

# JOAN OF ARC



PROTOCOL

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*Joan of Arc* is Game 3 in the *Protocol* game series.

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# JOAN OF ARC

*Joan of Arc* is a story roleplaying game about scientists and rescue personnel working to save a damaged space station before disruptive energy rips it apart. Starting from the planet's surface, the team has limited time to get to the station, climb inside, and repair the damaged station. The clock is ticking as problem after problem besets the team members who have limited resources to battle the ravaged reactor core.

Will they save the Joan of Arc before it's too late?

# PROTOCOL

Protocol is a series of story roleplaying games that thrusts characters into dramatic situations. Each game uses the same set of rules, with vastly different parameters, start-points, characters, and finales. Players take on the roles of directors outside the action and characters inside the action, using the ebb and flow of four different scene-framing styles (vignettes, interrogations, interludes, and ensembles) to tell meaningful stories about characters in crisis.

Each game in the Protocol series is zero-prep for 3 or more players. The game length is exponentially long, so games with more players take more time to complete. The Protocol Series requires a deck of poker cards as well as tokens to track drama points.

This series presumes some understanding of GMless game protocol: scene-framing, shared authority, and so on. If you've never played a GMless game, try one of the GMZero games such as *Dying Memories*, or *George's Children*. A free pdf of game advice — GMZero Introduction Document — is available for download from [drivethrurpg.com](http://drivethrurpg.com).

The Protocol series includes over 50 games using the core Protocol engine. Some elements of the game have changed since its first release. Those familiar with the original system should review the changes before beginning the game. There are also optional rules that can slow down set-up time and world building. Be mindful of this. And while the document is longer than before and the format is vertical, some elements have been streamlined. For instance, advanced roles and backgrounds have been eliminated, and roles have been simplified.

Some of the new Protocols have special rules. Be sure to read them carefully.

# GETTING STARTED

Each character is a part of a rescue team, sent to a damaged space station set to rip itself apart. The team must rescue key personnel, all the while stopping the space station from entering a decaying orbit. With limited supplies and almost no time, the characters do everything they can to avert disaster.

The characters need roles, names, motivations, and relationships, as well as an understanding of the world. Once each player has completed the following steps, you are ready.

- Select one role for your character — this has no mechanical benefit
- Name your character (a list of suggestions is on page 23)
- Determine a character's motivation by drawing one card
- Determine a relationship between two characters by drawing one card
- Determine elements about the game through world building

## SPECIAL RULES: SEARCH AND RESCUE

In *Joan of Arc*, characters are tasked with getting on board a space station, finding the cause of the core's disruption, and rescuing as many people as they can before it's too late. This protocol in particular requires the players to make up a lot of information on the spot. As such, there will be a lot of interaction with NPCs who know more about the situation than the characters do.

To reflect this, interrogations with NPCs should be frequent. Whenever a player chooses to interrogate an NPC (or have an NPC interrogate a character), he or she may ask two additional questions (seven, instead of five). In addition, whenever a director completes an interrogation, he or she must immediately narrate one vignette. This vignette can be about anything, but it will usually be about the topic at hand.

## DECK SHUFFLING

A standard deck of cards is shuffled at the beginning of the game and again (only) if the deck runs out of cards. Used cards are discarded. Do not return cards drawn for Motivations or Relationships to the deck. The same goes for Scenes and Locations during play.

## DRAMA POINTS

Each player starts the game with one drama point and only gains additional points during specific scenes. For players who want more authorial control before play, consider starting with two or three drama points each. See page 12 for more on using drama points.

# ROLES

Roles provide flavor and context, but no mechanical benefit.

1. **Analyst.** The analyst is many things to many teams. Perhaps he or she is nothing more than a glorified data-sniffer.
2. **Chemist.** Understanding matter at an atomic and subatomic level may be important, especially if the space station is radioactive.
3. **Commander.** Commanders have some combat experience, as well as an understanding of every team member's function.
4. **Coordinator.** Part team leader, part logistics expert, part comm specialist, the coordinator makes sure things get done.
5. **Doctor.** More specialized and educated about medicine than anyone else, doctors lack the field experience of medics.
6. **Engineer.** Leave theory to scientists and leave the application of science to engineers and technicians.
7. **Logistician.** A fancy word for supply-chain manager, the team logistician also knows the best routes and the most efficient way to do anything. Someone has to watch the fuel gauge.
8. **Medic.** A field medic is trained in a variety of fields. Mostly, he or she knows how to get the job done quickly.
9. **Physicist.** Considered the purest form of scientist, physicists study how matter interacts, which is helpful when a space station is about to collide with a comet or planet.
10. **Pilot.** Pilots can operate any number of vehicles with ease.
11. **Search and Rescue.** The mostly highly-trained of all soldiers, the S&R specialist can survive in the most hostile of conditions.
12. **Sweeper.** Part scout, part soldier, and part door-breaker, the sweeper is (pound for pound) the team's strongest member.
13. **Technician.** All around technical expert, perhaps with a specialty.

# MOTIVATIONS

Each player defines the motivation of his own character. Motivations are determined by drawing one random poker card from the deck for each character. The motivation descriptions are vague — specificity is your job. For instance, the ♠10 is a motivation of family, impulsively. The player may define this motivation as doing whatever it takes to protect her family's, or constantly acting in such a way that her family is in jeopardy.

