased. Unfortunately this Martian Facility is in part above ground unlike the restricted Facility that you have just so conclusively dealt with. Not only is Facility-B visible but it is part of a network of similar facilities that provide regular reports on weather, environmental and geological phenomena. So time is of the essence as the Martian authorities are aware of this unexpected shutdown and they will be sending their own investigation and medical team to establish what has caused this unprecedented situation, and, if necessary, effect remedial action."

"I need to know what is going, and if it is something impolitic then you, lucky team that you are, can consider yourself the Fire Brigade."

"This Rover is now being remote piloted to Facility-B you have about four hours to get some shut eye before you arrive. Your mission is to get there, thoroughly evaluate the condition of the Facility, and gain as much information as you can. If you are able to send a signal send it on the Corporate Band only, and if you find the Facility has been compromised by alien life then you know what you got to do.....nuke it."

"This is a Code Red Corporate Contingency condition."

"It's the only way to be sure."

"This is a team effort guys. All for one and one for all, as they used to say. If any one of you decide that it would be best to take the CSS exit route then I think it only fair that I explain the current situation. Mother is in high Mars Orbit, all her mining lasers are charged and her sensors are



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focused on Mars. All extra orbital pods resulting from CSS launch from Facility-B will be tracked and vapourised”.

“If you are feeling lucky and able, then feel free to gain as much information about what has transpired, you will be extremely well rewarded for such knowledge, or any biological items you can retrieve”.

“Once you have completed these instructions get back to the Rover and you will be remotely driven to the Space Port. A dedicated “Meet and Greet Team” will be awaiting to take care of any of your medical or nutritional requirements, and there is a VIP high speed shuttle waiting to take you to Mother for some well-earned R&R. There will be bonuses allocated to you on your arrival”.

*“Good luck and remember **exploit**, this situation, **expand** our knowledge and you will be **enriched**.”*



Board set up

Set up the Lockdown alternative board as per the Lockdown rules with the following six differences.

- 1) Place a random Room 2 tile face down at the board location where the Repository Room tile is shown in the Lockdown Rule Book on the Alternate Board.
- 2) Place an Environmental token on that Room 2 tile.
- 3) Place an Intruder Injury Counter on that Room 2 tile, this counter will be used to reflect the Items in the Room as defined by the Rooms Environmental token.
- 4) Place the Repository Room Tile on Room 009
- 5) Place the Rover outside Room 009
- 6) There is no need to distribute or manage Corporation Contingencies as they do not form part of this Scenario as the Corporation has made it very clear what objectives they want to see carried out.

All Lockdown Survivors have arrived at the Facility in the Rover. If the Intruders are the same species as encountered in Scenario 4 Characters keep their Knowledge and can they can use any discovered Intruder Weaknesses to their advantage. The Lockdown Survivors also keep their Heavy Items, and equipment from Scenario 4. All Wounds/Injuries have been removed and weapons loaded. Thematically this is explained by the Bunker in Scenario 4 having medical and surgical facilities akin to the Emergency and Surgery Rooms, as well as an armoury and engineering equipment store. Any Heavy Items that have been acquired can be left on the Rover, and can be re-acquired at the successful completion of this Scenario.

The Lockdown Survivors and any Facility Workers start the Scenario at Room 004 (an Exit Room). This Room is effectively The Repository as well as being an Exit Room. The Rover is placed outside Room 004 and it has sufficient fuel for a return journey to the local space port and or any local transport requirements between Facility Rooms. The Rover is roomy enough for ALL Characters in play. Cost of using the Rover must be paid by each prospective passenger, card cost is as described in Lockdown Rules Exit Room Actions. Characters accessing the Rover can either use it to drive to the Bunker and or a Facility Room, or can wait until another character has boarded before “driving off”.

Character Objectives

As per the Corporate Instructions received in the Rover time is of the essence in this scenario. The five objectives are communal and clear cut:

- 1) Explore all Rooms in Facility-B.
- 2) Set the Self Destruct.
- 3) Acquire Knowledge/Intruder Weaknesses and or Intruder Eggs/Corpses.
- 4) Find any Nemesis Survivor, and aid them in their survival.
- 5) Exit Facility-B in the Rover

Victory Points will be assigned to individuals for each Knowledge they gain in this scenario.



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For players wishing to take the option of the Lucrative Offer this opportunity is available under the same constraints as specified in Scenario 4, i/e Leave the Facility in a CSS with an Intruder Heavy Object. The Lucrative offer will be placed on the table at the appropriate game event.

For the first Character to meet the Nemesis Survivor read the printed file Nemesis Survivor, or turn to page 14.

For the first player to send a Signal, read the printout Signal Sent or turn to page 16.

Once you have successfully completed the game read the printout Introduction-1 Victory Points or turn to page 18.



Introduction 2

This Introduction is for a game where there are no Lockdown Survivors, Characters are confined to Nemesis Survivors and or Facility Workers. Gameplay is based on the rules described in the Lockdown Rule Book and utilises the alternate side of the board. All relevant details for Scenario 5 are described below.

Introduction 2 Board set up

Set up the Lockdown alternative board as per the Lockdown rules with the following seven differences.

- 1) Place a random Room 2 tile face down at the board location where the Repository Room tile is shown in the Lockdown Rule Book on the Alternate Board.
- 2) Place an Environmental token on that Room 2 tile.
- 3) Place an Intruder Injury Counter on that Room 2 tile, this counter will be used to reflect the Items in the Room as defined by the Rooms Environmental token.
- 4) Place the Repository Room Tile on Room 009
- 5) Place the Rover outside Room 009
- 6) There is no need to distribute or manage Corporation Contingencies as they do not form part of this Scenario as the Corporation has made it very clear what objectives they want to see carried out.
- 7) Create a Personal Objective deck out of the following cards:

Personal: Base Plans, Best Friends Forever, Goose Who Lays The Golden Eggs, Last Stand, Learn and Run, Solid Proof, The Great Hunt, Treasures are Buried Deep, Ultimate Knowledge.

Solo/Coop: Alien Compendium, Egg-Sample, No Stone Unturned, Proving Your Worth, Unconventional Medicine.

Distribute the cards as per Lockdown Objective rules.

All Facility Workers have arrived at the Facility in an “all-terrain” vehicle (The Rover) and start the game in Room 004 (an Exit Room). This Room is effectively The Repository as well as being an Exit Room. The Rover is placed outside Room 004. The Rover is roomy enough for ALL Characters in Play. Cost of accessing the Rover must be paid by each prospective passenger, Card Cost is as described in Lockdown Rules Exit Room Actions. There are no other Rovers available in this scenario. Characters accessing the Rover can either use it to drive to the Bunker and or a Facility Room, or can wait until another character has boarded before “driving off”.

