



ESCAPE

UNIVERSE

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LEXICON

BUSHIDO: Strict code from feudal Japan, which demanded loyalty and honor unto death, and to which most samurai vowed their life. This code was based on seven virtues: righteousness, bravery, benevolence, manners, sincerity, honor, and loyalty.

CYBERSHELL: Cybernetic implant replacing part of the brain of human beings. It allows its owner to physically connect to the L.A.B.'s network, to store information or otherwise perform certain highly complex mathematical operations.

DATAPAD: Digital notepad commonly used by the inhabitants of the L.A.B.

FIXERS: name given by members of the Resistance to friendly informers found in the upper levels.

HAB: common name meaning a residence / house in the jargon of L.A.B 03's inhabitants.

HOLOPIX: pocket 3D projector which is able to show short filmed sequences.

I.S.C: International Scientific Council.

KARO: title given to the important advisers of lords in feudal Japan.

L.A.B.: Large Automated Base

MEDIKIT: first aid kit used by doctors of the L.A.B.

U.N.: United Nations.

OTAKU: name given to the young computer prodigies used by the Resistance.

RUN: computer hack in hacker jargon.

SLUMS: refers to the lower level areas inhabited by the rebels since shortly after the ascensionist riots.

TASTYDOUGH: energy paste with artificial coloring and flavors which is used as a basic food staple by inhabitants of the L.A.B. This paste is produced from living organisms in troglodyte agriculture and from the recycling of organic waste.

TECHIE: name given to technicians in the L.A.B jargon.

TRIDEO: projected 3D video system which has replaced television.

THE BREACH

"Air. I need air!" I'm suffocating behind my mask. My breath is short, and I have the unpleasant feeling that my lungs are caught in a vise. I feel smothered.

The sweat running down my face burns my eyes and veils my sight. But it's nothing compared with the dust which darkens my lenses and that slips into each of the pores of my skin. I feel dirty, soiled. My throat is dry and my mouth feels pasty. My esophagus radiates pain, my trachea is on fire... And still that damned dust gets everywhere. Finally that noise, the infernal racket of the drills and excavators which intensifies as we go. I feel their vibrations throughout my body. They keep me from thinking... I... I feel ill. Really ill.

On that instant, I'm on the verge of breaking. Almost forty years of confinement have dulled my mind and made me claustrophobic, and today, as we are reaching our goal, I can no longer stand it. Yet we must still hang on for a few meters. It's not just me, I'm not alone anymore.

I raise my head and let my gaze wander over the crowd assembled behind me, poor souls with haunted eyes full of hope. Good people. I can say so as I know each and every one of them. For many months I've shared their pain and dreams. They're all my sisters, my brothers, my comrades.

I also share a thought for those who remained below to cover our escape and whom I'll probably never see again. Freedom demands sacrifices, and we've already paid so much for it...

Finally, a new page in the history of mankind is about to be written. I know that, said this way, it can seem pretentious. But when it's your skin that's been used as paper and that your blood has served as ink, believe me, you'd see things differently and you'd also allow yourself this sort of digression. And anyway - we're a hair away from putting an end to over a century of lies and oppression. Over a century during which we've been turned into moles while we hoped for better days. But better for whom? For what?

Actually, it doesn't matter anymore. The veil that has kept humanity in a slow state of numbness will soon break. As soon as we set foot on the surface, we'll be able to taste the fruit of our struggle, this much-desired freedom.

All I hope for is that future generations will acknowledge us for what we'll have accomplished today. As for the moment we're dissidents, traitors, insane.

My name is Mickael Aaron Manhattan ID #767465, I'm 38 years old, and I'm a scientist for the ISC.

Well, I was. And when the din of the jackhammer stops, I'll be a free man. But, to understand what led me on to the road to revolt, you need to go back in time and listen to my story. And, in the end, the one of the last bastion of civilized humankind.





THE APOCALYPSE AND THE PREVIOUS WORLD

A troubled time.

Actually, everything started about 150 years ago, at a time where our Earth was much different from what our sensors tell us.

At that time, the human population was roughly 9 billion people and the strain imposed on the environment by their activity led to the quick arrival, on a geological level, of an ice age. Ever so slowly, the Earth was covered by an ice cap and heavy climate disruptions occurred, which resulted in a progressive reduction of spaces which could sustain life and, in time, low resources. These changes in our way of life led to the emergence of geopolitical trouble on a global level. It was a period of great instability, which saw the appearance of influence struggles everywhere. A global conflict for the control of resources and survival was brewing.

A new hope.

In the year 2111, during the Kyoto conference, a Japanese scientist, Professor Kyoufou GYAKUTEN, then head of a multidisciplinary team composed of geologists, climatologists, psychologists, mathematicians, statisticians, and geopoliticians, presented the findings of a three-part study which would give new hope to humanity.

The first part was a climate study which clearly showed a spurt of the cooling process and spelled out its consequences: statistical and dated reduction of the inhabitable spaces, climate changes, evolution of the world production of energy and resources.

The second part of the study was on the influence and consequences of such a situation on the worldwide geopolitical context: annexation of inhabitable areas and with high resource potential by superpowers, armed conflicts by intermediary countries, and then open warfare between superpowers.

The third part offered technical and ideological solutions to put an end to this evolution and its consequences.

Despite being quite alarmist, this study caused a stir in the scientific world, as it had established, with precision, a calendar of events. These results had been made possible thanks to the work of Professor GYAKUTEN, who had managed to establish probability laws which could be applied to the evolution of the planet and human behavior.

In fact, this work met with such a success that the old man was quickly offered the chance to put his theories to work. Thus was the International Scientific Council or I.S.C. Born, and Kyoufou GYAKUTEN was named its director.

In order not to solely benefit a single state, the creation of the I.S.C. was supported and financed by the U.N., with the goal of putting into action the solutions proposed by the professor and his team. The goal of this enterprise was to make the I.S.C. a tool in service to the objectives of the U.N.: the maintaining of peace and the arbitration of international conflicts.

This is how the most brilliant minds of their time were given tasks which were part of a larger plan:

Guofinna BJARNADOTTIR was named director of the Deep Drilling Project (D.D.P.) set with the exploration of new energy sources.

Alexandra ZIDOVSKA took the reins of the Material Research Lab (M.R.L.) tasked with the development of alternative materials (ersatz).

Mark POST got down to setting up alternative agricultural techniques via the Food In Tubes (F.I.T.) project.

Amelia CHANG became head of the Biomedical Cybernetics Group (B.C.G.) which would lead to the birth of cybernetics. Hugo DE GARIS led the Brain Builder Group (B.B.G.) and began working on creating the Artificial Intelligence that had been named N.O.E.

Finally, Professor Len A. PENNACCHIO was put in charge of genetic research through the Joint Genome Project (J.G.P.).

In parallel to the studies begun, Professor GYAKUTEN had multiple self-sustaining underground laboratories built on each continent, which were meant to be coordinated among them by the AI which was to be perfected.

His aim was to gather the men and women of the I.S.C. in "temples" dedicated to science, where they would be able to work in the best of conditions, far from war, tensions, and stresses of all sorts.

Construction sites were chosen carefully, in areas with low population density, but all of which had access to fresh water sources, and vast natural cave networks. It was of utmost importance that they have maximum autonomy to exist and experiment.

Encouraging results.

After many years of work and important investments, the Artificial Intelligence called N.O.E. was born.

This AI was created and programmed to coordinate, direct, and share the work of the different L.A.B., in order to improve efficiency.

From that moment on, the progress made by the I.S.C. were enormous, particularly for the industrialization phase and the application of developed concepts.

Under the control and drive of N.O.E., the A.B.R.I. project - Automated Base for Research and Improvement - was launched. Thus, in every country around the world, fully automated factory-labs appeared. These A.B.R.I.s allowed the I.S.C. to produce, out of any governmental oversight and under the protection of the U.N., the results of its discoveries and advances.

Far from solving all of humanity's problems, the A.B.R.I. nonetheless gave it a break, laid down the foundations for future developments, and reinforced the legitimacy of the scientific apparatus of the United Nations.

Indeed, to satisfy the hunger of countries, the I.S.C. needed quick results in answer to the main problems facing mankind.

Unfortunately for the organization, the instigator of all these changes would never see the conclusion of his work. Kyoufou GYAKUTEN would pass away only a few months after the birth of N.O.E., stricken by disease. Before dying, however, he took care to hand the finalization of his dreams to his students and closest collaborators. Thus, the I.S.C. lived on after the disappearance of its founder.

This event was also the opportunity to undertake a stock-taking regarding the project. The I.S.C.'s work had allowed some notable advances, easing the task of states in the management of their populations' needs. The new energy and alternative materials divisions had wonderfully fulfilled their role.

However, it seemed more and more obvious that this fragile balance could not last.

The Apocalypse.

Yet, the titanic task which had been accomplished was not enough. And despite all the efforts deployed, scattered conflicts broke out over the globe.

In only 7 years time, human civilization crumbled, drowning in its own blood.

The climax of the conflict saw the use of weapons so terrible that the orbit and surface of the planet were irreparably changed.

To the bloody battles followed a catastrophic meteorological unleashing. Tsunamis, hurricanes, heat waves, and tornadoes ended up sweeping away the rotting remains of humanity.

It's only once the last bombs had fallen that, many feet beneath the surface of the earth, that the true nature and objectives of the I.S.C. were revealed.

The EDEN project could begin.



THE I.S.C.

A necessary evil.

Truthfully, the I.S.C. was built on a lie, or, to be perfectly honest, on an illusion.

Even if its efforts to save humanity were real and sincere, the collapse of the human species was inevitable. Well, in any case it was the most probable scenario. In his great wisdom, its father and creator promised an impossible salvation to the world and its leaders. His objective was to gain enough time to be able to put in place a structure able to preserve all of humanity's knowledge, and thus keep mankind from centuries of obscurantism and barbarism.

Kyoufou wanted to create a sort of ark whose credo would be the scientific approach and whose ultimate goal would be the rebirth of humankind. He wanted to sow the seeds of a new society, united around a common good and progress. A society where the sense of duty would be more important than personal interest and individual rights. The I.S.C. was to give birth to a new humanity, cleansed of its past sins and freed from its eternal demons.

And he had planned for everything.

A divided society without any barriers.

To talk about the I.S.C. in an objective way, we have to start with what makes up its core: its education system.

In the schools of L.A.B. 03, each child gets a complete education ranging from theoretical, to practical, and organizational domains. Throughout their studies, students are evaluated by the most impartial of judges, the AI. Each is thus judged based on their own potential, their origins and status being abstracted.

At the end of this period, the qualities of the young adults are entered in service to one of the three castes which makes up our society.

The first is the scientist caste. Researchers, theoreticians, or those looking for practical applications, it gathers those who are tasked with developing the techniques in which we will be able to return Earth to its former state and give back to humanity its place in the universe. To be part of this caste is, in a way, to inherit a bit of the glory of the Visionary. But it's also a burden, as you must hold upon your shoulders the hopes of an entire people.

The second caste is that of the administrators. Whether they are legislators, managers, or I don't know what – the people who are part of it are those on whom the proper working of the L.A.B. and, more generally, our community, rely on. They watch over the progression of the projects, allocate resources and means, or solve common law problems. It's a thankless but necessary task and, despite being poorly appreciated, anarchy would have quickly settled in had it not been for their vigilant eye.