A list of motivations is on page 7.

## MOTIVATIONS ARE NOT GOALS

Do not confuse motivations with needs or goals. The goal is defined by the story. What motivates a character is an extension of the character's role within the story. You can be motivated by pride to save another character from herself, but your goal cannot be pride.

A motivation may also be a hindrance as much as a benefit. Being confidently driven by your illness doesn't stop you from coughing at the wrong moment or help you keep up with everyone.

TRAINING WAS ONE THING,  
REALITY ANOTHER,  
AND NO ONE COULD BE  
SURE THAT THE ANCIENT HUMAN  
INSTINCTS OF SELF-PRESERVATION  
WOULD NOT TAKE OVER  
IN AN EMERGENCY.

- ARTHUR C. CLARKE,  
RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA

# MOTIVATIONS

## SUIT

- ♣ Unyieldingly
- ♦ Defiantly
- ♥ Inexplicably
- ♠ Impulsively

## VALUE

- A Discovery/Exploration
- 2 Academics/Curiosity
- 3 Duty
- 4 Envy/Greed
- 5 Desperation/Fear
- 6 Proof
- 7 Glory
- 8 Wealth
- 9 Distance/Time
- 10 Family
- J Retribution
- Q Love
- K Dominion

Joker

Draw two and combine the results

---

## EXPRESSING VALUES

Interpreting the motivations chart can be perplexing. What exactly does it mean to be motivated by Distance/Time? Defiantly even? Who is the character trying to get away from? As always, the values are prompts to spark the imagination. They are not delimiters. Character motivations are tied to the story goal of that particular Protocol. If you're struggling to figure out what your motivation means, ask around or spend one drama point to draw or pick something else.

# RELATIONSHIPS

Each player selects one pair of characters to have a relationship. Relationships are determined by choosing (any) two characters and drawing one random poker card from the deck. The pair of characters share this relationship. The relationship descriptions are vague. Specificity is your job. For instance, the ♣10 is a relationship of family trust. The players sharing this relationship may define it as an ongoing issue of trust between two brothers who have lied to each other since childhood.

A list of relationships is on page 9.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to add a third character to a relationship.

A player may **spend one additional drama point** to make a drawn relationship between a character and an NPC (see page 12).

Once play has started, any player may **spend one drama point** to create a relationship between two characters who have been in a scene together. No card is drawn for this relationship. It is defined by the context of the scene(s) already played.

## DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS

Traditional roleplaying games assume relationships of adventurous intent. But good drama unfolds when two players can develop a relationship beyond always agreeing to 'chase the gold.' Let your relationships with others focus your gameplay and storytelling styles. But don't let it derail the story. No one wants to watch a movie where two people bicker for two hours (i.e. Bad Boys II).



# RELATIONSHIPS

## SUIT

- ♣ Family/Long-Term
- ♦ Friends/Rivals
- ♥ Romantic
- ♠ Community/Working

## VALUE

- A Contentious
- 2 Training
- 3 Loss/Reconciliation
- 4 Codependent
- 5 Predictable/Reliable
- 6 Generous/Intrusive
- 7 Burdensome
- 8 Monetary
- 9 Obsessiveness
- 10 Trust
- J Ominous
- Q Compassion
- K Brothers-in-Arms

Joker

Draw again, adding another character to the Relationship

---

## EXPRESSING VALUES

Relationships between characters should be dynamic. They can be positive or negative, but they shouldn't be easy. The suits are always the same, but the values change from time to time, to reflect the setting. In most cases, it should be easy for two players to work out the details of their characters' relationship. However, there are instances when two players do not want their characters to be romantically involved or kin. The suits and values are prompts, not absolutes. Family could be in-laws. Romantic could be two characters who were once involved with (or chasing after) the same person. Community is as simple as knowing each other from around the neighborhood.

# WORLD BUILDING

**World Building** is an important game stage. Players assume power over the environment that their characters are involved in. The characters may know some of this information already. Some of it becomes evident as the story progresses. Each player selects one ingredient from the list below. If you are playing a 3-player game, then each player selects two.

Now is a good time to name your ship and your team.

1. **How far are you from the galactic core? The nearest planet?**
2. **What caused the space station to rupture in the first place?  
How many people are trapped? Who were the first to die?**
3. **What is the power source of the space station?  
What is the station's primary function? Secondary function?**
4. **What is the political governance of the space station like?  
Are those in charge of it hands on or hands off?**
5. **Why can't you land your ship directly on the station?  
What kind of interference is making communication more difficult?**
6. **Who is in charge? What are your specific orders?  
Are you freebooters? Or do you work for the federation?**
7. **How much time have you been told you have before the core explodes?  
How much time do you really have?**
8. **Name and describe the two largest operational outposts in the region.**
9. **Name and describe the team member who died en route to the station.  
Narrate a vignette about his or her death.**
10. **Describe the last time your team failed in an operation like this and your feelings about that failure.**

## OPTIONAL RULES

Consider one of these two methods of answering world building questions:

- One player chooses a question for the player to his left to answer.
- Players answer random questions (determined by a die roll or card draw), instead of choosing them themselves.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to answer one additional world building question (after everyone has answered one).

A player may **spend one drama point** to answer a question that has already been answered, offering additional insight that does not contradict what has already been said.