If there are Nemesis Survivors, they start in the Isolation Room using the rules as defined in Lockdown (reverse side of the Board). are Characters from who have escaped from the Nemesis. This number should not exceed one. If there are too many Nemesis survivors then use the Character Draft system to establish which Character remains in Scenario 5. The other Character(s) keep their VP and continue the campaign in Scenario 6. Nemesis Survivors can acquire their quest item fully Activated, and all their previously owned Items for the cost of one Action in Room 004.



Character Objectives.

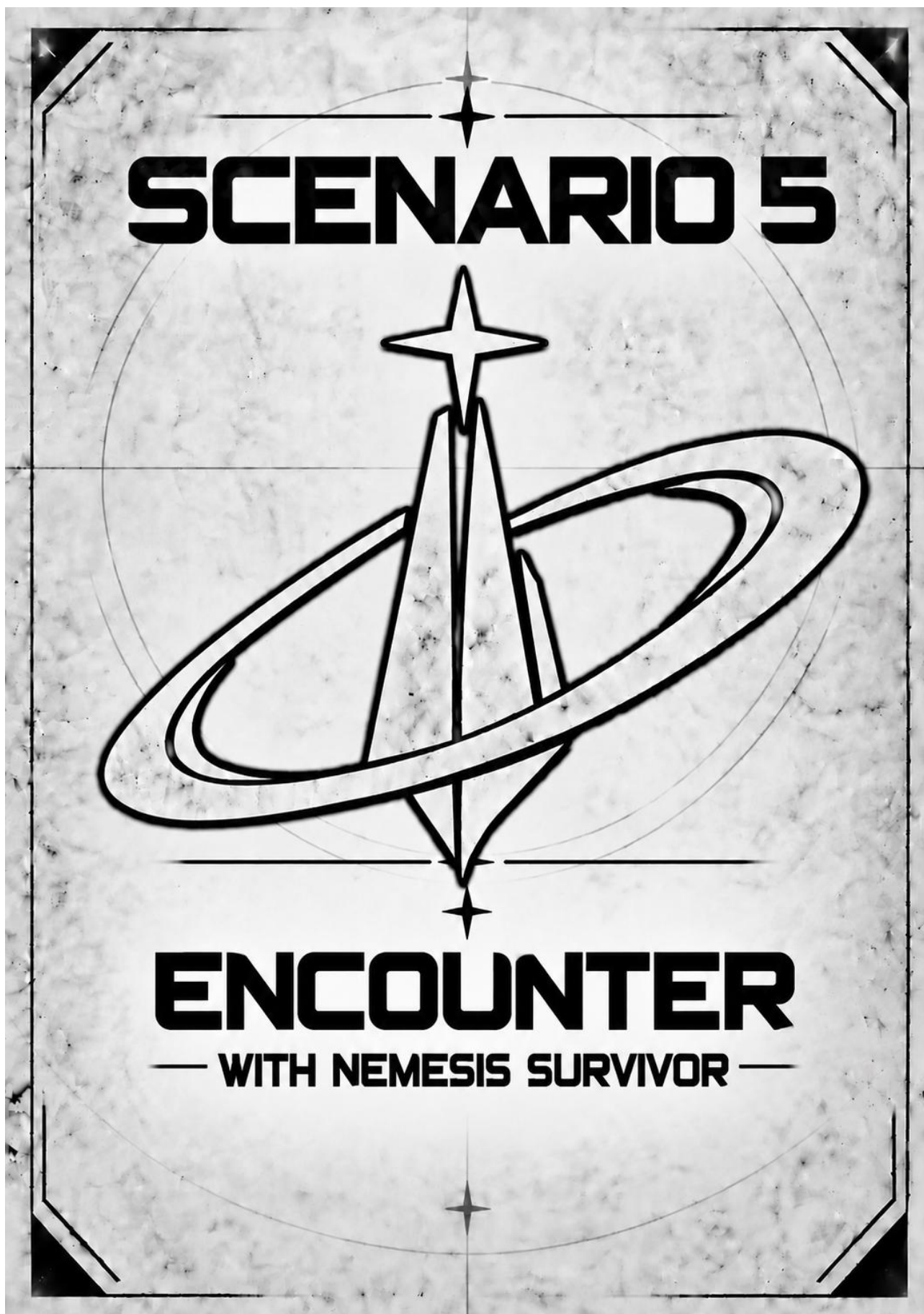
In this version of Scenario 5 the Characters are very much in the dark as to what is going on and what the Corporation wants achieved. There are no Corporate Contingencies in this scenario but each Character has their own Personal Objective as defined by the Objective Deck. Do not place the Lucrative offer on the table until directed to do so.

On first encountering the Nemesis Survivor read the printout file Encounter with a Nemesis Survivor, or turn to page 14.

If the Signal is sent that player reads the printout Signal Sent or turn to page 16.

As per winning conditions in the Lockdown rules, i.e complete your objectives and survive.

When the scenario is finished turn to page 18. Or read the printout Assigning Victory Points.