Finally, the last caste is that of the technicians. I've often felt contempt from my peers towards these men and women. Yet it's thanks to their sweat that our installations have been working for almost two centuries, that we've enlarged the L.A.B. and that we scientists can give ourselves fully to our duty. They are the dam that isolates us from daily worries, the force which will rebuild the world when the time comes.

Outside of their specific duties, there is no segregation between the various castes.

The habits of the scientists are the same as those of the technicians, and the administrators live on the same level as



their fellow citizens. Unions of persons are free, and despite being subject to genetic compatibility laws, they are common between the various castes. Also, being from one of them doesn't mean you'll wind up being a part of it. This system, based on a constant questioning and re-examination of all knowledge, has allowed the I.S.C. to keep going forward and maintain a united, egalitarian society.

Yet, despite being efficient, this social mechanic is not enough to build humans working with and for others. But once again, professor GYAKUTEN had thought of everything.

Samurai: the one who serves.

Despite the social structure of the I.S.C. being divided into three distinct castes, you need to know that all citizens of the I.S.C. are Samurai. This term, taken from ancient Japanese, means: "the one who serves."

Among the International Scientific Council, one isn't born a Samurai – we become one and that moment is seen as a privilege and an immense honor. This title is generally given at the end of the Gempukku, or ceremony of passage to adulthood. During this event, the course of the aspirant Samurai is studied in detail, by a council represented equally by all castes. Once this step is complete, the postulant is interrogated at length on their expectations, ambitions, and life choices. The aim is to measure if the candidate has properly integrated the values and the goals of the organization, and if the plans are now the applicant's. Meaning, if they can be echoed in their way of life and in the least of their daily actions. In fact, this council determines if the men and women have been properly reshaped in the crucible of Renewal.

Those who succeed at this trial are put under the care of a Sempai, or master, from one of the castes. This mentor is tasked with teaching the young Samurai their job and will be guarantor of their progress. Generally, the relation woven between Sempai and Gohai, or disciple, is extremely strong, as it is based on mutual respect and common vision. It's meant to combine the experience of the elders with the curiosity of youth, in order to be the cause of progress. Tradition has very little space and innovation is encouraged. In the end, this system produces competent people, entirely dedicated to their tasks and working for the development of their society and the common good.

And yet, it's rather ironic to see that, in a society entirely based around other people, no one wonders what happens to those who fail...

A perfect system, well almost...

Of course, saying that two centuries of troglodyte life happened with no incidents would be a lie. Other than the daily worries due to aging installations or a tension caused by an extremely strict management of resources and birth rate, the I.S.C. has gone through a few major crises.

The first began a few months after the fall of humanity. Under the direction of N.O.E., the four L.A.B.s that had spread out over the world became organized and developed themselves, progressively becoming true underground cities. As months went by, these installations revealed to their inhabitants their true potential: fresh water systems, troglodyte agriculture, education, leisure, formation, medicine... Everything was planned for.

At first, during a time now called the time of Consolidation, the communication was permanent between the various L.A.B.s. N.O.E., despite all that was happening on the surface, managed to maintain the exchanges going as best it could. This link, despite being weak, allowed the survivors not to feel alone, to know that other people throughout the world had survived the Apocalypse. It fed hope. In a more pragmatic way, the common experiences of the different L.A.B.s allowed the residents to better organize and better wrap their heads around the long period of confinement which was to follow.

But, as time went by, communication breakdowns happened. At first short and rare, they became increasingly more frequent and ever longer. In parallel, the biometric readings made on the surface were unquestionable: the world was uninhabitable. The various L.A.B.s then started getting ready for a long and harsh period of isolation.

Many decades passed, generations followed one after another and the cities continued their development. The educational system which had been set up showed its worth and an alternative society mixing the precepts of Bushido with scientific culture saw the day.

However, among the various populations, some individuals, more adventurous than others, expressed, in an increasingly insistent way, the desire to go explore outside, despite readings which remained as catastrophic as ever. A long argument started between the partisans of these expeditions and their opponents. The role of mediator was given to N.O.E. who was asked to evaluate the risks of this kind of enterprise and gave a daily report on the evolution of the readings. And the AI did what it was asked to do - it built various exit scenarios, which it enriched with information provided by its sensors. But the conclusions to these studies were never revealed.

Indeed, following a major geological catastrophe, the entirety of transmissions between the cities were cut and never renewed. Fear then gained the hives and humans remained under the earth, and over a century went by.

This is the history of the world and of the I.S.C. as they were taught to me. Now, it's time for me to tell you about what I've lived through these past few months.

The Ascensionist Riots.

Our L.A.B. has been facing with serious problems for many years. Despite the Administrators having regulated with care the reproduction of the inhabitants, and managed the best they could our production and our consumption, the precarious balance existing between the development of infrastructures, production methods, and population growth has started to wither.

This situation naturally led us to look for other spaces in which to prosper, and, quickly, the question of settling the surface has reappeared.

At first whispered about by a few, this movement quickly gained importance and appeared to many as the only solution to avoid asphyxia. The Ascensionist movement was born.

And yet, despite all the different reports and optimistic studies it could supply, this movement received a categorical refusal from the Administration, who could count on the unconditional support of N.O.E.

The Ascensionist leaders then tried to reach a compromise and negotiations began. But the situation quickly turned sour. Unable to gain "freedom" through words, the more radical wing of the movement decided to take it by force and lashed out at the symbols of authority. Despite calling for calm, the situation worsened when the partisans for Ascension and their opponents met during a counter-protest. For the first time in the history of the L.A.B., an armed conflict began. The security forces, few in number and unprepared to manage this kind of events were quickly overruled and chaos took over.

The Great March...

I refused to leave my home during these ascensionist riots. Anxious, I spent my days watching the news aired by the trideo, hoping to find there signs of calm. In vain. Outside, I remember we could hear the loudspeakers regularly air messages designed to quell the belligerent. A curfew had even been imposed. But all this seemed so futile. It was clear that the Administration no longer had the situation under control.

Even though the vast majority of the population didn't support the movement, we had to admit that this minority had been able to impose its views, even if it had been through most extreme methods.

I think I really realized that things were getting out of hand when the insurgents managed to take control of the internal communication network of the L.A.B. in order to spew their revolutionary propaganda. I learned then, like thousands of others, that a great march would take place in order to force the doors of our shelter. And quite honestly, at that moment, I couldn't see who could stop them.

I thus witnessed, fascinated and riveted to my seat, the Great Ascensionist March. Thanks to the magic of the trideo, I found myself in the midst of a crowd with raised fists, walking in unison and calling with its slogan for a destiny too long denied. It was an incredible scene. I could read

a fearsome determination on the faces. Nothing could have persuaded these people from turning around and going back home. Nothing, except an even greater force...

... and the Repression.

Finally, the crowd arrived at the central core, without meeting any resistance. Fascinated and horrified all at once, I awaited with fear the moment when the steel barriers which barred the way to the elevator would be broken, and, with them, our security. But that moment never came.

The noise of the crowd progressively gave way to a heavy silence, and soon, a disquiet murmur shivered through those gathered. Activating the controls on my trideo, I then moved through the crowd of hundreds of my kin to finally discover the cause of so many interrogations. There, a few meters away from me, immobile and perfectly aligned, stood mechanical avatars of sumotori warriors of the past. Tall and massive, they fixed with their empty optics the mass of bewildered protestors. Where could so many drones come from and who was controlling them?

I didn't have to wait long to find out the answer, as a familiar voice rang out. The AI's voice.

I don't remember exactly the words spoken by N.O.E. that day, but I can say that it asked once more for calm and asked everyone to return to their homes so that negotiations could resume.

It explained that it could not accept that the security of the L.A.B. was compromised and that, if the crowd couldn't and wouldn't understand reason, it would be forced to enforce its directives through force.

And then things went haywire. To these demands, the Ascensionists responded with insults and shouts, refusing any compromise. Galvanized by their numbers, they began to throw projectiles at the ranks of robots who didn't react. Encouraged by their immobility and driven by their anger, the rebels began to move forward, trying to break their way through. It was then that the terrible machinery of the I.S.C. went into action and mankind's creations turned, once again, against it.

That day, I witnessed, powerless, a scene which I refuse to relive and that opened my eyes to the world in which I lived.

So that you can understand the reasons that had made me break my oath, let me tell you the story of a slaughter.



SHORT NOVEL

Hidden behind the window, the child observed his father with curiosity. The man, a fifty year old with graying temples, was sitting at his desk. He seemed pensive and was staring attentively at the monitor which was in front of him. As per his usual custom, he was working late. The light was off and only the bleak light of the monitor betrayed his presence. His traits were tensed by concentration and the greenish reflects of the machine made him look fearsome.

Tamping down on his fear, the child decided to break his sire's trance and spoke to him: "Father?". The words were shy and quiet, the man did not react. He tried again, putting a bit more strength in the attempt: "Father?". Still no reaction, the man continued with his task, unfazed. With a mix of excitement and irritation, the child raised his voice: "FATHER!". His small shout had the effect of a discordant note and broke the staccato melody of fingers hitting the keyboard. The man finally raised his head: "What's the matter Noé? You should be sleeping at this time!" Truth be told, it wasn't the first time Noé disturbed him like this, but the curiosity of the child made him happy and he gladly answered his questions. "Father, I've something to ask you." The tone was trailing, deep. The man guessed that the question was important. He settled comfortably in his chair, as if to answer better: "I'm listening". Overjoyed, the child continued: "There. Today, I've studied family structure and the relationships between its members. It was really interesting, but... he hesitated. But?, insisted his father.

...but to give birth to a being there's always a father and a mother. So... ..so you'd like to know who is your mother, is that it?"

Noé couldn't have said it better. "Yes." he answered simply.

The man paused. He knew he would have to answer such a question someday. Many times, he had imagined this scene, and every time he thought of a different answer, but, in all honesty, none had ever seemed to work. How to explain it? Slowly, he rested his chin on his closed fists and took a deep breath. "You know Noé, when you were born, my entire team was present. Not a single person was missing. That day was a celebration day! I think I've never been as happy in my life..."

The words flowed in his mouth like nectar: sweet and savoury. With each breath, each syllable, we could feel the pride and sincerity in his words. A few seconds passed and his tone grew cold. "At the time, the L.A.B. wasn't fully operational, there were still glitches and our protocols weren't efficient yet. We didn't... I didn't see that the lights on the machines which were feeding you had turned to red and we almost lost you. When we finally realized what was going on, we tried an emergency technique and... we had to take a choice. We decided to focus all the energy to you. So that you could live..."

These last words remained hanging... "...She had to die."

That night, his sleep was agitated. The memories of a conversation. A specter from his past. One of a woman dead in childbirth. The ghost of a mother. His conscience emerged with much difficulty.

At the same moment, hundreds of kilometers away, an automated factory shut down. It had worked all night, assembling, welding, riveting to the rhythm of data. Finally, the last step. The powering. The birth of a new drone. Tearing through the night with a simulacra of sobs and moans, a new horror was let loose on the world. The Ubume was going hunting.



THE RESISTANCE



Gaining a Conscience.

Actually, I only understood later that these regrets had been mine and not the machine's. How could silica circuits have any?