## GAME PLAY

In the Protocol Series, players take turns directing scenes involving some or all of the characters. Directing a scene involves establishing parameters of game play, such as who, where, and when, some of which is provided for you. Scenes and location charts are on pages 20 and 21, while names appear on page 23.

Each turn the active player (director) draws two cards, which determine the scene type — vignette, interrogation, interlude, or ensemble — as well as the location. The scene's type (suit) and atmosphere (value) are determined by the first card, while the location is determined by the second card. *For instance, the director draws a ♦7 and a ♣9 indicating an interrogation (♦) about technical problems at a populated (♣) laboratory.*

Some players may find the location cards restrictive. You are free to ignore them or just invent a location if you so choose.

### ADVICE

These 'tags' are designed to inspire the director to create scenes that link a complete narrative together. There is an ebb and flow here, trust me. It works. Listen to what has come before, pay attention to the cards you've drawn, and rely on your instincts.

## OPTIONAL RULES

- If the same suit is drawn three times in a row for a scene or location, the director may discard the card and draw a new one until a new suit appears.
- At the beginning of the game, shuffle the deck and remove 10 cards at random. Do not look at them. Remove them from play and never shuffle them back into the deck.
- A player always has a minimum of one drama point to spend during the finale on his own character.
- Once per game, the players may **award one drama point** to a director who has framed a particularly good scene or a player who has contributed to a scene in a dramatic fashion.
- Select a permanent director who does not play a character, but instead runs the game like a traditional RPG. Cards are still drawn for scenes. The game lasts for a number of scenes equal to four times the number of players, or as long as the director chooses. During the finale, the director may spend up to four drama points in order to write vignettes about the other characters.

# DRAMA POINTS

Drama points are used to control the narration and finale. In addition, players may use drama points in any way that breaks the rules. They are tools for dramatic escalation, interrupting the action, and general authoritative control. There are few rules for spending drama points, but some examples include:

- The director may **spend one drama point** to discard a scene/location card and draw a new one. If the card drawn is a scene card of the same suit OR value, the director may draw a new one at no cost (but only once).
- The director may **spend one drama point** to change the suit of a scene card to any other suit. The value may not change.
- If a scene ends with unresolved conflict, any player may **spend one drama point** to shift the conflict to an NPC who has already made an appearance in the story, or **spend two drama points** to shift the conflict to a new NPC.

Other examples appear elsewhere throughout this document.

# NPCS

NPC is short-hand for Non-Player Character. These are characters who may appear during play, but that no one single player controls. A cop on the street, a bartender at a restaurant, or a cashier at the check-out line are all NPCs. Sometimes they are the background noise from the world and sometimes they interact with the characters the players control. How often they appear and how much they influence play is up to you.

Creating them for the game is easy. If you're the director, you can create one NPC during any (non-vignette) scene. Each scene type provides information on how NPCs are used in those scenes. When you are not the director, you can **spend one drama point** to create an NPC in a scene, following the same rules. Keeping track of NPCs should be done on a separate piece of paper or index card that is easily available to all the players.

Whoever adds the NPC to the scene plays that character in the scene.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to create a relationship between two NPCs by drawing a card from the deck and defining that relationship in detail.

A player may **spend one drama point** to take on the role of an NPC during a scene.

# THE OPENING SCENE

The opening scene of the game is always a **vignette** (see page 14) that takes place after the rescue team leaves for the space station. The vignette focus is either Analysis or Desperation. Determine randomly which player narrates this vignette, but do not draw any cards. Afterwards, take turns until every player has directed four scenes.

*The director decides that the group is half-way to the space station when a call comes in that another explosion has rocked the station. Twenty-percent of the remaining crew have been killed. The commander reads the notes like it's a recipe. Chemical radiation venting into the upper atmosphere. Time to planetfall recalculated at four hours. Luckily the pressure from the core has been eased by the new vents. Cynical.*

## ADVICE

The opening scene sets the proper tone. From here, the other players get a sense of where the story might lead. Pulling together as many world building threads as possible ensures that things won't be forgotten once the game is underway. The opening scene is about providing pathways to plot threads and not closing the door on ideas.

## NPCS

The opening scene does not have dialogue, but any number of NPCs may color the story background. Since the opening scene can be about anything or anyone, this is an opportunity to show the 'audience' what is going on elsewhere in the story.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to add a minor detail or affectation to the opening scene, but he cannot contradict what was said by the director.

A player may **spend one drama point** to add a new NPC to the opening scene, adding a minor detail along with the new character.

## VIGNETTES ♣

Vignettes involve no actual dialog. They merely set the atmosphere for the story. The director determines the location from the card drawn and narrates a brief scene. A vignette shouldn't take more than a minute or two to narrate.

*The director draws a ♣10 for scene — Vignette about Safety in Numbers — and a ♦Q — Damaged Tools.*

*We still hadn't found the scientists living aboard the outpost. But we knew splitting up wasn't an answer either. All of our readouts were useless. No matter where we walked we couldn't get a proper infrared display of who was where.*

### ADVICE

Keep your vignettes short and simple. Narrate enough information to set the tone, but don't overdo it by dragging the action on too long. Concise sentences are a storyteller's best friend.

Vignettes are a good opportunity to show what else is going on in the story that does not involve the main characters. They can highlight a single event, resolve a crisis from another scene, or set up future tension. No one can interrupt a vignette, so explore the game space as much as you like.