Encounter with a Nemesis Survivor



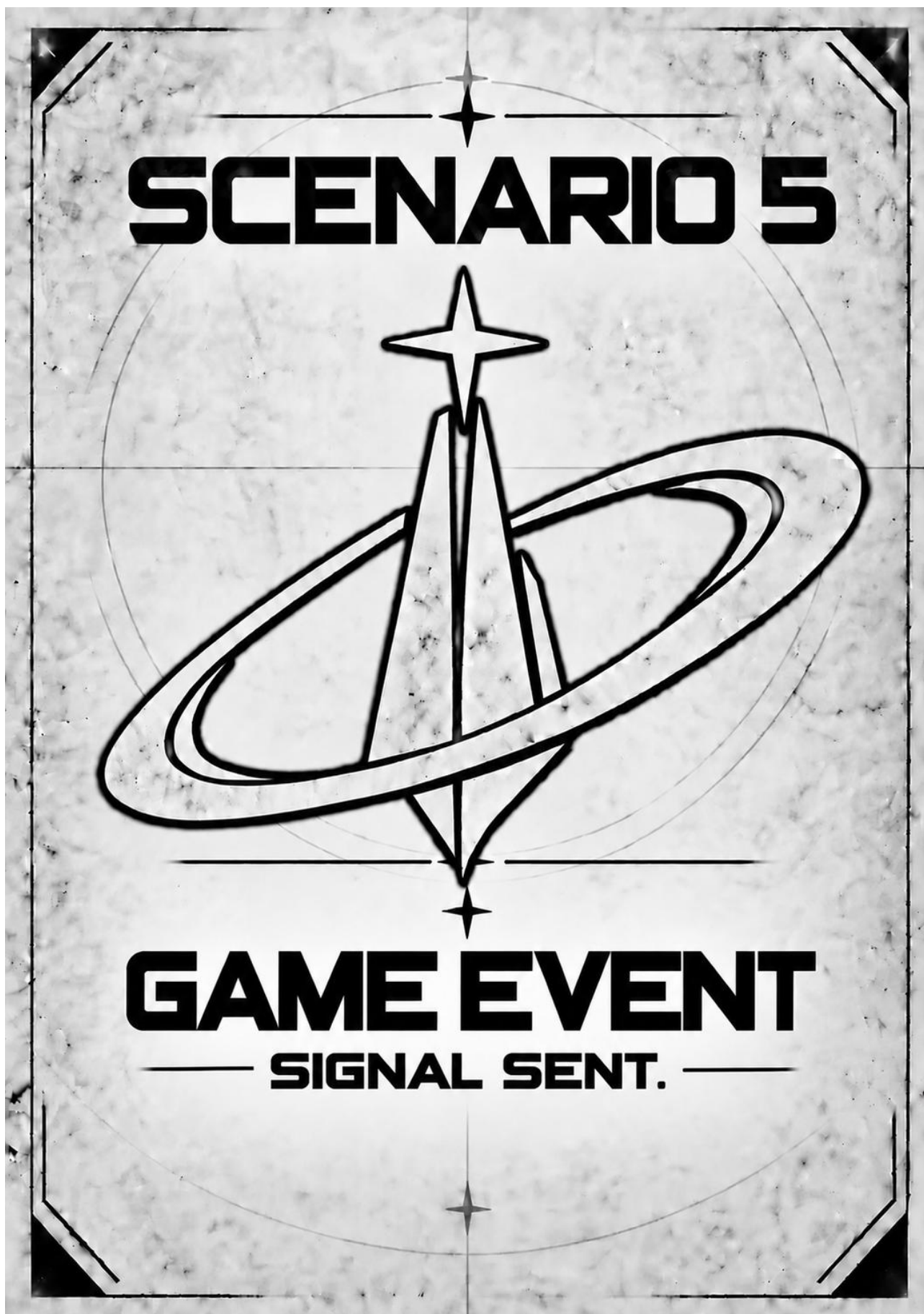
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On encountering a Nemesis Survivor and sharing your back stories it is very clear that the current situation at Facility-B is entirely due to the Corporation having been messing with alien life forms. Whether these life forms were smuggled in by the Corporation or were “acquired” by accident is not known. And quite frankly its not the fucking point.

Fucking around with alien biological is illegal, dangerous and arguably just plain stupid. But it’s also potentially extremely lucrative.

Place the Lucrative Offer on the table, the objective of which is to escape the Facility, by CSS with an Intruder Heavy Item.

Return to the game.





Signal sent

The player that sent the signal immediately gains two Knowledge and should read the following page. It is up to the player to keep the information to themselves or share it amongst their fellow players.

On sending the Signal there is an immediate reply, and it's not surprising that it is so quick Mother is in Martian orbit with all its sensors focused on Facility-B. The reply states that there has been a major breach of The facility which has been infested with a hostile alien lifeform. Added to this problem there is a government based "Rescue Team" coming to establish why The Facility has gone dark. The corporation would rather not have the government assume that it is responsible for the alien infestation and so the five Corporate Objectives are:

- 1) Explore all Rooms in the Facility.
- 2) Set the Self Destruct.
- 3) Acquire Knowledge/Intruder Weaknesses and or Intruder eggs/carcases.
- 4) Find any Nemesis Survivors.
- 5) Exit The Facility in the Rover located outside The Repository, an Exit Room, Room 004

If you want to keep the Corporation happy, ignore any other objectives you may have.

Return to the game.





Assigning Victory Points.

As per winning conditions in the Lockdown Rules you must complete your objectives and survive. However, please do not undertake a Contamination Check until directed to do so in the epilogue.

If Facility-B was not destroyed all Characters that survived, and remained on Mars, lose all their accumulated VPs and are left to face the inquisition of the local authorities. Gain three Quarantine Division Tokens and turn to Scenario 6 to find out what happens on the next step on the Road to Retaliation.

Any Survivors in play from Scenario 1,2 or 4 automatically gain 2 VP.

For successfully completing the Lucrative Offer immediately turn to the printout Epilogue Lucrative Offer or turn to page 21 .

For other Characters that survived they are to be legible for any of the underlying Victory Points conditions:

A single Victory Point will be assigned to each of the Characters that achieves any of the underlying :

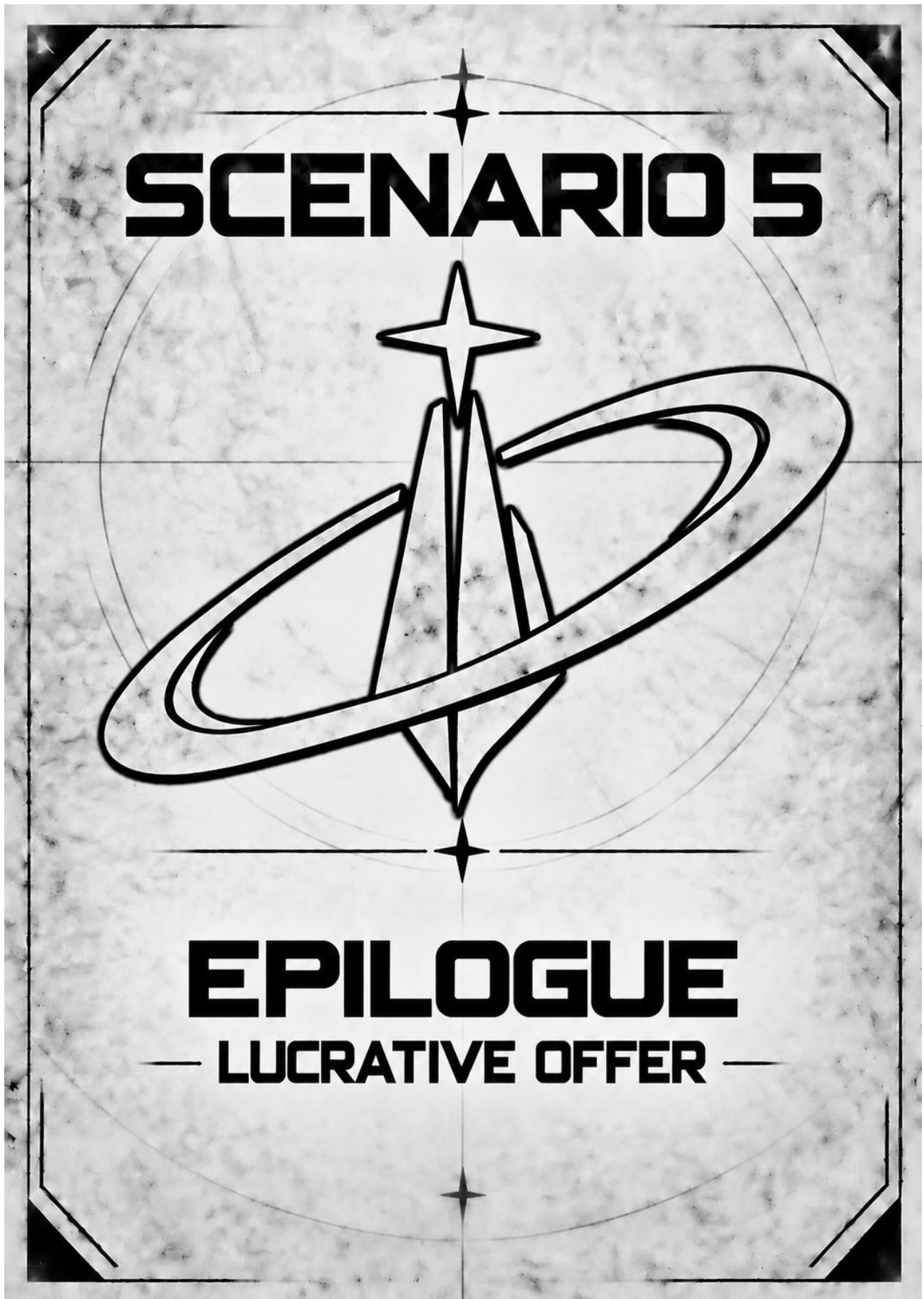
- a) Meeting a Nemesis Survivor.
- b) Learning an Intruder Weakness
- c) Gaining a knowledge
- d) Gaining an Intruder Heavy Item
- e) Each Personal Objective successfully completed if not already rewarded by a Corporate Objective.

