

2015 WINDHAMMER PRIZE FOR SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

Instrument of the Gods

AN ENTRY IN THE 2015 WINDHAMMER PRIZE FOR
SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

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This is a stand-alone, sci-fi adventure based on a larger free-roaming game experience that will span three titles (*New Star's Filth*, *Alpha's Shadows*, and *Utopia's Fantasies*).

Alpha's Shadows is available for free here:

<http://dirtyinstrument.wix.com/alpha>

The other two titles are currently being worked on.

Warning: This adventure contains mature content and is not suitable for young audiences.

"...Paris has another Paris under herself; a Paris of sewers; which has its streets, its crossings, its squares, its blind alleys, its arteries, and its circulation, which is slime..." - *Les Misérables*

The three men had kept a good distance from you at first but now about half hour after being noticed, they've given up on subtlety. Brushing shoulders with throngs of sweaty people in a crowded marketplace is not exactly your idea of a relaxing walk but then to have thugs tailing you makes it all the worse. Turns out defeated foes often don't get over their humiliation – sometimes they send hired muscle to take revenge. A glance back reveals the largest of the three, a muscle-bound man about 7 feet tall, now only a few steps behind you. His sheer size simmers caution through your body.

An old, rusted sign hangs loosely against a damp, brick wall to your right and reads "*Marché Central*." The voluminous chamber you're walking through is cluttered with tents, each showcasing its own wares for sale. Live acts are trying to eke out a living amongst it all – jugglers, acrobats, etc. A large, cast iron chandelier hangs from the chamber's ceiling, its many light bulbs charged by a patchwork of wires spreading away haphazardly across the ceiling over to various generators nailed against the walls. Under the bright lights, throngs of people scuttle about like rats, their noses trying to sniff out opportunities that might help them and their loved ones survive yet another, miserable day here. The stench of their sweat mixes with the stink of human feces and their shadows stretch and contract against brick walls as if in agony.

Several small speakers set up around the chamber have a recording playing on loop - a woman's voice repeats, "I am Queen Marie Henri, your one *true* God. Worship me and you shall see all that is good in life - disobey me and you shall be deemed a traitor and *killed*."

"Soothing," you quip to yourself and then spot a human corpse nailed against the chamber's rightmost wall by its wrists and thighs. A pool of blood collects below it. Graffiti sprayed on the wall alongside reads "*Méfiez-vous des traîtres!*"

"She's not joking - *frucking hell hole*," you whisper through gritted teeth, barely able to mask disdain for this place. A plump, bacteria infested fly slaps into your face just then as if in response to your condemnation causing you to take a step back into a puddle of dirty water, most likely human urine – New Star City definitely hates you as well. Your reflection stares back at you from within the rippling, yellow puddle - who do you see?

Choose one character and note his/her attributes on the Mission Sheet at the end of the gamebook. You will find each attribute's description there as well.

Jax Sypher (Height: 6'0", Weight: 160 lbs., Age: 28)

Base Marksmanship: 9
 Long-range weapon: Aon 190 Pistol (+1 *bonus*)
 Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 9
 Melee weapon: Knife (+1 *bonus*)
 Strength: 8
 Defense: 9
 Stealth: 5
 Intellect: 5

Charisma: 8
 Wanted: 9
 Money Upon You: \$0 Inter Planetary Dollars
 Explosive device 1: *none*
 Explosive device 2: *none*

Background: An ex-agent of the *Lunar Elite Forces*, Jax is well versed in mixed martial arts and the use of several ranged weapons. Framed for the murder of another agent, Jax escaped martial law's erroneous shackles and set course for a life less honorable than his past. He keeps a low profile due to the bounty on his head but does take on missions from the black market to keep his special skills honed and his pockets full.

Genesis Thorne (Height: 5'2", Weight: 110 lbs., Age: 21)

Base Marksmanship: 4
 Long-range weapon: G Pistol 10g (+1 *bonus*)
 Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 5
 Melee weapon: Dagger (+1 *bonus*)
 Strength: 6
 Defense: 8
 Stealth: 10
 Intellect: 8
 Charisma: 8
 Wanted: 5
 Money Upon You: \$20,000 Inter Planetary Dollars
 Explosive device 1: Pulse Grenade (-5 *enemy strength*)
 Explosive device 2: Pulse Grenade (-5 *enemy strength*)

Background: A brilliant hacker, Genesis belongs to an outlaw, underground organization known as *The Thievery Collective*. She revels in the challenge of breaking into highly secure facilities, physically and or digitally. Having been disowned by her family for dropping out of a prestigious Martian university to pursue the black market's fortunes, Genesis bounces around from place to place leaving havoc in her wake.

Apex Fassbender (Height: 6'3", Weight: 220 lbs., Age: 32)

Base Marksmanship: 9
 Long-range weapon: Aon 190 Pistol (+1 *bonus*)
 Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 8
 Melee weapon: Double-ended Scythe (+2 *bonus*)
 Strength: 10
 Defense: 8
 Stealth: 5
 Intellect: 10
 Charisma: 0
 Wanted: 0
 Money Upon You: \$10,000 Inter Planetary Dollars
 Explosive device 1: *none*
 Explosive device 2: *none*

Background: When convicted for a string of brutal murders, Apex was offered to a military geneticist instead of being put to death as required by lunar law. Through numerous, secret experiments, Apex's brain was surgically merged with a flexi-hard drive and his organs were supplemented with state of the art robotics, all done to enhance his natural health so that he could serve the military as a highly specialized soldier. Once these experiments were over and the sociopath regained consciousness, he took matters into his own hands by violently killing his handlers. Equipped with the mental capacity of a supercomputer and the strength of a robot, this cyborg now scours society for the darkest deeds, his existence vehemently denied by the lunar government to avoid negative press.

Grave (Height: 5'9", Weight: 129 lbs., Age: unknown)

Base Marksmanship: 9

Long-range weapon: JB Silencer Pistol (+1 *bonus*)

Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 8

Melee weapon: Double-ended Sword (+2 *bonus*)

Strength: 7

Defense: 10

Stealth: 10

Intellect: 5

Charisma: 0

Wanted: 10

Money Upon You: \$0 Inter Planetary Dollars

Explosive device 1: Pulse Grenade (-5 *enemy strength*)

Explosive device 2: Pulse Grenade (-5 *enemy strength*)

Background: Grave is a ruthless, contract killer. Her reputation precedes her in every inhabited corner of the solar system. Her last few hits include a high profile celebrity, a drug-lord, and a famous scientist. Needless to say, she doesn't care who or where her target is as long as the price is right. She ranks top of every wanted list and her face is a constant fixture in the media. While not much is known about her, a disturbing rumor continues to make the rounds - as a child, she killed her abusive father after watching him stab her mother and infant sister to death.

The thugs are now closer than ever - what's your next move?

If you want to make a run for it then **turn to 77**

If you want to turn around and attack your follower, catching him off guard then **turn to 5**

2

If you possess event word *virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word and the X2 anecdote is upon you, then deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

"You better not even *think* about passing without proper paperwork," the guard at the tunnel's entrance commands with a sinister smile. He eyes two corpses dangling behind him, iron chains wrapped tightly around their throats. **If you possess both event words *Detonate* and *Destroy*, turn to 52 now. Otherwise, read on.** Ten of his comrades stand some distance within the narrow tunnel, their eyes focused on you. They are dressed in New Star's military uniform -black skin tights punctuated by thick armored padding and a visor helmet. They are armed to the teeth. There is absolutely *no* sneaking past them all.

If you possess the *East End Seal*, you flash the item and are granted access - **turn to 97**
 If you don't possess the item, you can try and charm your way past the guard, **turn to 13**
 If you want to go back to the market, **turn back to 54**

3

The tent is littered with long-range and melee weapons. There are a few patrons bartering with a portly, old lady. Without looking at you she shouts, "Everything is on discount...but *only* for today."

You can purchase as many weapons in the "To Buy" section as permitted per your Mission Sheet and the money upon you. Existing items and weapons in your inventory can be sold here as well per the prices in the "To Sell" section.

If your Charisma score is 8 or higher, everything in the "To Buy" section is half off (*the score lends well to your bartering skills*).

To Buy:

Nail Machine Gun (Price \$5,000) – This handheld machinegun can turn almost any nail into a lethal projectile. It adds 2 bonus point to your Base Marksmanship score.

Grenade (Price \$4,000) – It reduces the enemy's Strength score by 3 points upon detonation.

Colt 5000 Plasma Shotgun (Price: \$10,000) - This standard plasma gun adds 3 bonus points to your Base Marksmanship score.

To Sell:

Image Manipulator– \$5,000

Aon 190 Pistol –\$2,000

G Pistol 10g – \$2,000

Colt 5000 Plasma Shotgun - \$2,000

Handheld Machine Gun –\$3,000

Nail Machine Gun –\$1000

Once finished, you exit. **Turn back to 41.**

4

The tunnel spits you out into another chamber, this one smaller and narrower than the last. It too is littered with filth, tents and misery. **If you possess event word *Roxanne*, turn to 29 now. Otherwise, read on.** You glance about and spot a large, cube shaped tent set up by the back wall. A sign hangs at its entrance reading, "Dark Waters Tavern."

Nothing else of interest lies here unless you crave sadness and decay. **If you don't possess event word *pickpocket*, turn to 80 now. Otherwise, read on.**

What's your next move?

If you want to check out *Dark Waters Tavern*, **turn to 72**

If you want head back to the main chamber, **turn to 10**

5

You swivel about your left foot and punch the behemoth right in his throat! He falls to the ground with a shattered esophagus, a look of utter surprise frozen on his face.

"The bigger they are..." you mutter under your breath.

Another thug jumps forward to avenge the death of his comrade and engages you in deadly hand to hand combat!

Second Thug

Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 6

Strength: 5

Defense: 3

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you survive the fight, turn to 90.

6

The bloodied rodent crashes into the pile of bodies, sending loose flesh and bones everywhere. Just as the fog begins to creep into the room you run down the flight of stairs and find yourself in a dark, dingy basement. Several human corpses lie strewn about haphazardly and you spot an entrance to the sewer amongst the mess – its cover has been loosened thankfully. **Turn to 27.**

7

The long, narrow chamber is bathed in a dull, blue light and you spot a few lab technicians walking about carrying multi-colored vials. Most are wearing nasal masks and eye goggles but some aren't – you can make out their breath. The narcotics probably require very specific conditions to be developed under such as the right lighting, the right temperature, etc. An acrid stench remains heavy in the room despite numerous exhaust fans.

Some of the technicians eye you briefly but then look away – the fact that you made it past the guards negates any suspicion. A closet to your right displays a few white lab coats and other accessories required for the job. You take what you need and blend in.

Large containers sit here and there, each filled to the brim with a strange, bubbling, black liquid. Pipes connect each container's base to a long spherical contraption standing tall in the back. Some of the technicians are monitoring it along with vitals displayed on their handheld tablets. You conjecture the mechanism to be the heart of the entire narcotics production process.

If you possess event word *Recipe*, **turn to 73**

If you don't possess this word, there's nothing else for you here – **exit and turn to 35**

8

"So then you'll get why I don't happen to have my seal upon me at this very moment," you finish with your shoulders up and arms stretched out playfully.

"Alright, alright – shit happens." The guard responds with a faint smile, "I get it. You can pass this one time but next time you *better* have the paperwork."

You nod your head and the guard motions for his companions to let you through.

Turn to 97

9

The men appear to be playing a game of cards the locals call *PATs* – short for *pussy, ass and tits*. It's a simple game where select card combinations can yield the player a win (*pussy*), a draw (*ass*) or a loss (*tits*) against his or her rivals. There are a few rules to the game beyond that but otherwise it's pretty straightforward.

The owner of the tent states to all, "Alright, we're about to start another round. You know the rules – bet as much or as little as you want. If you get *pussy* you win the amount you bet, if you get *ass* you get nothing and if you get *tits* you lose what you bet. Questions?"

"Yea." You ask nonchalantly, "Why the fruck is a loss called *tits*? I mean that sounds odd. Maybe it should be PAS – Pussy, ass and *shit*. Now that makes more sense."

"We got a *frucking* scholar over here." The man isn't amused, "Alright, lets start already."

You can play as many times as you'd like but if you lose all your money, you cannot play anymore. Here are the steps to play:

- 1) **Bet as much as you want.**
- 2) **Roll a die - *this is the equivalent of a hand being dealt to you.***
- 3) **If you roll 1 or 2 – you win. If you roll 3 or 4 – you draw. If you roll 5 or 6 – you lose. Simple.**

Add or subtract money from your Mission Sheet.

Turn back to 41 when you're done.

10

If you possess event word *Detonate*, turn to 57 now. Otherwise, read on.

If you possess event word *virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word and the X2 anecdote is upon you, then deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

If hell were real then the West End would be it. Its main chamber, a large, rectangular space, is essentially a working sewer with the addition of miserable residents surviving amongst its filth. Flies make their way from one ragged tent to the next. A narrow, sludge lined path carves its way through these makeshift homes – you spot children playing alongside pigs and dogs. Scrawny women make for a small hole in the chamber's corner to empty buckets of excrement. Men of every race sit about slack jawed, lost apparently in a drug-fused haze. The decaying corpse of a little boy lies by a tent, untended for several days from the looks of it.

You search for a bit of humanity in your surroundings but there's no sign of it.

If you possess event word *Broker*, turn to 50 now. If you don't possess this word then read on.

Two tunnels stretch away from the chamber – one to the right, the other to the left. There's no visible sign marking either path. They both lead deeper into the bowels of this hellhole. What's your next move?

If your character is *Grave* and you possess event word *Home* then you can turn to 88 if you want at this point or you can continue reading.

If you want to take the tunnel to your right, **turn to 4**

If you want to take the tunnel to your left, **turn to 98**

If you want to head back to the central market, **turn back to 54**

11

"No," you respond calmly, "I don't believe in hocus pocus."

"You *bitch!* Bow down to the supreme goddess!" The guards are pointing their pistols at your face.

"No need!" Queen Marie interjects with a raised tentacle. There's no emotion in her face but you can

tell she is not happy.

“Your reputation does precede you, assassin – aren’t you afraid of me killing you?”

“If I die for my convictions then so be it.”

“You see yourself as my equal don’t you, assassin?”