Gobsmacked, I realized that I had been the involuntary accomplice to this implacable repression and to all the pain it had caused. You'll ask me why? Well, because of my inaction first, and the morbid voyeurism I had shown. But the true reason of my guilt was due to my own work. The weapon the Ubume had used to slay its victim was born of my research on brain waves. I was sure of it.

If my theory was right, it meant that someone was corrupting the work of the I.S.C.'s scientists to turn them into weapons and then wield them against its population. It was simply unacceptable and stood against everything in which I believed in! The dream of the Visionary had been sullied under my eyes and I was determined to not remain passive. But I had to remain cautious...

And I was right, as the days following that bloody Sunday were equally marked by the seal of ignominy. Tracked, the Ascensionists had fled to the lower levels and had barricaded themselves there, turning that area into a dying ground and a lawless zone.

Elsewhere, martial law had been established and drone patrols were circulating in the streets. Moreover, extremists of another side, the ultra-conservatives this time, revealed themselves and held a real witch hunt.

The mood in the L.A.B. had literally turned poisonous. Because of suspicion, accusations, and arbitrary arrests, a simple wrong word could turn fatal.

Despite all of that and to my great disappointment, the majority of my fellow citizens seemed satisfied. Despite being nearly under martial law, order had been restored, the veil of the unknown would not be torn and their little lives could resume. My only and meager consolation was to see that all of the Visionary's teachings hadn't been in vain, and that many voices were now raised against a punitive action against those who had been our brothers and sisters. This is how the ascensionists' lives were spared, thanks to the expression of a people they had ignored. Ironic, isn't it?

Settling Accounts

It took many weeks for things to settle and a semblance of order to return. After the great inquest that followed the riot, the administration and N.O.E. put a stop to things, and the improvised purges ended. However a dark spot still remained. Where could all these drones come from?

The question was finally asked publicly by one of the better established scientists: Henry Cunningham. This man in his prime fifties had supported the request for settling the surface but he was among the moderates. Of those who wanted to get there through dialog and mediation, through the consent of the greater number.

So, Henry Cunningham took place on the tribune one morning and, instead of presenting the advancement of his work, held a passionate speech on our common heritage and on the mission we had inherited. Finally, he ended his plea by this burning question: "Where did these drones come from and why had they been made?"

Despite not being directly named, it was clear that the question was addressed to N.O.E. And it was thus unsurprising that the AI answered. To my great amazement, its answer was clear, concise and without any detour. On all of the L.A.B.'s channels, the artificial intelligence explained that it had reactivated some A.B.R.I. In order to assemble their exploration drones. The reason given was simple: to compensate for the failure of its sensors.

These machines had thus been exploring the surface for a few years, taking various readings and looking for the best place to establish a colony. But the world above, despite being inhabitable, was far from the promised paradise. With much use of images and comments, N.O.E. described

the barbarism and the dangers which awaited the people of the L.A.B. It explained how it had been forced to assemble these drones made to fight in the sole goal of protecting us. Finally, it regretted not having been able to include the population to these scouting missions, but admitted to have feared that the less wise of us would have used this as an excuse for inconsiderate actions and concluded that recent events had proven it right.

However, it recognized that the time had come for mankind to participate actively to this new challenge and announced that, in the upcoming weeks, it would make a proposal to that end.

His speech ended under a thunder of applause.

I was flabbergasted, stunned, I couldn't believe what I had seen and heard. The mind which was supposed to be the straightest and most impartial of all had given us proof of its treachery and duplicity. This allegedly pure conscience had just admitted that it had been fooling mankind for years and we were congratulating and thanking it for that! Had people gone insane? Had my peers lost all common sense?

Truth be told, I didn't care for answers, I was just furious and revolted. The story couldn't end like this, I had to do something, to act. But I had no one to turn to. What could a single man do? Unless...

First Contact.

Unless he contacted other people sharing his opinions.

Right then, the idea seemed as brilliant as it was simple, but its application would doubtless be complex. No doubt the Administration and the AI were watching communication systems, looking for dissidents who had slipped through its net. So no way I was going through that so as to "leave an ad" and get in touch with the rebellion.

Ask those dear to me or people in the leisure areas? Hmm, bad plan. Given the current "discipline" of my fellow citizens, I'd be turned in before I had even been able to return home. How could I do it, then? Well, in a way, good old Henry Cunningham was the one who gave me the solution.

No, I had no intention to head to the tribune to openly shout my revolutionary tendencies to all, but I could still try to hide a message in my publications. It was by far my best alternative. All I had left was to hope that a rebel would read them and discover the jackpot – and that they'd do so before the henchmen of the I.S.C. did.

I started getting to work, carefully hiding in my research's results the message meant to lead me to a clandestine lifestyle. And it was a brilliant failure.

As I had planned, my doorbell rang one morning, but to my dismay, it wasn't a revolutionary who was waiting for me on the doorstep, but two security agents, dressed in their anti-riot gear.

Firmly but politely, they asked me to follow them without delay. A request I followed. I guess that right then, I wasn't ready for a fight yet.

I thus followed them to their vehicle. The first agent, a woman, got in the back with me while the second, a man,

took the wheel. The van started and my torment with it. The buzz of the electric motor had barely any time to start before the female agent began her interrogation and started harassing me with questions. "Did I know why I was being arrested?", "Was I one of these traitors?", "Who were my contacts?" Of course, I had no answers to give her. I remained content with remaining silent and fleeing her gaze.

I understood something was wrong when my "taxi" stopped in a tastydough factory and I was forced to get off. Panic rose in me. I wouldn't even get judged for my crime, they would get rid of me by being turned into protein-enriched food? Was that the fate the I.S.C. reserved to those who didn't share its views?

With a well-placed bludgeon blow, the woman forced my knee to the ground and, while constantly circling around me, continued to ask me questions. It was useless as I wasn't even able to speak anymore. My eyes had filled with tears, my nose was leaking pitifully and my entire body was spasming at the rhythm of a sonorous hiccup. My, what proud bearing this revolutionary had...

But as I thought my final time had come, an unknown voice came from behind me. It was a man's voice, but not the one of the first agent. This one was deeper, more confident. "I think he's clean", the stranger said. "He's not giving out any signal and there's no odd agitation on the network".

At these words, the woman removed her helmet and extended her hand to me: "Mister Manhattan, we're sorry for this sinister charade, but you'll understand that we need to be prudent. Accept our most sincere apologies and consider yourself welcome into the Resistance".

Welcome to the Resistance.

After having given me the scare of my life, my mysterious hosts covered my eyes and dragged me with them in a long and disquieting trip.

After what felt like an eternity, someone removed the cloth that masked my sight and I discovered for the first time what would become my future home. I was in a hab, exactly the same as mine, on the ground on which many sleeping bags had been left. The only light source, given by a spare projector, gave this place a frightening look. The air was heavy, as if thicker and it was unbearably hot.

My guide introduced himself then, he was called Edward, but liked being called Ed better. A simple name for a simple man, as he said. Ed, then, showed me around quickly, gave me my "welcoming gift", a few clothes and basic items, and showed me where to "park my ass". Feeling that I had trouble moving around, he explained to me that the machines had cut the power to the levels we were occupying, but that my eyes would get used to the darkness and that my body would soon adapt to the lack of air conditioning. Other than the bad smell emanating from him, what struck me in this man was his immediate use of "us". Ed didn't know me, didn't know anything about me, but he was already including me in the sociological group. I was intrigued.

After introducing ourselves to each other, he dragged me outside to meet the other occupants.

The hab led to what had been the main artery of the level and which, now, had been turned into a training camp. Under the light of battery-powered projectors, tens of men and women were training for combat. Noticing my surprise before this martial display, Ed couldn't help but let out a prideful "Impressive, huh?". To tell the truth, I was finding it pathetic. I had witnessed the riots and had been able to judge the efficiency of the combat drones. One couldn't stop that kind of creatures with sticks and stones... In spite of that, the will was there and these people seemed more organized than it first seemed. And this first impression was confirmed in the following weeks.

Finding Your Place.

First, you need to know that the Resistance is made up of pragmatic and prudent people. Before giving you any task, their officers try to know you and gauge you.

The first step of this evaluation is thus completed in the hours following your arrival. After a well practiced speech, on the topic of liberty, our rights, and the whys of our struggle, the "young" insurgents are separated from their group and interrogated individually. The point of this interrogation is to learn everything about you with the aim of using your talents at best. Past, experiences, hobbies, contacts, etc. All aspects of your life are scrutinized. As a scientist, I was also asked about my work, its state of completion, and its possible applications.

Once they've stripped you down, the recruiting officer hands you over to a baby-sitter who is officially in charge of showing you the ropes of the movement. While admirable, this attention is a way to put you under the gaze of someone in charge of watching you, no more, no less. Safety first, they say.

The second step is that of the classes. For eight long weeks, the instructors teach you the "basics of the job". Other than improving your physical condition and teaching you the basics of combat, it seems to me, with hindsight, that the most important aspects of this teaching were all something else.

During these two months, the officers never ceased to harass and provoke us. They wore us out physically and mentally and showed us no mercy.

During this difficult period, my only source of comfort was my companions in misfortune. The trials which were imposed on us forced us to tighten our ranks and show solidarity. As the days went by our individuality faded and a real esprit de corps appeared. Driven by the group, each of us pushed beyond our limits and did things we would have never been able to accomplish alone. From now on, we no longer went along solely for ourselves, but for the others above all. And that changed a lot of things...

This lesson was vital to me, as it redefined us as humans and laid down the basis for our organization.

I think that the Visionary would have been proud of us.

First Assignment.

My classes done, I thus gained my first assignment. As a man of science and as a doctor, I was obviously sent to the hospital in order to make use of my skills.

The healing center was near the heart of the Resistance's base, not too far from the High Command's quarters. The building had been turned into a stronghold and many freedom fighters were on guard.

Once my identity was verified, I was allowed to settle in and get to know the team with whom I would be working.

The conditions in which we were working were precarious at best. Due to a lack of electrical power, none of the high-tech equipment we had at our disposal worked, and we had to relearn the basics. Thankfully for us, the "sorties" were rare at the time, and other than a few wounds gained during training, there were only few medical acts to be taken.

But I knew that it wouldn't last and, in order to be prepared for that inevitable end, I spent all my time improving our efficiency and getting our equipment to work. With the help of our technicians, we managed to plug a number of our gear on to EDLC batteries and, with the help of other doctors, started training as many medics as we could.

This work allowed me to meet a large number of people and, through these meetings, better understand our organization.

Organization.

When I arrived, I thought that the Resistance was a band of illuminated idealists whose lack of organization was compensated by passion and engagement.

However, as I discovered my new family, I realized that it was led by strict rules and that nothing was left to chance. This working could only be the product of intelligent minds, methodical and meticulous. Yet, despite what I saw, I must admit I was still far from the truth.

The Resistance thus presents a dual organization, at once both pyramidal and cell-based.

All missions created in the upper levels, right under the nose and eyes of the I.S.C.'s minions, are undertaken by independent cells which have a great freedom of action. Thus, if one of the members was ever captured, only the cell to which it belonged to would fall, without it having an impact on other groups of that kind.

The circle of action of cells includes intelligence, whether through hacking and spying, the extraction of dissidents and gear or, quite the opposite, the infiltration of intervention groups. The goal of these fixers isn't armed struggle, unlike the men and women they can be asked to bring in.