### NPCS

Vignettes do not have dialogue, but any number of NPCs may color the story background. Since vignettes can be about anything or anyone, this is an opportunity to show the 'audience' what is going on elsewhere in the story.

### DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to add a minor detail or affectation to a vignette, but he cannot contradict what was said by the director.

A player may **spend one drama point** to add a new NPC to a vignette.

# INTERROGATIONS ♦

Interrogations are a complicated but varied approach to scene-framing. There are a number of ways to direct an interrogation scene, but the core concept is that the director asks up to five questions to another player.

## METHOD ONE

The director selects one player, steals one drama point from that player, and asks that player up to five questions.

## METHOD TWO

The director selects one player. That player takes on the role of an NPC of the director's choosing. The director then asks that player up to five questions.

**Reminder:** When interrogating an NPC, you may ask two additional questions.

The director may ask the questions from the point of view of an NPC or his own character. This process should feel organic. However, the interrogation may be out of character as well, in which case the director asks the questions in an abstract fashion, as though going down a list. Regardless, the questions can be anything fitting the theme of the card drawn.

The player being interrogated cannot say *no*, nor can the player avoid answering the question. If a leading question paints the player into a corner, all the better.

*The director draws a ♦4 for scene — Interrogation about Innocent Lives — and a ♠7 — Energy Crippled Power Systems.*

*The director decides that Dr. Kim is working feverishly to fix the unstable power when his conscience gets the better of him — he starts to wonder aloud what would happen if he cut out the oxygen to levels 4 and 5. The director takes on the voice of Dr. Kim's conscience, asking five questions in this vein.*

## ADVICE

Ask leading questions. Avoid yes/no questions, or questions that can be reduced to short answers. What and why questions are great. Did or can questions are not. "Why are you waiting for reinforcements?"

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

The director may **give one drama point** to another player to have that player interrogate the director.

The director may **spend one drama point** to ask one additional question during the interrogation.

A player being interrogated may **spend one drama point** to avoid answering one question.

# INTERLUDES ♥

Interludes involve two (and only two) characters with a pre-existing relationship, but neither character needs to be the director's. The director sets the scene based on the cards drawn. The scene runs as long as the director likes, without being self-indulgent — calling “scene” when the characters have said or done enough. An interlude involves only one location. Should the characters leave the location (or reach a moment of conflict), the scene ends.

All players **not** involved in the scene **gain one drama point** at the end of the interlude.

*The director has drawn the ♥5 for scene — Interlude about Analysis — and the ♣8 for location — a Populated Operations.*

*The director decides that Dr. Kim and Gretchen are trapped with a number of non-vital personnel in Operations. The pair have isolated themselves and are analyzing the data regarding radiation and parts per million. Gretchen doesn't have the heart to leave these people behind, but Dr. Kim wonders if they can even be saved. The director does not have an agenda beyond this and wants to see where the characters take the story.*

## ADVICE

Interludes are mostly about the drama between two characters. While interludes can be used to advance the plot, this is secondary to the interpersonal actions and reactions of the characters. Let them explore their relationship in the context of the scene's focus.

## NPCS

Typically, there are no NPCs in an interlude, unless someone **spends one drama point** to include one.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

The director may **spend one drama point** to place two characters into an interlude who do not have a pre-existing relationship.

The director may **spend one drama point** to add an NPC to an interlude.

A player may **spend one drama point** to join an interlude.

A player may **spend two drama points** to join an interlude as an NPC.

A player may **spend one drama point** to end the interlude early or to extend the interlude after the director has ended it.



# ENSEMBLES ♠

Ensembles involve all of the characters. Like an interlude, the director determines the focus of the scene, as well as the location. The director may preempt the scene as much as he likes, but once the ensemble starts, the players should let things develop organically. The director still has the right to call “scene” at any moment, but any player may override the director by spending one drama point to end a scene early, or to extend a scene longer.

The director may take on the role of an NPC in the ensemble, instead of his own character. Any player may **spend one drama point** to take on the role of an established NPC instead of his own character.

*The director has drawn the ♠3 for scene — Ensemble about the Unknown — and the ♥6 for location — Insulated Storage.*

*The director decides the group needs to locate the storage in order to get oxygen tanks. But without a proper map, they have no idea where they are going. Already isolated from the rest of the outpost, the team debates their next move. To increase the tension, the director decides that half the emergency lights are working.*

## ADVICE

Ensembles involve everyone and should be allowed to run their course. But not too long. Eventually the characters will start spewing every kind of theory and idea, which slows play and distracts from the story.

Let everyone get a say, but once you resolve the scene’s primary focus, it’s time to end things. Don’t forget, if there’s conflict, the scene ends on its own, unless someone **spends one drama point**.

Reward ingenious ideas and know when it’s time to cut the action.

## DRAMA POINT EXAMPLES

A player may **spend one drama point** to end the ensemble early or to extend the ensemble after the director has ended it.

A player may **spend one drama point** to take on the role of an NPC in the ensemble.

## FLASHBACKS (JOKER)

Flashbacks are interlude or ensemble scenes from the past, before the story began. The director determines the focus of the scene, as well as the location. The director may preempt the scene as much as he likes, but once the flashback begins, the players should let things develop organically. The director still has the right to call “scene” at any moment, but any player may override the director by spending one drama point to end a scene early, or to extend a scene longer.