You’re confident that in a one on one battle with this so called goddess, you’d win.

“That’s irrelevant - what is relevant is that I can complete this assignment for you...easily.”

The queen’s eyes are large. She takes in a deep breath as if to compose herself and says, “Fair enough. When you have completed your task, report back to me. Bring back proof of the kill – Alexandre’s head will do just fine.”

Add event word Kill.

You nod your head. Goddess Marie exits unceremoniously and you set out knowing all too well that the queen will eventually have a response for your lack of belief. **Turn back to 97.**

12

Getting onto her feet, the queen licks blood off her robotic limbs and instructs, “Tonight we feast on my sacrifice.”

The room breaks into applause. Her naked body glistens with sweat for all to admire. Despite her short stature, she commands attention effortlessly. There’s *something* hypnotic about her. The merriment is short-lived though for the woman suddenly notices you and shouts, “*Les intrus!*”

Her guards turn around and point their guns at you immediately.

If you possess the *Seal of Official Business*, you flash it and are then guided into a waiting area by a guard - **turn to 30**

If you don’t possess the seal, **turn to 20**

13

You start to joke around, hoping that he will fall for your charm. **Roll a die – if the number and your Charisma score total more than 10, turn to 8 now but if the total is equal to or less than 10, read on.**

He punches you in the face abruptly and yells, “Shut the *fruck* up – I know what you want and you’re *not* getting through. Leave if you don’t have the right paperwork otherwise I *will* shoot your face off!”

Deduct 1 point from your Strength score and turn back to 54

14

You feel something hit your head from behind. Before you know it, darkness has enveloped your senses. **Deduct 1 point from your Strength score.**

When you come to, you find yourself lying on the ground in an altogether different room. Your head aches terribly. Blinking your eyes wide open you notice Alexandre in the middle of the room. Behind him stands the group of old men, all looking down their noses at you. In the corner you spot Alexandre’s security robot. You look at his sturdy right hand and realize immediately how you ended up being knocked out so easily.

A thick rope binds your hands and feet. Alexandre takes a step towards you and says, “Good thing my bot there got wind of your real intent just in time. You don’t think I have spies everywhere,

instrument?

Tell me something – *were you really going to kill me? Do you even realize what that would have meant for the future of this city?*”

He is yelling at you at this point.

Realizing that your options are limited, you reply, “No...after hearing your side, I completely changed my mind. I will do your bidding as you are the rightful ruler for New Star.”

“*Liar!*” the old men yell back in unison.

The robot takes a heavy step towards you, its mechanical hand ready to crush your face in. The situation is dire. **Turn to 17.**

15

You eye the queen’s red wine coyly. The silent death tablet remains hidden in your hand and all you need to do is drop it in her drink – easier said than done of course. You’re in a confined space with your target and her minions, all studying your every move carefully. Stealth alone is not going to help you out here. The task of slipping the poison into the red wine is also going to require some type of a distraction – a distraction that could be brought about with witty banter. **If you feel confident in both your *Charisma* and *Stealth* scores, turn to 99. If you don’t feel confident about these attributes, you can forget this approach altogether and turn to 75.**

16

You run into the building and shut the entrance doors behind you quickly. Then you survey every visible window to ensure that it’s sealed – most appear to have shattered glass unfortunately. This is not good.

You look about frantically for a safe spot. Rays of sunlight illuminate the large, narrow space ahead of you. Against the back is a row of desks once used by bank tellers – the room is empty otherwise. Soon the fog will be upon the building and making its way in through the windows. Cursing out loud you rush to a back door and kick it open only to come face to face with a horrific sight!

A pile of decomposed, dead human corpses sits in the center of a large room. The largest rat you’ve ever seen sits on top of it all. This building is a makeshift graveyard for New Star’s dead and it turns out that those tales of large, carnivorous rodents scavenging civilization’s ruins for human flesh are actually true. The rat, which is about as large as a desk, lets out an ear-shattering screech when it sees you in show of dominance. It’s now the apex predator above ground and wants you to know that.

In that moment you spot a staircase running underground behind the pile of bodies and conjecture it to be a possible access point to and from the sewers – after all, these corpses were brought above ground safely somehow. You can’t be sure of that guess but since the fog’s presence is becoming a larger threat by the second in the room behind you, you decide to head for the stairs.

The rat attacks you predictably!

Giant Rat

Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill: 7

Strength: 6

Defense: 4

See Mission Sheet for combat rules.

If you survive the fight, turn to 6 now.

17

"No wait!" you shout desperately, "Look...*look*, I have to return to Marie with your head, Alexandre. That means I have the chance to be within extremely close quarters of her. That gives me the opportunity to take her out! She will not be expecting it and-"

"This instrument can't be trusted!" yells an old man.

The robot is now standing over you.

"I *promise* you, Alexandre - *Lord* Alexandre, I *promise* you that I am your best bet. She won't be expecting it!"

The robot raises its right hand and curls it into a fist, ready to smash it down into your face.

"Stop," Alexandre says calmly. All eyes are now on him.

He stares down at you for several moments before speaking again, "Alright, instrument. You will do exactly as I ask of you. When I set you free, you will head straight to the East End. There you will get audience with my sister. You will kill her and you will bring back her head to my tent."

He takes out a tiny, transparent film of some kind from his pocket and pastes it onto your forearm gently. In response to your questioning look, he says, "This is a tracking device. It provides me your location in real-time. If I see you deviating from the plan, all I have to do is press a button on my end and this device explodes, taking not only your arm but also your life. If you try to peel it off yourself, an alarm goes off on my end and I press the button to kill you. If you fail...if you *fail* to achieve your mission and are caught for interrogation purposes, I will know because through this device I can pick up your communications as well. And I will press the button on my end to kill you immediately. Basically, I own you until this task is finished."

You stare back wide-eyed.

"Now...I trust that you are truly on my side but I need some assurance of course. After all...Marie thinks you are loyal to her and yet...here we are."

He asks the robot to undo your constraints. As you are forced up to your feet, Alexandre states, "It won't be an easy task, instrument – how you do it is up to you. Once it is complete, you will still get your money. I am a man of my word."

Replace event word *Kill* with event words *Detonate* and *Destroy* – then turn to 54.

18

You give up frustrated after several failed attempts. Turning off the smart shades, you focus your attention onto the vault again. The only way left to break in is via physical force. There's no other option and you can't leave empty handed. Getting a seat at the *Thievery Collective* table isn't easy and walking away from a job can cost you. There's no way you're walking away from the organization – it's your only family now.

"Desperate times, desperate measures." With jaws clenched, you shoot the lock open.

One of the technicians raises alarm, "Stop – *thief!*"

That's when all hell breaks loose – several guards come rushing in and engage you in a heated shootout!

Six Security Guards

Marksmanship: 10

Strength: 10

Defense: 8

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you win, read on.

As the last guard crashes to the ground, you gather your wits, turnabout and steal the piece of paper within. Rushing over to the designated spot you slip the recipe down a crack in the floor. Then you rush past crouching technicians and exit the lab only to find Shock standing at full alert with a handheld machine gun – several guards lie dead about him.

“Sorry I couldn’t come to your aid, Genesis; had some issues of my own.”

“No worries - I got it! Lets jet!”

Turn to 83.

19

You find yourself handcuffed and aboard a private spacecraft no bigger than a small room. The bounty hunter, who goes by the name Zero Lock, is seated in a chair at the front focused on several computer screens and diagnostics. A narrow window to your left displays what’s left of Paris – ruins of skyscrapers and buildings blanketed by dust. The Eifel Tower’s remains sit in a pile of steel some distance away. Above it all, a bright sun shines down its unfiltered rays onto a burnt landscape. The sight is a sad reminder of man’s once great place on this planet.

Just then you feel the craft’s ion propulsion engines roar to life. A slow vertical lift off commences. At first every thing seems fine but at about 200 feet the craft starts to lose balance – something is wrong. It reels from left to right suddenly before nose-diving. The pilot tries taking back control but her attempt seems futile and you brace for impact!

The craft crashes violently, sending the bounty hunter flying about like a rag doll against the cabin’s walls. You escape a similar fate thankfully to the harnesses that strap you to your seat. Nonetheless you do sustain wounds from debris that is thrown about upon impact. **Deduct 2 points from your Strength score and turn to 89.**

20

“Hey *woah...woah*, no need to get pissy just because I made it past your guards.” You put up your hands and state with a wry smile.

“Show some respect to your God, *you filthy mongrel!*” One of the guards steps forward ready to take you out but the queen commands him to stand down.

“So...your telling me that you simply *snuck* past my entrance security?” She asks with a raised eyebrow.

“Well...I had to chat them up a bit. It was actually a pleasant conversation.”

The queen’s priests cover her with a silk robe. As she pats her neck dry with a towel, she points to a guard and instructs, “Go to the front and hang those idiots. I do not tolerate fools.”

Then she walks over to you and circles you slowly, studying every inch of you all the while. You can feel her piercing gaze linger around your eyes briefly.

“I recognize you now – the old broker mentioned you.”

Images of the man from the market flicker in your mind.

“Yes...you’re the one he couldn’t stop raving about. He went *on and on* about you.”

She stops circling, points at a narrow door and commands, “Stay put in that waiting room and I’ll come meet you shortly.”

Turn to 30

21

"What does she want with me?" you ask.

"That *only* she can tell. But I do know it will be more than worth your while."

"Alright but ... isn't the first rule of being a broker that you *don't* give up your client's identity?"

With a chuckle he responds, "There are no such rules in New Star – you should know that by now."

A knock at the door interrupts the conversation. With a knowing smile, the old man works his way past you and lets in a young woman wearing nothing more than tattered underwear. You think she'd be pretty if not for her protruding rib cage and missing front teeth.

"You ready *big daddy*?" She starts to tickle the old man playfully.

Giggling like a little boy, the man shouts, "Oh yes – *oh yes, yes, yes!*"

You quietly leave him with the prostitute. **Turn back to 10.**

22

"I hear you're one of the best instruments out there and I can make you \$50,000 richer." Goddess Marie leans back in her chair, "That's enough money to buy a one way ticket to Alpha. I *know* that's what you want."

"I'm listening." You wonder where the conversation is going. **If you possess event word *Broker*, remove it from your Mission Sheet.**

"I want to see how good you really are. I've got a job for you - kill my brother, Alexandre. He survives somewhere in New Star...shielded by a small group of supporters who call themselves *les révolutionnaires* – a bunch of third rate misfits that believe my brother is a god. You need to find him and end him."

Her nose crinkles in disgust.

"There is only one true god...*and that's me.*"

You can feel her glare studying you for a desired reaction.

"Tell me something, instrument." She leans in slightly, "Do *you* believe I'm a god?"

If your character is *Grave*, turn to 11 now.

Eyeing her heavily armed guards, you smile, "Of course, the one *true* goddess."

You're glad she cannot read your mind.

"Excellent." She leans back in her chair calmly, "When you have completed your task, report back to me. Bring back proof of the kill – Alexandre's head would do just fine."

Then Goddess Marie exits unceremoniously and you set out with your task. **Add event word *Kill* and turn back to 97.**

23

The thug falls to the ground with the right side of his face caved in. You eye one of the remaining two men – he's pointing a handheld machine gun directly at you! Get ready for a shoot out!

Second Thug

Marksmanship: 7

Strength: 6

Defense: 4

See Tab 2 of Mission Sheet for Shoot out rules.

If you survive the fight, turn to 86.

24

You walk for about a mile under a network of bright, fluorescent lights. The air is cooler here – rotating fans decorate the ceiling at set intervals. Military personnel stand guard near each fan and eye you cautiously as you walk past.

The tunnel deposits you into a small, white-marble chamber, its smooth walls decorated with paintings that once hung within the famed musée du Louvre. You recognize several works of Leonardo Da Vinci all concentrated around a sparkling, gold-plated door that has been left slightly ajar.

A woman can be heard moaning loudly from within.

Curious, you stick your head through the doors only to be greeted by an unexpected sight - a voluptuous woman mounted atop a man who's splayed on the ground in the center of a lavishly decorated chamber. The two are in the throes of passion. Numerous military guards stand watch while five white-robed men lie prostrated on the ground around the couple, all chanting a prayer in unison. The woman's beauty is enchanting but the sight of six metallic tentacles sticking out of her shoulder blades is downright terrifying.

"Say my name!" the milky-skinned cyborg demands as her hips grind feverishly against the man's bare pelvis.

"G-goddess Marie," the man stammers.

"Once more!" she screeches through gritted teeth while grabbing at her own bare breasts.

"Goddess Marie!" he shouts, his eyes wide with rapture, "Send me to heaven!"

The woman climaxes, her many arms flailing about madly and then with one swift motion, buries the sharp tips of her artificial limbs into the man's forehead. Blood and brain matter burst forth explosively.

"I free you, my child!" she shouts to the chamber's high ceiling as her bosom heaves up and down. You watch on with bated breath. **If you possess event word *Revenge* and wish to go to task now, turn to 87 immediately. If you possess this event word but rather wait or don't possess this word at all then turn to 12.**

25

With some witty word play you're able to guide the queen and her guards' attention over to one of the rifles hanging on the right hand wall. As their eyes glance over momentarily, you sneak the tablet into her drink unnoticed. She takes a sip just then as if on queue and the poison takes affect immediately.

Queen Marie starts to cough. Her cheeks turn purple and her eyes begin to water as if she'd just swallowed a red pepper whole. She reaches for her throat all the while staring at you wide eyed. Before her guards can make sense of the situation, her neck muscles literally explode, shooting her head clean off her shoulders like a firecracker. Before it falls back to the ground you lunge forward and knock out the puzzled guards with some kicks to the face. They fall to the ground just as you catch the falling decapitated head into a cloth bag. It all happens within a few seconds.

"Well that was certainly fun," you quip with a smile as splatters of the queen's blood drip down the walls about you.

Turn to 42

26

"Where's your badge?" a guard barks as you step up to the entrance.

If you have the *Chemical Specialist Badge*, you flash it and are allowed to pass - **turn to 7**

If you don't have the badge but want to try and charm your way past the guards, **turn to 51**

If neither of the above options is feasible, **turn back to 35**

27

You climb down a ladder in complete darkness for some time and eventually find yourself in a dimly lit tunnel. There are remains of tattered tents and old cardboard boxes scattered about – signs that this tunnel was once occupied. Several such tunnels flank New Star. Some were abandoned because they were overrun with carnivorous rodents while others had been abandoned because they weren't able to sustain a sizable enough population.