Fighting personnel are actually part of operation units made up of 4 to 6 specialists. They are deployed in enemy territory to lead discrete operations of theft, sabotage, or escort. For this, each of these squads has some of the best gear the Resistance has access to, and are given a great deal of autonomy, as their leaders are tied to the standard command structure, but instead get their orders directly from the higher ranks of the Revolution.

The security of our installations is insured by the “Pillars of the Revolution”. These guards make up most of our numbers and follow a classic military structure. They are tasked with watching the various entry points, go on patrols, fortify positions, etc. They are, in a way, the beasts of burden and the shield of the Revolution.

Separated from these groups, there's an entity whose field of action is both in the lower and the upper levels. Commonly called “Voice of the Resistance”, this group of people is tasked with organizing the communication and propaganda policy of the Revolution.

Carrying the messages and philosophy of the organization, they ensure the upkeep of the troops' morale and ensure sympathy from a part of the L.A.B.'s population without which we might not exist any more. Reporting only to the Resistance's High Command, they remain to this day our best card.

Finally, at the top of this pyramid is the Resistance's High Command, which directs and coordinates everybody's efforts in order to successfully lead the Revolution.

To be totally honest, at that time I didn't know much about our leaders. Despite my quarters being near theirs, I hadn't ever seen them and, quite frankly, it didn't matter much, as I also had a mission to complete.

Well, that remained true until the day they requested me urgently.

The Turning Point.

It must have been 20:00 or 21:00 standard when an armed group of men came to get me. With a tone that offered little alternative, they demanded that I take my medical gear and follow them. Thinking that it was a surgical emergency, I took a medikit and asked that an operating room be readied. Then, following them into the dark streets of our sector, I went to meet my future patient.

To my great surprise, the men didn't accompany me to one of the training camps but instead went the opposite way, towards the High Command center. Thinking that one of our leaders had an accident, I better understood their firmness and their rush. But, once again, I was wrong.

The patient wasn't one of our leaders, but a fixer named Amber. The young woman, barely in her twenties, was unconscious and didn't show any visible wounds.

A quick examination told me that she was in a comatose state, and that other than an early case of dehydration, her life didn't seem to be in danger. Wanting to establish a better diagnostic, I asked the people present how it had happened. I was told then that Amber was a hacker and that she was found in this state after one of her runs on the network. Being barely aware of this sort of thing, it was explained to me that hackers had the habit of connecting directly through their cybershell. This method improved their efficiency as, freed from physical constraints, they could “think the code” without having to write it.

Now informed, and better understanding why my services

had been called upon, I sent someone fetch a cerebral scanner and the rest of my gear. I started my work at once when it arrived.

My examination stretched over many days, and I had trouble believing what I had discovered. By isolating the brainwaves of the young woman, I managed to identify a parasitic signal which I first thought was a glitch in my gear. However, enhancing my settings, I realized that it wasn't a malfunction of my equipment, but an entire signal. There could only be one explanation: someone, or rather something, was active in my patient's cybershell. And that meant that she had been hacked...

This discovery would mark a turning point in the actions and policies of the Resistance, and I'd be tightly linked to it.

First successes.

If the I.S.C. had access to people's cybershell, it meant that some vital information could have been discovered by our enemies and that anyone able to connect to the network became a potential spy.

We thus had to completely revise our strategies for information, communication, and secured information transfer.

This is how the first Otakus appeared, young children who had become, through the order of things, our best hackers and data couriers. As each adult was equipped with a cybershell, inherited from their gempukku, only the children and their tactile interfaces could safely perform this task.

But this weakness would quickly become an advantage by being used as a keystone in a vast disinformation campaign.

Without our own agents knowing, we distributed false information to our enemies in order to prepare the field for our operational units. These could then ambush drone patrols, steal equipment, and perform sabotage on some key elements of the enemy's structure. But, above all, it allowed us to lay the groundwork for a much bigger plan. Operation Prometheus was being born.

A New Enemy.

Months passed and the frequency of our operations increased. Despite a few failures and regrettable human losses, our plans met with the hoped-for success and our situation improved. The Resistance was making itself heard. I for one abandoned my post at the hospital to be assigned to High Command. I would now totally assume my status as resistance member and leader.

However, while we had gained in strength and confidence over the half-year which had just gone by, it seemed evident that we were reaching our maximum potential.

Lack of space and a restricted access to energy, technical, and food resources were dangerously cutting short our development. As long as we would not be able to take on a new

dimension, our enemy would remain an unmovable force which could blow us away at any time. A decision needed to be taken.

Quite ironically, it was an important announcement by the I.S.C. which sealed our common destiny.

N.O.E. had said, some time ago at this point, that it would offer mankind a solution to involve them in the "Great Project of Humanity's Rebirth" and it kept its word.

On all communication channels, the news was a priority broadcast. From now on, each of the decisions concerning the reconquest of the surface and the future of the L.A.B. would be taken by the AI and an assembly composed of six members, the Karos or Advisors. The Celestial Order had just been born.

The move was skillful as it touched the very essence of the I.S.C. and flattered its heritage.

First, the name was a reference to the culture which was a model for our society and, in this case, was heavy with meaning. In ancient Japan, the philosophy of the Celestial Order preached that each thing and each being had a specific place in the divine scheme of things. It posited that each person had a specific destiny to fulfill and had to do everything to accomplish it, even if that meant enduring the most terrible torments or even death. And, as terrible as this destiny could be, it was nothing compared to the fate which awaited anyone trying to avoid it.

A bit like the Resistance trying to free itself from the rule of the machine, actually...

Then, the number of members in this assembly matched the number of great projects which had given birth to the I.S.C. and which had ensured the survival of an entire race. It was also a reference to the number of factions admitted to the heart of the Imperial Court of ancient times.

Finally, the title of Karo gave its members a higher social status and granted them a certain authority. All that was left was to find out who the lucky few would be and what their functions would be.

But these last few details were not important, a new variable had just been added to the equation and we all felt that the wind had just turned.

D Day.

It didn't take long for the Celestial Order to take its first decisions and very quickly, our maneuvering space was greatly reduced.

The drone patrols increased drastically, the arrests of our cell members multiplied, and scout drones often had to be taken out. It was now clear that our enemies intended to finish us off and that they were only waiting for an excuse to go on the offensive.

In order not to give it to them, we announced in a release that the Resistance would put an end to its operations and wanted to negotiate its surrender to the Celestial Order. High Command thus recalled its operational units, put to sleep our cells, and negotiations started.

Of course, we had not abandoned our goals and there was absolutely no question of surrendering, but we absolutely had to save time.

The enemy held back for about six months before losing patience, but we were ready. The time came for us to reveal our true potential and fight. Operation Prometheus could now begin.

And this time, I had front row seats.

My work had been noticed and I was given the responsibility of one of our teams. Well, rather that of its evaluation.... As, while they had shown themselves able at multiple times, its members had known, with the arrival of the Celestial Order, multiple defeats. The losses of many of theirs had led them to disobedience and to perform inconsiderate acts. Some had seen in those acts passion for our cause, others a lack of reason. No matter what it was, we needed all available hands, and there was no excuse to not use an experienced squad. Unless its lack of discipline would be a danger for our plans...

I thus had the task of briefing them on the mission to come and, through their reactions and comments, make sure they'd follow their orders.

I met them only a few days before the operation began. In order to prepare for this mission the best I could, I worked late the previous night. Yet, despite the fatigue, I felt it was important that I be the first one in the briefing room in order to greet them and, at the same time, show them that they were on my turf. Unfortunately, when I showed up the next day, they all were already present, waiting for me. A bit abashed, I saw now that the first part of my plan was a failure... But quite frankly, I wasn't nearly done being surprised.



CAMPAIGN PRINCIPLE AND PATHFINDER



[Illegal Transmission Detected] [...]

- BEGIN RECORDING.
- START LOCALIZATION PROTOCOLS.
- START SCRAMBLING PROTOCOLS

[...] [End Transmission]

- LOCALIZATION: FAILURE.
- SCRAMBLING: FAILURE.
- RECORDING: OK.

BEGIN DECRYPTING PROTOCOLS: ANALYSIS IN PROGRESS [...]



“Comrades. Humanity is at the dawn of a new day. After almost two centuries of servitude, we’re finally on the verge of awakening from our long torpor. I know that each of you has paid the price in blood and tears. I know that you have all lost people dear to you and I’d like to tell you that these sacrifices weren’t made in vain. But if we give up now, if we don’t do what must be done, then there won’t be any tomorrow, and no new dawn will rise for us or our children.

But I’m telling you – we won’t accept it, we won’t stand for it! The time has come to break our chains and reclaim this freedom which is still today denied to us.

Tomorrow, you will take up arms and march towards the surface. The machine will try to bar your way, they will try to break your bodies and return you to your cage. And it will be in vain, as no weapon can wound the specters of vengeance, no prison can hold us! On this day, we swear to put an end to the tyranny of man’s creations. On this day, we reclaim our place.

Long live the Revolution! Long live the Resistance!”



What’s a campaign?

A campaign is a series of games with a common theme.

Here the theme is the escape of the Resistance members during the first conflicts between the members of the I.S.C. and those of the Resistance.

The campaign offered here will

allow you to play 5 successive games, allowing you to change the intensity of the games each time.

Each scenario can, of course, be played independently, but the campaign mode allows, depending on the victory of one of the two opposing

sides, to immediately define the events to follow, granting bonuses to whichever side has won.

Finally, you could play the same campaign multiple times without the scenario chain ever being the same, as these will depend on who wins.



SCENARIO 1 “INFILTRATION”



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

Alice switched off the radio with the back of her hand and scrawled a few more notes on her datapad. Her right hand drew with grace curves and arabesques then finally left the fine polymer surface. Carefully, she stored the stylus in its casing and raised her head.

Clustered like tastydough, her team was pressed around her and were staring at her with eyes in which anguish and excitement were equally mixed. D-day was coming soon and her men were awaiting orders with a barely contained fervor. “So?” Duncan, the least patient member of the unit ended up asking. “Did you decipher the code?”

“Yep,” replied Alice, with a wry smile. “But you’re not going to like it.”

“Bloody hell, out with it!” shouted the dwarf who was squirming frantically.

“Calm down, Duncan, and listen,” answered the woman with a serene but firm tone. “The plan is simple, we have orders to move towards the upper levels while avoiding patrols the best we can. According to the data gathered by our fixers, the Celestial Order has increased their frequency. So this is not going to be a cakewalk.”

Alice broke off momentarily, took a few seconds to think and continued. “The objective isn’t to take down drones,” she said while looking at Ashton. “It’s an infiltration operation. Is that clear to everyone?” The men agreed with a nod. “And after?” asked Jimmy in his small voice.

“All in good time,” she answered, smiling. Then, taking a serious tone. “You know enough for now. Get your gear ready and check your batteries. We’re moving in fifteen. Hop to it.”



I.S.C. BRIEFING

Fuujin, the Karo of the winds, was the first to break the silence. “N.O.E., these reports are alarming, what is your analysis of the situation?”

A soft voice, disembodied and with a monotone tone, answered him: “Our monitoring center has taught us that the illegal messages emitted by the rebels increased and became more frequent these past few days. Their analysis, despite being incomplete, confirms that a large-scale operation is in preparation. While their objectives are still unknown to us, it seems that the insurgents will try to infiltrate the upper levels. The probabilities are of 97%”.