For Characters that successfully deployed the CSS read the printout for Epilogue CSS or turn to page 23.

For Characters that survived in the Bunker read the printout for file Epilogue Bunker or turn to page 25.

For Characters that escaped in the Rover read the printout for file Epilogue Rover or turn to page 28.

For Characters that survived in the Isolation Room read the printout for Epilogue Isolation Room or turn to page 29.





Epilogue - The Lucrative Offer

“You have done it yes sir you have done it!” After years of careful infiltration you managed to hit pay dirt and got yourself on one of the Corporation’s Key missions. And boy have you hit the jackpot. You are on a ticket to ride straight back to your employee The Mega Corp and a big payout. Your last thoughts before the chemical cocktail slams you into oblivion is “What are they going to do with the egg, the choices are all beyond lucrative, a) Ransom it back to the Corporation, b) Sell it on the open market, c) or, 3) Bring it to Earth Governments attention for some serious Government kickbacks and the destruction of The Company’s main competitor.”

You are assigned 5 VP

But Hey!

You are not out of the woods yet:

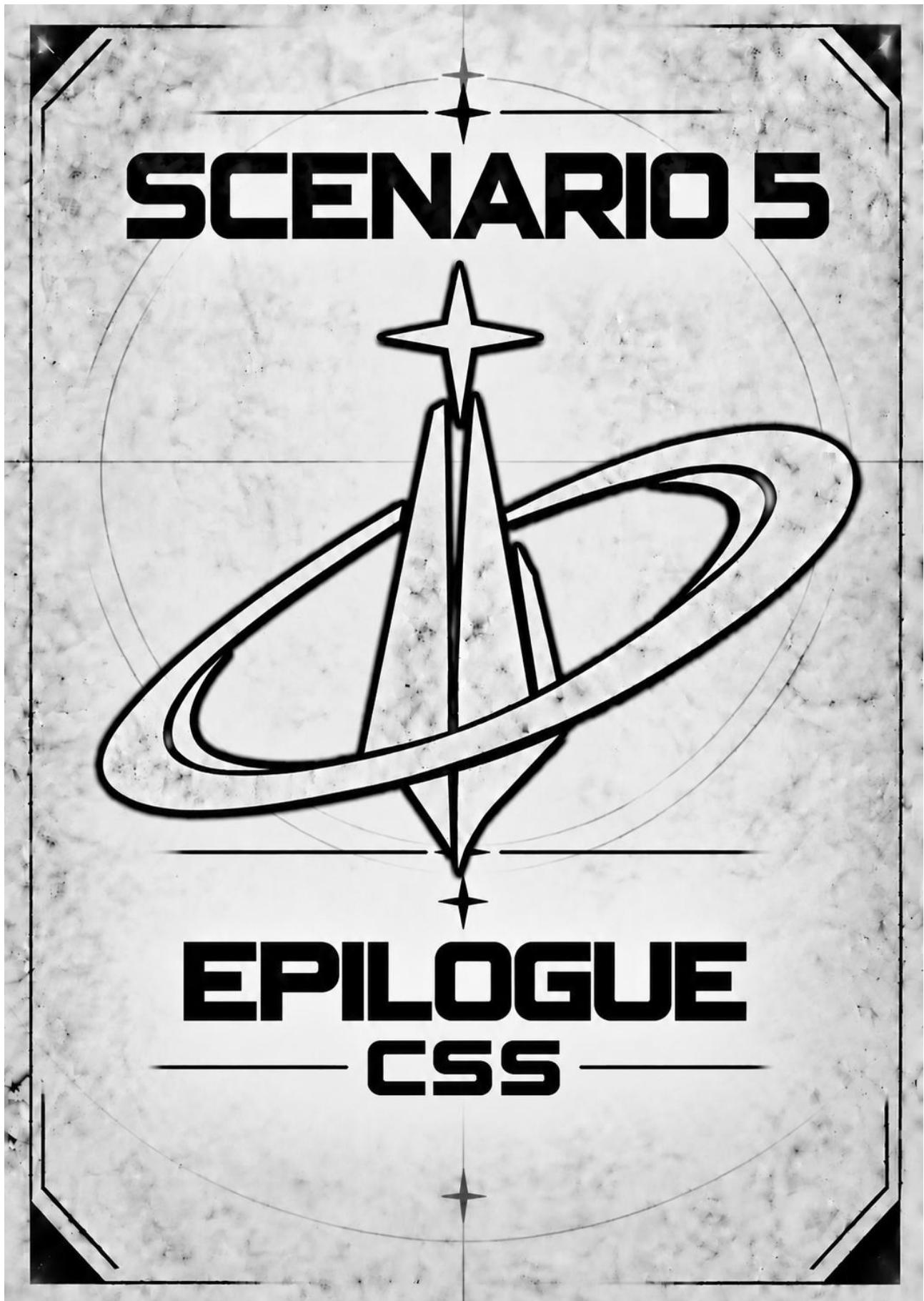
Roll a Red Combat Die: the results below determine your Characters future.

Any Intruder symbol – Mother has been tracking you and are vaporised by concentrated laser fire. You lose all VPs and play no further part in the Campaign.