You walk through the tunnel for some time without incident, peering into dark corners to ensure safe passage from hidden dangers. The reality is that you have no idea which direction leads to New Star – you're just hoping for some good luck.

The exact opposite happens.

You spot several pairs of eyes staring back at you from one of these corners – rats! Three large rodents, each about the size of a desk, scuttle out of the darkness and charge you with speed! You have no choice but to fight back as they are upon you within seconds.

Three Large Rats

Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill: 8

Strength: 10

Defense: 6

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you win, read on.

The rodents fall to the ground one by one, their blood and guts littering the floor underneath. You glance about trying to determine your next move and spot a speck of bright light in the distance that signals civilization. You've never been this happy about New Star.

After reaching a brightly lit room, which appears to be a morgue, you climb down several ladders and finally reach a tunnel that deposits you into the West End. **Turn to 10.**

28

Roll a die and add the number you rolled to your *Charisma* score – if the total is more than 10, turn to 84 but if it's equal to or less than 10, read on. The woman slaps you across the face and says, "Shut your mouth – you pathetic little weasel."

"You meant to say handsome shark," you smirk back while licking a cut on your lips.

"No...pretty sure I meant weasel." She's not having any of it.

Turn to 19.

29

Upon probing you are informed that a woman named Roxanne overdosed on Euphoria pills a couple of days back and passed away. A heap of dead bodies in the corner of a darkened chamber puts to rest any lingering doubt in your mind about her untimely death – you see Roxanne at the top of the heap, her skin pale and her eyes dead. The sight is shocking to say the least.

The corpses are being hauled away one by one by men who are meant to deposit them above ground into an open graveyard of sorts - out of sight and out of mind. You watch Roxanne's limp body get dragged away unceremoniously and feel a pang of pain in your stomach. She had wanted nothing more than to escape her bleak life of prostitution back on Alpha and had felt, much to your concern, that New Star was her ticket to a fresh start. But this city is brutal and has crushed many a dreams violently. Roxanne's were no exception.

"See one of yours in that pile?" someone standing to your left asks. Her voice is full of pain and when

you look over, you spot a spindly woman probably no more than 20 or so. Her eyes are filled to the brim with tears.

"My mother is in that pile today. I always knew this day would come – her life was just too hard for her to bear."

"My friend is in that pile," you state.

"Well may your friend rest in piece."

You nod your head and respond, "I wish the same for your mother."

"She will not rest in peace unfortunately." The woman eyes her mother's body being dragged away as it leaves behind a trail of bodily fluids in the process.

"She will not rest until someone takes revenge on her behalf. And neither will your friend. Both were addicts but both didn't have to die like this. They were *forced* to take the drug."

"Forced?"

"Yes forced by local pimps so that their bodies could be sold without any pushback."

Your heart breaks. Turns out Roxanne never really found relief. Looking to the pile of bodies, you notice that most are women – some are even girls no more than 5 or 6 years of age.

"You going after your mother's pimp?" you ask.

"Yes." The woman's jaws are clenched, "Richie – he's usually over at Dark Water's tavern. I'm going to look for him there."

The woman is clearly enraged. Her hands are shaking with anger and one of them holds a small knife. That is the only weapon she seems to have on her.

"What's your plan?" you ask trying not to sound too skeptical.

She doesn't answer.

Roxanne's face flashes in your mind for a split second – she is smiling. You make up your mind and say, "Look...I can help you."

When she flashes back a questioning look, you continue, "I'm an instrument – a damn good one. I don't know if this Richie guy was the one who was behind Roxanne's death but I don't think any good will come of him staying alive."

"I don't need charity, instrument," she says wiping away a tear.

"I know that...but I need to do this. Your mother and my friend deserve to rest in peace and I can help provide that."

The woman's features loosen as she nods her head appreciatively.

"Take me to Dark Water," you request. **Replace event word Roxanne with Richie and turn to 72.**

30

The small waiting room, probably a storage space when these sewers were still functional, has its brick walls decorated with weapons – antique pistols, decommissioned machine guns, etc. A few dim light bulbs dangle from the ceiling keeping total darkness at bay. You remain seated at a round table in the center of the room, your eyes fixed on the entrance and your mind focused on fighting off claustrophobia.

About an hour passes before two security guards step into the room along with the self-proclaimed goddess herself. While you obviously don't buy into her divine status, there is one thing you cannot deny – her exemplary beauty. Wisps of black curls hang carelessly around her high cheekbones and large, dark eyes. Her full lips shine with a black, sparkly gloss that matches the color of her long, flowing gown. A glittering diamond encrusted necklace rests across her bosom –the most beautiful of its kind you've ever seen. Her physical beauty is unquestionably admirable but its juxtaposition with those robotic arms protruding from her back simmers caution in you.

She takes a seat at the small table and you find yourself face to face with this enigmatic cyborg. At first, she says nothing – just stares at you. The guards stand directly behind her, studying you intently.

After several moments of awkward silence, she asks softly, "Do you like red wine?"

When you nod your head, she responds, "Good – an instrument of taste."

One of her guards pours both of you a glass of wine all the while keeping his eyes fixed on you. The queen notes, "The best red you'll ever taste – lovely import from the Martian colonies."

You're not surprised that she has trade ties beyond Alpha and with Utopia, a cluster of spaceships orbiting Mars ensuring the smooth terra-formation of the red planet. **If you possess event word *Revenge* and have the *Silent Death* item upon you, turn to 15. Otherwise turn to 75.**

31

You remind yourself that brawling in public with a gang of thugs isn't going to help you any given you're wanted status. Then again, this is New Star you tell yourself – the only reason the queen imprisons anyone here is if she stands to make financial gains off the incarceration. If her own security arrests you, there is nothing in it for her. But if Alpha city's security arrests you, then she willingly imprisons for a price.

"*Damn*, I wish I was your lover." A sultry voice rings in your ear. You turn to see a group of women walking by, their dark eyes studying you from head to toe. The lack of clothing gives away their profession immediately. One smiles to reveal rotten teeth, "I wouldn't charge you *nothin'*, handsome."

You look away coolly, your right eyebrow raised in amusement. Just then the thought of Roxanne, the prostitute you helped escape Alpha some time back, crosses your mind. She had wanted a fresh start down here you recall. Perhaps a visit might be in order – you've heard she lives over in the West End. **Add event word *Roxanne* to your Mission Sheet and turn to 54.**

32

As the queen's servants dress her with a flowing silk gown, she glares at you and states, "So...there you are – the Godless assassin."

You know where this is going.

When you don't respond, she turns to you and continues, "You don't believe in my divinity."

She glances over at her guards momentarily and then looks back at you. She wants to prove a point, you're sure of it.

"Grave, I'm going to give you another chance to become a believer. Do...you...*believe* that I am the true path to righteousness?"

You've had enough of her shit.

"It's time to grow the fruck up, Marie. I did your work and now I'm going to leave."

You know very well that she's not going to let you leave – not without a fight. And when she gets in your face threateningly you retort, "Listen, bitch I will never believe that you're some kind of a god but if you want to prove it to me then why not fight me right here right now, one on one. No help from your guards – nothing. Just you and me."

The tension is thick. Her men have you surrounded. The queen motions for them to stand down and says, "You dare challenge a Goddess? Foolish move."

She walks back a few feet and continues, "We fight to the death. And no one interferes!"

Her men look about confused and then stow away their weapons. You prepare for fierce combat

Queen Marie

Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill: 10

Strength: 8

Defense: 9

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you win read on.

The queen falls to the ground lifeless with several of her tentacles ripped from her torso. A trail of blood leaks out her broken nose. Catching your breath you turn about ready to face her security.

They just stare back in shock. One of them kneels down and stammers, "Our n-new g-goddess! All hail the new Queen of New Star!"

The rest follow suit as you look on with a raised eyebrow.

"Right...well, stay in your positions boys." You speak while coolly walking over to the exit, "I've got to go start reading...the...how to be a Queen manual...now."

Turn to 81

33

A pair of guards stops you at the entrance, eyeing you carefully all the while. The taller of the two barks, "State your business."

If you possess the *Seal of Official Business*, the guards let you pass - **turn to 24**

If you don't possess this seal and want to charm your way past the guards - **turn to 39**

Otherwise, **turn back to 97**

34

You spin on your left heel ready to knock the weapon out of the bounty hunter's hands but before your foot connects with her weapon, she manages to shoot. **Quick, roll a die – if the number and your Defense score total more than 10, the bullet only grazes your shoulder – deduct 2 points from each of your Strength and Defense scores. But if the number is equal to or less than 10, she shoots your right arm – deduct 5 points from each of your Strength and Defense scores.**

Your foot connects with her weapon regardless and knocks it away into a puddle of dirty water. The two of you engage in a heated brawl!

Bounty Hunter

Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill: 8

Strength: 7

Defense: 7

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you win, read on.

The woman lands on the ground with a broken neck and you coolly walk away - those around who noticed the brief altercation rush in to steal whatever they can off the bounty hunter's corpse.

Turn back to 98

35

If you possess event word *detonate*, turn to 57 now, otherwise read on.

If you possess event word *virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word but the X2 anecdote is upon you, then deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

The North End's main chamber is populated with numerous assembly lines, each lined with workers handling blue and yellow colored pills. A subtle haze fills the room and acidic fumes sting nostrils - producing Euphoria isn't pretty. Many of the workers cooly eye a clock hanging on the wall. The bags

under their eyes speak of long hours and minimal breaks. There are some military guards marching up and down the assembly lines harassing those laborers who've fallen behind in their tasks.

It all appears a finely tuned nightmare – produce, inspect, package, repeat.

Those who work in this dark and dingy factory have no other recourse to making a living. They are most likely poor and not connected enough to start their own business out in the market nor are they strong enough to meet the royal military's criteria. That leaves limited options to earn a living in New Star. Needless to say these workers probably don't brag about their job.

On the other hand, the chemists producing batches upon batches of Euphoria are a different story – they're a coveted lot. There is only a handful brought into the highly guarded production process. The pills' recipe is worth quite a bit for obvious reasons.

You glance about and spot a tunnel to your left – a sign at its entrance reads "*Labs*" and is flanked by several guards. Another tunnel, this one to your right, leads to the spaceport. It's also heavily guarded.

What's your next step?

Take the tunnel to your left - **Turn to 26**

Take the tunnel to your right – **Turn to 81**

36

The man's body slumps to the floor bloodied beyond recognition. The crowd around you looks on with concern for no more than a second or two before going about their regular business. A few moments later a pack of stray, mangy dogs rains down upon the carcass to relieve it of any flesh. The act of death and the removal of its evidence appear to be a finely tuned process down here in New Star.

You can take the handheld machine gun (bonus +2) but remember that only one long-range weapon can be upon you at any given time (ex. You need to discard your current long-range weapon if you choose to pick up the machine gun).

Turn to 60

37

"There he is," the woman, who's name is Cutie, points with her chin to a tall, broad shouldered man standing in the corner. He has a beer bottle in one hand and a girl of probably no more than 10 years standing by his side. Her teary eyes give away her plight and his dark eyes give away his true intentions – he's sizing up several men in the crowd.

A few drunken old men stumble by eyeing the child lustfully but most are pointed away by Richie because they don't appear wealthy. Then a middle-aged man seems to catch the pimp's attention and soon some haggling begins. You're trying to figure out the right time to strike when Cutie rushes forward without warning, screaming, "*Dieeeeeee!*"

Before you can even stop her, the attack is thwarted with one swift move – Richie simply lunges forward at surprising speed and cracks open Cutie's skull with his elbow. She falls to the ground with brain matter seeping down the side of her face.

"What the fruck," you mumble to yourself in disbelief.

The crowd gasps and then goes about its business. Laughter resumes as the tavern's owner has a couple of his servant boys drag the corpse away. You shake your head at your companion's foolishness – her emotions got the best of her.

Then you notice that Richie is staring you down all the while scratching his long, black beard. The tavern's bright lights reflect off his tan, bald scalp and you eye some type of a socket on top of his head – he's a cyborg, hence the incredible speed with which he deflected Cutie.

He saw you walk in with her and is now on full guard. As you lock eyes with him, you wonder

whether all this is worth the trouble. The reason you were here in the first place just committed suicide basically and you have no idea whether this man was even involved in Roxanne's death. But as he yanks the little girl towards the tent's exit, you reason that *something* must be done. Literally no one in this city is going to help that child. **Turn to 95.**

38

You feel the barrel of a gun on the small of your back. **Add event word *Bounty* to your Mission Sheet.**

"Hello, my friend." A grisly female voice speaks in your right ear, "You're going to make me a rich bounty hunter."

"You're screwing with the wrong instrument," you retort.

Pressing the barrel firmly into your spine, the woman continues, "Save it – I'm taking you back up to Alpha and turning you over to the authorities. There's a fat bounty on you."

"Fine by me – I've been trying to get out of this shit hole anyway and now I'm going to get a free ride. That's perfect. But *once* I get there, you know *damn well* that I'll be out of your clutches before you can blink. You've bitten off more than you can chew."

"A bit too cocky there, instrument." She leans into your ear – you catch sight of long, blonde locks in your peripheral vision.

"I've put away bigger criminals than you so I think I'll be fine but *thanks for the warning*. In the meantime, you make one wrong move and I'll kill you – the reward is half for your dead body so I'd *prefer* you stay alive."

The gears of your mind spin frantically. You could try and take this bounty hunter out right now - it will be difficult though given you're position. She obviously has the upper hand. *Or* you could wait it out and strike at a more opportune time later. What's your move, instrument?

If you want to strike now **turn to 34**

If you want to wait to strike **turn to 19**

If your character is Jax and you want to try charming your way out of this, **turn to 28**

39

You start to joke around, hoping they will fall for your charm. **Roll a die – if the number and your *Charisma* score total more than 10 then turn to 46, otherwise read on.**

The guard abruptly cuts you off, "*Fruck Off!*"

Turn back to 54

40

"You're not listening to me, Apex!" The voice snaps in your head. It's your mother's. The woman has managed to haunt you even after death. She's exactly the same as you remember when she was alive – petite but overbearing and always carrying about a butcher's knife.