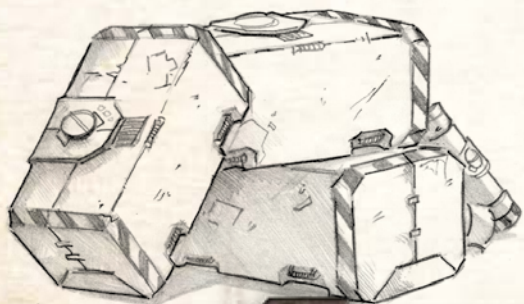
As the numbers were given, some gasps of surprise were heard. Fuujin pursued: “What are your recommendations?”

- The rebels still have the support of about 24% of public opinion. A preventive strike may cause a second uprising. The odds are at 72%. I thus recommend not to intervene for the moment.

However, letting the rebellion take hold in of the upper levels would increase its potential for nuisance by about 12% and would risk increasing the public opinion in its favor to 32% within a standard year.

“In conclusion, I suggest increasing the frequency of patrols surveying the access between levels -28 and -30. By allocating 2% of our forces to it, we’d reduce their chances of success to less than 3%. This risk is acceptable. What is your decision?”

Bishamonten, the Protector Karo spoke: “With the approval of Kagutsuchi, assign 4% of available drones to patrols. The odds should go down to less than 1%. It’s vital to sanitize the situation in the L.A.B. before thinking of restoring order to the surface.”



SETUP

Map A

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : Both players deploy in Mode (Entry). The Resistance characters through airlock 1, I.S.C. characters through airlocks 2, 3 or 4.

Objectives : The Resistance player must get his characters out of the lab, by any airlock except the 1. The I.S.C must stop them.

Duration of the game : 7 turns.

Victory conditions : If at least two Resistance characters are able to escape the map, the Resistance wins the game. If less than two Resistants are able to escape, then the I.S.C. wins the game.

SCENARIO 2 “BREAKOUT”



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

Saying that the plan had badly taken place was a soft euphemism. In truth, the qualifier of “real disaster” was much closer to the facts. At least that’s what Alice was thinking while adjusting the bandage covering her chest. For close to twenty four hours now, she and her unit had played cat and mouse with the I.S.C. drones, and she was starting to feel like time had slowed down. Then again, they’d been sorely beaten. Duncan was half dead, and Ashton was throwing sparks. Only Jimmy had gotten out without too much damage. Looking at her watch, Alice wondered how much time those damned machines would take before finding them. Again... And after all, why wait? Why not go out fighting!

The last message sent by command asked all squads able to fight to head to the L.A.B. detention centers. Apparently, the buckets of bolts had caught a lot of prisoners since the start of Operation Prometheus. And among them, there were some unit leaders, the only people able to decipher the transmissions. If the drones ever managed to crack their cybershells, the Resistance would suffer a serious blow. That was the bad news, but there was still some good news. Since the start of the riots, the prisons were overflowing with many sympathizers ready to take up arms if given the chance. With a bit of luck, and if Murphy didn’t interfere, they’d soon get a chance to do so.



I.S.C. BRIEFING

Kagutsuchi, the Karo of Fire, was triumphant. The few drones he had lent Bishamonten had perfectly performed their role, and their success was bathing him in glory and honor. Better yet, this success was strengthening his position among the Celestial Order. The only thing worrying him was that his creatures may have been a little too efficient in completing their mission.

Indeed, the numerous rebels who had been captured were giving Fuujin an opportunity to look good. In a short time, the prisoners would reveal all of their secrets, and the Karo of the Winds would then be in a position of strength...

But Kagutsuchi stopped his thoughts there – N.O.E. had just started speaking and its voice drew him from his conspiratorial thoughts. “The reports sent in by our guntai tell me that a few rebels have managed to avoid our surveillance and have been able to blend into the population. Despite being few in numbers, the probability that they will attempt an intervention in the next few days is estimated to be 82%. Among the possible targets for of their actions, the detention centers are the most likely to be attacked, with a probability of 74%. As a consequence, I suggest adding a few extra drones to the surveillance of these centers ...”

The Karo of Fire smiled. Things were going his way. All that was left now was to wait for the next attack of these terrorists.



‘Objective’ mission token :
CONSOLE

SETUP

Map B

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Consoles : 2 “console” tokens have to be placed, red side up on the central square of rooms 2 and 4. A third “console” token is placed red side up on any of the squares of the high security airlock, in a square chosen by the I.S.C. player. Special ; the squares containing a “Console” token are considered occupied.

Deployment : Both players deploy in Mode (Position). The I.S.C. characters are deployed in room 3, the Resistants in room 1.

Objectives : The Resistants must destroy the consoles with a combat action (difficulty 5) following the normal rules for combat (melee or range). A console has a life gauge of 5. As soon as the life gauge of a console is reduced to zero, the token is destroyed and discarded.

The I.S.C. characters have to reset the consoles with a hacking action (difficulty 7) targeting a console in a square of their periphery. Place the “Console” token green side up to indicate the reset is done. A reset console can be destroyed thereafter, but a destroyed console is removed from the game and can not be reset.

Duration of the game : 6 turns.

Victory conditions : At the end of turn 6, if the I.S.C. has reset more consoles than the Resistance has destroyed, then, the I.S.C. wins the game. The Resistance player wins if he destroys more consoles than the I.S.C. player has reset. A console that has been reset and destroyed counts for both players. The game ends if, at the end of any turn, all the consoles have been destroyed.

SCENARIO 3 “STALLING FOR TIME”



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

“Fuck! These damned drones are still after us!” screamed Duncan as he dived for cover behind a divider. If they didn’t quickly find an exit, the situation would rapidly become unsustainable.

“Jimmy, how much longer is it going to take?”, asked Alice dryly. The child didn’t answer – his attention was entirely fixed on the lines of code scrolling on the lenses of his goggles. He was tapping frantically on the keyboard of the cyber-console implanted in his forearm, looking for a way around the security protocols. Finally, he found the breach, dived in and took over the access points.

“Got it!”, triumphed the kid. At the same time, the doors locked, granting them some respite.

“Alice! This is really a shit plan! Volunteering to cause this diversion is real suicide!” spat Duncan in the direction of his squad leader. The young woman didn’t even take the time to answer. Actually, she felt the same way as her subordinate, but now really wasn’t the best time to talk about it. They had to find a way to get out of there.

“Jimmy, find us a fall-back route to the lower level..., she ordered. ...and lock all intercepting routes. We need to gain a little bit more time. Ashton! Barricade these exits as best you can. And you, Duncan, open a breach in this wall. We need to be out of here by the time the machines get in, so get to work!”

But she barely had time to finish giving her orders before a loud and strident whirling sound started to be heard from outside. The drones were already starting to cut through the walls. The situation looked complicated.

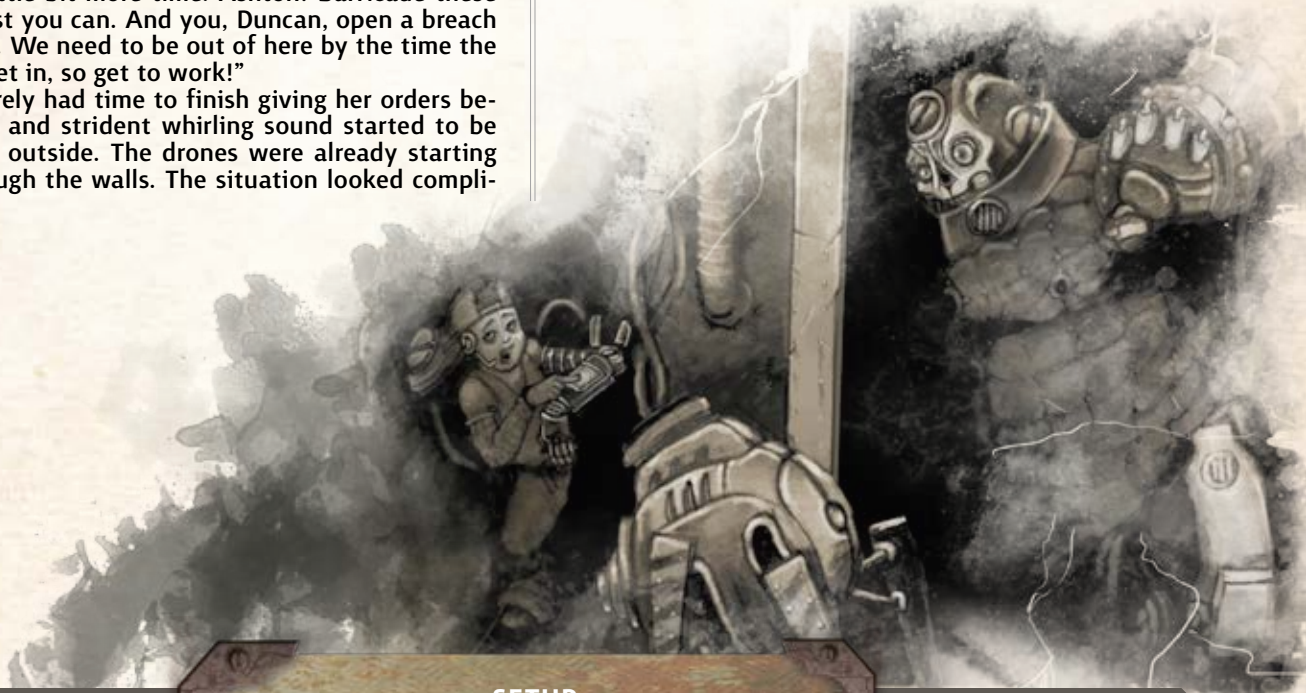


I.S.C. BRIEFING

Bishamonten was worried. The drones loaned by Kagutsuchi, while made for combat, had only been somewhat useful in these patrol and surveillance missions. Indeed, many groups of rebels had managed to reach the upper levels and few had been stopped. The combined action of the two Karos had been a failure.

Yet these elements didn’t explain everything. The insurgents had to have precise information to slip through the net as they had done. Fuujin absolutely had to discover what their source was.

But for the moment, the Celestial Order had other questions to solve. Thanks to Sarutahiko, the Karo of Earth’s drones, many groups of rebels whereabouts are known. Now they needed to be eliminated. No doubt Kagutsuchi would try to claim all the glory, but that was of no importance. In due time the Protector Karo would remind all of them of the mission of the Celestial Order: protect the inhabitants of the L.A.B. and ensure the Yonaoshi took place.



SETUP

Map B

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The Resistance player is in Mode (Position) in any room, except the airlock rooms and the central room. **Special** : in this scenario, the I.S.C. player sets up the Resistance characters on the board. He can deploy them in any room, as he wishes. The I.S.C. characters are in Mode (Entry) through any airlock.

Objectives : The Resistance player has to keep at least one of his characters alive.

Duration of the game : 7 turns.

Victory conditions : If at least one Resistance character is still on the board at the end of turn six, the Resistance player wins, in any other case, the I.S.C. player wins.

SCENARIO 4 "RAID"



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

"Alice, said Jimmy, we are reaching the antechamber of paradise. Here and there, he said designating small red squares on the screen of the giant monitor display he was facing, are the consoles that close off the access to the last Bloc before the exit.