Any hit - You are captured by a Mega Corp interceptor vessel before breaching the atmosphere. Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die lose all your VPs and Mega Corp is grateful to gain some accelerated learning courtesy of your corpse and its alien occupant. Gain a Mega Corp Token. If you pass the check then your mission is a complete success and you keep all your VPs. Your Character plays no further part in the campaign. Your next step on the road to Retaliation is Scenario 6 with new Characters and new dangers to be faced aboard Mother. Gain a Mega Corp Token.

Blank - You are picked up by an Earth government vessel. Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die lose all your VPs and gain a Quarantine Division Token. If you pass the check then you survive with your Victory points intact. Your Character plays no further part in this campaign, but you do “Spill the beans” about what you have experienced thus ensuring a new career, a very nice pension and the Quarantine Division developing an extremely active interest in The Corporation. Gain a Quarantine Division Token.

This is the end of Scenario 5, the story continues in Scenario 6.





EPILOGUE CSS SURVIVOR

“ You have done it yes sir you have done it!” You are on an express elevator out of hell. Your last thoughts before the chemical cocktail slams you into oblivion is “What can I make out of what I have seen and heard, the choices are, a) Report my experiences to the Corporation, not much choice there if I get picked up by a Corporation vessel, b) sell the information on the open market, risky but I’ll never have to work again, or, c) bring it to Earth governments attention for some serious government payout and an early comfortable pension”.

Your character survives with all their Victory Points.

Hey but wait just one moment!

You’re not out of the woods yet:

Roll a Red Combat Die to find out what happens next:

Any Intruder Symbol – Mother has been tracking you and you are vaporised by concentrated laser fire. You lose all VP and play no further part in the campaign. Scenario 6 follows the narrative with new Characters and a new location.

Single - You are picked up by a Corporate shuttle and taken to Mother. Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die lose all your VPs and scientists aboard Mother gratefully dissect your body and its Intruder occupant to learn two new Intruder Weaknesses. If you survive the test you manage to convince your colleagues that you had no choice but to take the CSS route. You keep your hard earned VPs. Feel free to trade them or bank them but do so ahead of reading Scenario 6, your next part in the campaign.

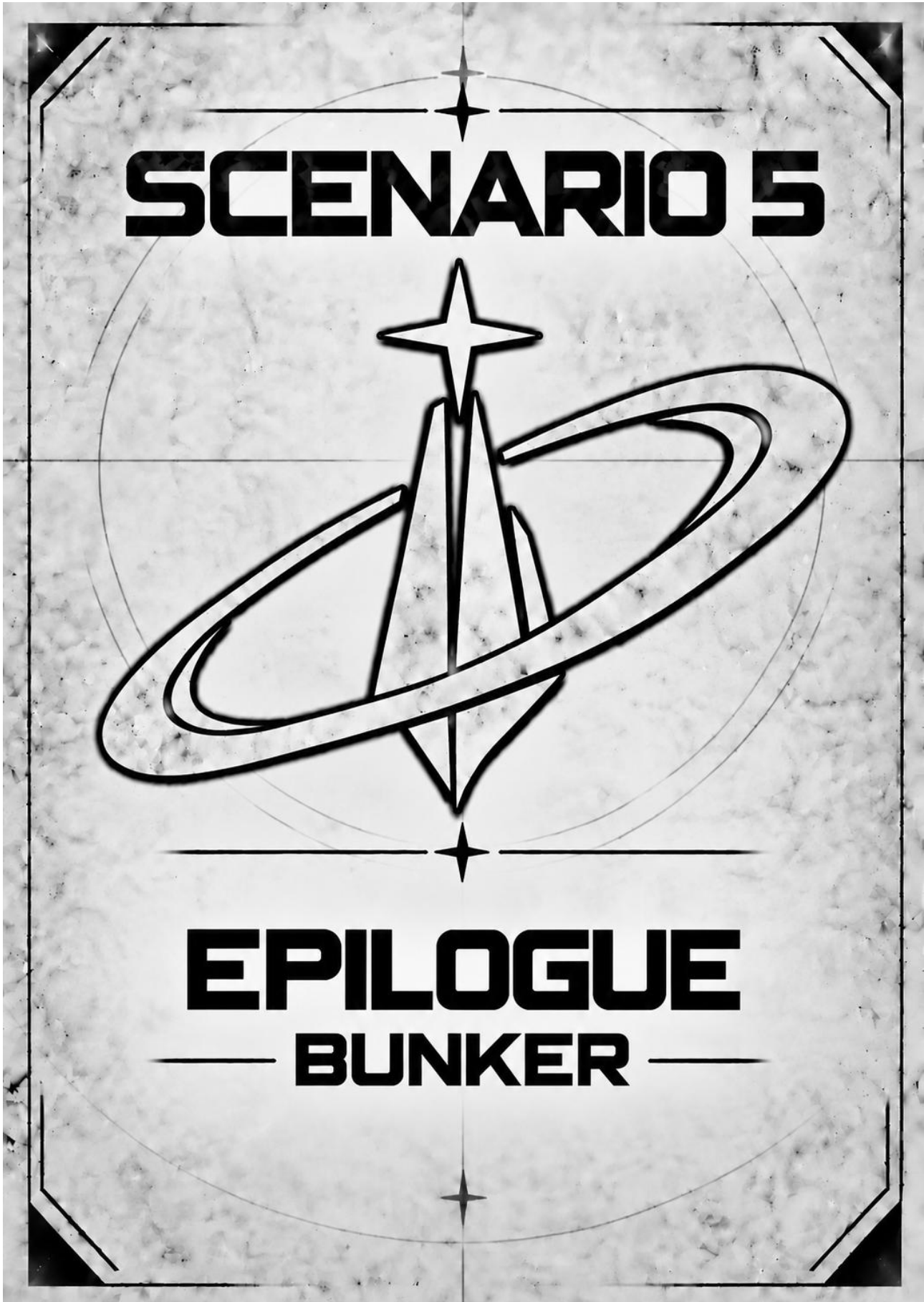
Double hit – You are picked up by a Mega Corp vessel. Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die lose all your VPs and Mega Corp is grateful to gain some accelerated learning courtesy of your corpse and its occupant. Gain an Mega Corp Token. If you survive the check your Character plays no further part in this campaign. The campaign continues as Scenario 6 with new Characters and a new location. If you have Token E or D or any Token-X Acquisition documents gain a Mega Corp Token

Blank - You are picked up by a Mars/Earth government quarantine vessel. Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die lose all your VPs and gain a Quarantine Division Token. If you pass the check you survive with your Victory Points intact. Your Character plays no further part in this campaign, but you do “spill the beans” about what you have experienced thus ensuring a new career, a very nice pension and the Quarantine Division developing an extremely



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active interest in The Corporation. You gain a Quarantine Division Token. If you have Token E or D or any Token-X Acquisition documents gain two Quarantine Division Tokens.