"No!" you scream out loud, "Stop talking to me! I already told you that I'm not doing that for the hell of it anymore!"

"Oh really, baby? You're going to deny yourself the one thing that gave you pure joy? You're going to deny the one thing that gave us *both* pure joy? Maybe for now you can...but long term, you don't have it in you. Remember when you were a child and said the same things? What did I always tell you? Nothing is more pure than taking a life. *Nothing...*not even money."

You punch yourself in the head repeatedly and the familiar voice goes away. But you know it's only a matter of time before she creeps back out from the recesses of your mind and urges you to go on a killing spree. Mother always does. She's been hiding out there for so long now that you can't even

remember when she first slipped into your mind through its cracks and made it her permanent home. Maybe it was the day you found her hanging in her bedroom ten years ago, her frail body slowly spinning along with the fan's blades. **Turn to 54.**

41

If you possess event word *Detonate*, turn to 57 now, otherwise read on.

If you possess event word *virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word but the X2 anecdote is upon you, then deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

If you're character is Apex and you don't possess event word *Bloodlust*, turn to 48 now. Otherwise, read on.

You walk through the market, eyeing its tents carefully – some stand out right away. One appears to be selling various weapons. Handheld nail-guns of many sizes line its entrance. Another is selling different concoctions – poisons, supposed antidotes to various local diseases, perfumes, etc. The third tent next to it has a few men huddled together playing a game of cards. Some of the players keep eyeing a large stash of cash set nearby under the flames of a candle. The last tent of interest is setup in the corner of the chamber and appears to be a brothel. A group of naked women stand at the entrance, showcasing their unwashed, spindly bodies via lewd gestures. An old man is having his way with one of their companions directly behind them. Prostitution is legal in New Star City despite the rampant sexually transmitted diseases. Public intercourse is not a rare sight - needless to say, childhood is short-lived here.

What's your next move?

If you *don't* possess event word *Lord*, **turn to 74 now. Otherwise, read on.**

If you want to explore the first tent, **turn to 3**

If you want to explore the second tent, **turn to 55**

If you want to explore the third tent, **turn to 9**

If you want to explore the fourth tent, **turn to 76**

If none of them interest you, **turn back to 54**

42

"Here's the noggin." You throw Queen Marie's head at Alexandre's feet, "Now can I please have this stupid tracking device removed?"

The man stands up with a broad smile while his disciples eye you in disbelief. He walks over and gives you an emphatic hug.

"You've just put New Star back on the map." He shakes you by the shoulders. Then he proceeds to remove the transparent film from your arm and jokes, "And here I thought you were going to double-cross me?"

You feign a smile.

He then hands you your reward. **Replace event words *Detonate* and *Revenge* with *Completed*, and add \$50,000 to your Mission Sheet.** He then asks, "How did you ever manage to get out of the East End in one piece?"

"The kill was contained to just one room. No one outside actually realized what had happened."

"Good then I ought to head over there now."

"Really? Aren't you afraid of her military?"

He lets out a hearty laugh.

"They will be *elated* to see me. Once they catch sight of me they will know what has happened. Most

if not all of them were loyal to my father and only worked for her out of pure fear. *Now...* I will show them what true leadership means."

He locks eyes with you and continues, "I know you hate this place but if you're ever back you will see how beautiful this place can be. You shall see."

You nod your head in admiration even though there's doubt in your mind. New Star has destroyed plenty of dreams in the past. Masking your concern, you bow your head and exit the new king's audience politely. **Turn to 81.**

43

"Jean, you may leave us," he instructs the old man.

When his disciple expresses concern, Alexandre points to a dark corner behind you, "My security is here – no worries."

You peer into the shadow and spot a spindly robot glaring back with menacing red eyes. The dark metallic machine had escaped your attention till now. It adjusts its position slightly, never taking its eyes off you.

The old man climbs up the ladder and you hear the distant sound of the secret door shutting shortly after. Alexander leans against the wall all the while studying you carefully. After a few moments of awkward silence, he asks, "You know why you're here, instrument?"

As you shrug your shoulders, he answers, "To kill my sister, Marie...New Star's Queen herself."

"I see."

"You don't seem overwhelmed at all by my request," Alexandre notes with a raised eyebrow.

"In my business...being overwhelmed is bit of a liability."

"Right...right – *good*, it is settled then. You will take on the task?"

"What's in it for me?"

"Ahh...but of course; \$50,000 which is enough to buy you a one way ticket out of this town. I know that's what you want."

"I see my disdain for this place precedes me."

"Everyone has disdain for this place, instrument – including me. Marie has destroyed any potential this place ever had. She's taken the hard work of my ancestors, may their souls rest in peace, and made a mockery of it. I would do *anything* to destroy her - this snake of a woman I'm cursed enough to be related to. She mercilessly killed our father and now she plots to kill me. Well I need someone like you to end her nonsensical reign so that the rightful ruler can take the throne."

Alexandre's right eye twitches slightly.

"Now don't mess this up, instrument for if you miss your mark, she will surely start a war. And in this place a war will mean the loss of countless lives. That's the last thing I want. These people deserve a second chance...*not* death."

If you possess event word *Kill*, turn to 14 now. Otherwise, read on.

You can't help but admire his thought process.

"Bring me back her head," he states calmly. Then he takes out a tiny, transparent film of some kind from his pocket and pastes it onto your forearm gently. In response to your questioning look, he explains, "This is a tracking device. It provides me your location in real-time and I need for you to head straight to the East End right now so that this task can be completed as quickly as possible. I'm very serious about this. If I see you deviating from the plan, all I have to do is press a button on my end and this device explodes, taking not only your arm but also your life with it. If you try to peel it off yourself, an alarm goes off on my end and I press the button to kill you. If you fail to achieve your mission and are caught for interrogation purposes, I will know because through this device I can pick up your

communications as well. And I will press the button on my end to end you immediately. Basically, I own you until this task is finished.”

You stare back wide-eyed.

“Now...I trust that you are truly on my side but I need some assurance of course.”

You now realize how critical this mission is not just for New Star’s future but also for your own livelihood. You nod your head and climb back up the stairs. **Add event words *Detonate* and *Revenge* and turn to 54.**

44

An old husband and wife couple, probably wealthy patrons from the East End, have their way with you for about an hour. The experience is not necessarily pleasant but you go along for the bumpy ride – there’s decent money to be made here.

Roll a die now.

If you roll 1 or 2, the couple, impressed by your skills, decides to help you out by gifting you an explosive device - Macro Pulse Grenade (-8 enemy strength). If you decide to keep this weapon, note it on your Mission Sheet.

If you roll 3 or 4, you spy the beginning of a tiny, black blister on the wife’s groin area and your heart drops – you have just contracted the deadly X2 virus. Note event word *Virus* on your Mission Sheet.

If you roll 5 or 6, they bid you farewell unceremoniously and walk away into the mass of heaving bodies about you.

Add \$10,000 to your Mission Sheet and turn to 41.

45

As soon as you enter the area you find yourself flanked by silk embroidered tents on both sides, each reaching high enough to touch the ceiling. Sitting next to one another, together the tents stretch the length of the room, filling it up with their multi-colored decadence. You spot the East End seal stitched into the fabric of each one. Some glow majestically from lit chandeliers within. Servant men and women scuttle about with bowls filled to the brim with hot broth – the look in their eyes speaks volumes of the long hours endured by their ilk. You can’t help but feel sorry for the lot.

These “residences” offer surprising privacy. You cannot make out any silhouettes within. Each seems large enough to house perhaps a small sitting area and a comfortable bed. Given their context, the tents appear as if mansions here. At the back of the chamber, you spot a narrow tunnel.

What’s your next move?

If you want to travel the tunnel and head deeper into this area, **turn to 79**

If you want to try and break into a tent to steal, **turn to 49**

If you want return to the main chamber, **turn back to 97**

46

“You’re a funny frucker!” The guard laughs out loud.

“I try.” You take a playful bow.

The two guards let you pass after telling you to keep your summoning papers upon you next time.

Turn to 24

47

"You're going to let me in," you command.

The portly man looks up taken aback by your response and then recognizes you immediately, "Holy shit – *it's you.*"

You respond with silence.

"We've been expecting you for some time now." He presses a button on a console next to him and the double doors slide open revealing a dimly lit tunnel that runs off into darkness. Several prison guards line its black walls – they all gawk at you wide eyed. You stroll up to one of them and ask, "Where is the bastard?"

He simply points to a door nearby without removing his eyes from yours. Most of these men know who you are and pretty much everyone in New Star has heard about what you did to your father. It's a much gossiped about family drama. Most had conjectured that you'd eventually return to finish the task you meant to complete back when you were a child.

One of the other guards walks over and unlocks the door to let you through. Eyeing him from the corner of your eyes, you ask, "Which cell?"

"216."

You brush past him nonchalantly. These prison guards know that you're a wanted criminal but they wouldn't dare try to harm you – they are aware of the odds stacked against them.

You find your father seated on a wooden bench in his cell, his hands chained to the wall. The cell's door has been left ajar and you step through the entrance with emotions bubbling just underneath your chest. It's been over 10 years since you last laid eyes on him and here he is in the flesh once again – almost unrecognizable now. His long white hair intertwines with his thick, scruffy beard making both seem part of a single headdress. Tattered clothes cling to his bony frame and deep wrinkles surround his sunken eyes. You stand in front of him with bated breath.

"I...thought you'd have come sooner, little Reiko," he stammers with labored breath. His condition looks beyond repair - years of psychological issues appear to have taken their toll.

He moves his gaze up to your face and smiles, "Just...like your mother."

"Don't even speak of her." You snap back, "You were never worthy of her."

He brings down his gaze to the ground.

"Why did you do it?" you press.

No response.

"Why did you kill my mother and my sister? *Why?*"

There's still no response.

You shake your head slowly and continue, "Look at you, old man. You're nothing – left with *nothing.*"

He keeps his gaze down as if ashamed. Then after a few moments of silence he says, "Please...just kill me, little Reiko. Please...just kill me."

Tears are streaming down his aged face. His bottom lip quivers.

"I have done nothing in this world to deserve anyone's mercy. Please...just kill me."

He begins to sob, his shoulders shaking uncontrollably. You realize how broken a man your father has become. Through his tears, he eyes your weapons and shouts, "*Kill me...please!*"

You look on for a few moments without emotion.

"*Oh god...kill me! I don't want to think about your mother anymore!*"

"No." You cut in as something changes your mind, "You will live out the rest of your days like this - *alone and broken* in this cell."

He looks up to meet your gaze. His face is distorted with self-disgust and remorse.

You leave the cell behind as he pleads, "*Reiko, no! Please! Kill me!*"

Upon your exit one of the guards states, "He doesn't have long. The X2 has ravaged his lungs – only a matter of weeks."

Nodding your head you leave the place behind and head for the market. **Remove event word *Daddy* and turn back to 54.**

48

You spot a scrawny teenager sitting in shadows behind a tent much removed from the marketplace, his eyes bugged out probably because of a drug binge. Ever since you figured out that you could actually get compensated for killing, you have cut short your homicidal thrills. Logically it makes no sense anymore to murder just for fun. Your mother obviously feels differently. Even in her silence you sense her prodding you to resume your old activities. You don't let her bother you most of the time.

But there are moments when she does make a good argument. And right now is one of them.

With unrestrained bloodlust you work your way over to the boy. He's so tripped out that he doesn't even notice you. The near by crowd has no idea what's about to happen nor does it care frankly as the boy is probably kinless. You study his shabby, black hair and tattered clothing. His protruding rib cage is visible through a hole on the side of his shirt.

"Do it!" your mother shrieks, "*Do it, my son!*"

Sometime later, you walk into the crowd with strands of bloodied, black locks sticking to your right hand and some stolen cash in your other hand. **Add event word *Bloodlust* and \$1000 to your Mission Sheet. Then turn back to 41.**

49

You scope out a couple of tents and hone in on one. Its residents seem to be away – the lights are out. Breaking and entering is harder than it looks. It involves the right amount of cunning and stealth. **Roll a die – add the number to the sum of your *Stealth* and *Intellect* scores and if the total is higher than 20, turn to 85. Otherwise, read on.**

You fail to break in. The alarm goes off within moments of you setting foot in the tent and you flee the scene unnoticed. Thievery is not everyone's forte. **Turn back to 97.**

50

"*Bonjour, instrument.*" The old broker from the market steps out of a crowd to greet you, "This way – come now."

The old man snakes his way through tents towards the back where he scolds a boy defecating next to a rusted steel door. As the child runs away in a panic, the broker complains with his nose held high, "*Filth – pure filth.*"

After scratching his rear end, he proceeds to remove a key from his garments and unlock the door. You follow him curiously into a small room with barren, concrete walls. The ceiling is crisscrossed with a web of wires, some of which trail down to an antiquated, desktop computer resting on a rickety desk.

"My access to the solar system," he says pointing to it with a satisfied grin.

You spot several rodents scuttling about the corners of the room, their plump bodies making their way in and out through tiny holes in the wall. Pointing to them, he smiles, "My pets."

You fake a smile back.

"So...you might be wondering what it is that I need, instrument."

"The thought had crossed my mind."

"Let me start with a question first – how do you suppose I get to live in this nice little room all by myself while all *les misérables* outside live in squalor?"

Eyeing a rat, you retort, "Well one's definition of "nice" is relative."

The man's pleasant smile disappears as his heavy beard droops down his face.

"You seem to hold yourself in high regard, instrument. This room is highly coveted by many outside those doors – I have my own space, a proper bathroom...a chance to *keep* my dignity."

He slaps a fly crawling around his thick beard.

"And you see, one doesn't get the opportunity to live like me here unless they serve a critical function. Mine happens to be that I am the queen's eyes and ears."

"You're her spy?"

"In some circumstances – I'm also her access to people like you." He walks over and hands you two, small papers each with a unique design printed on it.

"These are official seals – one is the *East End Seal* which grants you access to *La Maison Royale*. The other, *The Seal of Official Business*, grants you audience with the queen herself. Don't lose these now."

Add both seals as items to your Mission Sheet and remove event word *Broker*. Then turn to 21.