### ADVICE

Flashbacks are not there to fill in the gaps of the story we already know. A good flashback takes us to a time and place we didn't expect. It should add a twist we didn't see coming.

## MONOLOGUES (JOKER)

Monologues are solo scenes where the director's character (or an NPC) delivers a single speech that cannot be interrupted. The director decides who else is at the location at the time the speech is delivered.

The director **gains one drama point** at the end of the monologue.



ROBOTICS IS A  
DEDUCTIVE SCIENCE  
AND SOCIOLOGY  
AN INDUCTIVE ONE.  
BUT MATHEMATICS  
CAN BE MADE TO APPLY  
IN EITHER CASE.

-ISAAC ASIMOV,  
THE NAKED SUN

# RESOLVING CONFLICT

## INTERLUDES

Whenever two characters in an interlude reach a moment of unresolvable conflict, the director narrates the conclusion and ends the scene. Should a player wish to override this, he must **spend one drama point** in order to narrate the conclusion. In the case of a tie where more than one player spends drama points, one player must spend more drama points than anyone else in order to narrate the conclusion.

## ENSEMBLES

Whenever two (or more) characters in an ensemble reach a moment of unresolvable conflict, the scene ends, which leaves the conflict dangling. Should a player wish to override this, he must **spend one drama point** in order to narrate the conclusion. In the case of a tie where more than one player spends drama points, one player must spend more drama points than anyone else in order to narrate the conclusion.

## ADVICE

Should a scene end unresolved, this creates a cliffhanger effect. Players may wish to resolve this in the following scene. But this isn't always necessary. Use your best judgement. Sometimes the best things are left unsaid.

## OPTIONAL RULES

Players who are used to adventure games with clear cut conflict resolution may not like the simplicity of drama points resolving conflict. If all the players agree, conflict should be resolved by a card draw (from a separate deck), with players able to spend drama points to draw additional cards — high card wins and ties remain unresolved.

# SCENES

## SUIT

- ♣ Vignette
- ♦ Interrogation
- ♥ Interlude
- ♠ Ensemble

## VALUE

- A Desperation
- 2 Science
- 3 The Unknown
- 4 Innocent Lives
- 5 Analysis
- 6 Fire/Oxygen
- 7 Technical Problems
- 8 Illness/Injury
- 9 Movement/Transportation
- 10 Safety in Numbers
- J Power Surge
- Q Tempers Flare
- K Space Station Rocked By Explosion
- Joker
- Flashback or Monologue

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## EXPRESSING VALUES

One of the changes in Protocol (from the original system) is the way in which scene values are defined. Previously, a large and abstract, thematic term would be used (i.e Fear, Despair, Chaos) to express the focus of the scene. In this edition, the values of the scenes have a more poetic and evocative style. The intent is trigger different kinds of ideas, while shaping richer stories. I hope you find it effective.

# LOCATIONS

## SUIT

- ♣ Populated
- ♦ Barricaded
- ♥ Quarantined
- ♠ Energy-Crippled

## VALUE

- A Outside the Station
- 2 Sealed/Ventilated Hatch
- 3 Transportation Area
- 4 Insulated Hallway
- 5 Damaged Escape Pods
- 6 Storage Bays
- 7 Power Systems
- 8 Personal Quarters
- 9 Laboratory
- 10 Communication Center
- J Weapons Control Center
- Q Operations Array
- K Intelligence/Data Center
- Joker
- Subductive Nuclear Core

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## LOCATIONS 101

Some Protocols put the characters on the move constantly, while other Protocols have characters staying in relatively the same place for the duration of the story. The location chart is therefore explored in one of two ways. Either the location is the Suit or Value of the card, and the modifier to the location is the other. For instance, in Home, the value of the card indicates the location and the suit of the card adds an affectation to the location that may or may not affect the plot.

# FINALE

Players take turns directing scenes. However, the order is not important. Players may decide to take turns in a random order, clockwise order, or even bid to be the next director. Just make sure everyone is involved and no one directs two times in a row.

The person directing the final scene of the game is not responsible for wrapping up loose plot ends. In fact, doing so robs the other players of their agency. Scene 16 is no more important than 8.

Once everyone has directed four scenes, the finale begins. The player with the most drama points (or the person who directed the final scene of the game, in case of a tie) narrates the first vignette of the finale. Draw one card (for each player) to determine his or her finale's focus. If the joker is drawn, draw again, amplifying the issue. Use of the card is optional and should not replace common sense. After that, these vignettes can be played in any order and the order of events can be fluid/plastic.

## SUIT

- ♣ **Not everyone makes it out alive**
- ♦ **The mission succeeds, but at what cost?**
- ♥ **Personal needs override mission goals**
- ♠ **People are separated, perhaps forever**

For each drama point a player still possesses, he narrates (in turn) a vignette about his character's fate and/or the fate of the others (including NPCs) in relation to the story. **A player may not spend more than one drama point affecting a single character other than his own.**

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## RANDOM FINALE

Not all roads lead to the same conclusion and sometimes the journey is more important than the destination. Glib inspirational poster pabulum aside, the way players play the game may lead to a finale where the card draw makes no sense. While I've done my best to make the suits associated with the finale as wide as possible to accommodate the story, it may be necessary to just ignore the card draw and play without it.