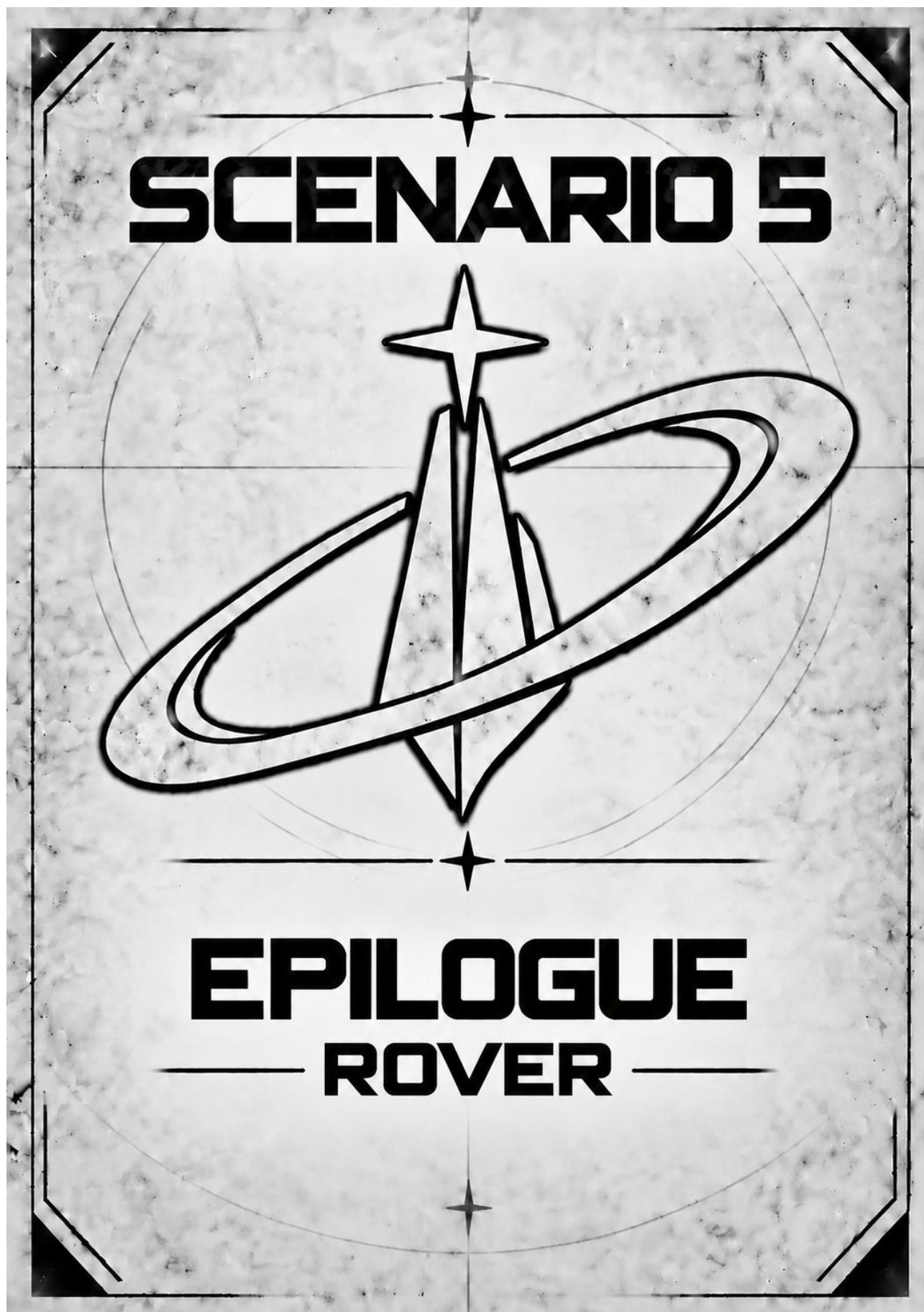
Introduction 2 Bunker Survivor



You made it, I mean *“What a rush.”* As you start investigating your surroundings you hear the unmistakable sound of the Bunker’s doors sliding open. Checking a nearby monitor you notice that a Rover is parked with engine running, and an access door opened. As you start to investigate this new situation and approach the open cabin door of the Rover you find yourself jump as a voice interrupts your thoughts. *“Congratulations very well done on your successful survival. You will be pleased to know that this back up Rover is under remote control by the Corporation. You will be transported to the local space port where you will be met by a “Welcome Team” who will deal with any of your immediate requirements, including the treatment of any medical issues. Once you are confirmed 100% fit and healthy you will be taken directly to Mother via a high speed VIP shuttle. On boarding Mother you will be personally met by the CEO where he will want to hear all about your experiences as well as rewarding you with a material slug of Corporation shares. So strap in, relax sit tight and enjoy the ride”.*

Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die and lose all your VPs. Meanwhile the Rover will continue its journey and representatives of the Corporation will be pleased to take your corpse and its occupant for further evaluation aboard Mother where two new Intruder Weaknesses will be uncovered.

If you survive the check then your Character keeps all their hard earned VPs and can trade them or bank them prior to reading the next Scenario. The campaign continues in Scenario 6, and your Character will be eligible to be part of the Character pool that will be set against the challenges in Scenario 6 “Mothers Tale.”





Epilogue- Rover survival

“The destruction of the Facility was total, Mars shocks were felt with violent force even in the Rover. I wonder how the big wigs are gonna explain that to Mars gov. Huh! who cares it isn’t my problem. Still..... I made it. I’m a survivor. Five hours to the space port then I’m out of here I got me a golden ticket, a one way ticket to Mother, reckon there’s gonna be some medals, tea and cake once they hear what I did, and what I found out, yes siree all’s well that ends better”.

Its time to take the Contamination Check, if you fail it then you die and lose all your VPs. Meanwhile the Rover will continue its journey and representatives of the Corporation will be pleased to take your corpse and its occupant for further evaluation aboard Mother where two new Intruder Weaknesses will be uncovered.