51

You start to joke around, hoping they will fall for your charm. **Roll a die – if the number and your *Charisma* score total more than 10, turn to 70. Otherwise, read on.**

One of the guards punches you in the face abruptly and shouts, "No badge – no *entry!*"

Deduct 1 point from your *Strength* score and turn back to 35

52

Queen Marie is relaxing in a bubble bath when you are given audience with her. She sits in a large, white marble tub, her eyes fixed on herself in a mirror attached to the ceiling above. Several of her most trusted guards stand alert in a corner and eye you through their visors cautiously. **If you possess both event words *Detonate* and *Destroy* turn to 87 now. Otherwise, read on.**

You walk in coolly and throw the decapitated head on the floor, blood splattering on the sleek concrete. The queen's eyes go large at the sight. She studies the target's face - its features remain scrunched in a look of utter pain.

"*Brilliant!*" She glares at you,

"Good work instrument. You performed well."

"I do what I can, your highness."

She gestures at one of her minions who then walks over and hands you a wad of cash. **Add \$50,000 to your Mission Sheet and event word *Completed*.**

"Your well-deserved reward." The Queen stands up to reveal her naked body, soapy bubbles still clinging to her curves. A couple of scantily clad female servants walk over with towels and dry her off. Then she steps out of the bath as her tentacles slowly snake their way out of her upper torso and into the air. **If your character is *Jax* turn to 71 now or if your character is *Grave* turn to 32 now. If it's neither, read on.**

"You have done good work, instrument. I will make sure that you receive eternal happiness in the afterlife." The Queen exits the room unceremoniously and you are escorted out. **Turn to 81.**

53

The machine crashes to the floor, a plume of smoke snaking its way out its head. You lock onto Alexandre – he's standing with a pair of swords in his hands and a look of desperation in his eyes.

“Don’t do this,” he pleads through gritted teeth, “I can make a difference to New S-”
You don’t care for his reasoning and attack.

Alexandre

Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill: 7

Strength: 8

Defense: 8

See Mission Sheet for hand to hand combat rules. If you win, read on.

The man falls dead, a trail of blood trickling down his mouth. Before working on the needed souvenir from this kill you glance up the ladder to see whether the commotion has raised any alarm. At the moment there seems to be no indication of trouble.

You kneel down by your target and get to work. A few moments later, you have what you need stashed in a cloth bag and leave the scene behind a bloody mess. Once back in the tent you realize that it’s completely empty – none of the old men are anywhere to be seen. An antiquated television set sits in the corner displaying a grainy security video of Alexandre’s decapitated body. **Remove event word Kill and turn to 52.**

54

If you possess event word *Virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word and the X2 anecdote is upon you, deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

You look around *Marché Central*’s hustle and bustle, pondering your next move. Four large tunnels stretch away from the chamber connecting the market to the remaining sewer system. New Star is sectioned into four areas: West End, East End, North End and South End.

The West End houses slums - this is where majority of the city’s poverty stricken population survives by trying to eke out a living as best as possible. In stark contrast, the East End, otherwise known as *La Maison Royale*, is where Queen Marie thrives along with her royal court, administration, military, and harem. Without context, one would never guess that section to be part of an aged sewer system – its sheer decadence is quite deceiving.

The North End is the industrious section of the city. Numerous sweatshops and manufacturing chambers rest within this area supplying the solar system with fruits of their labor, mainly *Euphoria* pills which happen to be the most coveted *and* addictive narcotic ever produced by man. This section brings in copious amounts of revenue for the Queen, all made by the sweat and backbreaking work of those living in the West End. It also happens to be the only direct access to the moon, connecting New Star city to Alpha city via one daily inbound and outbound flight.

Finally, the South End houses another moneymaking industry – New Star’s penitentiary or *Pénitencier pour des Traîtres*. The Lunar colony sends its convicts here to serve out their terms in hopes that they will die from the unsanitary conditions. In return for housing these criminals, Queen Marie pockets hefty profits. The more the merrier is the unofficial tag line for the prison.

“I can’t wait to get the *fruck* out of here,” you mumble to yourself.

What’s your next move?

If you want to explore the market, **turn to 41**

If you want to venture into the East End, **turn to 2**

If you want to venture into the West End, **turn to 10**

If you want to venture to the North End, **turn to 35**

If you want to venture to the South End, **turn to 94**

55

The tent contains several wooden shelves, each showcasing glass vials and bottles - the concoctions within each sparkle under the many candles' dancing flames. A middle-aged man limps over, adjusts his specs and instructs with a raised finger, "Have a look around - remedies for most anything. Some of them are straight in from Alpha City. Others I have created myself. Oh and...*everything* is half off but only for today."

You spot some concoctions of interest.

You can purchase as many of each item in the "To Buy" section as permitted per your Mission Sheet and money upon you.

If your *Charisma* score is 8 or higher, everything in the "To Buy" section is half off (*the score lends well to your bartering skills*).

To Buy:

Stamina Therapy Cocktail (Price: \$2,000) - This nanotech microbial concoction adds 2 points to the drinker's Strength score. This is a onetime use item, meaning it can only enhance your *Strength* score once. It is meant to be stored upon you and can be drunk at any time during the game except during combat.

X2 Anecdote (Price \$5,000) – a supposed aid for X2, the deadly sexually transmitted disease that now plagues humanity. This item is a best seller here despite lack of proof of its potency - can be used when the game book instructs.

Silent Death (Price: \$5,000) - This poison, once mixed with a drink, instantly kills its target. This is a onetime use item. It is meant to be stored upon you and can be used when the game book instructs.

Once finished, you exit. **Turn back to 41.**

56

The behemoth slumps to the floor with a fractured spine. The crowd around you looks on with concern for no more than a second or two before going about their regular business. A few moments later a pack of stray, mangy dogs rains down upon the carcass to relieve it of any flesh. The act of death and the removal of its evidence appear to be a finely tuned process down here in New Star. **Turn to 60.**

57

Before you know it, the tracking device on your arm explodes, killing you instantly. **Game Over.**

58

After walking the well-lit tunnel for about a mile, you come upon a large, circular chamber. It's been repurposed into military barracks. Several soldiers are running single file while others spar to keep their combat skills sharpened. The smell of sweat sits heavy here. You wonder whether these men and women have any real loyalty to the Queen or if they enlisted to simply escape New Star's squalor. One does what they have to down here to survive.

As some of them eye you, you stroll about taking in the place casually. A large stable rests in the corner full of ferocious canines. Most of these dogs are sizable enough to serve as military steeds - they have effectively replaced the now extinct horse which once served that very purpose. You conjecture them to be the byproduct of breeding Great Danes for size, ferocity and strength. A few growl at you as you walk past them, their sharp teeth exposed all the while. Their caretaker is doing his best to calm the canines by throwing what you can only imagine to be grounded human flesh into their stable.

After some time you feel there's nothing much for you here and decide to exit – **Turn back to 97.**

59

A quick sideways dive into a tent results in you loosing the thugs for the moment – they rush past your hideout without realizing they’ve lost you. With a chuckle, you note, “Clowns.”

Just then a knife’s sharp blade dissipates any relief from your body as it’s pressed against your neck. A man speaks from behind in a hoarse voice, “Those men will pay me good money for you.”

His breath smells like rat meat.

Just as he is about to call out for the thugs, you spin around swiftly and engage him in combat!

Assailant

Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 6

Strength: 5

Defense: 3

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you survive the fight, turn to 93.

60

You begin pushing through the crowd not sure of your next step. Just then an old man with a black shawl covering much of his spindly body steps in front of you. He mumbles something barely audible. You stare unsure of his motives.

He then leans in closer and repeats with a creepy smirk, “You’re talented.”

“Yea...listen old man, you’re not going to get your marbles off with me.” You brush past him.

“I’ve kept an eye on your for a few days now,” he shouts after you while scratching his long, lice infested beard.

You stop dead in your tracks. Images of a silhouette hiding in your peripheral vision flash through your mind.

“So it’s been *you* following me all this time?”

He nods in agreement and asks, “You’re an instrument aren’t you?”

“Who wants to know, old man?”

“A broker - you know a greedy bastard that links deep-pocketed clients harboring devious intentions with instruments possessing devious skills.”

“I know what a broker is for *fruck’s* sake – what do you want, old man?” There’s exasperation in your voice.

“I can’t tell you here but we can chat in a more...*private* place.”

There’s something untrustworthy about him – hard to pinpoint though. His lazy-eye and body odor are distracting enough.

The man continues, “I live over in the West End – head over there when you can and I will find you.”

“This going to be worth my while?”

A smirk cuts through his gray beard, “This will be your ticket out of here. I can promise you that.”

The old man turns and disappears into the crowd as his last words repeat through your mind on loop. **Add event word *Broker* to the section titled “Event Words” on your Mission Sheet and turn to 100.**

61

After brushing past a drunk, you look down at the wad of cash you just pick-pocketed and chuckle, “Child’s play.”

Add \$1,000 to your Mission Sheet. Looking around, you spot a familiar face – it’s Olu! You haven’t seen your contact for the local *Thievery Collective* chapter in ages. It’s a welcome sight. He appears to be

in a heated argument with a shopkeeper. With a smile you approach him and Olu responds excitedly, "Girl, is that *really* you?"

"Yes sir! How do I look?" You twirl playfully.

"Like a sight for sore eyes." The man gives you a warm hug.

"How long has it been?"

"At least *two* years, girl and you haven't changed a *bit!*"

"And you look well fed as always, Olu!" You laugh while patting the man's belly.

Just then the shopkeeper cuts in, "Hey man, are you gonna buy my stuff or stand around flirting with this gal?"

"I ain't flirting you little-"

Olu stops short his retort and takes a deep breath. Turning to you he says, "We are getting together later today at the Dark Waters tavern over in the West End. *Join us.*"

"Well...considerin' I'm a wanted bird, think I might lay low for-"

Olu cuts you off with a hearty laugh.

"Baby girl, everyone in New Star is wanted for somethin'! The military here doesn't care about your wanted status unless someone is payin' big bucks to have you incarcerated."

"Alrigh...alrigh' – I'll see ya soon then."

You nod and let the man get back to his bartering. **Add event word *Olu* to your Mission Sheet and turn to 54.**

62

You finally spot what you're after amongst the chaos – a black tent marked with a large red circle sits in the back, hidden amongst the filth. A group of bearded men sit cross-legged in front of it. You walk up cautiously and display the paper you were provided by the orphan. One of them nods and grants you access.

Inside, you come face to face with another bearded man, this one stouter than the ones outside. Titling your head, you ask, "Alexandre...Lord Alexandre?"

"No," he responds, barely looking up from his book, "I am not the divine one, instrument – I am merely his servant."

Setting aside his read, he points to it and inquires, "You know that book?"

You glance at it and nod your head - it's the Bible. The man points to a few other books sitting next to him and asks, "What about these?"

"I believe the top one is the Quran, the middle one is the Bhagavad Gita, the bottom one is-"

"They are all books praising false gods – that's what they are, instrument." He cuts you off, "Nothing more than nonsense packed together to rule the minds of weak men."

"Umm...ok." You look around not sure how to respond.

"Real gods don't need *books* to spread their message. Books are written by ordinary people just like you and me – they are fabricated versions of reality."

You nod as if in agreement.

"Tell me something, instrument...have you ever been in the presence of a divine being?"

A smirk crosses your jaw and you say, "Well...I'm not sure about that *but*...I have been in the presence of those who claim to be something they are not."

"That's going to change then." The man makes a grand gesture with his arms, "You will meet someone divine for the first time in your life."

A dramatic pause disrupts the conversation. The concept of a so called divine being in need of *your* assistance amuses you.

"And this divine being...Lord Alexandre...how does he need my help?" you ask.

"That he will tell you."

The old man stands up and removes the rug he was seated upon to reveal a secret door. He pulls it open by a latch and a narrow ladder comes into view. It climbs down into darkness.

"The sewer has a sewer," you quip. The man asks you to follow him. **Remove event word Lord.**

The ladder leads you down into a tiny chamber that is illuminated by warm, yellow light. It appears mostly empty except for a tattered mattress sitting by the back wall. A man lies stretched across it with a book in his hands, his brows crunched in concentration. Upon your arrival he looks away from his read and asks, "Tell me - have you ever read *Les Miserables*?"

"Yes." You nod your head, "Not one of my favorites though."

"Sorry to hear that, instrument. You should read it again perhaps...although I'm assuming you don't get much time to read with all the...killing and stealing I suppose."

"And lying," you add with a crooked grin.

The man lets out a slight chuckle, ties his long black locks into a neat bun and stands up. Something about his face seems endearing and sinister all at once – perhaps it's his soft features punctured with a pair of dark, brooding eyes. You had envisioned someone a bit more regal. Alexandre is probably in his late 20s – his scruffy jaw, shabby attire and pudgy physique make him appear a pauper rather than a royal. You wonder what the bearded old men see in this guy.

If you possess event word Kill and wish to go to task, turn to 91 now. Otherwise turn to 43.

63

As the last guard hits the floor dead, Queen Marie swipes at you from behind with one of her tentacles opening a bloody gash on your right shoulder blade. **Deduct 1 point from each of your Strength and Defense scores.** You turn about on your heels just as the cyborg engages you in heated combat!

Queen Marie

Hand-to-hand combat skill: 10

Strength: 8

Defense: 9

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules. If you win, read on.

The woman falls dead, a trail of blood trickling down her mouth. Before working on the needed souvenir you glance around the room to see whether more trouble is lurking about. Fortunately for you there's none – several guards lie about dead.

You kneel down by your target and get to work. A few moments later you have what you need stashed in a cloth bag and leave the bloodbath behind. Your exit doesn't bring about any suspicion and soon you're out of harm's way. **Turn to 42.**

64

You spot two men of interest – one of them is your old friend, Olu. The other is a tall behemoth with a shaved head, an eye patch and what seems like a permanent scowl. The two appear the only sober individuals in the tent.

"Hey, Olu, here I am." You steal into their conversation casually.

"Oh hey, baby girl!" He gives you an affectionate hug, "Now we are getting somewhere."

"It's just us?"

"No...there's one more member of the crew but he isn't coming here. We have to go meet him in the skull tunnels."

"The *what* tunnels?"

With a grin, Olu answers, "Oh...you'll see, baby girl."