# NAMES

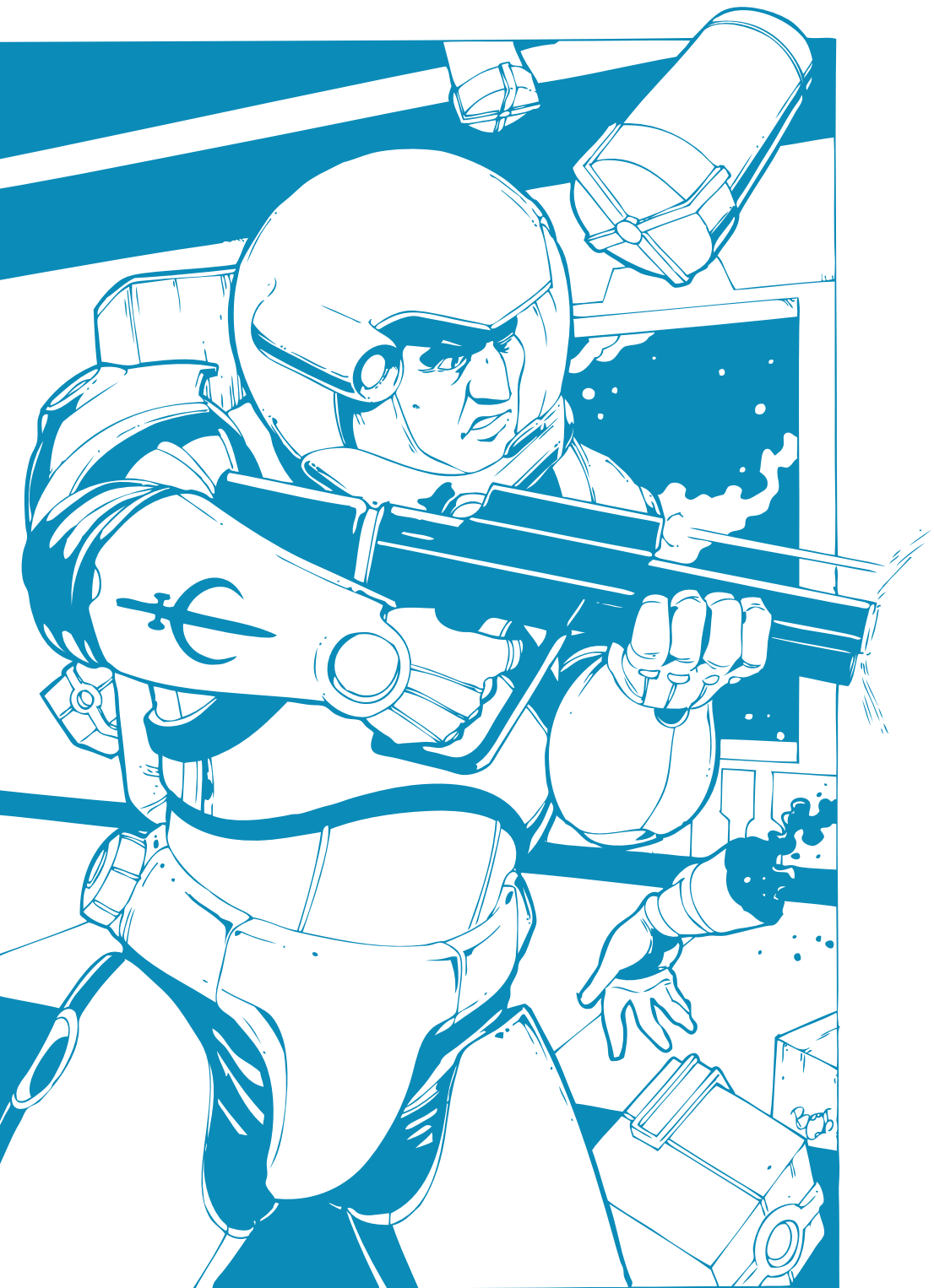
## CHARACTERS (FIRST, LAST)

Alex	Aarons
Amelia	August
Bella	Baldwin
Bryce	Becks
Carsten	Clemens
Catherine	Cosgrove
Dana	Demler
David	Dryden
Eddie	Eddings
Fineas	Flagg
Gloria	Gregory
Illyra	Grendel
Ivan	Ians
Jennifer	Jalal
Jonah	James
Kim	Knudsen
Kristina	Kody
Lang	Leads
Lorey	Linn
Maxwell	McAdams
Myra	Musgrave
Norton	Niels
Olivia	O'Toole
Oswald	Ogden
Paul	Pearce
Quincey	Quinn
Rose	Rodgers
Rykin	Russells
Sloane	Sorensen
Tyron	Thompson
Uther	Uncer
Victoria	Von
Weston	Winchell

## ENGINEERING PROBLEMS

Absorption	Acoustics
Boiling Point	Capacitor
Cavitation	Charge
Chemical	Compression
Coupling	Density
Discharge	Electromagnetism
Emissions	Energy
Exchange	Fission/Fusion
Freezing Point	Friction
Frost	Fuse
Gravity	Heat
Hydraulic	Hydrogen
Ignition	Inducer
Input/Output	Intake
Interference	Ionized
Invert	Isometric
Kinetic	Latency
Leak	Load
Locomotion	Magnetized
Molecular	Negative
Offset	Osmosis
Overflow	Oxygen
Polarized	Pressure
Radiation	Receptor
Reduction	Retrograde
Reverse	Ring
Rotation	Sensor
Simulated	Static
Telemetry	Thermal
Torsion	Vacuum
Vapor	Ventilation
Vibration	





## ADVICE

Running good Protocol games is not difficult. In fact, if you just pay attention to the game around you, it becomes very easy. The most important rule to remember is that there is nothing here to win. This is a game that starts, plays, and resolves in less than three hours. There is no value in a character living or dying, winning or losing, succeeding or failing. The value is in how these events impact the story.