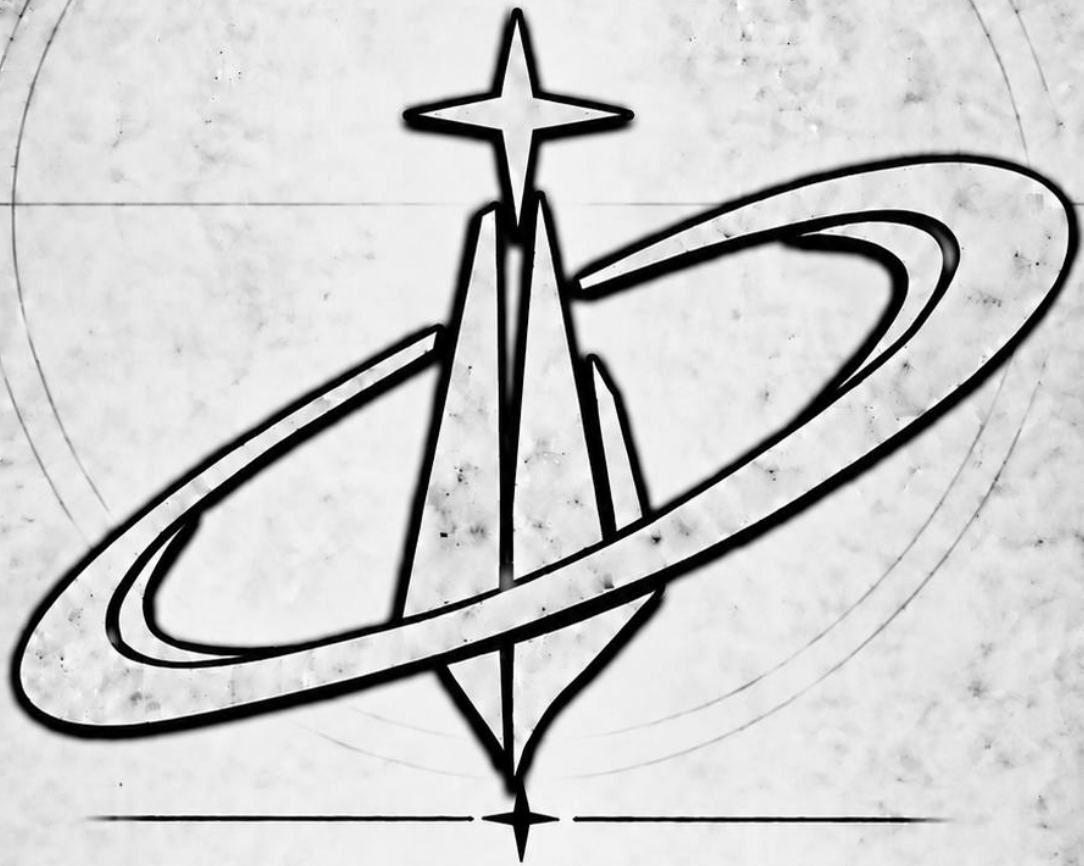
If you survive the check then your Character keeps all their hard earned VPs and can trade them or bank them prior to reading the next Scenario. The Campaign continues in Scenario 6, and your Character will be eligible to be part of the Character pool that will be set against resolving Scenario 6 “A Mothers Tale.”

If Facility-A survived and if a Mega Corp Token has been awarded in any Scenario Read Aftermath on page 38.

Otherwise proceed to Scenario 6.



SCENARIO 5



EPILOGUE

— ISOLATION ROOM —



Isolation Room survivor

If Facility-B has been destroyed you die and you lose all your accumulated VPs. The campaign continues as Scenario 6, with some new Characters and a new setting.

Its time to take that Contamination Check. If you fail the test you die and loose all your accumulated VPs but you do gain a Quarantine division Token.

If a Mega Corp Token has been awarded, anytime during this campaign, and Facility-A remains intact please turn to page 38.

Otherwise.....

The Isolation Room Door slides open and a Mars government investigation team stares in at you, their expressions of frank surprise can just be seen behind their Enviro-Suit face plates.

Its not long before you find yourself escorted to a military quarantine facility, and answering some very tough questions.

Your character keeps their Victory Points. For you the campaign is over. Gain 3 Quarantine Division Tokens.

The campaign continues as Scenario 6 with some new Characters and a new setting.



Plates

Nemesis Survivor.....	page 32
Facility B is destroyed.....	page 33
Isolation Room Survivor.....	page 34
CSS launch.....	page 35
Rover escape.....	page 36

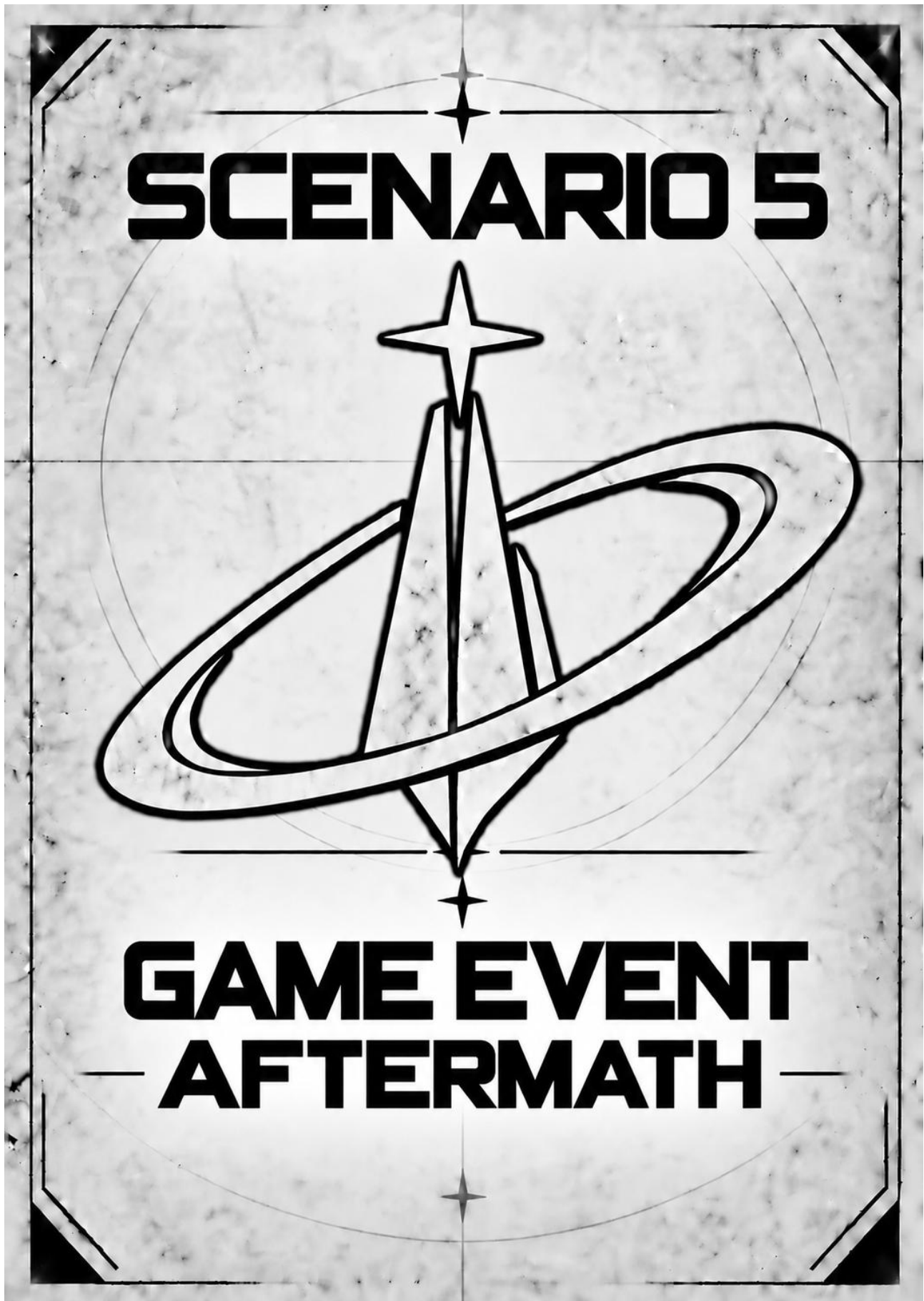














Aftermath.