- This is not the end yet, but this will allow us a potential retreat if things get bad. And eventually get some reinforcements too.
- I know we are lacking time but we should take some to get these strategic points.
- I agree. I'll tell the others to come this way, said Alice pointing a path through the map. Freedom, you and I will take a tiny detour.
- Freedom let me know that he appreciates calculated risks.
- I like your robot you know? Tell him I would love to paint him pink. With a drawing of a cute tiny cat on it"



I.S.C. BRIEFING

"My dear friend, I have to confess my extreme concern. You may ask why. We failed. We failed the majestic Visionary. Failed our principles. Failed those who have chosen to stay under our protection. We are declining.

- We know you for seventeen years professor and this is the first time I hear you question the infallibility of the project. If I did not know you well, I would say that you speak like "them". Quell your fears. These mis-believers were part of us, and they elude our basic security systems with ease. However, you are right on one point : we failed our principles. It was not our robots' duty to react, but ours, the administrators, to anticipate. Use our deduction capacities to infer their next position and crush them like bugs. Therefore, let me ask you : what would you do if you were between blocs B3 and C6, trying to escape?
- I would create the conditions favorable for the next move.
- You see? You did not fail. Now, let's work."



'Objective' mission token :
CONSOLE

SETUP

Map A

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Consoles : The I.S.C. player places one "Console" token, red side up on any square of the room of the Airlock 2 and another token, red side up on any square of the room of the Airlock 3. Two other "Console" tokens are placed by the I.S.C. player, red side up, one on any square of Airlock 1 and a last one on any square of Airlock 4. The Consoles are linked to one another, respectively the "Console" token of room 2 is linked to the "Console" token of airlock 1 and the one of room 3 to the one of airlock 4. Special : the squares containing a "Console" token are not considered occupied.

Deployment : The I.S.C. player is in Mode (Entry) through Airlocks 1 and 4. The Resistance player is in Mode (Entry) through Airlocks 2 and 3.

Objectives : The I.S.C. player must eliminate the Resistance. The Resistance player must take at least one of his characters off the board through Airlocks 1 or 4 to win. As long as the consoles on Airlocks 1 and 4 are on their red side, no Resistance character can not exit the board through these airlocks. The Resistance has to hack the "Console" tokens in rooms 2 and 3 (with a difficulty 6). Any Resistance characters can target a "Console" token in its periphery square on which it has a line of sight, a successful hacking allowing the Resistant player to flip the targeted "Console" token and the one its linked to on their blue side. The I.S.C. may reset the "Console" tokens in room 2 and 3, by targeting them with an Attack Action, melee or ranged (difficulty 6). If the ensuing Simple roll is strictly higher than the difficulty, the targeted "Console" token is set back on its red side, and so is the "Console" token linked to it

Duration of the game : 8 turns.

Victory conditions : The Resistance player wins if at least one of his characters escapes the board. In any other cases, the I.S.C. player wins.

SCENARIO 5 “LOW BATTERY”



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

Jimmy was working like a Tasmanian devil on Ashton's exoskeleton. Since the fights two days ago, the mechanical armor had been showing signs of weakness. The right arm's piston remained stuck half-way and one of the legs remained desperately still. As for the plating, it had been torn in many places and dangerously exposed the fragile circuits it was supposed to protect. “How bad does it look, doc?” quipped Alice with a falsely amused tone.

- “Could be worse,” answered the young prodigy, shrugging.

- “How long do you think it'll take you?” asked the woman again.

- “I ain't too sure. A day at least if everything goes right, three days max if that darned hydraulic circuit acts up again,” the child admitted.”

Hearing that, Alice let a swear word slip out and, clacking her heels, started walking back to the rest of the group.

- “Wait!” Jimmy called after her. “That was the good news...”

- “Oh. Because on top of that there's some bad news?” Interrupted the woman with a pout.

- “Yeah, the exoskeleton's batteries are almost empty and it's also true for Freedom's. We won't be able to continue for long at this pace,” he said.

- “Well in that case, listen – this'll make you happy!”, snarkily declared Alice. “Our next target is the EDLC production facility in sector 11. the higher-ups need them for the rest of the operations. I'm betting you'll find what you want there!”

- “We're also sure to find lots of trouble,” concluded the child.”



I.S.C. BRIEFING

“N.O.E., what's the situation?” Despite being deep and powerful, Bishamonten's voice had trouble being heard over the passionate conversations going on between the members of the Celestial Order. It's true that the offensive launched by the rebellion had reasons to stir the Karos, as its true objectives remained confuse and uncertain. Yet, it was clear that the dissidents did not have the means to overthrow the authority of the L.A.B. In that case, what was their true goal? To discover it, Bishamonten relied heavily on N.O.E.'s analysis and Fuujin's work on the prisoners. “Honorable Karos, began N.O.E. According to the fragmented information taken from the brains of the rebels, it would seem that we have been fooled. The only logical conclusion, with an estimated probability of 95%, is that Operation Prometheus must not be taken as a whole. Indeed, the lack of coherence in the choice of targets indicates that most of the actions led are diversions meant to hide the true objectives. The only option with more than a 99% probability, no matter the scenario, is that the insurgents will soon need energy for their equipment. Thus, if we manage to keep them from renewing their reserves, they will end up defenseless against an eventual assault. In consequence, I suggest concentrating our efforts on the protection of our power plants and energy cell production centers.”

With a nod, Bishamonten agreed, this scenario did seem the most probable and the least risky. But, despite being wise, N.O.E.'s plan wasn't enough for him. “N.O.E.,” resumed the Protector Karo. “I want you to meticulously record the attacks on our installations. When the first assaults begin, I want you to air these images, with a slight delay in order to select only the images showing the true face of these terrorists. Am I clear?” The tone was firm and resolved. “I will do as you direct, Bishamonten-sama” was the AI's only response.

SETUP

Map A

Crates : the “crate” tokens are considered as objective tokens and can not be thrown. The Resistance player randomly picks the “Objective” tokens and places two of them on the squares of airlock 2 and two of them on the squares of airlock 3 (1 token on each square). The I.S.C. characters can not pick up the “objective” tokens.

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : Both players are in Mode (Entry). I.S.C. characters enter through airlock 4, Resistance characters through airlock 1.

Objectives : The Resistance characters have to drop off the “Objective” tokens on any square of airlock 1 and may stack them. The I.S.C. player has to prevent this.

Duration of the game : 7 turns.

Victory conditions : The “Objective” tokens have different values : 1 or 2 points. The Resistance player wins if he drops off at least 3 points of “Objective” tokens on any squares of Airlock 1, before the end of the seventh turn. In any other case, the I.S.C. player wins.

SCENARIO 6 "THE WHITE RABBIT"



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

"Will you be finishing anytime soon?" asked Alice impatiently. It had been almost twenty minutes since Jimmy had started loading data into the young woman's cybershell and she was starting to get bored. The stillness to which they were constrained made them particularly vulnerable and contributed to her nervousness. If Alice hated something above all, it was not being in control of anything, and right now, that was just the case. "Jimmy? Why is it taking so long?" She insisted, worrisome.

- "I'm almost done, but you need to understand that I can't copy the data as is. I need to encrypt it first, and that takes some time," answered the child. "If the machines get their hands on that..."

- "We're all dead, I know," she interrupted him. "That's why the higher-ups don't want us to send them this data over the airwaves. If the enemy managed to break our code before the end of the last phase, Operation Prometheus will have been nothing but a fiasco."

- "And that's why they decided to call on a courier," added the young prodigy. "You do realize that you've just drawn a target on your forehead, right?" he wondered, visibly preoccupied.

- "Yes, but the goal makes it worth it. If we manage to get this data to High Command, we'll be able to leave this prison for good," answered Alice with a resolved tone. "And I'm not alone, you guys are here."

- "For better and especially for worse," the kid finished, pouting.



I.S.C. BRIEFING

The air was electric and Fuujin was quite worried. Bishamonten's plans had been nothing but a series of failures, Kagutsuchi's drones had been unable to suppress the rebels, and now there was this breach in the security system. Things were really going wrong. They had to react, and to do fast. As if it was answering to these thoughts, N.O.E. spoke: "Karos. Our guntai have managed to capture the hackers who took part in the piracy against our security system. Unfortunately, they were no longer in possession of the stolen information when they were arrested. Their interrogation is underway, but we already know that they've transmitted all of the data to a squad of warriors who are on their way to the lower levels. If we react quickly, we should be able to intercept them."

- "I'll take care of eliminating them!" shouted the Karo of Fire. "I..."

- "You will do no such thing, Kagutsuchi-sama," interrupted the Karo of the Wind. "If we eliminate this squad, the rebels will find another way."

- "What do you propose, Fuujin-sama?" asked a highly interested Bishamonten.

- "If we manage to hack their leader's cybershell, we could plant in it a viral bomb which would activate itself only once the information has been transmitted to their central system," argued Fuujin. "This way we could knock out, at least temporarily, all of our enemy's computers..."

- "Thus allowing us to prepare a greater response," resumed the Protector Karo. "It's a brilliant idea," he added. Then, turning to Kagutsuchi. "And if your drones don't manage to do it, then you'll be allowed to try and kill them."

All of the Karos agreed.

SETUP

Map B

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The I.S.C. player is in Mode (Position) in the central room. The Resistance player is in Mode (Entry) and chooses one of the four airlocks to be his entry point for the duration of the game.

Objectives : Every I.S.C. character has to hack the Rank 4 Resistance character. It is possible to hack this character if it is in a periphery square of the hacking character and in its line of sight. The I.S.C. player records the successful hacking actions by adding a "Console" token on the profile card of the character who successfully hacked the Resistance Rank 4. A Taken out I.S.C. character discards its "console" token, if any, and has to hack the Resistance character again. The Rank 4 Resistance character is allowed

to get out of the board on the opposite side of its entry (Airlock 3 if the characters entered on Airlock 1, Airlock 2 if the characters entered on Airlock 4...), in order to foil the I.S.C.'s plans.

Duration of the game : 8 turns.

Victory conditions : The I.S.C. player wins if all his characters have a "console" token on its profile card and if The Rank 4 Resistance character has not gone out of the board on the side opposite to its entry's (it may however have been Taken Out). The Resistance player wins if its Rank 4 character gets out of the board through the opposite side of the board. In any other case, the game is a draw (the game must be played again if part of a campaign).

SCENARIO 7 "RESCUE"



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

Exhausted and angry, Alice was hardly recovering from the last skirmish with the I.S.C.'s forces. Nothing happened as she expected. A ten seconds delay in the execution of her orders, a little bit of bad luck, a weapon that jams at the worse moment and everything fell flat. Fortunately, her tactical sense allowed three of her crew members to escape. There is still a hope. But for now, emotions are colliding. The young woman fell powerless.

Jimmy felt the same but took refuge in logic rather than fury. There was something reassuring to have Freedom next to him in this dramatic moment.

"I got good news, he said to Alice. Our friends are probably alive. Freedom is detecting the move of an interrogating unit in a sector within a kilometer.

- Alive. Of course they're alive, answered Alice while grabbing her weapon. They want to interrogate them, to hurt them. But we leave no one behind. Let's go:"

Jimmy smirked thinking about how robots ignore that trustworthiness challenges probabilities.



I.S.C. BRIEFING

- Activity report : The captive hostiles are in cryogenic sleep and kept in sector K5.
State : waiting for instructions.