Imagine an axis. Upon that axis is *win* on one side and *lose* on the other. This axis would be familiar to 99% of the world who believe that game design started and ended with *Monopoly*. For people who've played traditional roleplaying games, the end points are not win-lose, but are based upon perceived wants. Are the characters in it for treasure? Glory? Experience points?

The objective of traditional roleplaying games is for players to set personal goals and achieve them at any cost. The traditional game structure rewards personal achievement with experience points that equate to monster killing and treasure hoarding. These are not ingredients in the Protocol series.

Certainly games have developed reward systems beyond that, but if your mind-set is to win, you're going to find a different game experience within these pages than someone who plays in order to be part of something or who just wants to "stay in character." So while it's impossible for everyone to share 100% of the same interests in the game, being completely at odds with the expectations of the mechanics is like expecting chess to have better touchdown rules.

**Here, the goal is to write a good story. The reward is a well-written story.**

## THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Recognizing and respecting the spirit of play is essential to a good protocol session. Finding the chalice in the first scene, overcoming problems with a made up device, and always saying no to anything people contrive about your characters are not in the spirit of the game. Since the Protocol series lacks a gamemaster, everyone is responsible for monitoring what is and isn't part of the story. For instance, ripping off a character's arm can be dramatic, but also debilitating. Just because one person wants to play in a gonzo manner, does not mean the story supports this desire.

## PROMPTS

Essentially, Protocol is a system of calculated prompts. Everything in this document — roles, motivations, questions, scenes — is meant to be here. It all works together into a web of interlocking ideas that the players turn into a story. I'll be the first person to admit that this is more of a rainy day activity than a game, but it follows the inherent logic of a storytelling game, without the added crunch of die rolls and statistics. That's what the drama points are for. You're only engaging for a few hours after all. The need for statistics is minimal in this kind of a game.

## FRAMING SCENES

There are few specific rules on how to frame a scene. Protocol scenes require the inclusion of elements drawn by the cards. But this can sometimes prohibit creativity and create merciless stricture. The cards are there for guidance, not limitation. And while there are tried and true methods to help generate *better* scenes, ultimately you are playing without the designer present. If you decide to break the rules, make sure you understand why.

- Before starting play, be aware of just how many scenes you'll be directing. Don't squander one by rehashing of what you already know.
- *In media res* is the concept of starting in the middle of the action. Don't worry about how the characters got here. Being surrounded by a pack of wild dogs creates immediate tension.
- A good scene starts late and ends early. Open with a strong sentence that implies some kind of history. Call "scene" or "cut" before someone ruins a perfectly-timed line with a weak retort.
- Bookends and mirrors. Framing tools can be visual, obvious, grad school crutches. But they can still enhance a roleplaying experience. Don't be afraid to bookend a scene with the sample elements at the front and back. Don't be afraid to use something that's been used before.
- The micro-management of framing a scene can ensure the scene doesn't slip off the rails with precise details about everyone's role. Conversely, a hands-off approach can allow the drama to go in unexpected directions.
- Cause and effect are your friends. Let the characters' mistakes grow into drama for a following scene.
- Cliffhangers are useful in the middle of a story, but hold little value early on. Also, the action of Act III washes away any possible tension of "does he make the jump," because we will know soon enough.

## **BETTER VIGNETTES**

Keep it simple. Do not resolve everything. Set the mood. Show the bad guys. Pay attention to where you are in the story and know when to start a new problem, complicate an existing problem, or end an ongoing problem.

## **BETTER INTERROGATIONS**

Ask leading questions. Do not give the interviewee a chance to wiggle out of answering. Paint him into a corner. Insinuate problems or situations with the questions. But keep it thematic and appropriate.

The answer to any question is never no.

## **BETTER INTERLUDES**

Protocol is about drama. Drama is about conflict. Conflict does not happen during a hug. Make sure the existing relationship is taken into account and use your interlude time as an opportunity to change or develop that relationship within the context of the scene's theme.

## **BETTER ENSEMBLES**

Do not be afraid to take on the roles of NPCs. Give everyone a chance to add to the scene. Do not compete. Contrast and complement the other players. When someone is playing big, play small. When someone is playing loud, be calm. When someone is struggling to get involved, engage.

## **BETTER FINALES**

The player directing the final scene of the game (before the finale) is not responsible for wrapping everything up. This is what the finale is for.

Bear in mind that the finale chart cannot predict where you've taken the story. The chart is merely a guideline. If you find the event jarring, ignore it and tell your stories as you see fit.

## **BETTER LOCATIONS**

Like everything else in Protocol, the location cards are prompts. If you draw a location that is weird or just doesn't work for what's been going on, ignore it. Staying in one place for two scenes in a row is just fine. Try to honor the tone of the story and take things where they need to go.

Advanced players may ignore the location cards altogether.