Mars gov. had sent its own investigation team had been dispatched to Facility-B to determine the fate of its personnel and assess the extent of the reported emergency.

They found nothing.

Where the facility had once stood, there was only a vast crater of shattered concrete, twisted metal and red Martian regolith.

No bodies.

No wreckage that could explain the destruction.

No survivors.

The team had returned to the local spaceport with more questions than answers.

As the transport's ramp lowered, Captain Rodriguez and his team stepped onto the landing platform.

Waiting for them was a tall, white-haired man in an immaculate black suit.

Beside him stood a machine.

Humanoid. Silent. Motionless.

Its polished exterior reflected the harsh white lights of the landing bay.

The man smiled.

He extended a hand.

"Captain Rodriguez, I presume."

Rodriguez looked at the hand, then at the robot.

He ignored both.

The man lowered his hand without embarrassment.

"I am the CEO of the Corporation."

"I understand you have just returned from Facility-B."

Rodriguez said nothing.

The CEO glanced towards the transport.

"Tell me, Captain. What did you find?"

A moment of silence.

Then Rodriguez answered.

"Nothing."

The CEO's smile faded.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing alive."

The CEO looked towards his robot.

For the first time, his expression betrayed something other than confidence.

Concern.

Or perhaps calculation.

"I see."

He turned back to Rodriguez.

"Then perhaps you can understand why I am here."

He paused.

"My board will want to know what has happened. More importantly, they will want to know what is being done about it."

"Facility-B represented decades of investment. Billions of credits. Thousands of man-hours. It was built to serve the common good of the Martian colonists."

His voice hardened.

"Now it is gone."

He stepped closer.



“And I intend to find out why.”

A beat in time follows a beat laden with threat.

“This incident follows the hijacking of the Corporation's ship, Nemesis, and the unexplained launch of an escape pod. Now one of our most important facilities has been reduced to a crater.”

He looked directly at Rodriguez.

“Three incidents.”

A pause.

“One Corporation.”

His eyes narrowed.

“I smell sabotage.”

He glanced towards the vast Martian landscape beyond the spaceport.

“And I believe the authorities should be looking very closely at Mega Corp.”

He smiled thinly.

“After all, they appear to be the only organisation capable of benefiting from our recent losses.”

Rodriguez finally stepped forward.

He was a soldier, not a politician. A man accustomed to dealing with problems using bullets rather than boardrooms.

And he had no patience for corporate men who thought money made them untouchable.

“Now listen here, sir.”

The CEO raised an eyebrow.

Rodriguez continued.

“We were sent here because we had intel. Good intel. Intel that something wasn't quite right with the Corporation.”

“We suspected that missing escape pod was here on Mars. Hidden somewhere in a Corporation facility.”

A grim smile.

“Probably the one that just got blown to hell.”

The CEO stared at him.

For several seconds, there was only the distant hum of spacecraft engines.

Then he laughed.

Once.

Quietly.

There was no humour in it.

“Are you suggesting, Captain, that I ordered the destruction of a multi-billion-credit facility...”

He stepped closer.

“...to cover up an escape pod?”

Rodriguez said nothing.

The CEO's voice became colder.

“Because if that is what you are suggesting, then I recommend you reevaluate your thinking.”

He turned away and began walking slowly across the landing platform.

“Did you—or your authorising commander—actually track the escape pod to Facility-B?”

He stopped.

“Did you have a confirmed trajectory?”

Silence.

“A beacon?”

Another pause.

“An ion trail?”

The CEO turned back.

“No.”



He smiled.

“You guessed.”

Rodriguez's jaw tightened.

“You guessed because you could find no trace of the pod anywhere else.”

The CEO's eyes hardened.

“You haven't even found an old ion trail.”

He took another step towards Rodriguez.

“Or perhaps you simply haven't had the common sense to look.”

The robot moved.

Just one step.

Rodriguez's hand instinctively moved towards his weapon.

The CEO noticed.

Of course he noticed.

“Relax, Captain.”

The robot stopped.

“I am not your enemy.”

A pause.

“At least, not yet.”

The CEO straightened his jacket.

“I suggest you reevaluate your intelligence. When you have done so, I expect you—or a representative of your command structure—to report exactly what you have discovered here...”

He looked towards the horizon towards where the ruined remains of Facility-B would be.

“...and precisely what you intend to do about it.”

“My Response Team will conduct its own investigation of the Facility-B site.”

Rodriguez stared at him.

“And if I want to speak to you....Sir?”

The CEO smiled.

“You will find me here in the Imperial Suite.”

He began walking away.

After a few steps, he stopped.

Without turning around, he spoke one final time.

“Captain Rodriguez...”

A pause.

“If I were you, I would turn my attention towards Mega Corp.”

He glanced over his shoulder.

“Before you find yourself with egg on your face.”

The CEO walked away.

His robot followed.

Rodriguez watched them disappear into the shadows of the spaceport.

For a moment, nobody spoke.

Then one of the soldiers looked towards the crater where Facility-B had once stood.

“Captain...”

Rodriguez didn't look at him.

“What?”

“You believe him?”

Rodriguez stared into the Martian night.

“Not for a fucking second.”

“I'll report back to command I anticipate us moving onto Facility-A, another one of that Gentleman's facilities, and another likely repository for the pod and more alien biologicals.”

“Take five then get them mounted up, I expect we will be burning rubber and like how.”



The CEO watched from the advantage of his suits panoramic view, as Captain Rodriques and his team departed the space port and turned onto a route that was clearly towards Facility-A.

“Best of luck Captain you are onto a hiding to nothing”.

The CEO new that the Martian authorities would find nothing of significance at Facility-A, after all his Response Team had already been hard at work, bodies had been removed, data bases swapped out personal and personnel files re set and any evidence of Intruders long gone.

The CEO turned his attention sky ward and mused, “Take all the time you want Captain,

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