- Transmission to mother-unit../..
Reception of transmission.

Activity report : Sending a public-relations expert unit. Primary objective : Obtain whereabouts and state of the hostiles still active. Secondary objective : Elimination of the captive hostiles.

Instructions : Reach positions / Patrol / Counteract hostiles still active. Instructions : Confirmation request.

- Activity report : Confirmation.



SETUP



'Objective' mission token :
CRYO-TUBE

Map B

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Rescue team : For this mission, the Resistance player may only choose half (rounded up) of the characters he is allowed to take following the recruitment chart. He chooses which characters he will play, the other are captives of the I.S.C.

Cryo-tubes : The I.S.C player randomly picks three "Cryo-tubes" tokens and places them on the board (without reading their value). He may not place more than one "Cryo-tube" token in a single room or place any of those in a square on which it is possible to draw a line of sight towards any square of any Airlock (including the High Security Airlock's). Special : the squares containing a "Cryo-tube" token are considered Occupied.

Patrol : The I.S.C. characters may not perform more than four Move actions during their activation (including opening of doors), as long as they did not end an activation having a line of sight towards a Resistance character or been Taken Out for a first time. After this, they can perform Move actions normally.

Deployment : The I.S.C. player is in Mode (Position) in any room, except the Airlock rooms ; he does not have to place all his characters in the same room. The Resistance is in Mode (Entry), through any Airlock.

Objectives : The I.S.C. Player has to eliminate the Resistance, The Resistance player must free the captives from the cryo-tubes. A Resistance character may perform a Hacking action (difficulty 6) targeting a "Cryo-tube" token in his periphery square on which he has a line of sight. If the action is successful, turn the token back to read its value and deploy immediately a Resistance character on the square the token occupied (the token is then discarded). The Resistance character must be chosen among those held captives, the number of stars on the back of the token indicating the rank of the character the player is allowed to deploy. If the Resistance player wishes to, or if he does not have any character of the suitable rank, he may deploy a character with a lower rank or take as many Revolution tokens as the rank authorized.

Duration of the game : 8 turns.

Victory conditions : The Resistance player wins if he hacks successfully at least two "cryo tubes". The I.S.C. player wins in any other case.

SCENARIO 8 "WHEN THE HUNTER BECOMES THE PREY"



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

Sitting in the corner of the room, Alice was silently reading the death certificates. Among the long list were the names of many of her friends Transmission officers, techies, Otakus, soldiers... the machines had spared no one, not even the children. Despite their wounds, she and her team had been lucky. A tear rolled down her cheek. She hadn't cried in a long time. Exhausted, she didn't even take the time to dry it. In these moments of deep distress, Alice had to remember why she fought. She needed to regain a bit of strength and courage. Undoing the top of her suit, she dove her hand under the thick cloth and pulled out an old dented holopix whose switch she pressed. A 3D projection appeared. It was a bit hazy and skipped ever so often, but it was her most precious possession. Seeing the image it contained for the Nth time, Alice smiled and her fatigue melted away. Feverishly raising her hand towards the hologram, she tried to touch it and thus find again this contact that she had so deeply loved. But, as ever always, her fingers passed through the beam of light. So her face drew closed and her anger resurfaced. She pressed the switch again and the image disappeared. Getting up with a leap, she grabbed her weapons and headed to the exit. Seek and destroy, had said High command? Perfect. It was time to return blows and avenge those who had fallen.



I.S.C. BRIEFING

Fuujin was smiling. Thanks to the efficiency of his teams, the plans of the rebels had been discovered and the so-called rebellion had just gotten lead in its wing. The quality of the information gained had allowed Bishamonten to hold an efficient defense and protect the L.A.B.'s population. Of course, he was proud of having preserved the future of humanity, but he also knew that this success would favor the allocation of resources to his own research. Letting his gaze settle on Kagutsuchi, he studied the reactions of the Karo of Fire as the Protector Karo explained his plan. Truthfully, Fuujin didn't like this pretentious and arrogant man. He knew fully well that he was more worried about his own interests than the true goal of their mission. How could such a person complete their gempukku? For the moment, the Karo of the Wind had no answer, but he was determined to find out and prevent other people such as he, or these rebels, to continue to proliferate. Such was the ultimate goal of his research. But for the moment, it was up to Kagutsuchi to act and prepare his drones for the final battle. If he fulfilled his task, the Rebellion would soon be nothing more than a bad memory and L.A.B. 03 could once again focus solely on its mission of saving humanity.



'Objective' mission token:
CONSOLE

SETUP

Map A

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Consoles : 1 "console" tokens is positioned red side up on any square of airlocks 1, 2, 3 and 4 (I.S.C. player's choice).
Special : the squares containing a "Console" token are not considered Occupied.

Deployment : The I.S.C. characters are in Mode (Position) on the High security airlock squares. The Resistance characters are in Mode (Entry) through airlocks 1, 2, 3 or 4. The Resistance player may not use an Airlock if the "console" token positioned on it has been reset. On the other hand, the I.S.C. player may not use an airlock to deploy a character again, thanks to the "internal factory" rule, if the "console" positioned on this airlock has not been reset yet (the High security airlock may be used normally thanks to result 6 of the random events table).

Objectives : The Resistance player has to destroy the I.S.C. characters. The I.S.C. player has to minimize the losses, he has to secure the perimeter by resetting the consoles. An I.S.C. character may hack a console (difficulty 7), targeting a console in a square of its periphery and on which he has a line of sight. Place the "console" token green side up to indicate it has been reset.

Duration of the game : no turn limit.

Victory conditions : The Resistance player wins the game if, at the end of any turn, he has taken out three or more I.S.C. characters (a character taken out several times counts as a different character each time) and the game ends. If the I.S.C. player has hacked the 4 "console" tokens on the board at the end of any turn, he wins the game. If both conditions are met at the end of the same turn, the Resistance player wins. If all the Resistance characters are taken out without completing their objective, the I.S.C. player wins even if he did not reset all the "console" tokens.

SCENARIO 9 "UPRISING"



RESISTANCE BRIEFING

« My friends, said Alice, I have to tell you about Jimmy's last discovery. There is, not far from here, a cryo backup center that the eggheads and there machines installed not long ago. It was most likely there that some of you were held frozen.

- So what ? asked Duncan.

- So during the last rescue mission, we... that is to say, Jimmy, swiped some datadiscs. We thought this place was only a temporary jail, where they kept the prisoners before transferring them to the central jail, but it's more complicated. Jimmy ?

- Actually, those cryotubes are the problem, the kid explained. They were encoded at first to be used as cloning device. »

An uneasy silence grabbed the audience, most of them didn't exactly know what this discovery was implying. « I don't get it, Duncan said, they want to clone us ? What for ?

- No, these were meant for the Karos, Jimmy explained. In short, they are preparing clones as back-ups, that they will be able to activate at any time. Meaning we can never stop them, they will just rise again somewhere else and keep on ruling.

- Oppressing you mean ! growled Ashton.

- Exactly, Alice moved on. So we must prevent these tubes from leaving this area. Jimmy already pinpointed their origin, they came from the labs of one Kureiji, in the sector 18. The prototypes used as cells were not fully functional, obviously, but we have to hurry...

- Because if they leave this area, we won't be able to stop them anymore, said Jimmy grimly.

- So why are we loafing around ? shouted Ashton. Let's get on with it ! »



I.S.C. BRIEFING

« Letting them discover these cryogenic prototypes wasn't such a good idea, was it ? The risk of seeing 5 years of research destroyed seems to me... inconsiderate.

- Sun Tzu said not to lead your enemy into despair, because that would make him dangerous and unpredictable, but to let him a way out, any way out. Their ideals make them predictable, they will be awaited.

- This war is nonetheless dangerous for us, as long as this cloning technology isn't ready. We must be wise enough to foresee the worst.

- Certainly, but this is already a lure. Doctor Kureiji tested his cloning device himself not long ago, with very satisfying results. These results have immediately been transmitted to N.O.E, the rest is just a matter of time. »

The Karos sat back, smirking. The rebels could win some battles, the outcome made no doubt for them. They could even let those utopians reach the surface, and let them die outside, when everything will be back to normal inside.



If the players have chosen to play the campaign, they now have to fight for the final victory. For this last scenario, they get the bonus(es) listed in the chart below, depending on the number of game won during the campaign. Every time the Resistance player is allowed to take an "Equipment" token (or more), he may chose the one he wants and give it to any of his characters who will be able to use it normally during the game. Every time the I.S.C. player is allowed to get rid of an "Equipment" token, he does so before the Resistance player chooses his "equipment" tokens (If possible) and the Resistance player will not be able to choose this token and give it to any of his characters.

Number of games won	Bonus for the Resistance	Bonus for the I.S.C.	Number of games won
4	2 Revolution tokens +1 Equipment	Bonus +1 to Initiative tests	0
3	The Cryo-tubes have a life gauge of 4 instead of 5	When a character fails a Hacking roll targeting a "Cryo-tube", he suffers one Damage point	1
2	2 Revolution tokens OR 1 Equipment	Get rid of one Equipment of your choice	2
1	The rule "Hymn to the Revolution" brings 2 Revolution tokens instead of 1	The difficulty of the hacking actions targeting a Cryo-tube is raised 1 point up	3
0	Bonus +1 to Initiative tests	Every turn, you may change by 1 the dice result of the random events chart.	4



'Objective' mission token :
CRYO-TUBE

SETUP

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Cryo-tubes : 2 "Cryo-tube" tokens picked up randomly are placed, "cryo-tube" side up on central squares of rooms 1 and 2. The third "cryo-tube" token is placed, "cryo-tube" side up on one of the squares adjacent to the high security airlock, chosen by the I.S.C. player. Special ; the squares containing a "cryo-tube" token are considered occupied.

Deployment : The I.S.C. characters are in Mode (Position) on the High Security Airlock squares. The Resistance characters are in Mode (Entry) through Airlocks 3 and 4.

Objectives : The I.S.C. player has to prevent the Resistance from disabling the Cryo-tubes. A Resistance character may perform a Combat Action (difficulty 5) targeting these tokens following the normal rules of combat (range or melee). A Cryo-tube has a life gauge of 5. As soon as a

Cryo-Tube life-Gauge's is reduced to 0, the token is destroyed, taken out of the board and the Resistance player earns a number of "Revolution" tokens equal to the number of stars read on the back of the token. A Resistance character may also choose to hack (difficulty 7) a "Cryo-tube" token on a periphery square and on which he has a line of sight. If the roll is successful, the token is immediately discarded from the board.

Duration of the game : 8 turns.

Victory conditions : The Resistance player gets a full victory if there is no more "cryo-tube" token on the board at the end of the game. If there is still one "cryo-tube" token, he gets a minor victory. If there are still two "cryo-tubes" tokens, the I.S.C. player gets a minor victory. If all the tokens are still on the board, the I.S.C. player gets a full victory.

OUTCOME

TOTAL I.S.C. VICTORY

"Victory". The word is on the lips of every inhabitant of the L.A.B and is widely spread on information channels. [...]

[...] Throughout the day, they air how the alliance of man and AI has been able to defeat the plans of dangerous anarchists. [...]

[...] The people now have their heroes and a banner under which to unite to go conquer the surface. [...]

[...] But before the time for our great departure can come, we must rebuild and rehabilitate our home which has been so grievously wounded [...]