Moments later you find yourself stepping through a wooden door and into a tiny room somewhere deep within West End. As Olu shuts the door behind you, his companion, who apparently goes by *Shock*, pushes aside an old, bookcase in the back of the room. A narrow gap in the brick wall is revealed. With flashlight in hand, Olu motions for you to follow him into a narrow passageway.

"This isn't where you take advantage of me now is it?" you ask with a grin.

"Baby girl, you know I like mine long and hard."

As you chuckle, you catch him wink at Shock.

The three of you continue down the dark passage for some time. The flashlight's beam reveals a dust strewn ground littered with rodents. Glancing back at you, Olu states, "There are many forgotten realms under Paris. The Queen has no idea."

Just then you all come upon a concrete wall with a keypad. Your friend enters a code and a hidden door slides open. Another tunnel is revealed, this one lit by dim lightbulbs hanging at set intervals.

"Welcome to *Catacombes de Paris!*" Olu hold up his hands dramatically.

"What the fruck? These are still around? I thought they were all blown up in the war."

"Some of them but not all, Genesis. That is a common misconception."

"So...what only you two know about these?"

"Oh come on, girl of course not. There is a whole host of hackers and digi thieves that thrive down here. It is our lil' secret...*our lil' kingdom*. The Queen has literally no idea. They still think these are radioactive ruins."

Peering down the tunnel, you ask, "Well *aren't* they...radioactive? I mean how can they not be?"

"The ground level entrances were all sealed off just before the war due to rising illegal activity down here at the time. A couple of tour guides had been murdered, etc., etc. - that kind of stuff. So as a result no radioactivity *or* any chemical agents made their way down here - kind of convenient for us."

A wall of human skeletons comes into view. The scene is macabre yet fascinating to say the least. You observe your surroundings keenly and stare at two women walking past, both dressed in black robes. Each has on smart shades. You slip yours on and boot them up. A light green screen materializes within the shades' lenses along with a cursor and some diagnostics. Soon you realize there is digital connectivity here - very *strong* digital connectivity.

"Man," you chuckle mischievously, "this place didn't skimp on the wireless."

Soon the three of you walk into a small space with nothing much of interest except for a long, black haired man leaning against the wall. He grins through his goatee upon seeing Olu.

"Thought you frucks were never going to show up?"

"Oh, you insult me, Hafiz."

"Alright look this has to go down quick, Olu so we've got to get to it now."

As your friend nods in agreement, you cut in, "What are we talking about?"

"Who the fruck is she?" The man doesn't seem amused by your interjection.

"She...*she* is the one who's going to make this happen for us." Olu sports a proud smile.

As you look on with curiosity, he explains, "We goin' after a big deal - the recipe for *Euphoria* itself. That's right, baby girl...the king drug itself. There's big money to be made here; \$400,000 to be exact which we'll split four ways."

Upon seeing alarm on your face, he continues, "I know, I know...it sounds bold. But we've actually got a solid plan."

"That's right." Hafiz jumps in, "So I've figured out that there is a narrow shaft that connects the North End's *Euphoria* lab to a location down here in the catacombs. It was probably used to pass messages, mostly notes scribbled on papers, at some point in the past – probably right after the war. Its opening is in the left hand corner of the lab, in the floor itself and so thin that it's been forgotten about by current security measures."

"And what? I'm going to scribble the recipe on a piece of paper and pass it down?" Your eyebrow is raised.

"No need to scribble." Olu shakes his head, "That paper already exists. It sits in a security vault in the back of the lab, locked and protected by a solid piece of code."

"Wait, wait...the most guarded narcotic secret in the solar system is scribbled on some piece of paper? It's not an encrypted data file protected by firewalls, passwords or defense viruses?"

"No." Hafiz responds, "Ten years ago, its original version was stolen – that was stored digitally. So it was decided that the new version would be kept in hard copy format. The only way someone can get to it now is if they are physically present in the lab."

"I see...and the code that protects this vault - that's what you need me to break?"

"Yes. Once you get your hands on the paper, you will walk over to the shaft's opening and slip the paper down."

"Hafiz, look isn't someone going to notice that I'm doing any of this?" You're scratching your head, "Even if I'm in disguise, you don't think-"

"That's where I come in," The largest of the group chimes in.

"He speaks?" You grin.

"I will create a distraction just outside the lab's entrance and catch everyone's attention – that will be your queue." Shock instructs.

Silence settles in for several moments as you digest the information.

"I gotta be honest boys - this sounds like a plan put together by a bunch of kids but...it's somethin'." You say with a mischievous smile, "Alright - lets get to work."

"You're going to need this to gain access to the lab." Olu hands you a badge, "Don't even ask what I had to do to get it."

Add event word *Recipe* and the *Chemical Specialist Badge* item to your Mission Sheet. Then turn to 35.

65

One of the guards reaches for his earpiece suddenly and then aims a gun at you shouting, "*This instrument is a hired hand!*"

Queen Marie eyes him with a questioning look and he continues, "Our spies have notified me this pawn is here to do Alexandre's bidding and take you out, your highness."

She looks back at you with bulging eyes. With guns aimed at you, there is no other option but to raise your arms. Your gig is up.

"Alexandre is an even bigger fool than I thought." The queen slaps you across the face.

Then she shrieks, "*You will give up his whereabouts now!*"

Turn to 57

66

Deduct \$50,000 from your Mission Sheet. At the end of the tunnel is a small space that's been converted into a waiting area. A handful of wealthy travellers sit about on benches. They look like merchants from Alpha probably here to negotiate contracts for dirt-cheap manual labor.

Within 15 minutes or so, there is an announcement that the spacecraft to Alpha has arrived. Everyone is asked to board a cargo elevator and soon you are riding up towards the ceiling. There you find a sewer exit and climb out after all of the other travellers and their luggage, and find yourself inside a black tent. Its exit leads you directly into the cargo space of a small craft – not exactly the luxury you were expecting for a hefty \$50,000 price point. Everyone straps themselves into a narrow seat – some, like you, are lucky enough to get a window seat. All luggage is stowed in the corner as the pilot comes on the intercom to say, "Short flight – about 2 hours. It's going to be bumpy so...you know...strap in. We'll get there soon enough."

His words aren't exactly comforting but you're excited about the flight anyway like a child giddy about candy. You see the ruins of Paris underneath an unfiltered, afternoon sun outside your window. All about them sand dunes rise and fall – this is not the Paris of Jacques-Yves Cousteau or Claude Monet. The Arc de Triomphe's can be seen in the distance, now nothing more than rubble.

It's all rather sad.

The craft's ion propulsion systems roar to life and it starts to lift vertically. As you are pressed into your seat, you watch Paris get smaller and smaller as it falls away outside the craft. Soon you are breaking free of Earth's atmosphere and entering space's blackness. A smile crosses your chin as you think about the adventures that wait up in Alpha City. **Congratulations on getting out of New Star! Do you think you can do it again with a different instrument?**

67

"Enter when ready." The naked sex-worker smiles while lying down on the dirty ground, legs wide open.

The two of you engage in various sex acts until you're sweaty and satisfied. You lie on your back then, your gaze studying the prostitute's dirty body. The scent and sounds of raw sex are all about you and you feel like you've been transported to some kind of sexual utopia. But the thought of the X2 virus keeps scratching at the back of your mind. You keep flicking it away though - *how bad can a fatal STD really be after all?*

Roll a die now.

If you roll 1 or 2, the prostitute, impressed by your skills, decides to help you out by gifting you an explosive device - Macro Pulse Grenade (-8 enemy strength). If you decide to keep this weapon, note it on your Mission Sheet.

If you roll 3 or 4, you spy the beginning of a tiny, black blister on the prostitute's ankle and your heart drops – you have just contracted the deadly X2 virus. Note event word *Virus* on your Mission Sheet.

If you roll 5 or 6, the prostitute bids you farewell unceremoniously and walks away into the mass of heaving bodies about you apparently not too impressed with your skills.

"You win some...you lose some." You exit the tent. **Turn to 41.**

68

You stare at a tunnel stretching away from the market chamber. A memory of you playing happily with other children flashes in your mind. Your early years were filled with joy for the most part despite their surroundings. A smile slowly crosses your jaw, taking your facial muscles by surprise, but it is

short-lived.

Things have gotten worse in New Star since then. What was once hailed as a beacon of hope for survivors on Earth has now completely disintegrated into what it was always referred to by those thriving on the moon – *a hellhole*. The agonizing wails of a woman lying at the edge of the market reach your ears just then. She's dying painfully from one of the most deadly sexually transmitted diseases mankind has ever faced; the X2 virus. Tell-tale signs of the disease cover her body – open sores with oozing black puss. The lack of a proven cure and proper sanitation has allowed the virus to become a permanent mainstay here in just the past decade.

Behind her lies the tunnel leading to the West End, the area where you spent much of your youth. Recollections of bloodied bed sheets and a dead woman, your mother, cut through your mind. That fateful day when your life changed forever feels *so* fresh. You can still hear her agonizing pleas for mercy. You wonder in what condition your childhood home is in today. A visit to the West End could quench that curiosity. **Add event word *Home* and turn to 54.**

69

You poke your head out the tent uncertain of the thugs' whereabouts – the crowd doesn't help your line of sight unfortunately. Your options are twofold: take your chances outside the tent or remain cooped up within it. Frankly, the latter doesn't really make any sense to you. Sticking around in one location for too long in New Star is like standing in quicksand – *you have to keep moving*.

Turn to 60

70

"...And that's why I don't happen to have my badge upon me at this very moment," you finish with your arms outstretched playfully.

"Alright, alright – go ahead." The guard responds to your banter with a faint smile, "I get it. You can pass this one time but *next* time you better have the badge."

You nod your head in agreement and the guard motions for his companions to let you through.

Turn to 7

71

"You need to do one more thing before you get out of here, Jax."

The queen motions for you to follow her and leads you into a large bedroom. A four-post bed rests in the middle, its mattress covered in satin sheets. Sheer red curtains hang from its posts. The queen slides into bed and lies on her stomach while staring back at you.

"You will pleasure me now," she instructs casually.

You study her naked curves, soaking in every inch of their beauty. Her body is tantalizing to say the least but those damn tentacles on the other hand are jarring as they flail about in the air like hungry snakes.

"You don't plan on using those on me by any chance, do you?" You ask masking your concern well.

"Not *if* you do well," she responds with a smile. You can't tell if she's joking or not. It doesn't matter though for you feel the barrel of a gun jut into your spine. Glancing back you see several of her guards behind you.

"The Queen desires – enter her *now*," the leader of the troupe commands. Your options are limited.

"I guess we are going to have an audience," you comment as you start undressing.

"Does that bother you, Jax?"

"Nope – won't be the first time your highness."

The next half hour finds you entangled in the queen's many limbs. It is the roughest and strangest sexual encounter you've ever had but it is worth it, oddly enough. The prospect of having your face

smashed in by sharp tentacles adds a layer of danger you haven't experienced yet. You find it exciting somehow. At one point you spot the tip of a tentacle inches from your inner thigh.

"Nervous?" the queen asks. There's playfulness in her eyes now.

"No," you retort confidentially and let her mount you. The guards watch on intently – it's all rather odd.

Once she's climaxed, the queen kisses your lips and says, "Good work – I have to take care of business now that my brother is completely out of the picture. So I will be leaving. We will never meet again but I will remember our time together."

You then watch her walk out of the room unceremoniously, lying there naked all the while.

Several awkward moments pass as you clothe yourself in front of the guards. With a playful smile, you quip, "You fellas take notes? *That's* how it's done."

"Leave now before you wear out your welcome, instrument."

"Alright then – everybody's a critic, I suppose." You note while exiting.

Turn back to 54.

72

You enter the tavern's tent cautiously. The place doesn't seem all that different than what's outside, except for the filth – it's comparatively cleaner in here. Well at least there aren't any decaying bodies lying about. There *is* an old woman peeing in the corner though. The tavern's owner walks over with glazed eyes and a huge smile, "Don't mind her – she's always here doing that. She loves our beer – best import from Alpha city. Drink like the rich, piss like the poor! Come in and sit where ever you'd like!"

The place doesn't have any chairs.

You nod your head and glance about. The tavern is packed with patrons; men and women, all lost in a drunken stupor. You hear laughter which catches you by surprise. It's a scene of momentary merriment. Several children run about, some sneaking around with tiny flasks. It's a strange vibe to get used to. It seems that alcohol placates misery no matter where you are in the solar system.

If you possess event word *Richie*, **turn to 37 now. Otherwise, read on.**

If you possess event word *Olu*, **turn to 64 now.**

If you don't possess either event words then there's nothing here of interest except drunks – **turn back to 4.**

73

A commotion at the entrance catches everyone's attention. A heavily muscled man has apparently started an argument with one of the guards. The lab's technicians stop short their work and look on with curiosity.

"Thank you, Shock," you whisper to yourself and work your way over to the vault. One wouldn't think twice about this unassuming little steel box unless they were aware of its contents. It displays nothing except an electronic lock. Quickly sliding your smart shades down your forehead and over your eyes, you press the power button and boot up their hard drive. Countless lines of code project in your lenses and with a few voice commands, you connect the shade's sensors to your brain's neurological synapses. Now you are in control of the device with your mind.

You set to work right away, your thoughts translating into new lines of code as you try hacking into the vault's information system. **Roll a die - if the number and your *Intellect* score total more than 10, turn to 92. Otherwise, turn to 18.**

74

You feel a tap on your leg just then and turn around to find a child of no more than eight years. Her long, unruly hair and tattered clothing indicate that she's most likely an orphan – droves of her ilk are

an unfortunate reality here. Most have lost their families to drugs, violence or the human meat trade. Sadness drapes her innocent face as she stands there with her frail arm stretched out, a small sheet of paper held within her wispy fingers. You take the sheet and the girl runs away without saying a word. It reads:

"We've been keeping an eye on you for the past few days – like what you can do. Lord Alexandre, the divine one, could use your help. Visit the West End and look for a tent marked with a red circle."

You look around for anyone suspicious but literally *everyone* looks suspicious – it's New Star after all. **Add event word *Lord* and turn back to 41.**

75

After taking a sip, the queen continues, "When I was ten years old, I asked my father if I could take the throne when he stepped down. I was *slapped* across the face and told no. I was told it belonged to my twin brother because he was a male. I kept the sharp sting of my father's judgment to myself and never spoke of it to anyone."