## **BETTER SCENES**

Do not force your agenda onto the story. This is the best way to derail what is going on. It may feel to you that the story is going slowly, but trust me, the pace is just fine. You have four turns around the table. If you force the game to advance on a timetable no one else can see, you will frustrate yourself... and others. Turning up the heat on the story may meet your criteria, but it's not always necessary.

# WALKTHROUGH

This, like all walkthroughs, involves me sitting at my desk and drawing cards, dealing with whatever I get, just like you'll be doing when you play.

Four people sit down to play *Joan of Arc*: Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana. Respectively, they have selected the characters of Eddie Hogan (technician), Freida Iyer (analyst), Gavin Joyner (engineer), and Helia Kross (medic).

## MOTIVATIONS

Keeping their information hidden, the players determine the following:

Abe draws a ♥10, indicating an inexplicable motivation focused on family. He decides that Eddie lost his family a long time ago to a disaster, though the rest of the crew doesn't know this. Eddie is determined to save as many lives as he can in an attempt to compensate for his own loss.

Bianca draws a ♠5 — impulsively motivated by desperation/fear. Freida focuses on the task at hand, because otherwise the fear of what she is doing would overwhelm her. She's dedicated to search and rescue, at an almost fanatical level, but Freida's personal issues beg the question: why does she do it?

Carl draws a ♦8. Gavin is motivated defiantly by wealth. Carl decides that Gavin is one of those guys that continues to go after the money, even though the pay isn't very good. Deep down he might have an honorable side, but on the surface he continues to play the part of the mercenary. "Pay me," is among his favorite one-liners.

Diana draws a ♣K, which is unyielding dominion. Diana decides that Helia is one of those busy-body types who always has to tell people how to do their jobs. The rest of the team has probably learned to tune out her badgering, but it doesn't stop her from always offering her two cents. If she wasn't so abrasive, she'd probably be the team leader by now.

Which is strange, because Diana always plays goodie-two shoes characters.

## RELATIONSHIPS

It's important to note, that while all characters know each other, they may not have important relationships with one another before play. Choosing two characters to have relationships means wanting to see those two characters work together.

Abe goes first, selecting the Gavin and Helia to share a relationship. Drawing ♣7, Carl and Diana decide the family/long-term burdensome relationship between the two means that they've been working together for a long time. However, things have gotten strange of late and Gavin is starting to find Helia tiresome, regardless of how valuable she may be to the team.

Bianca selects Eddie and Frieda. The ♦5 indicates friends/rivals and predictable/reliable. It is decided that Eddie and Fredia are reliable friends (since Gavin and Helia are on the outs). The two have worked together for many years and know each other's strength, though there is some friendly rivalry at times.

Carl selects Freida and Gavin to have a relationship, drawing ♣A (family/long-term + contentious). The players determine that the two characters do not get along, an indication that Gavin is starting to rub people the wrong way. So far, the relationships indicate that this team has worked together for a long time.

Diana goes last and decides that Eddie and Helia need to know each other. Drawing a ♥2 — romantic training — the players determine that Eddie and Helia had a short affair when they were training together (years ago), but things cooled off long ago. They don't really have any problems with one another now, but every once in a while Helia gets that look in her eye and Eddie knows that means trouble.

The group can see a thread emerging in the story and move on to world building.

## WORLD BUILDING

With the relationships finished, the group decides to use a random method for the world building Q&A. They name decide that the ship name is *The Lariat* and the team calls itself Mother Superior.

Abe gets question 7: “*How much time have you been told you have before the core explodes? How much time do you really have?*”

- The team thinks they have six hours to get everyone off the space station, but it’s really closer to four.

Bianca gets question 2: “*What caused the space station to rupture in the first place? How many people are trapped? Who were the first to die?*”

- A coolant failure — ignored for months — caused the rupture. People working at the highest levels of the station died first, as this is where the radioactive leak spilled back in through the vents. 65 workers remain trapped on the station.

Carl gets question 9: “*Name and describe the away team member who died en route.*”

- Nathan Oshiro was the team sweeper, cool and confident, with an air of ‘I don’t give a \*\*\*\*.’ But he was injured on a previous mission and while *en route* to a medical station, the call came in for Mother Superior to help others. Before the team could get Nathan somewhere safe, he died. His body is still onboard the ship, in a body bag in cryogenic freeze. The feeling on board the ship is that this is an ill-omen. Not to mention that Nathan’s skill and expertise will be missed on this mission.

Diana gets question 4: “*What is the political governance of the space station like? Are those in charge of it hands on or hands off?*”

- Joan of Arc is run by a megacorporation that normally micromanages everything. However, a recent takeover has caused people to lose track of a lot of details. Since the space station is nothing more than an observational platform for studying volcanic activity on the planet’s surface, no one considered it a priority to double-check all the systems — including those working on board.

## THE OPENING SCENE

Diana directs the opening scene, selecting Desperation for her vignette focus.

*Diana decides to do this vignette like self-narration. “Nathan died just a few hours ago. We have two more hours before we reach the station, leaving us four hours to get everyone out of there. Four hours to find everyone and get out. Sixty people. Is now a good time to tell the crew that we can’t hold that many people presently? Not until we get some repairs going on the Lariat, at least.”*

From here on, the players take turns drawing cards and directing scenes.

NAME/ROLE

MOTIVATION

RELATIONSHIPS