[...] While the events of these last few months have been sad and unhappy, they have had at least the merit of reminding us, all of us, our duty towards Earth and Humanity. [...]

[...] This is why the Celestial Order will continue its action and its investigations, up there outside. [...]

[...] As we should take no risks, since the life of each of us is too precious to be risked in vain. [...]

"Good, N.O.E., I've seen enough," said Fujin as he turned off his trideo. "It's perfect."

- "Thank you, Karo," answered N.O.E., "I've strictly followed your instructions. At this very moment, we're testing the process on a sample of prisoners. If the results reach a performance of 80%, we'll apply this treatment to the whole of the captured dissidents in order to rehabilitate them."

- "Very well," agreed the man. "If everything goes well, we could preserve a large number of lives this way. The existence of each human is far too precious to be wasted."

- "Your words are that of a sage," complimented the AI. "And what about the educational system?"

- "It's too early to use my process on children," objected the scientist. "As long as we don't get a success rate of 95%, the benefits won't equal the losses."

- "As you wish," answered the machine. "In any case, allow me to point out that the resources and means you had asked for to continue your researches have been approved."

With these words Fujin ended the transmission and smiled. The dreams of the Visionary and all of theirs would finally happen and a new humanity, created according to His ideal, would emerge. A new day was finally dawning for Mankind.

PARTIAL I.S.C. VICTORY

The lesson had been harsh and the teaching bitter. The young Resistance had over-estimated its forces and came out broken toothed. The efforts it had deployed to escape the L.A.B. had been in vain and Operation Prometheus would go down in history as a huge failure.

Many freedom fighters had pointlessly been killed and the meager resources the Resistants had at their disposal had been spent in vain. Despite being soundly defeated, the Resistance wasn't dead and continued its struggle. The lower levels were still under its control and it remained a thorn in the I.S.C.'s side.

However, it wouldn't take much longer before a cleaning operation would be launched by the Celestial Order in order to regain full control over the L.A.B. But that was of no importance, as a new plan was already in the works. And if everything went well, thanks to undercover agents and a few sympathizers, many survivors would soon be free.

Of course the I.S.C. would realize it and they'd be hunted down but, up there, their chances of survival would be much better than here, under ground.

PARTIAL RESISTANCE VICTORY

The machines had attacked a bit before 22:00, taking the Resistance soldiers by surprise. Very quickly, the defense had been organized, but it was clear that the Celestial Order had decided to finish it once and for all. After all, the Karos had won the ideological war – the population wouldn't revolt to protect terrorists putting in jeopardy the functioning of the L.A.B., and thus the survival of its inhabitants. They now had free hands to act and could eradicate any form of opposition.

Wave after wave, drones rushed in to assault, taking a heavy toll each time. Quite quickly, it became obvious to the defenders that it would be impossible to repel the invaders. The Resistance's High Command had to rush its plans and took a tragic decision. The civilians were led to the evacuation tunnels, escorted by slightly more than half of the troops. Meanwhile, the rest of the warriors were sent to the front lines, with no hope of returning. These men and women were deliberately sacrificed to cover the escape of their comrades, but they knew it and accepted it gracefully.

Alice and her squad were part of the escort. Somewhere deep inside her, she knew that she would rather stay and die, weapon in hand, surrounded by her brothers, but she wasn't alone. Her team had done so much for the Cause, had so many close calls with death, that they deserved to now savor this small victory.

And there'd be other chances to die. Obviously, the I.S.C wouldn't wait for the bodies of their friends to turn cold before going after them. Also, the world above was completely unknown to them and probably held a thousand dangers. No, this episode wasn't really an end. The Resistance had simply finished a chapter and had begun a new one. Alice simply hoped that it would be written with a little less tears and blood.



TOTAL RESISTANCE VICTORY

Sitting in front of this his command interface, Kagutsuchi was getting impatient. Of a volatile temper, the Karo of Fire didn't take inactivity and immobility very well. Despite his status as a scientist, he only felt alive in action, not reflection. But, while his drones were ready, and the attack plan carefully prepared, he had to wait for the authorization before launching the assault, and that he had trouble accepting.

That moment he had dreamed of since the beginning of the riots, so many months ago. To him, the rebels were no more than bugs, crawling and squirming insects which deserved no nothing more than to be crushed under the heel of his boot. And today, he had the means to fulfill his fantasy. The insurgents didn't know it yet, but he held their lives and their destinies in his hands. In a few minutes, with a simple gesture, he would condemn their future and break it.

This last thought made him feel hot and gave him a feeling of bliss, leading him to a state close to ecstasy. But it was only temporary, as, for the moment, he still had to wait.

Finally, the much awaited signal arrived. A hungry smile on his lips, Kagutsuchi ordered the assault. But for the Karo of Fire, being a simple witness wasn't enough. Leaving N.O.E. the task of applying the plan, he connected his Cybershell to one of his combat drones and, like a general from ancient times, leapt into battle, a katana in hand. Running ahead of his troops, his mind hazy with a warrior's fever, he ran with his mechanical legs the space separating him from an enemy outpost. With a single leap, he ignored the barricades and landed in the heart of the rebels' facility. To his great surprise, no one attacked him. The camp was empty. The terrorists might have fallen back.

Enraged by the cowardice of his opponents, Kagutsuchi let out a howl and, enraged, renewed his progression to the heart of the enemy lines, set on a fight. In vain. There was no one to fight. All reports given by the guntai were identical – the slums didn't contain a living soul. Obviously, the rebels left some time ago already.

SCENARIOS OF THE COOPERATIVE MODE

Setting up the board

In a Cooperation mode game, players must set up the board using the proper tiles, following the indications of the scenario. The different elements of the game (Airlocks, consoles, etc.) are indicated, with their position, by the scenario.

Difficulty setting

Before starting the scenario, the players must agree on a difficulty. There are three levels of difficulty in the cooperation mode, each of them having an influence on the number of Repression cards drawn during step a) Drawing Repression cards.

1. Cushy (easy) : 2 cards
2. Free (normal) : 3 cards
3. Wild (hard) : 4 cards.

The difficulty has an impact on the speed of arrival of the Drones on the board, but also reduces the length of the game, as the deck will reduce faster in the hardest levels.



SCENARIO 1 “INFILTRATION”

Here we are, we got out of our living quarters to head towards the Storage Bloc. There, we will find weapons, drugs and rations, essentials to the success of our project. We may need some of those up there, who knows? The Storage Bloc are under constant surveillance of the combat robots of our former fellows. They are programmed to defend their goods with all the requisite strength. As soon as the alarm bells are ringing, we won't be able to seek clemency, all the blows will be deadly.

Maps D4, D3, D2, D1

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The Resistance deploys using the Mode (Entry), through Airlock 1.

Objectives : The Resistance has to make its characters out of the board through Airlocks 2, 3 or 4.

Victory conditions : If at least two Resistance characters get out of the board, the Resistance wins the game. If less than two Resistants get out, the Resistance fails.



SCENARIO 2 “SEARCH AND DESTROY”

● ‘Objective’ mission token : CONSOLE



The L.A.B. has a very elaborated computer network, directly connected to N.O.E. Its purpose is double : It allows on the one hand to help everyone get the informations needed on a daily basis and, on the other hand, offers a watch tool for the hierarchy. The robots may come in it and take new informations, download combat protocols or share data. However, they have to go on-line. The consoles are strongly built but not indestructible. If we break the consoles, we provoque a black-out and the influence of the robots will be undermined. It is time for willful damage to material.

Maps C1, C3, C4, C2

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The Resistance deploys using the Mode (Entry), through Airlock 1.

Objectives : The Resistance has to destroy the “Consoles” indicated, attacking them with a combat action (difficulty 5) following the normal combat rules (melee or range). A console has a Life Gauge of 5. As soon as a “console”’s life gauge reaches 0, the token is destroyed. Special ; The squares containing a “console” token are considered occupied.

Victory conditions : The Resistance wins if all the “console” tokens are destroyed. If it can not, the mission is a failure.

SCENARIO 3 “RACE AGAINST TIME”

Everything went very fast, it was a trap. We have been spotted, the other side took initiative, no time to linger here. Take everything you can and get out of here as long as you still breeze. The robots named a strong squad and they’re coming. How could they know that we were here?

Map D1, C4, D2, D3

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The Resistance deploys using the Mode (Entry), through Airlock 4.

Objectives : The Resistance players have to make their characters out of the board through Airlock 1.

Victory conditions : If at least two Resistance characters get out of the board, the Resistance wins the game. If less than two Resistants get out, the Resistance fails.



SCENARIO 4 "LOW BATTERY"

The last battles have been testing. We lack rations, batteries and ammo. Moreover, one of us is injured. Nothing serious for now but if it becomes infected, it could quickly degenerate. We must plunder a warehouse and get back everything we need to survive. With a little bit of luck, we could find a lovely prototype experimental weapon or, even better, the food reserved for the Karos. I'm already salivating.

Maps C4, D1, C3, D2

Crates : "Crate" tokens are used as "Objective" tokens and can not be thrown. They are set up following the rules above, "crate" side up. They are randomly selected so that the Resistance ignores their respective values.

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Deployment : The Resistance deploys using the Mode (Entry), through Airlock 1.

Objectives : The Resistance has to drop off the "Objective" tokens on the squares of airlock 1, but may not stack them.

Victory conditions : The Resistance wins if it drops off 4 points of "objective" tokens on the squares of airlock 1. Otherwise, the mission is a failure.



SCENARIO 5 “FREE JIMMY”

Jimmy has been captured and placed in a cryo-tube by the robots. I know their ways : they're going to interrogate him and then, try to re-conditionate him. And, if they fail, he will be recycled as a tasty-dough. So let's put ideology apart for the moment and re-establish priorities : to arms, we have a kid to rescue. And, if we find potential draftees among the prisoners of the bloc where Jimmy is convicted, so much the better.

Maps C1, C2, C4, C3

Crates : 4 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Equipments : 8 tokens to place (maximum 1 per room)

Cryo-tubes : The “Cryo-tubes” tokens are set up following the indications above, “cryo-tube” face up. They are randomly selected so that the Resistance players ignore their respective values. Special ; the squares containing a “Cryo-tube” are considered occupied.

Captive : Jimmy may not be selected has a Resistance character by any player during this scenario.

Deployment : The Resistance deploys using the Mode (Entry), through Airlock 1.

Objectives : The Resistance must free Jimmy, prisoner of a cryo-tube and help him to escape. A Resistance character may perform a hacking action (difficulty 6), targeting a “Cryo-Tube” token in a periphery square on which he has a line of sight. If the action is successful, turn the token back and read its value. If the value is 3 or 4, place an I.S.C. character of this rank (if not already on the board) in the square previously occupied by the token (which is then discarded). If the value is 2, then place Jimmy in the square previously occupied by the token (which is then discarded). Jimmy may be activated as soon as he is freed. The Leader of the Resistance activates Jimmy each turn.

Victory conditions : If Jimmy gets out of the board through airlock 1, the Resistance has fulfilled its mission, otherwise, it failed.





“Under the pretext of protecting us, it has locked us up in gilded cages and deprived us of our future, treating us like weak and ignorant children. The time has come for us to reclaim our independence...”

- Mickael Aaron Manhattan on the eve of Operation Prometheus -