She leans in slightly and continues, "Then I asked him the same question when I was fifteen only to be told the same thing. No, Marie the throne belongs to your brother Alexandre – you *know that*. I was slapped again, this time hard enough to make my nose bleed. The wound continued to fester untended. It burned for years *and* years until I approached my father again when I was twenty with the same request. *Care to guess what happened next?"*

Her tone has taken a sinister turn. After a beat, you respond, "He...told you again that it would be... Alexandre's?"

"Wrong!" She slaps the table violently, never removing her gaze from yours, "This time I didn't *give* him a chance to shut me down because *this time, I ripped his frucking throat out!"*

The revelation is unnerving given that the official cause of death had been cancer. You consider her confession carefully before asking, "Why are you telling me all this?"

"So you know the context behind my ask."

If you possess event word *Revenge*, turn to 65 now. Otherwise, turn to 22

76

The tent is bright red and larger than most around – hard to miss. Upon entering, you find yourself engulfed by naked, sweaty bodies and the stench of raw sex. You've essentially walked into an orgy.

A bearded man stands apart from the scene - the only clothed individual in here. He's holding a thick wad of cash and appears to be the owner. Upon noticing you, he steps over a pair of nude, semen-stained men and approaches with a crooked smile.

*"Looks like you wanna fruck – great decision! See those naked folks in the back? They're the prostitutes. You can have one for a half hour for *only* \$5000. Better hurry because they are in heavy demand at the moment."*

He's pointing at a line of customers, men and women, waiting to get their hands on a sex-worker.

*"Those prostitutes are frucking incredible - I'm sure you've heard already. Now...you can sell your body too if you'd like and make nice money - I'd say \$10,000 per transaction for you. You look very fit so you'd do *very* well."*

You spot a naked man eyeing you while rubbing his crotch underneath his rotund, hairy belly. He winks at you and displays a toothy smile.

"Lovely," you mumble to yourself.

What do you want to do?

If you have \$5000 and want a prostitute, deduct the money from your Mission Sheet and **turn to 67**

If you want to sell yourself instead and make some money– **turn to 44**

If you'd rather get the hell out of there – **turn back to 41**

77

You bolt through the crowd as quickly as possible, knocking over people in the process. The thugs follow with haste. Maneuvering around tents and food stalls, you try shaking your pursuers!

Roll a die – if the number and your *Stealth* score total more than 10, turn to 59 now. Otherwise, read on.

A quick, sideways dive through a tent's entrance results in you crashing into one of the iron, support poles and the entire tent falling in on you. As you fumble around clumsily with the fabric that now entangles your limbs, you feel yourself being picked up off the dirty floor and hurled into a wall some distance away. The next few moments find you lying flat on the ground, dazed and confused - **deduct 1 point from your *Strength* score.**

The surrounding crowd quickly disperses as the three thugs rush at you. Kicking the tent fabric off yourself once and for all, you jump to your feet and find yourself immediately engaged in a heated brawl with one of the men!

First Thug

Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 6

Strength: 5

Defense: 3

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you survive the fight, turn to 23.

78

The queen attempts jumping out of harm's way but your shot decimates her left calf causing her to crash into a wall. As she screams in pain, one of her guards shouts, "*Protect your Queen!*"

Within moments you're engaged in a heated shoot-out with the security team!

Guards

Marksmanship: 10

Strength: 10

Defense: 7

See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand Combat rules.

If you win, turn to 82.

79

The tunnel leads into the servant quarters. Several chambers here serve as housing and kitchen areas. Men, women and children hustle about you, each with their own set tasks needing attention. The conditions here, while decrepit compared to the aristocracy's residential area, seem several leagues above those in the West End. People's desire to serve as servants to New Star's elite is understandable.

There's not much of interest here unless you want to learn about serving the aristocracy – obviously you don't. **If your character is Apex and you don't possess event word *Blood*, turn to 96 now. Otherwise, turn back to 45.**

80

Roll a die – if the number is odd, half of the money upon you is pickpocketed. Deduct the

appropriate amount from your Mission Sheet, add event word *pickpocket* and turn back to 4.

81

The desired tunnel stands before you. A sign above it reads, "To Alpha City."

You cannot hide your giddiness at the thought of getting out of here.

"If you don't have 50 grand, you can turn right around and leave," a guard at the entrance barks. **If you have the money and wish to leave New Star at once, turn to 66. Otherwise, turn to 35.**

82

As the last guard hits the floor dead, Queen Marie swipes at you from behind with a tentacle, opening up a bloody gash on your right shoulder blade. **Deduct 1 point from each of your *Strength* and *Defense* scores.** You turn about on your heel and shoot the woman in the chest. Her body slides back into a wall with smoke spewing forth from the wound.

Before working on the needed souvenir you glance around the room to ensure that trouble isn't lurking about - at the moment it isn't. Several guards and priests lie about dead. You kneel down by your target and get to work. A few moments later you have what you need stashed in a cloth bag and leave the bloodbath behind. Your exit doesn't bring about any suspicion and soon you're out of harm's way. **Turn to 42.**

83

"I'm glad to see you two make it back," Olu exclaims dramatically upon seeing you and Shock.

"Glad to be alive," you remark. Looking over to Hafiz, you ask, "Well, what's your next move?"

"It has already been played, Genesis. The recipe has been handed over to the end client."

"Payday is upon us then?" You ask greedily.

"Yes, here is your cut." Olu hands you **\$100,000. Add the money to your Mission Sheet.**

After a quick celebratory drink, the group disperses quickly. It all seems rather anticlimactic but then again, the *Thievery Collective's* meet ups and celebrations are always brief so as to avoid unwanted attention.

Turn to 54

84

After some banter, the bounty hunter lets you take her from behind in a dark tunnel nearby. Her gentle moans echo about you and after climaxing, she gets dressed without making any eye contact. You admire her athletic physique - she's your height and her face reminds you of a model you once dated back in Alpha.

"Jax - I don't want to see you again. You need to leave before I change my mind."

Sitting upright on the ground, you smile back and say, "Sure - until next time then."

"Jax, I *said* I don't want to see you again."

She locks eyes with you - they're blue and they're beautiful.

The next round is even more passionate than the last. The bounty hunter is screaming at the top of her lungs. After you both finish, she gets onto her feet, pulls up her leather pants and whispers with a smile, "You *bastard*."

"Catch you 'round." You throw a kiss her way as she runs off.

"Always up for some vigorous exercise," you remark to yourself while dressing.

Turn to 10

85

You break into the tent successfully; the alarm doesn't go off. As expected, the place is decked out with expensive furniture and beautiful decorations and you swiftly get to work.

Roll a die to see what you make off with.

If you roll 1 or 2, you get your hands on \$2,000.

If you roll 3 or 4, you get your hands on \$3,000.

If you roll 5 or 6, you get your hands on \$4,000.

Once done, you exit the premise unnoticed. **Add the money to your Mission Sheet and turn back to 97.**

86

The man crashes to the floor, his body bloodied beyond recognition. Just then you notice the remaining thug from the corner of your eye – the behemoth is rushing at you from your left!

Roll a die – if the number and your *Defense* score total more than 10, you quickly leap out of harm's way. Now if the number is less than or equal to 10, subtract 1 point from your *Strength* score because the thug rams right into you, sending you flying back into a wall.

You ready yourself for a brawl with this massive opponent. He lets out battle cry while slapping his bare, hairy chest and then charges you!

Third Thug

Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 10

Strength: 10

Defense: 4

If you win, turn to 56.

87

Without warning, you take quick aim with your long-range weapon and fire at the queen. **Roll a die and add the number you rolled to your *Total Marksmanship* score – if the total is more than 10, turn to 78 now. Otherwise, read on.**

The target jumps out of harm's way with cat-like reflexes. Before you can take aim again, her security team engages you in a heated shootout!

Security Guards

Marksmanship: 10

Strength: 8

Defense: 9

If you win, turn to 63.

88

You work your way through stench and misery over to a darkened corner in the West End. To your shock, you find your childhood home still standing. It's a tattered, brown tent and it looks much smaller now than what you remember.

You had vowed to never return after that fateful day but this little trip is much needed. It's closure. Taking a deep breath you muster the strength to step inside and find yourself surrounded by clutter.

Someone else seems to be living here now. There are several articles of clothing and pots and pans littered about the dirty floor. A narrow cot rests in the corner with someone lying underneath its covers.

You eye the body heaving up and down slowly, its back turned to you. There seems to be nothing left here for you besides bad memories. As you turn about to exit a man's voice cuts through the silence like a knife.

"I knew you'd return one day." It sounds oddly familiar.

Without turning around, you ask, "Uncle Ryu?"

You hear movement behind you, like someone getting out of bed. Turning about you see a frail, old man sitting bedside. His wild, grey hair and bushy eyebrows make him appear much older than his actual age.

"It's good to see you again, my child."

You nod your head gently in response.

"I hear that the media loves you...for all the wrong reasons. What do they call you...ah yes...*Grave*; New Star's most notorious export...right after *Euphoria*."

You keep your eyes on the floor.

"But to me...you will always be Reiko...my little, Reiko Ota."

Your cheeks turn red and you shout back, "*That is not my name anymore!*"

Uncle Ryu stares back without emotion.

You continue, "I severed ties with that name the day I cut my father's life short."

Silence settles into the tent once more. But it is short lived.

"Reiko...there is something you need to know. My brother...*your* father...he's still alive."

Your uncle's revelation hits you like a punch to the gut.

"Yes...yes, he's still alive. You were only 10 when you struck him with that knife – your strikes were weak, not deep. He survived them."

"*H-how?*"

"I helped him, Reiko."

Your eyes turn to thin slits.

"I *had* to – he's my brother."

"*He murdered my mother and sister in front of me...that psychotic maniac murdered them in front of me and you saved him?!?!?*" You're limbs are shaking.

The old man nods gently.

"Yes – I did. I regret it now...but I couldn't help it at the time. He recovered eventually and went on to murder again. His murder spree became talk of the town around here. But soon he was caught...and put into the penitentiary."

"Is that where he is?"

"Yes, he rots there now."

"Uncle, you did what you had to and now I will do what I *must*."

"I cannot stop you, Reiko but...do you really think you turned out any different than your father even after all that running? Blood is blood, my little Reiko."

His words cut like barbed wire. You exit the tent hastily with a singular focus. **Replace event word Home with Daddy and turn back to 54.**

89

As your senses come back you notice that the craft's front has been set ablaze and the flames are spreading back towards you at an alarming rate! Luckily the exit hatch is to your immediate left. You undo your harnesses quickly as they have been loosened by the crash's force. Within moments, you are outside and scrambling away from the vehicle when it explodes into a ball of fire sending you to the ground.

Getting back to your feet, you try taking stock of your surroundings. You recall that prior to takeoff the craft had been parked next to New Star's official exit - a manhole cover inside a small makeshift tent serving as an airport. It's by the Louvre museum or at least what's left of it.

You feel relief but it's fleeting because you have no idea where you are now. Indistinguishable Parisian ruins surround you, their broken frames draped in ash and soot. Sand dunes flank them -in the absence of a balanced environment and a functioning ozone layer, large parts of the Earth have been turned into deserts. You feel like part of some surreal scene painted only in different tones of brown and grey.

Then you spot a massive green fog behind a row of three-storied buildings several hundred feet to your left - it's a lingering reminder of the deadly biological weapons that were deployed in the last world war. Fogs such as this one will never dissipate due to their chemical composition and are expected to forever roll across land and sea, killing all living things in their path - just one of the many reasons colonizing Earth again is not a viable option for humanity.

The fog appears to be rolling in your general direction, pushed along by a heavy wind. You need to find cover fast! Looking around, you quickly spot two options at your disposal - a stand alone building, probably one that served as a bank before the war, to your left with all its windows and doors intact and a sewer entrance to your right with a missing cover. Most entrances to the sewer system have been sealed to keep outside dangers from creeping in but some, like this one, remain available for access. What's your next move?

If you want to take cover in the building **turn to 16**

If you want to head into the sewer **turn to 27**

90

You eye the last thug - he's pointing a handheld machine gun directly at you! Get ready for a shootout!

Thug

Marksmanship: 7

Strength: 6

Defense: 4

See Mission Sheet for shoot out rules.

If you survive the shootout, turn to 36.

91

"Time to meet your maker!" You lunge at your victim but before you're within striking distance, something grabs you from behind and hurls you into a wall. You land on the ground dazed and confused - **deduct 1 point from your Strength score.** Blinking away stars you focus on a stocky, black-metallic robot in the middle of the room. You assume it to be Alexandre's bodyguard and realize that it had remained hidden in one of the room's shadowy corners until it had detected threat.

The robot, with its menacing red eyes, engages you in heated hand to hand combat!

Robot Bodyguard

Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 8

Strength: 10

Defense: 8

See Mission Sheet for hand to hand combat rules.

If you win turn to 53.

92

You hear a clicking sound – the vault has been unlocked! As the commotion grows louder at the entrance you steal the piece of paper, work your way over to the designated spot and slide the recipe down the small crack in the floor. Then you work your way over to the entrance where, upon seeing you, Shock suddenly changes his demeanor with the guards and says, “Sorry guys but you’re right. This has all been a major misunderstanding and I’ll go my way now.”

“Crazy asshole!” one of them retorts. You brush past them all nonchalantly and walk away with Shock some steps behind you.

Turn to 83

93

Your opponent, a middle-aged shopkeeper, falls back onto a pile of rugs. Before you can catch your breath, a teenage boy, probably the dead man’s son, storms into the tent with a gun aimed for your head.

“Boy, don’t!” you command but it’s no use - a deadly shootout ensues.

Teenage Kid

Marksmanship: 7

Strength: 6

Defense: 4

See Mission Sheet for Shoot out rules.

If you survive the shootout turn to 69.

94

If you possess event word *detonate* turn to 57 now, otherwise read on.

If you possess event word *virus* and the X2 anecdote is not upon you, deduct 1 point from each of your attribute scores except the *Wanted* score. If you possess this event word and the X2 anecdote is upon you, then deduct 1 point from only your *Strength* score.

The tunnel to the prison stands without a sign, its entrance blocked by two, iron-cast double doors. There are no guards littered about – only a tiny television screen rests next to the doors with a single, red button by its side. You press the button and the grainy visual of a security guard appears on the screen.

“No visitors allowed – go away,” he mumbles without looking up from his paper-filled desk.

If you possess event word *Daddy* turn to 47

If you don’t possess this item turn back to 54

95

You start pushing through the crowd and when you step out of the tent, both the man and the child are nowhere to be seen. You curse to yourself while scanning your surroundings feverishly. That’s when you feel something grab you from behind and throw you into a wall! **Deduct 1 point from your Strength score and remove event word *Richie*.**

Fighting off stars, you jump to your feet just as the cyborg pimp engages you in heated combat!

Richie**Hand-to-Hand Combat Score – 10****Strength – 8****Defense – 7****See Mission Sheet for Hand-to-Hand combat out rules.****If you survive the fight read on.**

The man falls to the ground, his face caved in and unrecognizable. You start looking for the girl immediately but she is gone – at some point during the melee she must have fled. You don't blame the child, as you would have done the same thing had you been in her position.

Before leaving the scene behind, you search the pimp and find a few items of interest.

Explosive device: Pulse Grenade (-5 enemy Strength)**Melee Weapon: Laser Sword (+2 bonus)**

You can take any of these items but remember that only two explosive devices and one melee weapon can be upon you at any given time (ex. You need to discard your current melee weapon if you choose to pick up the laser sword).

Turn back to 10.**96**

"Look at that one," your mother whispers in your ear. She's pointing to an old lady hobbling away into the darkness of a nearby tunnel.

You ignore the voice but it presses, "We need her...now."

"No!" you whisper sharply.

"Don't talk back to me, boy!"

"Go away!" You start to walk over to the tunnel the old lady disappeared into.

"Just do as I say and I will leave you alone – *I promise!*"

You stop in your tracks and stare at the tunnel momentarily.

"You promise, mother?"

"I promise, my dear." You can see her brandishing a wicked smile while lurking in the cracks of your mind.

Within darkened shadows, you hold the old lady down as you choke the life out of her with your bare hands. She grunts for breath all the while scratching at your face with feeble fingers.

"Yes! Yes! Kill the bitch!" Your mother is shrieking with delight. You want her to stop but there's nothing you can do.

The whole ordeal doesn't take long and soon your victim's bulging eyes relax. You get off her limp body and glance the length of the tunnel in either direction to ensure there are no witnesses and when you see none, you flee the scene. **Add event word *Blood* and turn back to 97.**

97

You walk into East End's main chamber, a large, rectangular space adorned with silk hangings all of which have Goddess Marie's visage stitched upon them. Her sharp features, flanked by black locks, scowl down at her dominion and even in her likeness possess an unmistakable arrogance. Several

crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling each brightening the spacious, luxurious room. The grimy, brick walls from the market are nowhere in sight. Instead the walls here stand clean and whitewashed. The floor is a glazed concrete – you can see your blurred reflection staring back. New Star’s elite walk about dressed in black robes and silk scarves. Their smiles and laughter seem completely oblivious to the suffering just outside this hall.

A few points of interest catch your attention. A narrow tunnel stretches away from the chamber, a sign at its entrance reading “Goddess Marie’s personal quarters.” To your left, another well-lit tunnel stretches away towards the aristocracy’s residences. A tunnel to your right heads for the military quarters and barracks. This section, with its opulence and heavy security, looks fairly self-contained – a resident here might never need to leave its comforts. What’s your next move?

If you want to head towards Goddess Marie’s personal quarters and don’t possess event word *Kill* and *Completed* - **turn to 33**

If you want to head towards the aristocracy’s residences, **turn to 45**

If you want to head towards the military barracks, **turn to 58**

If you want to head back to the market, **turn to 54**

98

The tunnel spits you out into another chamber, this one smaller and narrower than the last. It too is littered with filth and tents. **If your *Wanted* score is 8 or above and you don’t possess event word *Bounty*, turn to 38 now. Otherwise, read on.** You glance about overwhelmed. A couple of stray dogs growl at you from a shadowy corner, their gums lined with human flesh.

If you possess event word *Lord*, **turn to 62 now**

If you don’t possess this event word, there’s nothing of interest here - **turn back to 10**

99

Roll a die – add the number you rolled to the sum of your *Charisma* and *Stealth* scores and if the total is 20 or more, turn to 25 now. Otherwise, read on. You fail miserably to sneak the tablet into the queen’s drink – it falls onto the table conspicuously. She eyes it with burning rage and shouts, “*You were trying to poison me you filthy mongrel?*”

Turn to 57

100

You turn your attention back to the filthy environment and blend into its guts and crevices. As you ponder how this city became the cesspool that it is today, you can’t help but think about the day it all started – the day of the attack. No one knows which nation launched the first nuclear warhead on The United States of America on that fateful, Christmas morning 500 years ago. What is certain though is that the response was swift, brutal and paranoid – American nuclear arsenal, along with deadly biological pathogens, were rained down upon the cities of Moscow, Berlin, Shanghai, Karachi and Tehran. Someone had boldly, or foolishly depending on how one looks at it, stood up against the increasingly imperial aspirations of Earth’s sole super power of the time and in doing so, carelessly altered the course of humanity into an unimaginable direction.

The third and final World War had lasted only an hour. It is estimated that roughly 2,000 nuclear weapons were detonated between Russia and America alone. Hundreds of metropolises around the world were engulfed in massive firestorms and urban areas totaling thousands of square miles were burned down in mere seconds. The 150 million tons of smoke that rose from those fires penetrated the

stratosphere where it eventually spread around the globe to form a thick, black cloud. For decades most sunlight was blocked. Not surprisingly, the effects of this nuclear winter were devastating for all life on planet Earth.

The absence of warmth led to surface temperatures dropping well below levels experienced during the last Ice Age. Crops perished. Most land and aquatic species perished as well. The human population, having already been decimated by billions in that one hour of warfare, continued its sharp decline years after until no more than a few thousand remained. Of those survivors, the moneyed ones were able to evacuate the planet and head for the moon where an existing international research colony, then only a small glass-domed facility of a few buildings, would serve as their new home. The less fortunate remained behind, holed up in various underground locations such as bomb bunkers, city sewers, subway stations and natural caves to avoid deadly clouds of radiation and poisonous gases that had now permanently blanketed the Earth's surface.

Only one of those locations, Paris City's sewer system, eventually stabilized to maintain a sizable human population. Supported by filtered water from the English Channel and a mixture of cannibalism, rodent meat and basic, indoor agriculture, this sanctuary became known as New Star City. Subsequent trading ties with those humans now thriving on their permanent lunar colony, Alpha City, led to an influx of healthier food imports and vitamin D supplements - this fledgling earthly shelter soon became a bustling metropolis of a quarter-million or so residents. Crammed in a limited space with a finite food supply, survival of the fittest became the law. And now you find yourself at its heart, struggling to figure out your place within it.

This is going to be an experience like no other. In this gamebook, you can move around New Star City as you wish, exploring new locations, taking on different missions, etc. This is a solo-role playing adventure with no linear story line to follow. There is one goal though - to save up \$50,000 interplanetary dollars so that you can buy yourself a one-way ticket to Alpha City. The price is pretty steep but for a reason - no one wants New Star's thrash.

How you get that money is up to you. You create your own path in this vision of humanity's future. What you do, where you go - it's all completely on you, plain and simple. Just try not to let your Strength score fall to 0 - that's when it's lights out and game over.

Good luck, instrument - try not to die.

If your character is Jax, turn to 31

If your character is Grave, turn to 68

If your character is Apex, turn to 40

If your character is Genesis, turn to 61

Mission Sheet (shoot out and melee combat rules at the end)

Character Name:

Base Marksmanship (accuracy with long-range weapons): _____/10

Long-range weapon name: _____ Long-range weapon Bonus: + _____

Total Marksmanship: _____/10

Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill (ability to brawl): _____/10

Melee weapon name: _____ Melee weapon Bonus: + _____

Total Hand to Hand Combat Skill: _____/10

Strength (pretty straight forward): _____/10

Defense (ability to dodge/deflect an attack): _____/10

Stealth (ability to move undetected): _____/10

Intellect (brain power): _____/10

Charisma (likeability factor): _____/10

Wanted (how much the character is sought after by the law): _____/10

Each of these scores can fluctuate depending upon your experiences – positive ones can increase your scores (ex. Certain concoctions can increase your Strength score) and negative ones can decrease your scores (ex. incurring a shoulder injury will most likely cause you to lose Strength points). Note: none of these scores can ever go over 10 or below 0; if your Strength score falls to 0, the adventure is over.

Inter Planetary Dollars upon you:

You will get various chances during your adventure to use your money (ex. purchase, gamble, etc.). Guard it carefully – Alpha has plenty of pickpockets.

Explosive Device 1:

Explosive Device 2:

Use explosive weapons such as grenades, etc. judiciously for each can only be used once; they must be crossed off from the Mission Sheet after use.

Item 1:

Item 2:

You can only carry two items at a time so be selective. These can be discarded at any point at your discretion.

Event Words:

An event word is a way to record events during the game – places you've visited, people you've met or actions you've taken. Do not erase these words unless notified.

Adventure Notes:

Shootout Combat Rules:

Shootouts require comparison between your and your opponent's *Marksmanship* and *Defense* scores.

Here's how it works:

- 1) Shootouts are broken up into rounds. These rounds continue until either your *Strength* score or your opponent's *Strength* score falls to 0. Some things to note before starting a shootout:
 - a. If you don't have a long-range weapon upon you at the time of a shootout, you are automatically killed – so sell it/discard it judiciously.
 - b. At any point during a shootout you can throw an explosive device (*ex. Pulse Grenade*) at your enemy. These onetime use weapons don't require a test of your *Marksmanship* score because their detonation has a wide area of effect. Their impact to the enemy's *Strength* score is immediate and denoted by a – x next to their name.
 - c. Your character starts off with a long-range weapon – make sure to add any bonus points awarded by this weapon to your *Base Marksmanship* score at the beginning of the game. If a new long-range weapon is acquired during the adventure, remember to delete your old weapon's bonus points and add this new weapon's bonus points to your *Base Marksmanship* score. But remember, as noted on the Mission Sheet, *none of your scores, including Total Marksmanship, can ever exceed 10.*

Ex. If your character is Jax Sypher, he starts off with an Aon 190 Pistol and so your scores will be:

Total Marksmanship: 10 (*Base Marksmanship score of 9 + 1 bonus point awarded by the pistol*)

Strength: 8

Defense: 9

- 2) Now you are ready for the 1st round. You always attack first unless instructed otherwise. Instead of throwing a long range weapon, you decide to test your stats. Roll a die and add your *Total Marksmanship* score to the number – this is your Attack Total. Roll another die and add your opponent's *Defense* score to the number. This is his Defense total.

Ex. You roll a die for yourself – say you get 3. You add your *Total Marksmanship* score to the 3 and get an Attack Total of 13. Then you roll a die for the security guard – say you get 5. His Defense Total ends up being 9.

- 3) Compare the two totals from round one – If your Attack Total is higher than your opponent's Defense Total that means you scored a hit. Take the difference between the two totals and deduct it from your opponent's *Strength* score. Now if your Attack Total is less than or equal to your opponent's Defense Total then that means your attack was deflected/dodged.

Ex. Since the guard's Defense Total of 9 is less than your Attack Total of 13, the damage is 4 points, bringing his *Strength* score down to 2.

- 4) After the 1st round, if you *and* your opponent are still alive, discard your totals from round one and prepare for round two. Repeat the steps outlined above but this time, it's your opponent's turn to attack.

Ex. You roll a die for your opponent – say you get 6. You add his *Marksmanship* score to the number and get 13. Then you roll a die for yourself – say you get 4. Your Defense Total ends up being 13. You don't incur any damage to your *Strength* score since both of your totals ended up equaling each other.

- 5) Continue these rounds until one of you loses all their strength. As mentioned above, you can use your one-time use weapon at any point during the fight *caveat being that it has to be during a round where you are on the offense. Also, if you have two one-time use weapons upon you, both can be thrown together.*

Hand to Hand Combat Rules:

Hand to hand combat requires comparison between yours and your opponent's Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill and Defense scores.

Here's how it works:

- 1) Hand to hand combat is broken up into rounds. These rounds continue until either your Strength score or your opponent's Strength score falls to 0. One thing to note before starting a brawl:
 - a. If your character starts the game with a melee weapon – make sure to add any bonus points awarded by this weapon to your Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill score at the beginning of the game. If a new melee weapon is acquired during the adventure, remember to delete your old weapon's bonus points and add this new weapon's bonus points to your Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill score. But remember, as noted on your Mission Sheet, none of your scores, including your Total Hand to Hand Combat score, can ever go above 10.

Ex. If your character is Jax Sypher, he starts off with a knife upon him and so your scores will be:

Total Hand to Hand Combat Skill: 10 (Base Hand to Hand Combat Skill score of 9 + 1 bonus point awarded by the knife)

Strength: 8

Defense: 9

- 2) Now you are ready for the first round. You always attack first unless instructed otherwise. Roll a die and add your Total Hand to Hand Combat Skill score to the number – this is your Attack Total. Roll another die and add your opponent's Defense score to the number. This is his Defense Total.

Ex. You roll a die for yourself – say you get 2. You add your Total Hand to Hand Combat score to the 2 and get an Attack Total of 12. Then you roll a die for the security guard – say you get 6. His Defense Total ends up being 9.

- 3) Compare the two round one totals – If your Attack Total is higher than your opponent's Defense Total then that means you scored a hit. Take the difference between the two totals and deduct it from your opponent's Strength score. Now if your Attack Total is less or equal to your opponent's Defense Total then that means your attack was deflected/dodged.

Ex. Since the guard's Defense Total of 9 is less than your Attack Total of 12, the damage is 3 points, bringing his Strength score down to 2.

- 4) If you and your opponent are still alive, discard your totals from round one and prepare for round two. Repeat the steps outlined above but this time, it's your opponent's turn to attack.

Ex. You roll a die for your opponent – say you get 5. You add his Hand to Hand Combat score to the number and get 11. Then you roll a die for yourself – say you get 3. Your Defense Total ends up being 12. You don't incur any damage to your Strength score since your Defense Total is higher than his Attack Total.

- 5) Repeat these steps until one of you loses all their Strength points.